



# LUMMI INDIAN BUSINESS COUNCIL

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DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presentation of the Lummi Tribe  
to United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations  
Presenter: Rudolph C. Ryser

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The Lummi Tribe has existed in the area of Northwest Washington State for at least 8,000 years including what is now parts of Canada and Northern end of the San Juan Islands all substantiated by archaeological finds and our own history. We are a tribe of over 3,000 members living on a small peninsula that had been set aside by treaty in 1855. The reservation originally was much larger than 12,000 acres that is included now in the Lummi Reservation. Much of this land has illegally been sold by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the State of Washington for various reasons.

With the influx of the Non-Indians during the mid 1800 demanding land, the Lummi Reservation was twice diminished in a land squeeze, We lost the Lummi Island on the south end and a large acreage in the north end which included the Nooksack Valley the richest agriculture land in the state of Washington.

Genocide was committed in the late 1700 by traders who had distributed blankets infected with Small pox to the Indians of Northern Vancouver Island. The Small pox worked its way southward and into Puget Sound completely wiping out small tribes and bands of Indians living in northwest country and the Puget Sound. The Lummi and Samish who numbered approximately 5,000 per tribe were counted at 250 apiece by the Lewis and Clark exploration party.

After the small pox wreaked its devastating toll, the Northwest tribes was hit with a severe influenza epidemic which further reduced the strength of the Northwest tribes.

After the signing of the Treaties which were negotiated by a pidgin English language (Chinook Jargon) composed of not more than 300 words or nonsensical phrases the United States Government was successful in taking over three quarters of the land which now is the State of Washington. It is interesting to note that previous to the treaties the choice Indian land was doled out to early settlers by the "act of taking."

Indians that did not sign the Treaties for reasons of their own were left landless and even tribes that had large areas that they utilized were forced onto small areas of land that was not suitable for the white man.

Twenty years after the signing of the treaties and with the land hungry non-Indians moving to Northwest Country, the Lummi

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Tribe was forced to give up more land. The Allotment Act or the Dawes Act was designed to put the tribal land into individual ownership, which allowed 80 acres to single adults and 160 acres to head of house holds and no provision for population growth. Out of over 205 eligible Lummi only 65 allotments were given and approximately 150 Lummi remained landless.

The Dawes Act was designed to put tribal land into individual ownership in hopes the Indian would sell off that land to non-Indian and within 40 years would have that Indian land on the tax rolls. We are fortunate that less than 40 per cent of our land was alienated in this manner.

During the Eisenhower Administration, he developed what was labeled the Indian Termination Act which stipulated that if the Indian ownership of land dropped below 50 percent the tribe would be terminated; over 65 tribes were terminated during this infamous period of the Eisenhower Administration, including the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin and the Klamath Tribe of Oregon both large and timber rich and large farming areas.

The Allotment Act has created a monster along with the pedigree system that the Indian people are forced to live with.

The Allotment Act has created a land problem that probably will never be corrected in that over the years, heirship problems have reduced ownership, in some cases, to less than 1 square foot of land per heir.

In order to qualify the BIA has set one-quarter (1/4) degree blood quantum to be eligible to enroll in a tribe. This is today a very serious problem being that in our cultural heritage in order to inter-marry a person would have to be at least five (5) generations removed. Also BIA and the tribes have adopted policy that a member has to marry within the tribe to be eligible to enroll or inherit.

During the 1950's and as late as 1969 in order to qualify for welfare assistance, if the land owner applied for welfare-he was forced to put Indian Trust land up for sale before he would be eligible for Welfare assistance; hundreds of acres of trust land was lost in this move by the State of Washington.

In the years previous to John F. Kennedy, the economic and social systems completely by-passed the Indian population which at that time we were at less than 750,000 total Indian population. For instance, a Federal housing act was passed in 1937--it was not until 1971 that a Lummi moved into a low cost home. During the 1940's Lummi tribe members had to be driven 120 miles to a hospital in Tacoma, Washington; many patients died on the way.

During the 1950's, health care was given to Lummi; the Bureau of Indian Affairs provided a doctor one (1) day a week and he handled approximately 500 patients per month in a small cottage 30 feet by 30 feet.

In the early treaty times, Cultural Genocide was again the order of the day when children were forbid to practice, talk, sing anything that was Indian-in short our legend's, history, lore, language, customs, cultural heritage was denied and taken away by the Federal officials and religious groups that staffed the early day schools. This continued from the 1860's to approximately 1930's.

As a result today, less than 12 people speak the Lummi Language and our cultural heritage is a shambles.

During President Nixon's term, he made a report to Congress July 8, 1971 which stated that the Indians were the lowest on the economic scale, highest death rate, highest suicide, highest infant mortality, lowest in education achievement, highest dropout rate and highest unemployment.

Also in 1973 Robert Kennedy completed a study (3 volumes) on Indian Education that severely criticized the education system as it affected Indian students; not much has changed despite the great effort Kennedy put into the study.

We still have ignored students. We still have students pushed out. We start losing our students in the 4th-5th grades. We still suffer from lop-sided history books. We are still in the last hired-first fired category.

The Indian tribes across the Nation own approximately 35 percent of the remaining Natural Resources of the United States.

We are today fighting to stay alive and resist the Reagan Administration's efforts to terminate Indian tribes. Speculators, even today, are trying to entice Indians to secure loans putting our trust land up for collateral. Again setting Indians up for another major land grab.

With the Indian economy low, with unemployment running between 75-85 percent on most reservations, we again face a major land grab to get at Indian owned Natural Resources.

The double standard in Law and Order is a major problem in Indian Country. We have authority over only our own people; non-Indians we have no control over on Indian Reservation.

During the late 1960's a self determination act was established for Indians. Today we still suffer from the parental attitude and colonialism practiced by the Federal administrations that we have to deal with.

The state and federal governments are constantly hacking away at our Sovereign status, our treaties, our natural resources, our land base. Our energies are being spent on fighting for our rights both aboriginal treaty and human rights even the right to exist as an original race of people who occupied this great land of America since time immemorial. We would much rather spend our time and money helping our people to come into the nuclear age and take part in the economic and social abundance as was developed in the richest land the world has ever known, these are priorities that we hope to accomplish.

1. Equal Opportunity.
2. Higher Education effort-trades/professions.
3. Social Acceptance.
4. Job Opportunities.
5. Development of banks-credit unions.
6. Health.
7. Indian Enterprise.
8. Develop Indian Department as 51st State.
9. Develop our resources.
10. Solve Heirship problem.
11. Solve Pedigree Problem.
12. Indian have given 90 percent of America to the USA along with trillions of dollars of resources. We have paid our taxes forever. Immunity from taxes.
13. Protect our water rights.
14. Protect our land base.