

**RULES  
OF  
THE TENNESSEE COMMISSION OF INDIAN AFFAIRS**

**CHAPTER 0785-1  
RECOGNITION CRITERIA FOR NATIVE AMERICAN INDIANS**

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**0785-1-.01 GENERAL.**

(1) General

(a) Purpose

To establish criteria and procedures to provide for legal recognition by the state of Tennessee of Native American Indians.

(b) Use of Number and Gender

1. As used in these Rules:

- (i) Words in the masculine gender also include the feminine and neuter genders; and
- (ii) Words in the singular include the plural; and
- (iii) Words in the plural include the singular.

(c) Rule Structure

These Rules are organized, numbered, and referenced according to the following outline form:

(1) paragraph

(a) subparagraph

1. part

(i) subpart

(I) item

I. subitem

A. section

(A) subsection

(2) Definitions

When used in Rules 0785-1-.01 through .05, the following terms have the meanings given below unless otherwise specified:

(Rule 0785-1-.01, continued)

“Act” means Tennessee Code Annotated Section 4-34-101 et seq., Commission of Indian Affairs.

“Applicant” means Native American Indian groups applying for Nation, Tribe, or Community recognition in Tennessee.

"Commission" means the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs.

“List” means the updated membership list to be submitted to the Commission by applicants and recognized Nations, Tribes, and Communities.

“Nation”, “Tribe” and “Community” for the purposes of these rules, mean an assembly of Indian people who are related to each other by blood or kinship and includes “band” and “clan”.

“Recognized” means being acknowledged as a Native American Indian Nation, Tribe, or Community by the state of Tennessee.

"Roll" means the official list of recognized Native American Nations, Tribes, and Communities in Tennessee.

"State" means the state of Tennessee.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §4-34-103. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed July 3, 1990; effective August 17, 1990. Amendment filed April 10, 2007; effective June 24, 2007.

#### **0785-1-.02 RECOGNITION CRITERIA FOR TENNESSEE NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN NATIONS, TRIBES, OR COMMUNITIES**

- (1) Eligibility for recognition shall be determined using the following criteria:
  - (a) The applicant for recognition is indigenous to Tennessee and has been identified on a substantially continuous basis as Native American Indians throughout the history of their group; and
  - (b) A majority of the applicant inhabits a particular geographic area in Tennessee or lives in a community in Tennessee viewed as Native American Indian and distinct from all other populations in the geographic area, and a majority of its members consist of individuals who have established verifiable documented descendency from an Indian tribe which has historically inhabited the State of Tennessee; and
  - (c) The applicant has maintained tribal political influence or other authority over its members, or is able to demonstrate their existence as a continuous, distinct cultural entity capable of self-regulation, throughout their history until the present; and
  - (d) The membership of the applicant is composed of a majority of persons who are not members of any other North American Indian federal or state recognized tribe.
- (2) The following information shall be provided to the Commission for review:
  - (a) A copy of the applicant's present governing document and/or a statement describing in full the membership criteria and the procedures through which the group governs its affairs and members; and
  - (b) A list of all known current members of the group and a copy of any available list of former members, based on the tribe's own defined criteria; and

(Rule 0785-1-.02, continued)

- (c) A history of the applicant from 1900 to present (maximum of 2000 words, unless an exception is granted by the Commission) written by a professional historian or anthropologist; and
- (d) The applicant shall also submit additional information including one (1) or more of the following:
  - 1. Documented traditions, customs and legends that demonstrate the group's Native American Indian cultural heritage; and/or
  - 2. Letters, statements, and documents from city, county, state, or federal authorities that document a history of tribal related business and activities that specifically address Native American Indian culture, preservation, and affairs; and/or
  - 3. Letters, statements, and documents from federal or state recognized tribes in and/or outside of Tennessee which attest to the Indian heritage of the group; and/or
  - 4. Other compelling documentation acceptable by the Commission that shows the heritage of the applicant; and
- (e) A signed and notarized statement from the officers of the applicant affirming that, to the best of their knowledge, information, and belief, the information provided is true and accurate.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §4-34-103. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed July 3, 1990; effective August 17, 1990. Amendment filed April 10, 2007; effective June 24, 2007.

#### **0785-1-.03 PROCEDURES FOR PETITIONING FOR RECOGNITION**

- (1) An Application For Recognition form with appropriate instructions for completion and submission on the back shall be developed and approved by the Commission. It shall be available on request by writing to the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs at the address below. Complete applications and supporting documentation are to be sent to:
 

Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs  
Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation  
Office of General Counsel  
401 Church Street  
L & C Tower, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243
- (2) The Commission shall appoint a Review Committee, consisting of three (3) members of the Commission, to review applications and supporting documentation for completeness and to work with applicants to achieve completeness. A record shall be maintained of all applications and appropriate information, including, but not limited to, the date received, date determined complete, date presented to the Commission and the Commission's decision. The Review Committee shall review an application within six (6) months of the submittal date.
- (3) If the application and required documentation are complete, the Committee will present the information to the Commission for review. Applicant(s) shall be notified in writing of the date, time and location of the Commission meeting at which the application is to be considered.
- (4) The Commission will either approve or deny the application within twelve (12) months of the application being determined complete by the Review Committee. The Commission may request additional information from the applicant.
- (5) The Commission will notify each applicant in writing of the Commission's decision.

(Rule 0785-1-.03, continued)

- (6) Applications pending under the former Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs may be processed using the new criteria following the effective date of these rules. Applicants shall be contacted in writing and advised accordingly. The Commission and/or the Review Committee may request the applicant to provide updated or additional information.
- (7) An applicant may, at any time prior to approval, withdraw their application and supporting documentation by writing to the Commission at the address in paragraph (1) of this Rule and may request the return of all submitted documents.
- (8) An applicant applying for recognition shall specify all submitted documentation that is to be returned to the applicant following the decision of the Commission or withdrawal by the applicant of the submitted application. All documents returned to the applicant shall be at the applicant's expense.
- (9) The roll of all approved for recognition shall be maintained current by the Commission and posted on the Commission's web site.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §4-34-103. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed July 3, 1990; effective August 17, 1990. Amendment filed April 10, 2007; effective June 24, 2007.

#### **0785-1-.04 CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP LISTS AND THE ROLL**

- (1) Every two (2) years from their date of recognition, Nations, Tribes, or Communities recognized pursuant to the rules herein contained shall notify the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs of any changes in membership criteria and subsequent additions or deletions of members at the address in rule 0785-1-.03(1).
- (2) Any recognized Nation, Tribe, or Community may terminate its recognition by submitting written notice to the Chairperson of the Commission. The Commission, at its next meeting, shall vote to remove the name from the roll.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §4-34-103. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed July 3, 1990; effective August 17, 1990. Amendment filed April 10, 2007; effective June 24, 2007.

#### **0785-1-.05 ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW**

Applicants (Nations, Tribes, or Communities) who disagree with the denial of their application for recognition may use the following procedure to seek a contested case hearing before the Commission pursuant to Sections 4-5-223 through 225 of the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act.

- (1) When an affected applicant disagrees with the denial of an application for recognition based upon the contention that such action is an illegal application of rules and/or statutes or such action is based upon invalid rules or statutes, the applicant may petition the Commission for a declaratory order.
- (2) Upon receipt of such a petition, the Commission may convene a contested case hearing pursuant to the provisions of T. C. A. Section 4-5-101, et seq.
- (3) The Commission may refuse to issue a declaratory order or fail to set a petition for a contested case hearing within 60 days of receipt of the petition. In either case, the affected applicant may apply for a declaratory judgment pursuant to T. C. A. 4-5-225.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §4-34-103. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed July 3, 1990; effective August 17, 1990. Amendment filed October 9, 1991; effective November 23, 1991. Amendment filed April 10, 2007; effective June 24, 2007.