

GRAND RIVER BANDS OF OTTAWA INDIANS

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

The Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians (“GRB”) submitted its “*Response to Proposed Finding Against Acknowledgment*” (the “Response”) to the Department of the Interior on February 26, 2024. GRB filed a “Notice of Intent” to petition in 1994 and completed its Petition for Acknowledgment in 2000. After submitting additional document in 2006, the Department of Interior waited 17 years to issue the Proposed Finding. The Response demonstrates why the Department of the Interior should *reaffirm* (or *restore*) the “government-to-government” relationship with GRB as legally required by the various treaties executed between GRB and the United States, and how GRB exhibits our distinct community pursuant to the 1994 Part 83 Regulations (25 C.F.R. Part 83). Moreover, the significant issues facing the administrative tribal recognition process since its inception are analyzed as well:

- The Grand River Bands are successors-in-interest to treaties executed in 1821, 1836, and 1855 and **100%** of GRB citizens trace their ancestors to Durant Roll of 1907-1910.
- GRB has documented all of our attempts to have our treaty rights enforced since 1855.
- GRB citizens have occupied the “Grand River Area” of Muskegon, Kent, Oceana, Newaygo, and Ottawa County since time immemorial.
- Former Secretary of the Interior Delano illegally terminated the relationship with the “Ottawas and Chippewa Indians of Michigan” in the late 1800s.
- The other Michigan bands that were administratively terminated along with GRB were permitted to reestablish their government-to-government relationship with the United States.
- In fact, the Department of the Interior and Congress utilized *exactly* the same or substantially similar evidence to recognize those other Michigan bands (such as the Gun Lake Tribe, Nottawaseppi Band, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa, Pokagon Band, Grand Traverse Band and Little River Band of Ottawa Indians).
- The Department of the Interior, Congress, as well as federal courts have recognized these historical facts. Federal court opinions in *U.S. v Michigan* (1979) and *Grand Traverse Band v U.S. Atty* (2002) both established the actions of the United States should be rendered void and illegal justifying the reaffirmation of recognition by the United States.
- The administrative federal acknowledgment process and the Regulations used by the Department to determine whether a group is an Indian tribe, are so subjective and ambiguous, that it makes these decisions so complicated. But because of federal court case law, the Department is now required to resolve any ambiguous regulations (that contain undefined terms), in the light most favorable to GRB.
- GRB trusts that the Department of the Interior will do the right thing and reestablish the government-to-government relationship between the U.S. and GRB.