

Cherokee National Council--1900 - Keetoowah History

In 1900, the Keetoowahs watched Cherokee Chief Buffington and his delegates in Washington very carefully. Buffington and the delegates were there negotiating issues on the Dawes Commission issue. The Keetoowahs made a statement to the Wagoner Record newspaper that was published on April 19, 1900, "The full blood Cherokee will never submit to such an agreement, which violates nearly every right held near and dear to a full blood Indians. We would rather submit to the Curtis Bill than to the new agreement, in the first place, Chief Buffington and his delegates had no authority to make such an agreement. The delegates were not chosen by the Cherokee people, neither by the Cherokee council, but were appointed by Chief Buffington on his own responsibility, without consulting the full bloods or real Indians. No, we will never submit to this kind of agreement." The Keetoowahs had previously sent a statement to Chief Buffington, respectfully asking for inclusion or representation in the delegation. The statement concluded with, "We earnestly solicit your consideration of the fact, well known to all of us, that the end of the Cherokee Nation and final division of property close at hand strikes closer and deeper into the hearts and lives of the Keetoowah or full blood Cherokees than to any other people, or class of people, on earth. With the fact in mind, we confidently trust that this request may be submitted to the Honorable National Council with your recommendation that it be granted by due and proper legislative enactment."

In 1898-99 Attorney Frank J. Boudinot, Sr. served as General Council for the Keetoowah Society. In February of 1900, the Emigrant Cherokees organized to prosecute their claim for \$5,000,000 against the United States government, and in opposition to the Government of the Cherokee nation which set up an adverse claim of ownership to the fund if collected." (Indian Pioneer Papers, Frank J. Boudinot interview, April 9, 1937) On September 20, 1905 Boudinot incorporated the Keetoowah Society under the laws of the United States and secured an official charter. This was in answer to the US Government terminating the Cherokee Nation government March 4, 1906, and the Keetoowahs wanting to maintain a traditional base of tribal government. Interestingly enough, the same year the incorporation was accomplished, Boudinot was elected Principal Chief (Nov. 21, 1905) in accordance with the Cherokee laws which were in full force for the purpose at that time. He took oath of office in the Senate Chamber of the Cherokee National Council. "Because of my active opposition to the Cherokee National authorities and to the Dawes Commission, I was persona non grats, and was never recognized as Principal Chief by the United States Government. I have been, and am now the representative of my people, the Cherokees by blood, before the authorities of the United States government, including the Court of Claims and the Supreme Court of the United States. I expect to continue in that capacity until the Cherokees' affairs and claims against the United States are finally and forever rightly closed, or until my own affairs and activities on this earth end." (Indian Pioneer Papers, Frank J. Boudinot interview, April 9, 1937)

From 1907 until 1933, there was no official Cherokee Nation Government, only the chartered Keetoowah Society. Therefore, the Keetoowahs continued to hold meetings, to elect chiefs and maintain community associations. During this period, there were at least six different traditional groups and societies of Keetoowahs.

In 1916, Boudinot was empowered by a duly-elected convention of the whole Cherokee people, presided over Hon. W.C. Rogers, the then recognized Principal Chief, to speak for all the Cherokees, in efforts to secure a general jurisdictional act. "I am still acting at all times under the direction and authority of the Keetoowah Society." (ibid)

With the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936, the Keetoowahs began taking measures to organize under the legislation. The federal government began buying up land, and placing it in trust for the "Cherokee tribe." These tracts of land are located primarily in three counties of NE Oklahoma. The deeds stipulate that the land is to be held in trust by the U.S. Government until they are assigned to a group organized under the Act of June 26, 1936. The Keetoowahs are the only group so organized. Darcy McNickle, Chief of the Branch of Tribal Relations of the Department of Interior, stated that the Keetoowahs historical had functioned as a political body, exercising independent action as a nation. McNickle and Chief Counsel Theodore Haas recommended that a bill be intro-

duced to recognize the Keetoowahs under the OIWA, section 3. President Harry Truman signed the bill known as the Act on August 10, 1946 which recognized the Keetoowahs for the purposes of organizing under the OIWA (60 Stat. 978). The Department of the Interior's Office of Indian Affairs stated in 1949 that this provision permits the Keetoowah Indians to organize apart from the Cherokee Nation as a separate band. W. W. Keeler, the government-appointed 'chief' of the Cherokee Nation appointed by President Harry Truman, stated in a letter to Levi Gritts of the Keetoowah Society, "The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that the Keetoowahs are the proper ones to help the Cherokees." Later, in the same letter, Keeler strengthened these feelings, "I, for one, would be willing to go a step farther and recommend that the present Executive Group be dissolved and the Keetoowah organization be the sole representative with the Government of the Cherokee of Oklahoma."

The Keetoowah people ratified the Constitution/By-Laws and the Federal Corporate Charter on October 3, 1950. The Keetoowah's ownership of all unallotted lands was expressly recognized in the Charter. By 1963, the BIA began using the UKB as a conduit for federal funding to the Cherokees, as they were the only Oklahoma Cherokee entity organized according to federal statute. For about five years, the Keetoowahs were instrumental in negotiating with the federal government for funding of such projects as the modernization of rural Indian homes, health clinics, the new IHS hospital in Tahlequah, and the funding of the tribal complex. The United Keetoowah Band had offices in the tribal complex from the time it was built until 1968. Several years later, Cherokee Nation Deputy Principal Chief B. Bob Stopp wrote to Keetoowah Chief William Glory, and informed him that anytime the United Keetoowah Band wished to use the tribal conference rooms, "you are perfectly welcome to do so." The letter concluded with, "We want all Cherokees to feel welcome to use this Conference Room for meetings of a constructive nature which will serve the interest of the Cherokees."

The Keetoowahs were also responsible for the Cherokee flag, being in charge of producing and selling them. Cherokee Nation's appointed Chief frequently referred persons interested in obtaining the flag to the Keetoowahs, "...the Cherokee flags, which are to be produced and sold by the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokees. Since this is being handled entirely by the Keetoowah Band, I am referring your letter. . ." (1969)

The United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs confirmed in 1993, via letter to the United Keetoowah Band, that No OIWA or IRA constitution was adopted for or by the "Cherokee Nation." The letter states that they are not aware of any documentation showing the intent of the Commissioner to approver CNO's 1975 draft constitution within the meaning of the IRA (through the OIWA of 1936). Most importantly, the letter states that the BIA is not aware of any documentation showing no justification for contracts and/or grants with the Keetoowahs to provide the same services to those portion of the Cherokee Nation that would be served under the Nation's contracts and/or grants. the BIA's Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ron Eden even sent a letter to the Keetoowahs on August 24, 1992, confirming the Band's autonomy, separate recognition and independent eligibility for services and trust land acquisition.

In Conclusion

There are two successor governments to the 1906 Cherokee Nation rolls. The UKB ancestors were part of the historic Cherokee Nation at the time of the Act of April 26, 1906 that dismantled the Cherokee government, allotted portions of the Cherokee lands and caused the creation of a final roll of the Cherokee Nation. (Testimony of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, Dallas Proctor, to Senate, 2002)

Throughout history, the traditional and full blood Kituwah people have followed what they believe to be the

proper channels. A Treaty was signed, they moved. They set up their government and flourished. The old Cherokee Nation forcibly overthrew the government by a majority in numbers. When the Cherokee Nation government was terminated by the Curtis Act, the Keetoowahs continued on, organizing under a federal charter and serving their people. When the OIWA was introduced, the Keetoowahs complied with all regulations and were approved for federal recognition with all rights and benefits afforded any other federally recognized tribes. Today, Cherokee Nation has revived its tactics to attempt to overthrow the Keetoowah government and intervening each time the Keetoowahs promote programs and services for the traditional and high blood quantum people. Yet, the government continues to publish decisions confirming their backing of the Kituwah people.

"Keetoowah is a phenomenon which has existed almost since the beginning of time and will exist forever, and that the name refers to something more than a mere collection of homogenous individuals." (Charles Wisdom, "The Keetoowah Society of the Oklahoma Cherokee," submitted to the Department of the Interior, 1953) "We must not surrender under any circumstances until we shall 'fall to the ground united.' We must lead one another by the hand with all our strength." (Laws of the Keetoowah April, 1859)

The only way you will be eligible to vote in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma 2007 General Election's. You need to download the Voter Registration Form from www.cherokee.org or call 1-800-353-2895 ask it to be mailed or e-mailed to you. Please make copies for everyone of your family members that are 18 yrs of age & older.

Fill them out, then mail to: Cherokee Nation Election Services, PO Box 1188, Tahlequah, OK 74465-1188 or hand deliver them to Election Commission in Tahlequah, OK

By RANDY KREHBIEL World Staff Writer 11/3/2006

Bush's approval ratings decline in Oklahoma but still outpace nation President Bush's standing with Oklahoma voters continues to slide but remains stronger than in most of the country, according to the latest Oklahoma Poll.

Fifty-two percent of the 547 likely voters surveyed Oct. 19-23 say they approve of the job Bush is doing.

That compares to 54 percent three months ago and is the lowest since he took office in January 2001.

Republicans still line up solidly behind the president, but support has dwindled to 30 percent among those who identify themselves as Democrats.

"These are very much party-line kind of approval numbers," said poll consultant Al Soltow, vice president of research at the University of Tulsa.

Support for the state's two U.S. senators declined more sharply than for Bush from the midsummer Oklahoma Poll. Senior Sen. Jim Inhofe was down 7 points to 52 percent, while Sen. Tom Coburn's rating was off eight points to 53 percent.

"Given the decline in Bush's ratings, one could conclude their unwavering support of the president could be reflected in those numbers," Soltow said.

Neither senator is on Tuesday's general election ballot.

Oklahoma

remains a bright spot for Bush despite his recent decline here. His approval rating in most national polls is in the low 40s and high 30s, and a recent Rasmussen Poll found nearly twice as many Americans strongly disapprove of the job Bush has done than strongly approve.

Freedmen Press Release

October 23 2006

The following was sent to all media outlets on 10/23/06. The latest news story on the Cherokee freedmen was the front page Tulsa World Story written by Susan Ruckman at <http://www.tulsaworld.com> on 10/21/06. We ask at all descendants of freedmen and their supporters attend the Rules Committee meeting on 10/26/06 at the Cherokee nation council house at 1pm in Tahlequah Oklahoma where the council will debate approval of a special election. Marilyn Vann - President - Descendants of Freedmen Association <http://www.freedmen5tribes.com> 405-818-5360

Press Release:
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Cherokee nation Starts Clock on Special Election to Terminate Rights of Black Indian Tribal members On Sunday October 22, 2006; The Tahlequah Daily Press published a legal notice filed by the Cherokee nation notifying Cherokee citizens of the initiative petition to change membership requirements of the Cherokee nation was held by the tribal Supreme Court to have sufficient signatures to amend the 1999 Cherokee constitution if the petition is unchallenged. The proposed amendment if passed will remove citizenship held by Descendants of tribal members who were enrolled as Freedmen tribal members by the Dawes Commission approximately 100 years ago. The Dawes Commission classed as Freedmen tribal members, both former slaves who gained citizenship in 1866 by treaty with the US government as well as mixed black Cherokee Indians who held citizenship prior to the 1866 treaty based on their Indian ancestry, as well as mixed black Indians who are descendants of other tribes such as adopted Shawnees who also have citizenship rights by treaty with the Cherokee nation and the US government.

Both Freedmen with Indian blood as well as Freedmen without Indian blood ancestry, including those found by the tribal court to have Indian blood ancestry such as descendants of Bernice Riggs who filed a lawsuit in the tribal court during the 1990s, will have their citizenship rights terminated by the proposed amendment although descendants of adopted whites without Indian ancestry listed

on the Cherokee by blood roll made by the Dawes commission will retain full tribal membership rights including voting rights.

Chief Chad Smith has announced a special election to be held on February 10th 2007 for Cherokee voters to approve or disapprove the proposed amendment. The election date is set 4 months before the regularly scheduled elections for tribal officials including the election for principal Chief.

The legal notice announces a 10 day period to challenge the petition. Petition law allows challenges both to the numerical count of accepted signatures as well as other factors dealing with the wording of the law changes and collection of the signatures. The Tribal supreme court will determine the validity of any filed challenges to the petition.

Additionally, the Cherokee nation Rules Committee has on its agenda, an agenda item to debate approval of the special election for February 10th 2007. The sponsor of this amendment, Councilman Martin appears to seek approval of this amendment by the council in the event that the initiative petition is held to be unconstitutional by the tribal court so that the freedmen people can be removed from the tribe prior to general elections of June 2007 through actions and support of the council. The rules committee will meet on October 26, 2006 at 1 pm. at the Cherokee nation council house in Tahlequah Oklahoma. The meeting can be listened to on streaming video at the Cherokee nation website:<http://www.cherokee.org> at the time of the meeting.

Cherokee freedmen tribal members have began taking steps to challenge the proposed special election. On October 11, 2006; attorney Jon Velie lead attorney for Cherokee plaintiffs in the federal lawsuit Vann et al Versus Norton filed additional documents with Judge Kennedy alerting him to the scheduled special election as well as correspondence between the BIA and Principal Chief Smith regarding the BIA determination that the Cherokee nation has not received approval of a constitutional amendment to the 1975 constitution which if approved by the BIA withdraws a requirement for the BIA to approve new constitutions or constitutional amendments of the Cherokee nation.

Marilyn Vann, president of the Descendants of Freedmen association (and a descendant of Catherine Fields, a Cherokee Indian woman listed on the 1852 lists of Cherokee citizens who was the niece of Richard Fields, a prominent 19th century Cherokee Indian) states that she is appalled that in the 21st century that current and former tribal leaders would take a leading part in disenrollment activities of long term citizens and would go from place to place, exhorting the Cherokee people to vote for a measure to have an "all Indian tribe" and assuring them that "freedmen with Indian blood will not lose their tribal memberships" when they know that in fact the proposed amendment was not designed to retain tribal membership of freedmen with Indian blood. She further questions how tribal leaders can in good faith demand that the federal government carryout each contract and each treaty to the letter of the law and at the same time indicate openly that the Cherokee people can do whatever they want and are free to break promises and commitments whenever they so chose including commitment's made to people more than 100 years ago who have been instrumental in building the tribe.

Vann states that If the President of the US government and the Speaker of the House of Representatives used the moneys, prestige and power of their offices to lead a movement to change the US constitution to terminate the citizenship rights or voting rights of indigenous people, no tribal leader would hail that as "democracy at work" and would call for the immediate resignation of such officials. This clearly is not a movement for an "all Indian tribe" but a movement to remove voters who are expected not to support the Chief, Deputy Chief, and some members of the council in the upcoming June 2007 elections. A similar situation existed in 1983 when freedmen tribal members did not support Chief Ross Swimmer and had their voting cards seized by order of the Principal Chief.

Additional steps are expected to be taken by Cherokee Freedmen tribal members prior to February 10th 2007 to combat the disenrollment movement led by Chief Smith in the Cherokee nation; these steps will be announced to the press as they occur.

Marilyn Vann
President - Descendants of freedmen association

Support of Bush wanes

SurveyUSA, which conducts monthly tracking polls in all 50 states, pegged the president's October approval at 37 percent. Oklahoma's was 46 percent, ranking behind only Utah, Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.

SurveyUSA polls 600 adults of voting age in each state. Those surveyed by the Oklahoma Poll have a history of voting and say they intend to vote in the next election.

Reasons for Bush's resiliency in the state are difficult to pin down but may reflect a reluctance by Oklahomans to blame the president for problems that in other states have become major campaign issues, including the war in Iraq.

"Under the circumstances, I think he's done pretty good," said Helen Tipton of Welch. "He was kind of thrown into all of this."

Bush supporter David McGuire of Broken Arrow said he thinks Bush did a good job taking control after the September 2001 attacks on the New York and Washington, D.C., areas, but has not been well-served by those around him.

"I don't think he was fed correct information," McGuire said. "I think the president himself is doing a good job, primarily on national security."

"Everything that goes wrong winds up being the president's fault; it doesn't matter whose fault it really is," he said. "There have been times he would have been better off getting rid of some people -- like Donald Rumsfeld."

McGuire said he is more concerned about job security than terrorist attacks and thinks more consideration is sometimes given to illegal immigrants than the native-born middle class.

"I literally work day-to-day wondering if this is the day I'm going to be laid off," he said.

Lori Bumgarner of Muskogee said she likes Bush because he "stands firm on religious beliefs," and said she believes he is "not getting the right backing in Iraq." But she's concerned about illegal immigration and worries about her elderly uninsured father's heart condition.

"They've got to get a better line on helping our elderly," Bumgarner said. "If it wasn't for us kids, Dad would be in a nursing home, if not dead."

By contrast, Air Force veteran and former Latimer County Commissioner Robert Woodruff has no trouble blaming the president for mishandling Iraq -- and just about everything else he can think of.

"He's done all of this war business under false pretenses," Woodruff said. "They want to commit the military but they don't want to let the military go in and do its job. They want to play politics. Politics gets people killed."

Woodruff said he suspects the president of being too close to the Saudi royal family and other influential Muslims to effectively wage war in the Middle East.

Referring to a famous photo of the president and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah looking at bluebonnets on Bush's ranch last spring, Woodruff said, "I knew we were going to lose that war when saw I Bush walking through that garden holding hands with that Arab."

Woodruff then turned to Coburn and Inhofe.

"Coburn is a joke. He has not come up against Bush on anything that he hasn't sat up and gone along. What has Inhofe done except shake his head yes and vote pay raises for himself. They are not interested in what the people want."

Others, though, give the senators credit for integrity.

"To me, they haven't shown their rears, so they ought to be given a chance," said Kenneth Grant of Jenks. "I don't think either of them ever took any money."

Publicity given Inhofe for his positions on global climate change and Coburn for his often solitary stands is misplaced, Grant said.

"We need to get (industry) other than American Airlines," Grant said. "What are the senators doing about that?" Tipton said Inhofe "is not too bad a guy," but Coburn is "kind of cocky."

"I'm not too crazy about Coburn," she said. "He comes off that, because he's a doctor, he knows so much. I don't see how, being a doctor all those years, he can know much about government."

Inhofe and Coburn polled somewhat better in the metropolitan areas than the rest of the state and each got approval from almost 40 percent of Democrats.

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Cherokee Freedmen 1890