



**Item:** Resolution 9871

**Initiated By:** Commissioner Bronson, at the request of members of The Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians

**Presented By:** Commissioner Bronson

**Action Requested:** Adopt Resolution 9871

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**Suggested Motion:**

1. Commissioner moves:

"I move the City Commission (adopt/deny) Resolution 9871.

2. Mayor calls for a second, discussion, inquiries from the public, and calls for the vote.

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**Recommendation:** That the City Commission adopt Resolution 9871.

**Background:** The Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians has been seeking federal recognition for nearly thirty years. The vast majority of those identified with the Tribe live in and around Great Falls. On December 19, 2006, the City Commission passed Resolution 9623, supporting federal recognition of the Tribe. At that time, it was anticipated that recognition could be accomplished through the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Federal Acknowledgements [OFA], based on favorable proposed findings issued by that agency in July 2000.

Just this past week, OFA issued an unfavorable decision on tribal recognition, questioning (1) whether there was evidence that the Tribe existed on a substantially continuous basis since at least 1900 (OFA does agree there is evidence of such existence since 1935); (2) whether they are a distinct community since historical times, maintaining significant social relationships and interaction as part of a distinct community; and (3) whether they have maintained political influence over a community of its members.

The decision by OFA not to grant recognition runs contrary to the history and traditions of the Tribe and its members. The current decision by OFA runs contrary to the preliminary findings in 2000 supporting recognition, raising a suspicion that the agency is being influenced by other factors outside the administrative recognition process. Our congressional delegation – Senators Baucus and Tester, and Congressman Rehberg -- has long maintained that the OFA process is “broken,” to say the least. What has happened in the past week is not uncommon, as other tribal

entities have experienced similar problems. Ultimately, the question of tribal recognition is best resolved by having Congress make the decision. The Little Shell has suffered enough indignities.

The Montana Legislature adopted a joint resolution in 2001 supporting federal recognition. Cascade County adopted resolutions in 2004 and 2005 supporting recognition. In October 2006, Governor Schweitzer signed a formal declaration supporting recognition. Our own Resolution 9623 followed suit. The Little Shell enjoys a strong, working relationship with Montana state and local government entities.

Resolution 9871 is offered to show our continuing commitment to the spirit and intent of Resolution 9623 adopted in 2006, to the extent that The Little Shell Tribe deserves federal recognition. By adopting the proposed resolution, we would be indicating our support for efforts by our congressional delegation to obtain such recognition.

**Prior Concurrences:** The Montana Legislature, Cascade County, City of Great Falls, Governor Schweitzer.

**Fiscal Impact:** N/A

**Alternatives:** The City Commission could choose to deny Resolution 9871.

**Attachment:** Resolution 9871