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INDIAN COUNTRY COMMUNICATIONS

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

4/21/99

Mr. William Winslow
United Church of Christ
New York, New York
Fax #212-870-2137

Dear Mr. Winslow,

You recently asked the question about lower watt radio stations and the need for communities of color, and/or Native communities to have access to such stations, and how and who might benefit?

As past President of the Native American Journalists Association, and UNITY 99 coalition of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native journalists -- the opportunity for a limited radio broadcast is of special interest to me. Our communities continue to be under served in many ways, in news, music and access.

Through-out the United States, and Canada, there are many Native communities in particular, and in general, communities of color that are still under served or reliant on commercials stations for the their listening interests. Unfortunately, the commercial stations have never served intellectual stimulation very well, and present public radio station siting, expenses, etc., are cost prohibitive to many of our communities.

The nature of many reservations, their population centers both on the reservation and in urban centers is conducive, I believe to lower watt, lower cost radio broadcasts that focus on local family, neighborhood reporting/coverage, while still having a capability to bring programs that are otherwise lacking into these community enclaves. Low watt, lower costing stations can benefit, what tends to be these smaller knit communities in many ways. Focusing on the problems and challenges of a ten mile radius of listeners has to be easier than focusing a 60-70 mile radius, such as WOJB-FM at Lac Courte Oreilles that I have been affiliated with for over a decade.

We are constantly worried about paying the power bill, coverage of events that cost travel and staff -- when I believe the real focus and power of the station is within the fringes of the reservation, say 20-30 mile radius, including both Indian and non-native listeners. That is where we do our best job. As such, I believe with a small staff, small budget, we could do just as well of a job covering a 10 mile radius of the reservation population center as we do the broader job, and if we are valuable, utilize links, or on-line streaming to build a coalition in order to provide cross coverage from different communities rather than redundant efforts.

At any rate, without thinking of all the options that would make it work, licensing low watt stations and reserving a portion of the licenses for communities of color overall would be a positive action that the FCC could take to give back control of some of the airwaves to smaller constituencies. Many of these constituencies, I imagine are not communities of color, but represent many legitimate community voices that we can not now find on the dial.

Please feel free to share my thoughts with the FCC or other advocates.

Sincerely,

Paul DeMain, CEO
Indian Country Communications Inc.

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