

## Chapter II

*"We fight and fight and fight and fight  
for every inch of respect and dignity  
due us as human beings"*

I always feel I cannot participate much in the meeting, as I am not a voting member. I listen and only ask questions when I feel it is truly necessary or a real injustice is about to happen. Most of the time when I speak they will listen but won't give much weight to it unless it is on Indian matters and then my word is golden, even better than any senator or representatives. It is a good thing but it is not a vote. This past summer we have been attending meetings involved with study of the Sovereign Nations representative in the Legislature. (This is a study that I requested Representative Joe Brooks to sponsor as I cannot sponsor studies. He and I wrote it up and recommended a list of committee members. It was approved by the House and the Senate and seems to be working well. The study looked at what the roles of Tribal Representatives should be and if we should have a vote and what our exact duties in the House and Senate should be, if any. It is a very complicated matter and we finally have a majority agreement on the committee of a draft proposal. It is one I proposed to the committee at the last meeting. It allows us to vote in committee, to chair a committee it also gives us a seat in the Senate. It does not give us any rights on the floors at this time. The Senate seat will be a very difficult thing to achieve. The Democratic Senators were at this last meeting but not the Republican Senator. The D Senator Anne Rand was not much in favor of giving us anything. She finally reluctantly came around. She said "I 'm not voting for anyone who didn't get here the same way I got here." That statement bothered me for a few days but I wrote a note to myself and felt better about it. (Senator Rand has since become a strong supporter of native issues)

"I'm not voting for anyone who didn't get here the same way I got here."

The following is my note:

*How did you get here?*

*Whatever the answer is I'm sure your right we did not get here the same way you got here. In our case, history dictated our role here. Our seats are a result of a debt owed to us by the Continental Congress. Massachusetts took over that debt and then the State of Maine took it over as part of an agreement with Massachusetts before Maine could become a State.*

*The debt owed to us by the continental congress was one resulting from our Tribal governments agreeing to fight on the American side during the Revolutionary war. Without our participation Maine as we know it would not have existed. General George Washington did not have the troops to hold this territory.*

*No, we did not follow the same path as you did to get here. We chose to become allies of America. We fought and died just like the Americans. They fought for freedom; we fought for the very survival of our culture. They fought for democracy; we fought for what we thought would be democracy. They fought for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; we fought for fairness and equality. We fought on the same side and even though our side won, we lost. We are still fighting. We fight and fight and fight and fight for every inch of respect and dignity due us as human beings. Since Maine became a State in 1820 It has tried to make us disappear and when that didn't happen they chose to make us invisible. We are still fighting for fairness and our dignity as a people. History gave us a seat in this body, although the election process is similar the dynamics are different.*

Opening Session begins tomorrow at 10:00AM. I have a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner of Education at 8:30AM. and a

1:30PM Work Session with the Judiciary Committee. I also have a list for the Legislative Council to sign in order for my proposed bill to be allowed into this session. I have to track them down and individually convince them to sign allowing it into session. It's a bill that would give the Penobscot Nation an extension to put our land into Trust. I have been waiting to talk to Tribal Council about having the bill eliminate the deadline all together.

So the first day of session tomorrow will be a very busy one for me. I'm certain people will ask me about Donald's Offensive Names Bill.

January 6, 2000

Thursday

Yesterday the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2000 we began the second session of the 119<sup>th</sup>. It was like old home week. The newly elected, Speaker Steven Rowe(D, from Portland, who we elected at the first session of the 119<sup>th</sup>, talked mostly about the many bills we have to deal with and the problem of dealing with them because our committee hearing rooms are located all over Augusta due to renovations to the Capital building and the State Office building. He explained a lot of house keeping details etc. All we did for legislative business was approve a bunch of written communications between the House and the Senate. A few people spoke off the record. The most moving speaker was Representative Joanne Twomey (D) from Biddeford, who spoke about her husbands passing of colon cancer a few weeks ago and how she appreciated the support of the house members and the speaker. She told how her husband, the love of her life, had died in her arms and that when she went home this summer she knew it was to prepare to say good bye to him. She said she took care of him the whole time and had him waked at home because that is where they lived, loved and had their best times.

There is always someone who is going through a real tough life experience in the House, it's like a huge extended family. Members are very supportive and caring with each other.

The Minority leader, Representative Tom Murphy(R) from Kennebunk, stood and praised the Speaker for his work in preparing for the upcoming session and all its challenges. Tom said the speaker had done a terrific job and that got the speaker a standing ovation.

We then heard some more House keeping details and adjourned until next wed.

I went in search of all the Legislative Council members to sign my ballot. I needed to get my bill in to extend the time frame on putting Penobscot land into trust.

To make a long story short I got eight out of ten to say yes. The others would have also said yes but I could not find them. I turned in what I had. Only six people were required to approve the ballot. I wanted to get everyone to sign that I could. It would make the bill look better and it was the politically smart thing to do. The revisor's office will write a draft. The bill will ask for a twenty-year extension.

(I learned later that the Tribal Council did not have a quorum to do any voting so they will have to vote on my legislation at their next meeting.)

I got home around 3:30Pm. Just in time to load the wood stove as it has been very cold lately. I consider the first day a success.