

## Written Testimony of Frank Wendt Regarding Shawnee Indian Mission in Fairway, KS

I oppose the transfer of title by the Kansas Historic Society to the Shawnee Tribe located in Oklahoma. There is little doubt that the site was a product of European descended settlers' tragically misplaced idea to integrate Indigenous peoples into their European based society. History tells us that during the 1820s to 1850s there was a "reformist" movement that the children of the Nations would be "saved" if they were placed in schools set up by the European descended settlers. The site should stand as a reminder of this legacy to all of us and not just one of the impacted Nations. If we forget history, we risk repeating it.

The children that were placed in the school were from many Nations. Other than the Kansa for which our state was named and who likely have a historical claim to large areas of Kansas, there is no claim that this specific site was promised to the Shawnee Nation by Congress. If that were so, such claims are more properly made in federal courts that are charged with enforcing federal laws, including treaties entered into by the United States.

Moreover, most of the land on which the mission once stood is now residential, church and school properties. These surround the remaining truncated mission site. The guarantee of continued use of this site for educational purposes fits within the neighborhood. Other uses will not. The question is how to preserve that and to recognize the importance of remembering what happened there.

Fairway, in conjunction with the State Historical Society and before any interest was expressed by the Shawnee Tribe, committed to the preservation of the site and sharing its lessons with all visitors. The city and its residents are committed to easing the burden of maintaining and restoring the site for educational purposes. Fairway has also solicited input from any interested party with ideas to enhance the site.

The Shawnee Nation is recognized as a sovereign under Congressional acts. Upon its acquisition of the property, there is an excellent chance that the state of Kansas will lose all control. This would be to the exclusion of the interests of both the descendants of other Indigenous Nations that are residents of Kansas (or elsewhere) and other residents of Kansas. Moreover, the location of the site within the metropolitan area will make it very tempting to change the use of the site to more profitable commercial purposes. Such use would be completely out of character for the neighborhood within the cities of Fairway and Roeland Park.

I believe the City of Fairway and its residents are committed to the inclusion of all groups, including reasonable requests of the Shawnee Nation, in defining the future of the site and preserving the educational value of the site so what happened there is not forgotten. To my knowledge, no one is ignoring reasonable requests from any group that has an interest in preserving the site as an important part of the history of both Kansas and the Indigenous Nations (who preceded the European descended settlers in this area.)

I ask you to not change the ownership of the site and to let the process of inclusion be assured by the state retaining ownership. Please vote "NO" on House Bill 2208.