To: Mayor John Medinger, Hiawatha Statue Committee

A Compromising of Neighbors

This letter to the mayor and the committee will hopefully help you in your meeting to come to a workable agreement over the Hiawatha statue in Riverside Park. We do hope you will read and think about what is being passed on to your committee by several of our Ho-Chunk area people who feel our thoughts and concerns are not being fairly represented by the persons on this committee.

Currently the so-called Native Americans on your committee cannot speak on our behalf because they have not been involved with our LaCrosse tribal people and some are not even from our area and others have come forward only because it is a fad to jump on the so-called politically correct band wagon of looking out for "Indian Rights." They do not speak for our community people nor have the right. In listening to the media interviews, a certain member talks of knowing and sharing of our cultures and traditions of our Ho-Chunk people, but yet is far from this herself. If she followed traditions as she stated she would not speak as she has and misrepresented our people because she has never been given that right or permission by our elders or people who hold that right. It makes no difference if your name is Tracy, Matt or Dan, you have to earn that right from our elders. It is this disrespect that prompts this letter.

Before the other side of the fence, the Zimmer-Hakel family and "good well-meaning" citizens of LaCrosse start to smile over this letter and feel you have an ally over this please, do not think for one second we condone the way we have been put down by your people. You do not "honor a people" by building a statue that hopefully will bring in tourism dollars as stated by your family ancestor.

Maybe it would be appropriate for the HO-Chunk Nation to dig up your ancestors and see if they had "forked tongues" and sell replicas of their tongues to raise tourism dollars for our Ho-Chunk Nation. Think of this endeavor very seriously because we are only trying to "honor your people."

I ask that you stop and think for a minute and hope you realize that our lacrosse area tribal people are having to try to stay away from both sides of the fence because you have both upset our people with your so-called good intentions for our Indian people. Neither side knows any better what is right.

As stated at the beginning of this letter there is a compromise of solution, as long as egos and personal feelings are checked at the door. The compromise to this concrete tourism icon is to let it remain, but also erect along side of it a sign or plaque next to it that states the good neighbor relations that the Ho-Chunks and the white refugees had in early settling of LaCrosse.

The plaque should also mention how there were no major conflicts between the Ho-Chunks and early refugees form Europe who settled in our area. The main statement of this plaque should state how this statue was intended to honor the native people of this area and is not meant to stereotype one race against the other. This plaque or sign would be the responsibility of the family and the good citizens of lacrosse because very simply, you created this dilemma by taking people for granted and showing no respect for another people or culture. You learn by your mistakes.
When the committee was formed and we seen who was on the board we had a very legitimate concern we would not be fairly represented. When the tables are stacked against you in such as this committee is against our true LaCrosse tribal community people, compromise is the best solution.

Pi-na-gi-gi,

Dale Littlejohn
Ho-Chunk Tribal Member
10-9-00

(Signatures listed below represent La Crosse area tribal community members and do not represent the Ho-Chunk Nation or its programs.)

Naomi A. Piers 10/9/00
Jennifer L. Carnovan 10/9/00
Rachey Littlejohn 10/9/00
Cynthia M. Red 10/9/00
Mary Taylor 10/10/00
Monique Batalia 10-10-00
Dana DeBoe 10-10-00
Ethel Hemmerly 10-10-00
Dale Mitchell 10-10-00

Lorraine Carrison 10-10-00

Dennis 10-10-00
Debra McNeil 10-10-00