

## Mackinac Bands Newsletter – DOI Petition Update

On November 18, Mackinac Bands Tribal Council met with its legal team to review the status of Mackinac Band's petition for federal recognition. To achieve federal recognition, a Tribe must prove several criteria: Indian entity recognition, distinct community, political authority, governing document, descent, and unique membership. The tribe must show evidence from 1900 to the present, with documentation from every decade. Tribal Council has already submitted many documents, which have now been digitized, fulfilling some of the criteria. However, the legal team requires more documents to support the petition, particularly for the "distinct community" and "political authority" criteria from 1900-1990.

"Distinct community" means an entity with consistent interactions and significant social relationships within its membership and whose members are differentiated from and distinct from nonmembers. "Political authority" means the entity uses a council, leadership, internal process, or other mechanism in significant respects, making decisions for the entity which substantially affect its members, and/or representing the entity in dealing with outsiders in matters of consequence. Any documents, records, or oral histories describing social gatherings or governance/leadership of Mackinac Bands members from 1900-1990 would help support the petition. Examples would show that historic Mackinac Bands members gathered to engage in cultural activities such as ceremonies cooperative labor such as hunting and fishing, and political organizing such as selecting tribal leadership based on a collective consensus or other norms - and that current Mackinac Bands members gather in similar patterns and for similar reasons today.

In the meeting with the legal team, Tribal Council also discussed other actions to ensure that the Mackinac Bands Constitution is updated and followed. This is crucial for federal recognition. Tribal Council plans to hold a general election in the Spring and hopes to form an election committee by February to plan for the general election. In the general election, members will also be voting on several constitutional amendments:

- An amendment which lowers the required number of tribal council members from nine to five.
- An amendment calling for a general election of five council members, eliminating the separate election for chairperson. The five elected members would then decide amongst themselves who would serve in the executive officer positions (Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer).
- An amendment to the enrollment criteria to include the 1836 Mixed-Blood Census as a means of tracing Mackinac Bands ancestry for enrollment purposes.

Once the general election has taken place, the constitution has been updated, and the necessary outstanding documents have been collected, the legal team can move forward in drafting the petition for federal recognition.