

September 13, 1993

I come before the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council this evening to update you on my work for a federally recognized Native American holiday.

I have talked to Congressman Mike Synar's office about a holiday for Native Americans. Mr. Synar is for us having our own holiday. He asked me to start a petition drive and to get the support of the people, then he would support the holiday bill. I have a petition, and I have talked to the media, TV-5, Fort Smith, Arkansas, did a 900 call in. Eighty-eight percent was for the holiday. The people want a federally recognized holiday. I have come before this council three times; the first time was in 1988 and then in February of this year. I have travelled a lot and made hundreds of calls to people and the media talking about a holiday. I have had friends help me type letters and make copies of the petition to send out. I have received letters from lots of people wanting copies of the petition. Lisa Wolbert of Sallisaw, Oklahoma; Don McDonald of Las Vegas; Debbie Wright of Fort Smith, Arkansas; Ada Kuykendall of Maybank, Texas; they all want a federally recognized holiday. I have talked to Ms. Jo Grove, who is the president of the Oklahoma Federation of Indian Women. She is for the holiday; she is going to ask for the support of her council.

This holiday would recognize Native American Indians, Alaskans, and Hawaiians. As a member of the Cherokee Tribe, I ask that our council take the lead for all Native Americans and back the petition drive. I ask the council to appoint me as National Holiday Coordinator. Of all the Native Americans, the Cherokees are the ones most looked upon for leadership. I hope this council will take the lead in this great cause so we can, as a nation, pay tribute to our past leaders and our future. With a national holiday, we open the door for cultural preservation and economic development. The cost to achieve this holiday should be shared by all groups of Native Americans.

I need the support of my tribe to go forward with this petition drive. If the council approves this holiday petition drive at this time, I ask you to make it known to all at the International Indian Council. This would give us a big start by giving copies of the petition out to all members.

I thank the council for allowing me to come before you this evening.

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