

ROBERT L. BENNETT  
CONSULTANT ON AMERICAN INDIANS  
July 10, 1985

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L. Gordon McLester, Secretary  
Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin  
P. O. Box 365  
Oneida, WI 54155

Dear Gordon:

Your letter of July 2 addressed to me at the American Indian Law Center reached me to-day and I hasten to reply.

It so happens that I am tentatively scheduled to conduct a Seminar in Reno, Nevada, on July 24, 25 and 26; but since this is tentative, I am also tentatively accepting your invitation to participate in the historical conference being held in Green Bay on those same dates. I am enclosing a resume which you may use in promoting the event; however, it is possible that I might not be able to attend because of this previous commitment.

I will call you on Monday, July 15, to advise you one way or another whether it will be possible to attend. You may be sure that I am most interested and I am delighted that you thought of me. The arrangements mentioned in your letter are satisfactory.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Bennett

ROBERT LAFOLLETTE BENNETT

Robert L. Bennett, Consultant on American Indians, was Commissioner of Indian Affairs from April 27, 1966, to May 31, 1969, and was Director of the American Indian Law Center, University of New Mexico School of Law, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and later Director of Special Projects at the Center, from February 1, 1970, to June 30, 1976.

Prior to being appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs by President Lyndon B. Johnson, Mr. Bennett was engaged in work with American Indians throughout the country, including the State of Alaska, for 33 years. Mr. Bennett, a Marine Corps veteran, is a member of the Oneida Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and received his degree of LLB from Southeastern University School of Law, Washington, D.C.

He was born November 16, 1912, on the Oneida Indian Reservation in Wisconsin and attended public and parochial schools there, and he graduated from Haskell Indian Junior College, Lawrence, Kansas, with an Associate Degree in Business Administration.

His occupational experience is, as follows:

- 1933-38 Served with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Agency at the Ute Reservation in Utah, including service in various capacities with the Ute Tribal Council and as Secretary-Treasurer of three Indian Livestock Associations on the reservation. (1)
- 1938-43 Assigned to Washington Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, as specialist in realty matters. (2)
- 1943-46 Administrative Assistant, Navajo Agency, Window Rock, Arizona. (3)
- 1943-45 PFC, Marine Corps, serving as administrative officer in San Diego Area Legal Office. (4)
- 1946-48 Directed training programs for World War II Indian veterans of the State of Arizona as member of staff of Veterans Administration in Phoenix Regional Office, Arizona. (5)
- 1949-51 Rejoined Bureau of Indian Affairs in capacity of Job Placement Officer, Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, South Dakota, serving Indian Tribes in the Dakotas and Nebraska. (6)
- 1951-54 Reassigned to Washington Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, as specialist in Tribal governmental and developmental programs. (7)
- 1954-56 Appointed as Superintendent of the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservations with headquarters at the Consolidated Ute Agency, Ignacio, Colorado. (8)
- 1956-62 Reassigned to Aberdeen Area Office in South Dakota as Tribal Relations Officer and later appointed Assistant Area Director. (9)

1962-65 Appointed Area Director of the Juneau Area Office, Juneau, Alaska, serving the Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts of the State of Alaska. (10)

1966-69 Appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs, resigning on May 31, 1969. (11)

1969 to PRESENT (12)

Mr. Bennett is a member of the Board of Arrow, Inc., the National Advisory Council on Indian Youth, the American Legion, American Society for Public Administration, American Academy of Political and Social Science, American Association of Applied Anthropology, and the National Congress of American Indians.

He is associated also as a consultant with the William H. Donner Foundation, Inc., Of New York, the National American Indian Court Judges' Association and the National Tribal Chairmen's Association. He serves as advisor to the Boards of Regents of Haskell Indian Junior College and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. He conducts seminars on Tribal Government, instructs judges of American Indian Tribal Courts, writes Civil and Criminal Codes for American Indian Tribes and is a public speaker on subjects relating to American Indians.

- (1) Assisted the Tribal Council of the Ute Tribe of Utah in developing its present Constitution and By-Laws for which I served as Secretary and also developed and was Secretary-Treasurer of three Indian Livestock Association on the Reservation.
- (2) Handled a variety of matters relating to tribal and allotted lands held in trust by the Government, including but not limited to, leases, sales, exchanges, title search and preparation of various land transactions for approval by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs or Secretary of the Interior.
- (3) As administrative assistant at the Navajo Agency, I worked closely with the Navajo Tribal Council and its chairman as liaison between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Tribe, including preparation of agenda for Council meetings, preparation of resolutions based upon action of the Tribal Council. While there, I was assigned also to be in charge of the Realty Branch, having to do with assignments of land, including grazing units; leases and rights-of-way, including oil and gas leases. I was also placed in charge of District 18 on the Navajo Reservation, comprising over 1,000,000 acres, and acted as administrative head over all activities of the Bureau of Indian Affairs within the district including community services, trust resource protection and development of the cattle economy and the Navajo sawmill enterprise.
- (4) My service in the Marine Corps was as administrative officer in the San Diego Area Legal Office reviewing deck, summary and general court martials for their compliance with the Navy Rules of Court Martial Procedure and I had fiscal responsibility for the office.
- (5) As a Training Officer for the Veterans Administration, I planned and developed training programs for WWII veterans on Indian reservations consisting of vocational and on-the-job training and also made arrangements for Indian veterans throughout the State of Arizona to receive benefits to which they were entitled.
- (6) As Job Placement Officer, I published a list of job openings on ~~or near reservations for the employment opportunities existing for~~ which Indians might qualify and arranged for on-the-job training and institutional training for Indians in urban centers. Further, I developed written agreements with the Employment Services of North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska so that each office created an Office of Indian employment specifically to assist Indians to obtain employment.
- (7) As a specialist in Washington, I worked with Tribes to plan and prepare comprehensive programs relating to tribal government, economic development, including industrial development on or near reservations, to provide employment locally for Indians. This assignment including assisting Tribes to plan for the use of

claims awards being made to Tribes by the Indian Claims Commission for the purposes of investing these funds in economic enterprises, social service programs, purchase of an adequate land base, construction of suitable housing and elements in the comprehensive tribal programs to meet the needs of the people. I also originated the concept of the Family Plan by which all resources of the family were used jointly, rather than separately, for the purposes of accomplishing goals of the various Indian families.

- (8) As Superintendent of the Consolidated Ute Agency, I was in charge of all Bureau of Indian Affairs programs and activities of two reservations and helped the Tribal Councils improve their governmental procedures, initiate various programs for tribal members, including a local radio broadcasting system for the general public. In this capacity, I was the head of the administration of the agency, while acting as trustee for their tribally and individually owned property and tribal and Bureau services. I initiated the consolidation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Public School district systems into a unified system, utilizing both Bureau and public school facilities so that there was a community consciousness of the tri-cultures of Anglo, Chicano and Indian.
- (9) Reassigned to the Aberdeen Area Office, I worked with all of the Tribal Governments in the states of North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska assisting them in interpreting and implementing their constitutions and by-laws and also developing appropriate amendments to these documents to meet changing needs. In this capacity, I reviewed all actions of tribal governments for their compliance with tribal constitutions and by-laws, Federal laws, rules and regulations and their general merit. As Assistant Area Director for Resources, it later became my responsibilities to work in the area of trust protection of tribally and individually owned resources on all reservations of the three states to enhance the contribution of these resources to the economic development of the Tribes and instituted procedures which increased their income and provided for greater tribal participation in the management of these trust resources.
- (10) As Area Director in Alaska, I was in charge of all of the activities of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the State of Alaska, during which time great emphasis was placed on obtaining for the native peoples a fair share of the natural resources of the State prior to State selection of lands for State ownership under the Statehood Act. Regulatory changes were made to the advantage of the native peoples providing them with priorities and less cumbersome procedures in land selection. Many logistic problems had to be resolved to construct facilities in the villages and to provide the native peoples with normal community services.

(11) As Commissioner of Indian Affairs, I was the administrative head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the national level, and I was involved in relations with the Congress, Department of the Interior and other Departments of the Federal Government, as well as all Tribes throughout the United States, including Alaska. During that time, I had to review and take action on legislative, economic and other proposals of Indian Tribes, during the course of which I met with Tribes from all over the country in the Washington office, in regional meetings and in visit to individual reservations. My review of these programs consisted of evaluation of the benefits and program goals and objectives. In some cases, legislation was required which initiated in the office of the Commissioner and required attendances at hearings of Congressional Committees. It was during my administration that the executive policy was enunciated that all of the agencies of the Federal Government had a responsibility to Indian people and that it was not the sole responsibility of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which added to the resources of the Federal Government which could be approached directly by Indian Tribes for services, grants and contracts. In October, 1968, I proposed the system of grants and contracts which finally culminated in the Indian Self-Determination Act of January 4, 1975.

(12) After my retirement from Federal Service on May 31, 1969, I became Director of the American Indian Law Center at the University of New Mexico and I was involved in a myriad of programs relating to legal training for American Indian Court Judges and Indian Court Clerks and Prosecutors. This involved the development of studies and curriculum materials as well as actual instruction. After leaving the American Indian Law Center, I have worked continuously in the field of Indian Law and Administration, including instructing Indian Court Clerks, Judges and Prosecutors; conducting seminars on tribal government; developing civil and criminal codes for Tribes; assisting Tribes to write or revise Constitutions and By-Laws; developing management systems for Tribes; conducted leadership seminars and orientation for newly elected Council members and tribal officials. I have participated as a resource person or consultant in training programs of both Tribes and the Bureau of Indian Affairs on a wide range of subjects relating to natural resource development, social services and particularly on the leadership role of Tribal Government pointing out its leadership responsibilities and opportunities as well as limitations of their own governmental documents, Federal law and judicial decisions from the various State and Federal Courts. I am serving currently as Advisor and Consultant to the National Tribal Chairmen's Association; Board of Regents of Haskell Indian Junior College and Board of Regents of Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute as well as Consultant to the National Indian Training Center.