

To the Kansas State Legislature

Jan 20, 2024

This letter is submitted in opposition to the two recent KS bills concerning the conveyance of the Shawnee Indian Mission to a particular owner. The land we now call Kansas had been home to many American Indian peoples. According to the Kansas State historical Society, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kansa, Kiowa, Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita are tribes that are considered native to present day Kansas.

Presently there are three interests in this property, which is less than a mile from my home. The Kansas State Historical Society, the Shawnee tribe of Oklahoma, as well as the Kaw nation, all claim some interest, if not outright ownership in the mission, which was ironically started by a Methodist minister named Robert Johnson.

It is my view and many of my neighbors that single ownership or conveyance may fan the flames of animosity among tribes and families who have lived here for generations. This would benefit nobody. There is also concern that the Shawnee Indian Mission would no longer serve its historical and educational purpose and evolve into a commercial entity. It would be tragic to lose such a gem of history right in our own neighborhood. The details of maintenance, management and historical emphasis could be shared. As a taxpayer, I would certainly be in favor of contributing to the cause.

Our hope is that tribal leaders and The Kansas State Historical Society realize the tremendous opportunity before them to demonstrate cooperation and compromise for the shared goal of preserving the site, to tell the stories of struggles, triumphs and cultures and a unique chance to make our own history going forward as one of celebrating our shared beliefs, and respecting those that may differ.

In summary our opposition to the current bills does not reflect any opposition or animosity to the tribes or the state historical society, but for the reasons mentioned above, we would favor alternative legislation to reflect shared cooperative not confrontational efforts.

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