

**Audrey Bennett**  
*President*

**Darelynn Lehto**  
*Secretary*



**Mason Pacini**  
*Vice President*

**Alan Childs, Sr.**  
*Treasurer*

**Victoria Winfrey**  
*Assistant Secretary/Treasurer*

December 18, 2002

To all Community Members,

Recently the Tribal Council gave notice to the Tribal Court judges that there would be a meeting to consider their removal because of concerns that the Tribal Council and many Community members had with their performance in the past year. The meetings were to be held on December 27<sup>th</sup> and December 30<sup>th</sup>.

On Monday December 16<sup>th</sup>, the judges sent a letter to the Tribal Council stating that they planned to resign as the Tribal Court effective December 26, 2002. The letter stated that the Clerk of Court and Judges "will take all appropriate steps to ensure the safety and well being of the Community's children and families as well as all persons who have matters pending before the Court at the present time." The Tribal Council has accepted this resignation and will work toward the same goals of providing Court services for Community members and people with cases in Tribal Court.

On December 18, 2002 the Tribal Council appointed B.J. Jones to be the interim Tribal Court judge. Mr. Jones is a professor of Indian law at the University of North Dakota Law School, a leading authority on the Indian Child Welfare Act and a Tribal Court judge with many years of experience in Indian Law and Family Court matters. He is the Chief Judge for the Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribe as well as several other tribal courts. The Tribal Council plans to hire other staff to make the transition as smooth as possible.

We understand that it is an important part of our sovereignty to have a fair and efficient Tribal Court. Our goal is to make improvements in the Tribal Court system and work toward establishing a Tribal Court that is considered on the same level as state and federal courts. We also plan to appoint an independent judge for a Court of Appeals.

If there are matters to be filed with the Tribal Court, please address them to:

Clerk of Tribal Court  
Prairie Island Indian Community  
5636 Sturgeon Lake Road  
Welch, MN 55089

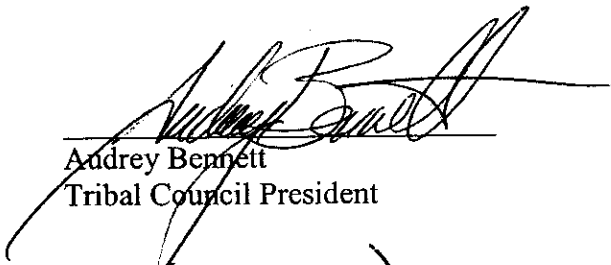
Please be assured that all Court matters will be held in strictest confidence and be separated from general Community files.



It is our goal to establish a Tribal Court that will be a credit to our Community.

Sincerely,

Your Tribal Council

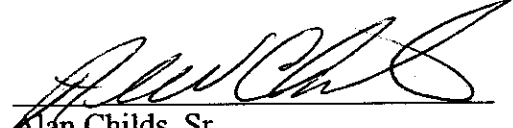


Audrey Bennett  
Tribal Council President

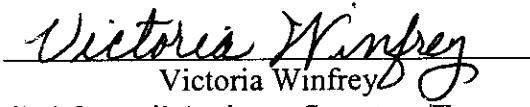


Mason Pacini  
Tribal Council Vice-President

(Absent)  
Darelynn Lehto  
Tribal Council Secretary



Alan Childs, Sr.  
Tribal Council Treasurer



Victoria Winfrey  
Tribal Council Assistant Secretary/Treasurer