

Docket 234 and the Indian Claims Commission

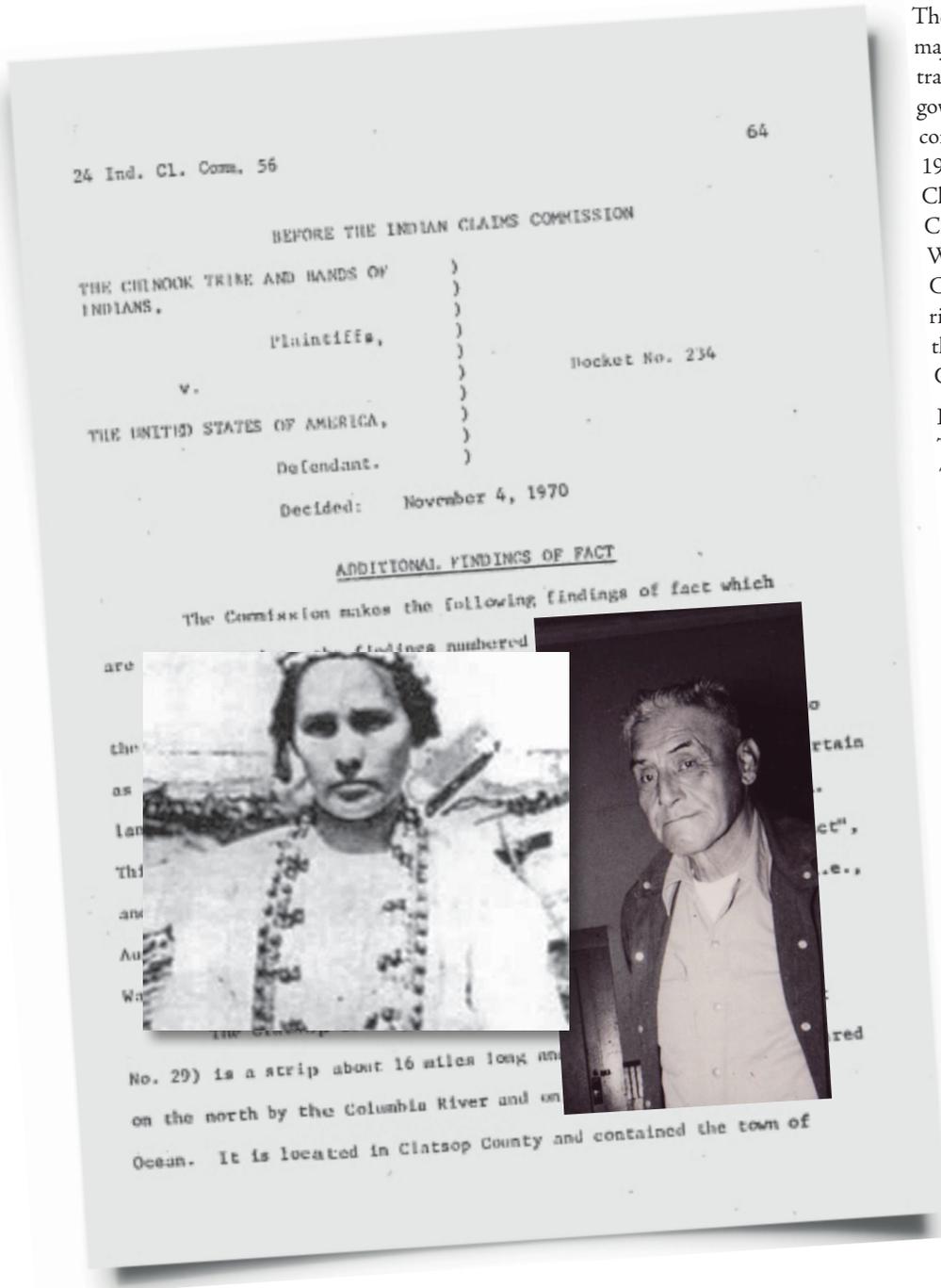
The Chinook Nation was clearly recognized by the Congress of the United States on February 12, 1925 (ch. 214, 43 Stat. 886) when it was authorized "that all claims of whatever nature, both legal and equitable, which the Muckelshoot, San Juan Islands Indians; Nook-Sack, Suattle, Chinook, Upper Chehalis, Lower Chehalis, and Humptulip Tribes or Bands of Indians, or any of them (with whom no treaty has been made), may have against the United States shall be submitted to the Court of Claims,..."

The Indian Claims Commission (ICC) was a judicial panel for relations between the United States Federal Government and Native American tribes. It was established under the Indian Claims Act in 1946 by the United States Congress to hear claims of Indian tribes against the United States. The legislation was intended as a means to resolve many longstanding claims; it took until the late 1970s to complete most of them, and the last was not finished until the early 21st century. The commission was conceived as a way to thank Native America for its unprecedented service in World War II and as a way to relieve the anxiety and resentment caused by the United States' history of colonization of Indigenous peoples. Together with the law, the Commission created a process for tribes to address their grievances against the United States, and offered monetary compensation for territory lost as a result of broken or non-existent treaties.

The opportunity to litigate these issues was a major reason why the Chinook Indian Nation transitioned from a traditional form of government to an elected council governed by a constitution. This constitution, first written in 1950, clearly define us as the five Westernmost Chinookan speaking tribes, the Cathlamet, Clatsop, Lower Chinook, Wahkiakum and Willapa. In April of 1958 the Indian Claims Commission found that Chinook had the right to sue the United States government for the lands taken from our Lower Chinook and Clatsop ancestors.

In 1970 The Chinook Tribe "won." The Commission found that the Chinook Tribe had "aboriginal or Indian title to certain lands lying in parts of the present states of Washington and Oregon... the Oregon portion is a strip about 16 miles long and 4 to 6 miles wide, bordered on the north by the Columbia River and on the west by the Pacific Ocean... the Washington portion is a strip 9 miles long and 12 miles deep, bordered on the south by the Columbia River and on the west by the Pacific Ocean." In total this is 76,630 acres of dry land and several thousand acres of tideland.

The Indian Claims Commission found that this land was worth 98¢ an acre in 1851 or about \$25 an acre in today's dollar. Chinook was appalled by this settlement, and to this date has not accepted the funds which are still held in trust for our community.



Pictured are Myrtle Woodcock, Secretary and Roland Charley Chairman of the first modern Chinook Council