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Celebrating Affirmation of the Wyandotte Nation's Homelands

Today, we celebrate affirmation of the continued existence of the Wyandotte Reservation. A Tribal Nation's jurisdictional authority over its lands is a bedrock principle of our inherent sovereignty. Through affirmation of the Wyandotte Reservation, the Wyandotte Nation is empowered to exercise its territorial jurisdiction over its lands and people.

On March 7, 2024, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals in *Oklahoma v. Fuller*, Case No. S-2023-409, affirmed what we already knew to be true: the Wyandotte Reservation—the seat of our government and the land on which our Ancestors sought refuge and created a home—continues to exist. The Court described its decision as “binding and precedential on all parties as to the existence of the Wyandotte Reservation.”

The Wyandotte Reservation was established through the Treaty of 1867. It was the last in a long line of treaties through which the United States promised to set aside a homeland where we could continue to exist as a Tribal community and government. In exchange for this promised homeland, we were forced to relocate farther and farther from our aboriginal lands to make way for settlers.

Despite the United States' promise, when Oklahoma became a state, many operated under the wrongful assumption that reservations throughout Oklahoma had been disestablished. This harmful position was corrected by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2020 in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*. Since that time, various reservations in Oklahoma have been reaffirmed. While the Wyandotte Nation knew the Wyandotte Reservation was not disestablished, we are glad to see the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals affirm this truth.

The affirmation of reservation boundaries is meaningful. Under United States law, Tribal Nations are recognized to have jurisdiction within the boundaries of our reservations. Any government's ability to keep its community safe is premised on its authority to exercise jurisdiction within its territorial limits. Reservation status also brings law enforcement services and funding from the United States in furtherance of its trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations and Native people.

We look forward to working alongside the federal government and the State of Oklahoma to ensure criminal law enforcement on the Wyandotte Reservation is coordinated and robust.

Though subject to many attempts to disestablish and assimilate the Wyandotte Nation and its people, and many broken treaty promises, we have survived and thrived. Now, the Wyandotte Reservation will be recognized by all as our jurisdictional and governmental homeland. We know our Ancestors smile down on us today.

Chief Billy Friend