



THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES
of
THE COLVILLE RESERVATION

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November 3, 1997

Samuel Penny, Chairman
Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee
P.O. Box 365
Lapwai, ID 83450

Ross Sockzehigh, Chairman
Yakama Indian Nation Tribal Council
P.O. Box 151
Toppenish, WA 98948

Donald Sampson, Chairman
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation Board of Trustees
P.O. Box 638
Pendleton, OR 97801

Rex Buck
Wanapum Band
P.O. Box 878
Ephrata, WA 98823

Re: Tribal Roundtable Meetings on the Ancient One

Dear Tribal Leaders:

Our people have been meeting in Tribal Roundtables on the ongoing Ancient One issue. These meetings were called for the purpose of allowing us to discuss, deliberate, and develop a course of action for the united Tribes regarding this important issue. All five of the Tribes and Bands have attended these meetings, making the effort to travel and taking the time that has to be taken away from other issues and projects. In the meetings, we all have talked about how important the Ancient One is to our traditional beliefs and rights, and we have talked about what this issue may mean to the future of those beliefs and rights. We all agree on the importance of these things.

But despite the many meetings, the same questions are on the table now that we began with. We've made little progress and have even less concrete action to show for it. Meanwhile, other side-issues continue to arise, forced on us by the other parties to the issue. In some instances, the things we are meeting on and trying to reach agreement about become moot by the time a group decision is reached, if agreement is reached at all. Often, decisions are being made on these issues without us while we consider them. To illustrate this point, note the attached copies of two recent Tri-City Herald articles found on the Internet. The Tribal Roundtable discussed what alternate methods of storing the Ancient One's remains would be appropriate at meetings on the 20th and 30th of October. But by the 24th, the Corps had already determined what they would do. Also, in those two and previous Tribal Roundtable meetings, we discussed the prospect of and responses to Dr. Huckleberry's ARPA permit to assess the geology of the landform from which the Ancient One originated. The Tribes also discussed at length what would be appropriate alternative methods of geomorphic/sedimentological testing (if any) of the landform and drafted numerous letters and documents in reference to such testing. Again, with the Tribes reaching no agreement on any of the aspects of geological testing, by the 31st the Corps announced it was granting permits to allow such testing. I point out that these two decisions by the Corps were made and announced without consulting with the Tribes.

I feel we need to ask ourselves what have we won in this issue? Are we meeting in roundtable just for the sake of meeting? We have fallen behind the curve and shouldn't think that the Corps will catch us up. The Corps is making decisions without involving the Tribes, and the Corps attorneys have stated explicitly that they will not share all of the information that they have on the situation. The Colonel has also made it clear with the conference call today that they will go ahead with actions that are in direct conflict with the Tribes' expressed desires (i.e. conducting testing of the landform).

In the current scenario, we have no control of the Ancient One's future and if we continue to be in a position of reacting to what the other parties are doing, we will have no control over the future effects of this issue. The threat to Indians is great, greater even than the current threat to the Ancient One. I ask that we reassess our position in the Ancient One issue and find a proactive, rather than reactive, path. We need to challenge the current thinking of all of the parties, including ourselves. We have an opportunity to do this on November 13th when the Tribal Roundtable will meet with Colonel Curtis in Walla Walla. There formal consultation will begin, face-to-face, as consultation should be conducted. We should be prepared to be involved, not just to be there for comment on what the Corps decides to do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Pakootas" with a flourish underneath.

Joseph Pakootas, Chairman
Colville Business Council

cc. Lt. Colonel Donald L. Curtis, Jr., Walla Walla District Engineer, Corps of Engineers