

April 19, 1963

*Int. Indians*

Mr. Harry W. Coons  
805 North Birch  
Ponca City, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Coons:

This is in reply to your letter regarding disposition of the Pawnee judgment award. It is your understanding that an effort is being made to have these funds put in reserve to finance reservation development programs, rather than paid out per capita.

The bill to authorize the distribution of the judgment award will specify whether the funds shall be placed in reserve or be paid out per capita. In making its decision, the Congress will hear the views of officials of the Pawnee Tribe, individual Pawnees, the Government agencies concerned, and other interested parties.

For your information, a hearing on the fees and expenses of the Tribal attorneys has been scheduled for May 9, 1963.

I appreciate having the benefit of your views, and you may be sure they will be kept in mind.

With best regards and good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,



805 North Birch  
Ponca City, Okla.  
April 13, 1963

Honorable Mike Monroney  
United States Senate  
Washington, 25, D. C.

My dear Senator:

Many serious problems exist in this great nation of ours. We realize as patriotic citizens the many important issues facing our nation such as the foreign aid program, medical care for the aged, federal aid to education, the Cuban problem, and President Kennedy's suggested tax bill.

We are members of the Pawnee Indian Tribe. We were born and reared and received our educations in the Indian and Public Schools of the City of Pawnee.

We are writing you regarding an important issue which vitally concerns us and many members of our tribe, namely, the Pawnee Tribal Claim.

On July 6, 1962, the Pawnee Tribe was awarded approximately \$8,100,000.00. At several of the Pawnee Tribal Council meetings that we attended, the majority of the tribal members present indicated that the Pawnee Tribal Council should do all in their power to obtain a distribution of the Tribal Claim on a per capita payment among the individual tribal members rather than having these funds used to finance reservation development programs as recommended by the Interior Department, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

It would not be feasible to use the Pawnee Tribal Claim award to finance reservation development programs as we do not have a Pawnee Indian Reservation in Oklahoma. The reason for this statement is that in 1876, our tribe was finally moved to Indian Territory which is now known as Pawnee County, Oklahoma. This land in Indian Territory was purchased from the Creeks and Cherokees with Pawnee Tribal Funds received in the Sale of 288,000 acres of land which was a part of Nance County in the State of Nebraska. This land purchased in what is now Pawnee County by the Pawnee Tribe became known as the Pawnee Indian Reservation which consisted of approximately 391,000 acres. In 1892 our Pawnee Indian Reservation was taken in severalty. Approximately 160 acres each were allotted to Pawnee Tribal members. The United States Government declared the unallotted lands as Surplus Lands and the Cherokee Strip of which the Pawnee Indian Reservation was a part was opened to settlement



in 1893. These Surplus Lands were sold to the white settlers at a \$1.25 per acre. This eliminated the Pawnee Indian Reservation.

In the latter 1800's the Government established a manual labor school in accordance with the 1857 Treaty made with the Pawnee Tribe on a 755 acre tract of Pawnee Indian Reservation land located near what is now Pawnee, Oklahoma. This school was built on Pawnee Indian Reservation acreage which was purchased from the Creeks and Cherokees, as previously stated, by the Pawnee Tribe. In 1924, the Pawnee Tribe sued the Government in the Court of Claims to establish tribal ownership of the 755 acre Pawnee School Reserve, and the Pawnee Tribe was victorious. In 1953 or 1954, the Government confiscated and laid claim to this property for unknown reasons. On December 1, 1962, ownership was returned to the Pawnee Tribe by the Government. We are inclined to believe that ownership was returned to the Pawnee Tribe because it is evident that the final judgement on the claim is approaching and the former Pawnee Indian School Reserve will be declared a reservation in order to use the Tribal Claim funds to finance reservation development programs rather than distributed per capita among the individual tribal members.

We are in favor of a per capita payment and believe the majority of the Tribe would be too--if put to a vote. In the Tribal Council meetings we have attended we have recommended that a vote by tribal members should be forthcoming regarding their preference as to receiving a per capita payment or investing their share in reservation development programs. It appears that the Pawnee Tribal Council does not wish to give the Pawnee Tribal members this opportunity.

We are not in favor of the reservation development program because about 80 to 90 per cent of our tribal members do not reside in or near the vicinity of the City of Pawnee. Most of the tribal members have left Pawnee to live elsewhere for purely economic reasons. It was necessary that we move near industrial sites where it would be possible for us to make a living. We are scattered from the East Coast to the West Coast and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian Border, but just as any other Pawnee Tribal member we are all intensely interested in Tribal Affairs. Furthermore, an industrial reservation development program established in or near the City of Pawnee would be a very poor business risk since practically all transportation facilities have been discontinued. To prove this statement, the City of Pawnee has tried unsuccessfully for the last 15 to 20 years to entice industry to locate in the vicinity.

We feel that it is undemocratic to coerce a group of people such as the Pawnee Tribe, to invest their money without the consent of each and every individual member of the tribe. Such a group investment of this type appears to have communistic tendencies.

When the Bill of 1946 established the Court of Claims to hear and adjudicate all Indian Claims in this nation of ours, it gave

the Indian Citizens of this nation the right to sue the United States Government. The Bill of 1946 did not indicate how the Indians were to be paid; only that they bring proof of their claims that they had filed and prove that they were entitled to reimbursement.

Since our Pawnee Tribal Claim has been in litigation these past 16 years, we have been told by our councilmen to have patience and constant courage. That the Pawnee Claim when awarded would be paid to the Tribal members on a per capita payment distribution. Now the award has been finalized by judicial authority, and it appears that we are going to be denied the right of indicating our preference as to how we would like our Tribal Claim to be dispersed.

We do not believe the situation is fair as it now stands. We sincerely and earnestly request your consideration and study for a per capita payment on this Pawnee Tribal Claim Appropriation Award when it is presented to Congress for Authorization of Distribution of Payment.

Sincerely yours,

WE THE UNDERSIGNED ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE FOREGOING LETTER:

*Arthur E. Coons*  
*Harry W. Coons* ✓  
*Susan Coons*  
*John L. Coons*  
*Harry C. Coons*  
*Harry D. Cummings*  
*Era N. Cummings*