

Letter to Little Shell Chippewa Tribal Members from Little Shell Chippewa Alliance

Background

As you may have heard, there is a Constitutional crisis affecting our tribe and our tribal Government. Article I, Section IV of the Little Shell Chippewa Constitution states: Elections SHALL be held every two (2) years for each Council member, every four (4) years for the Executive Officers. On January 1, 2009 the terms of all elected officials for the Tribe expired because of these constitutionally-mandated term limits. The Constitution mandated that elections be held for all 7 seats before December 31, 2008. To date, no elections have been held.

Below is the sequence of events since November 2008 to present:

1. The Little Shell Tribal Council Election was announced (in the tribal newsletter and on the tribes' web-site) to be held on November 8, 2008. Absentee ballot request forms were sent in by Tribal members.
2. Before the stated deadline, candidates filed, and paid a \$100 filing fee to the Tribe to run for Tribal Council positions.
3. Past Chairman, John Sinclair (who also announced his candidacy to run for Chairman again) then took it upon himself to "disqualify" a number of candidates including another candidate for Chairman! He also declared there would be no election held.
4. In response to Sinclair's actions, on November 29, 2008, the Little Shell Elder's Council, consisting of elders of the Tribe, convened a public meeting in Havre and determined, as Elders, that Tribal Elections must be held and all candidates reinstated.
5. John Sinclair, at a tribal public meeting in Havre, the first week in December, stated that the Elder's Council was a "bunch of crackpots." When asked if he intended to suspend the tribal Constitution to try to remain Chairman past his term in office, Sinclair responded "Yes, even if it means the suspension of the tribal Constitution to do so."
6. Other Little Shell public meetings were held in Great Falls on January 24th and January 31st. At those meetings, the Little Shell Elder's Council sanctioned the formation of the Little Shell Chippewa Alliance and authorized the Alliance to organize and conduct elections by May 31st, 2009, to preserve the Constitution and elect legitimate Tribal representatives.

7. The Little Shell Chippewa Alliance decided that it was necessary to ask Little Shell tribal members to vote their approval or disapproval on holding an election. This is to be accomplished by a **Referendum Ballot**.
8. The Referendum Ballot further asks tribal members to either agree or disagree that the past Tribal Council is beyond its Constitutional term limits and all actions taken by them after January 1, 2009 are neither legal, nor binding.
9. The Little Shell Chippewa Alliance discussed the need for revising the Tribal Constitution to include resolution of grievances, establishing a tribal court, and clarifying election language, but decided this should be brought before a newly elected Tribal Council properly elected by the tribal members.

Instructions for Referendum Ballot

1. Your Referendum Ballot needs to be returned postmarked by March 14th, 2009 to this address:

**Little Shell Chippewa Alliance
P.O. Box 1498
Great Falls, MT 59403**

2. Referendum will be counted on **March 21st, 2009** at 10 a.m. in Great Falls.
3. You are encouraged to make additional copies of the Referendum Ballot to give to other tribal members, including your family and friends who are enrolled Little Shell Chippewa. Additional ballots and information will be on the Alliance website at: <http://www.LittleShellChippewaAlliance.org>.
4. Donations to help pay for election costs (printing, mailing ballots, etc) are appreciated. (Any funds left over will be given to the new Tribal Council for the General Fund.) In the event the Referendum vote goes against holding an election, all donations will be re-funded.
5. Anyone who is interested in being a candidate (provided you live in Montana) is encouraged to contact Little Shell Chippewa Alliance, attention Elections Committee at the email and/or mail address below:

Please contact the Little Shell Chippewa Alliance if you have any questions.

Little Shell Chippewa Alliance
P.O. Box 1498
Great Falls, MT 59403
E-mail: Contact@LittleShellChippewaAlliance.org

