



*Nez Perce*

TRIBAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Idaho Commission for Reapportionment  
Testimony of the Nez Perce Tribe

September 24, 2021  
Lewiston Idaho

Good afternoon. My name is Samuel N. Penney, and I serve as the Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. On behalf of the Nez Perce Tribe, I would like to welcome the Commission for Reapportionment to Nez Perce Country. The Tribe appreciates the opportunity to testify about the Nez Perce's views on redistricting in Idaho.

To begin the discussion, I would like to provide the Commission with information about the Nez Perce Tribe and the Tribe's position in relation to the current legislative districts. The Nez Perce Reservation covers approximately 750,000 acres and five counties in Idaho. Those counties are Latah, Nez Perce, Lewis, Clearwater, and Idaho. The Nez Perce Tribe is represented by the 1st Congressional District in Congress and by Districts 5, 6, and 7 in the Idaho Legislature. The Tribe has approximately 3,500 enrolled members, most of whom reside within the boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation.

However, due to the size and reach of the Nez Perce Tribe's aboriginal lands, the Tribe's interests extend north of Moscow, as far south as McCall, <sup>WEST</sup> east into Washington and Oregon, and as far east as Montana. As such, from a tribal perspective, the Tribe's interests and connections range beyond the current boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation. Besides having satellite offices throughout the Reservation, the Tribe also has offices in McCall and Powell, Idaho, Clarkston, Washington, and Joseph, Oregon.

Given this background, the Commission can understand the Nez Perce Tribe's strong connection and interest in Latah County, the city of Moscow, and the University of Idaho. This relationship continues to grow. That growth is partially attributed to the representation provided by District 5 in the State Legislature—Representation that has recognized the importance and role of the Tribe in the area.

The Tribe also has a strong relationship and connection with Nez Perce County and the city of Lewiston. The Tribe's increased economic impact and presence as an employer in the region means there that there is a need for representation for the Tribe and its members in the State Legislature from this district. The Tribe requests that these connections to Latah and Nez Perce

counties be maintained under any new apportionment plan. In addition, the Tribe understands the limitations for redistricting presented by the small populations in large counties like Clearwater, Idaho, and Lewis.

The Nez Perce Tribe recognizes that the requirements for keeping counties intact and populations evenly distributed may prevent the Commission from placing the Reservation in a single district. Regardless of the choice, it is important that any final decision only be made after careful consideration of how the portions of the Reservation that lie within different districts are represented from a tribal perspective. The Tribe does request that any division of the Reservation that may occur only be done if those divisions respect the need for all members of the Tribe throughout the Reservation to have representation and the connections the Tribe has with surrounding areas outside of the reservation boundaries. For example, the potential for splitting Nez Perce County into two districts may harm the Tribe given the strong economic connection the Tribe has with the city of Lewiston.

With regard to the reapportionment of the Congressional Districts in Idaho, the Tribe does not have any particular recommendations although it is important to state that due to the unique trust relationship tribes have with the United States, the Nez Perce Tribe expects all members of the Idaho Congressional Delegation to represent and be mindful of tribal issues and interests regardless of which district the Tribe is in and which district an elected official represents.

I would like to thank the Commission again for allowing the Nez Perce Tribe the opportunity to provide testimony. Although the Tribe has not formulated its own redistricting plan, the Tribe would request any draft plans be consistent with the Tribe's comments in formulating a final map.