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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGREES TO WITHDRAW SALE OF SAND POINT ARCHIVES

Deming, WA -- Chairman Ross Cline, Sr., announced that the Federal Government has agreed to withdraw the proposed sale of the Sand Point Archives facility in Seattle. This was due to pressure exerted by Western Washington tribes, including the Nooksack Indian Tribe.

In late 2019, the Trump administration proposed the sale of the Sand Point Archives, which holds irreplaceable records of vital interest to tribes, including originals of treaties, allotment records, enrollment records, and other valuable documents and artifacts, many of which exist only in their original form. If the sale went forward, the Federal Government intended to ship the archives materials to various locations around the country. In January 2020, Chairman Cline, along with other tribes, appealed to the Federal Government to stop the sale until proper consultation could take place. When the Federal Government refused to consult, the tribes brought suit in federal court to block the sale.

On April 8, 2021, the Biden administration agreed to withdraw the sale and committed to holding proper and meaningful consultation before taking any action that affects tribes. Hailing this victory by tribes, Chairman Cline praised the Biden administration for taking the consultation requirement seriously: “Now that we have a proper federal partner in place, tribes’ interests shall be taken into account and tribes will be properly consulted when their interests are at stake. The Federal Government has not yet determined the permanent location for the archived materials but it is clear that any solution will involve the tribes.”

What is the Sand Point Archive? The National Archives maintains the Federal Archives and Records Center at 6125 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA. The Sand Point Archive contains historical records from all federal agencies, including the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, and various other agencies that have had dealings with Indian tribes. Among the many important historical materials housed at Sand Point are the original copies of correspondence between Governor Stevens, Indian agents, and Tribal leaders during treaty negotiations in the mid-19th Century, as well as original drafts of the treaties themselves. The facility also houses critical and hard-to-reproduce historical information related to the area tribes. Moreover, the Anchorage archives were closed in 2014, and all the information related to Alaska tribes has now been moved to the Sand Point Archive facility. Tribal leaders, tribal cultural resources staff, tribal historians and others regularly make use of the Sand Point Archive to carry out research and recover their tribe’s history.

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