



Skagit County Board of Commissioners

Ron Wesen, First District

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Second District

Lisa Janicki, Third District

June 5, 2019

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510
E-mail: Megan_Thompson@Cantwell.senate.gov

Re: Support for H.R. 2961, the Samish Indian Nation Land Reaffirmation Act

Dear Senator Cantwell:

We write on behalf of Skagit County to express our support for H.R. 2961, the Samish Indian Nation Land Reaffirmation Act, which would reaffirm the Bureau of Indian Affairs Northwest Regional Director's November 9, 2018 decision to take 6.7 acres of land owned by the Samish Indian Nation into trust for the benefit of the Tribe.

Skagit County evaluates fee-to-trust requests on a case-by-case basis, and, having considered all the relevant facts, including the small amount of land involved, we believe this legislation in the best interests of Skagit County and its citizens as a whole.

The omission of a reservation homeland for the Samish Indian Nation is a grave historical injustice that we believe should be corrected. To that end, we write to respectfully request your support for the passage of this legislation in the 116th Congress. H.R. 2961 will enable the Samish Indian Nation to finalize the trust status of their land, which will in turn help the Tribe preserve their culture; provide housing, health care, and education; and meet the many other needs of the Tribe's citizens.

Skagit County and the Samish Indian Nation have formed a close and cooperative working relationship since the Tribe was restored to federal recognition in 1996. Among other things, Samish has consistently shown its willingness to contribute their fair share to the cost of local government services on which the Tribe and their members rely. As such, Samish provides a model for productive cooperation between tribal and non-tribal communities in our region.

Furthermore, we believe that reaffirming the Bureau of Indian Affairs' decision to take these lands into trust will greatly benefit Skagit County and the City of Anacortes through increased economic activity in partnership with Samish.

In conclusion, Skagit County is proud to support the Samish Indian Nation in its efforts to establish a governing land base through the Land Reaffirmation Act, and we respectfully urge you to pass H.R. 2961.

Respectfully,

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Lisa Janicki, Chair

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

Ron Wesen, Commissioner