From: pinejm@plu.edu
To: MakahDEIS.nwr@noaa.gov;
Subject: ATTN: 2008 Makah DEIS
Date: Monday, May 12, 2008 10:01:29 AM

I am a linguistic anthropologist currently affiliated with Pacific Lutheran University as a Faculty Fellow. I will be taking up a tenure-track position at Western Washington University in the Fall. I have had the opportunity to visit Neah Bay and been priviledged to spend some time with the team of people who are engaged in reviving the Makah language.

I am writing to express my complete support for a solution which permits the Makah to whale according to their tradition and within the guidelines set forth by the International Whaling Commission. I realize that you are recieving a significant amount of mail on this topic. I will, therefor, keep this note brief and address only four specific topics, drawing from what I have read recently of arguments in opposition to completely legal Makah whale hunts.

I note that many opponents argue that Makah people were not necessarily unanimously in favor of resuming whale hunting. This is in no way an argument for depriving the Makah people of the right to decide, independently, on a course of action that is within their legal rights. Currently, the Democratic Party is deeply divided over its choice of candidate for the upcoming presidential election. This in no way authorizes the Republicans (or the British, for that matter) to make a choice for the Democrats.

The argument about the thinking, feeling nature of grey whales is romantic, and applicable only if you feel that you must not eat things that think and feel. If, as many native peoples including the Makah, you have traditionally assumed that you are part of a web of life within which thinking, feeling creatures eat other thinking, feeling creatures this argument holds no water. Again, even if there is some debate among the Makah themselves this in no way authorizes outsiders to come in and make a choice for them. Pigs are also thinking and feeling creatures, more intelligent than dogs in many ways. If you choose not to eat pork, that is your choice, but you are in no way authorized to take my bacon off my breakfast plate.

The argument that the whale might not be eaten entirely, or that not every Makah individual would enjoy their first taste of whale, also does not requre that the Makah be further deprived of the legal right to make their

own decisions regarding whaling. A great many foods which are good for us are acquired tastes. People may spurn brocolli, turn up their noses at salmon, refuse to touch a pizza with anchovies when they first encounter these foods, only to discover that over the course of time they have grown to enjoy them. Acquiring, over time, a renewed appreciation for whale meat, a taste which would be shared with many cultures around the world, is, I would argue, an implicit right protected by the treaty of 1855.

There are those who argue that whale hunting ritual could take place without actually killing an individual whale. Perhaps these same folks would like to attend a nearby Catholic Mass and inform the congregation that their traditional sacramental meal can take place without any actual wine or wafer. The experience of hunting and consuming Whale, a sacramental meal associated with ritual, might change over time, if Makah culture changes, just as in some Protestant congregations grape juice is substituted for wine in the interest of avoiding alcohol. The central issue here is that Makah people have the legal right to make this decision for themselves, and all others are prohibited by treaty from interfering in the legitimate decision making process.

Finally, with regard to treaty rights "giving" something to the Makah, I must point out that this is factually inaccurate. When the treaty was written, it in fact took away many rights. The rights protected by the treaty, including the right to hunt whales, are those few rights which the Makah at the time deemed absolutely inalienable, while those same elders ceded other rights. Just as we respect the decisions of elders who drafted our Constitution, we must respect the decisions of elders, Makah and non-Makah, who drafted the 1855 treaty.

Yours,
Judith M.S. Pine