

NOTES TO THE NATION OCTOBER 27, 2008

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MEETING OCTOBER 18, 2008

A meeting of the NCO was held in Pt. Richmond, Ca. on Saturday, October 18. It was relocated from the Pt. Richmond Community Center to the home of Melani and David King. There were about 24 attendees.

I had been invited to speak at the meeting and after a great meal and some NCO business, including comments from Christy Marani about educational opportunities, I spoke for about an hour. Starting with a brief history of the tribe's journey from the Ohio River valley to our present reservation in Oklahoma we proceeded to current political affairs. Afterwards there was a question and answer period that brought out some lively discussion. At one point in the afternoon, two ladies had to leave. I thought the meeting had ended, but our host said that several people wished to continue the discussion, so after a short break, we continued for another hour or so. We heard comments from Charles Maker and others.

I had anticipated questions about the pending trust suits, including Cobel. These suits were not even mentioned as attention was centered on other issues such as tribal spending, accounting problems at the Casinos, education, health and the Chief's suits against the Congress.

Some of the NCO members had reviewed the tapes of current elected officials when they campaigned for office two years ago. They mentioned the candidates' promises of accountability and transparency in this government. Now, they said, the same people seem to be fighting any attempt at open government. It is apparent that this is an issue that is disturbing Osages everywhere.

The NCO decided to confirm Karen Elliott as Treasurer and Chuck Maker agreed to continue as interim President until the next meeting. Tentatively the next meeting will be in early May on the campus of CSU Monterey Bay in Seaside, CA. A steering committee was formed, which includes Chuck Maker, Melani King, George Baldwin, Jim Norris and Karen Elliott.

My thanks go out to the Northern California Osages and especially Melanie and David King and Jim Norris for their hospitality and counsel.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS BOARD MET OCTOBER 23 AND 24 IN STILLWATER

The Osage Nation Health and Wellness Advisory Board met in a two day retreat last Thursday and Friday in Stillwater, OK to plan for the Nation's health needs. The Board consists of Dr. Ron Shaw, Tim Tall Chief, Cecelia Tall Chief, Paul Stabler and Tom Gann.

I went down with Assistant Chief John Red Eagle on Friday to get a report on their progress and offer our support.

The Board has done a lot of work and is making some long range plans. Some of the ideas they are discussing are the current Health Benefits Act and the possibility of the Osage Nation taking over the IHS clinic at Pawhuska.

A short discussion revealed that communication between the Board and the Executive and Legislative Branch needs to be improved. The Board had little involvement in the Health Benefit Act recently passed and the suggestions they did have were not disseminated to all members of Congress before the Act was passed. They expressed a desire to be apolitical and work only for the best health care for the Nation. A joint meeting of members of Congress, the Executive Branch and the Board was discussed.

During the next few weeks the Board will be attempting to gather statistics for estimating administrative costs and health claim projections for the Congressional Appropriations Committee when this committee considers funding the Health Benefits Act.

CONGRESS WILL APPEAL DECISION AGAINST AN INDEPENDENT PRESS

Congress had recently filed a Post Judgment Motion to Intervene in the suit the Chief filed to review the constitutionality of ONCA 08-07, The Independent Press Act of 2008. This was an attempt to appeal the decision rendered in the Osage Nation Trial Court.

You may recall that this bill was to create an independent press for the Osage Nation, free from political bias. The Chief vetoed the bill but the Congress was able to over ride the veto and the Act became law. The Chief would not implement the law and instead filed a suit in the trial court to review the law, alleging it was unconstitutional.

Attorneys advised Congress that an over ride should end any further argument and no court review could occur without controversy or injury. There was no legal controversy because the law had never been implemented and, likewise, there was no injury. However, instead of dismissing the suit, the Trial Court accepted it and ruled the Independent Press Act unconstitutional.

Obviously, if this is allowed to stand, any Osage citizen who disagrees with any law of the Nation could file a suit for review. Recognizing the chaos this could cause, the Speaker has elected to pursue an appeal in the Osage Supreme Court. This may take until the spring to come to trial. Until then, you won't have an independent Osage newspaper.

RE-ELECT SCOTT BIGHORSE REPRESENTATIVE DIST. 36

Scott BigHorse, Democrat, will be running for a second two year term as Oklahoma State Representative for House District 36.

Last Thursday night Scott debated his Republican opponent at the old high school auditorium in Hominy. Scott showed the ability and experience we need to represent our district.

Let's all get together and re-elect Scott to continue the good work he has done for State and the people of Osage County.

SPECIAL OSAGE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER ATTACHED

Cherise Lookout has asked me to forward this Special Education Newsletter to our mailing list. Lots of good information for high school students and parents. May take a while to download.

