



Committee to Exonerate Chief Leschi

Case Of Chief Leschi To Be Heard By Historical Court

NISQUALLY (November 8, 2004) – For the first time in almost 150 years, a court will take up the case of Chief Leschi, a Nisqually tribal member who was unjustly executed in 1858. A “Historical Court of Inquiry and Justice,” requested by the Leschi descendants and the Nisqually tribe, will be convened at the **Washington State History Museum on December 10 at 1 p.m.**

Leschi’s conviction, the first recorded criminal case in Washington, will finally be reassessed to determine the validity of the judgment. Leschi was hanged for the murder of A. B. Moses, a member of the Washington Territorial militia. For more than a century there have been lingering questions over Leschi’s guilt.

“The historical icon of the Nisqually Tribe is also Washington State’s first murderer,” said Cynthia Iyall, member of the Committee to Exonerate Chief Leschi. “We want to correct the historical record. This is an important part of history, not just for the Nisqually Tribe, but for the entire state of Washington.”

The justices on the historical court will be Chief Justice Gerry Alexander and Justice Susan Owens of the state Supreme Court; Judge Ronald Cox of state Court of Appeals; Dick Manning, former president of the Washington State Bar Association; and Judge Theresa Pouley of the Lummi Tribal Court.

“The purpose of the historical court is to reflect and examine the two Leschi trials,” said Alexander. The historical court will consider evidence that was never allowed to be presented in the original Leschi Trials.

Lawyers for the defense will be Bill Tobin and Thor Hoyte, Nisqually Tribal attorneys, John Ladenburg, Pierce County executive, and Robert Anderson, Director of the Indian Law Program at the University of Washington. Carl Hultman and Mary Robnett of the Office of the Pierce County Prosecutor will represent the prosecution.

Cecelia Svinth Carpenter, a leading expert on Chief Leschi, Sascha Harmon, Ph.D. of the University of Washington Native American Studies program, and Professor Kent Richards, author of a well-respected biography of Isaac Stevens, Washington’s first territorial governor, will be among the witnesses called.

Reservations for the trial are highly recommended. To make reservations call (253) 798-5877. The Washington State History Museum is located at 1911 Pacific Avenue in Tacoma.

Immediately following the historic trial in Tacoma, the Washington State Capital Museum will hold a reception in Olympia in honor of the opening of a new exhibit entitled *The Northwest Treaty Trail, 1854-1856*. This commemorative exhibit explores the history of the ten Northwest treaties negotiated by Governor Isaac Stevens in his whirlwind journey across the newly formed Washington Territory. Following its premiere at the State Capital Museum, the exhibit will be displayed at public venues throughout the Northwest.

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