

File No:
Bureau

Approved 5/26/87
Checked 5/26/87
Filed 5/27/87

MAY 27 1987

Tribal Government Services-AR

Mr. Kirby Verret
Star Route, Box 95-A
Golden Meadow, Louisiana 70357

Dear Mr. Verret:

This is in response to an April 8th meeting with your representatives, Ms. Arlinda Locklear and Dr. Jack Campisi, regarding their request for clarification of deficiencies and/or omissions found in the Houma petition for Federal acknowledgment. This letter will describe potential problem areas in the Houma petition materials more thoroughly and will replace our original letter of December 12, 1986. Acknowledgment staff members will contact your researchers to discuss the contents of this letter in an attempt to clarify any lingering questions. Copies of this letter are being provided to Ms. Locklear and Dr. Campisi in preparation for their forthcoming trip to Houma.

25 CFR 83.7(b). The description of the contemporary Houma community is limited. Your representatives indicated at our meeting that considerably more information is now available concerning the contemporary Houma community. Our questions are directed at understanding both the social organization of the local settlement areas and the aspects of social organization that encompass or function between them.

The petition narrative describes the present-day Houma in general, but does not describe the local settlements in any detail. We recognize that the size and distribution of the Houma population, together with the nature of the geography, prevent each settlement from being described in detail. We will, however, need a summary description of each settlement to provide a framework, together with a more detailed description of a representative "cross-section" of settlements. The summary description should include an idea of how the community evolved and how the settlements vary in terms of characteristics such as size, settlement pattern and economic base. The number of settlements is not clear from the petition. The narrative (p. 133) states that there are seven settlements in Terrebonne and LaFourche parishes. The Houma constitution states in Article IX that there are four communities and in Article IV that there are five communities. The introductory page of the petition names nine settlements where Houmas are concentrated. You may wish to include a discussion of how "settlement" is defined by the researcher and by the Houma, in different instances.

Regarding cohesion between and within settlement areas, it is not possible, or appropriate, to provide a detailed and precise model of the research required, since we are not familiar with the case in sufficient detail to anticipate what problems or modifications might be required in the course of research. Please feel free to consult further with the Acknowledgment staff regarding this subject.

It is important for us to understand the social organization of the local settlements, and essential to have a more adequate description of how the local settlements interrelate with each other as well as with the central organization. We recommend a detailed ethnographic report, based on interview and observation of a reasonable cross-section of settlements and families. A description of the kinds and distribution of interactions is appropriate, but it does not appear that an exhaustive listing and analysis of all families and their interaction with all families is necessary. The approach your researcher suggested of utilizing the degree of knowledge about persons elsewhere in the group as an indicator of the existence of social relationships and the occurrence of social interaction could be used as part of or in supplement to the above. Your researcher has also suggested the use of a schematic representation of the genealogical relationships underlying this social interaction in order to demonstrate the breadth of interaction and relationships, using the field data for more intensive investigation of selected portions. To rest the conclusions about social cohesion solely on such data would not present the strongest case, but such data may provide important supporting evidence which broadly covers Houma society.

As part of or in addition to the information requested above concerning the various settlements and the relationships which link them together, it would be extremely useful to have a more detailed description than has been presented concerning certain aspects of the social organization of the contemporary Houma. Please provide a description of, or more detail about, any communal endeavors, cooperative activities or events among the Houma. For example, if there are any predominantly Indian churches, celebrations or gatherings (beyond individual kinship groups), please describe them. Are there any social or religious distinctions or factions within the group, other than geographical? Please include information about any inter- and intra-community celebrations, homecomings or other social occasions for maintaining social relationships. If the group has any customs or cultural practices which distinguish them from surrounding non-Houma populations, please describe them.

The kinds of information requested are not a requirement that the Houma have all of the items suggested, but rather an inquiry regarding whether they exist and a request that if they do exist that they be described, in order that we have as detailed and complete a description of the modern community as possible. These requests should not be construed to be a

requirement for having formal organization nor should a description of unformalized patterns of social relationships be omitted if they are significant.

A brief description of the nature, size and contacts of the Houma population living away from the home area, e.g. residents of New Orleans, Chicago or other parts of the country should be provided, to complete the description of the modern community. This should include an estimate of size relative to the resident population.

25 CFR 83.7(c) The petition indicates that during the life of Rosalie Courteaux, the Houma were unified, but after her death the various settlements had their own political processes and leaders, whether formal or informal. To have as complete a picture of this historical period as possible, please provide whatever additional evidence is possible about tribal political process within local areas in the past. The description of the present-day political system should include a better description of local political process as well as community-wide. This may include a description of how the organized government under the constitution functions, as well as more informal aspects of centralized political functioning. Please describe in more detail how the political system in the local settlements integrates these settlements with the centralized political body. Please describe how local representatives to the council are selected.

The description and evidence of exercise of tribal political authority need not be and should not be limited to formal organization or the actions of explicitly designated chiefs or other leaders. Informal leaders should also be described as fully as possible. While direct evidence of actual political process is ideal, community conditions or actions which you believe result from the exercise of political authority are also appropriate and useful evidence (e.g. coordinated actions, maintenance of consensus and norms, etc.). You may also wish to include evidence, if available, of a strongly cohesive and socially distinct community in discussing the context of the evidence of tribal political authority. While indirect, supporting evidence may be used, it is essential to provide as much direct evidence of political process for current and historic periods as possible.

25 CFR 83.7(e) Submitted with the documented petition was an address list showing a total of 2,718 members. We had anticipated that the membership would be substantially larger. In the materials submitted, there were some individuals with assigned numbers into the 6,000's. Apparently the address list does not include all members of the group. The regulations require that a group submit a list of all known current members of the group (25 CFR 83.7(e)). Children who are considered members of the group should be included in the group's membership roll. Please furnish us with a list of all current members. This list should include the following for each

member: 1. full name of the member; 2. complete residential address; 3. the assigned identification number given to the member on the Individual History Chart submitted with the petition; and 4. complete date of birth or at least year of birth. This list should be certified by the governing body of the group. We cannot overemphasize the importance of submitting a complete membership roll. If recognized, the list submitted for acknowledgment purposes will become the group's base roll for Bureau purposes and, as such, will be binding on the group for some time to come except for minor corrections. Other questions are as follows:

1. According to the membership criteria, a person must possess 1/8 or more Houma blood. We would like to know how this blood degree is computed.

2. The Constitution and By-laws state that the membership consists of all persons officially registered as Houma Indians at the time of the ratification of the Constitution. Is there a list of these people? If so, please provide a photocopy of the list. How does a person become officially registered as a Houma Indian?

3. By-laws, Article III, Section 2(B) state that "an application for membership shall be determined by membership guidelines that have been established by resolution of the United Houma Nation Tribal Council." Please provide copies of any guidelines that have been adopted. Photocopies of the formal resolutions should be submitted. If you have a list of persons voting, please provide a copy.

4. Please provide photocopies of any former rolls of the United Houma Nation, Inc., that may exist.

5. The Constitution, Article II, states "jurisdiction shall extend to any parish." Is membership limited only to residents of Louisiana who meet the membership criteria?

6. It would be helpful to have copies of the governing documents of both the Houma Tribe, Inc., and the Houma Alliance, Inc., the predecessor organizations of the United Houma Nation. If the governing documents do not state what the membership criteria was for these organizations, could you please provide a statement of each organization's membership criteria if it is known. Please submit photocopies of all membership rolls that are in existence for the former organizations.

7. If at all possible, in addition to the above documents, we would appreciate one more copy of all the genealogical material such as Individual History Charts and Ancestry Charts.

We realize that our review will require more research on the part of your group but it will greatly facilitate our evaluation of your petition when

your group is placed on active consideration. The Branch of Acknowledgment is not responsible for the actual research on behalf of the petitioner (25 CFR 83.6(d)). Once active consideration begins it may be necessary to ask for additional information. If you have any questions, please contact Lynn McMillion, Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, Mail Stop 32-SI3, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1951 Constitution Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20245 or call Area Code (202) 343-3568.

Sincerely,

W. E. Ebbert

Deputy to the Assistant Secretary -
Indian Affairs (Tribal Services)

cc: Helen Gindrat
Governor Edwin W. Edwards
Attorney General William J. Guste
Senator Russell B. Long
Senator J. Bennett Johnston
Congressman John B. Breaux
Congressman Billy Tauzin
Diana Williamson, Governor's Commission
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Jeanette A. Campos,
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