March 22, 2016

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1951 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Reference: Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan Guadalupe, Petition #5

To Whom It May Concern:

I am sending this information regarding the results of the City of Las Cruces recognizing The Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, and input of the other groups present. I am of Piro decendent., and was in the original petition until the dispute we had with the Roybals and was taken off the tribal roll.

Thank you very much for the consideration in this issue.

For more information please feel free to call me at or Las Cruces, NM 88001.

Natalia Melon
Piro woman
City council holds off on statement of support for tribe

Diana Alba Soular, Las Cruces Sun-News  8:20 p.m. MDT March 21, 2016

LAS CRUCES - After two different tribal groups expressed conflicting stances, Las Cruces city councilors voted Monday to indefinitely postpone action on a statement of support for the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe in its quest for standing as a federally recognized tribe.

Some city councilors said they felt Monday’s proposed statement of support would have forced them to choose one local tribal group over another.

But Las Cruces Mayor Pro Tem Greg Smith, who favored passing the statement argued that the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe has a documented heritage and is eligible to apply for federal status. He said that doesn’t preclude any other tribal groups from petitioning the federal government for recognition as well. He noted, for instance, that among the Apache people, there are several tribes, such as the Mescalero and Jicarilla.

"We have this 'us' and 'them' mentality going on that I think is unfortunate," Smith said Monday.

The Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe is not officially recognized by the U.S. government. But the group has had a petition pending before the U.S. Department of the Interior since the 1970s. A 120-day comment period on its request to become a recognized tribe is set to end March 27, according to the federal government (http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/OFAPetitionsInProcess/Petition5/index.htm). The second major group, Los Indigenes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, which organizes the large Our Lady of Guadalupe Fiesta (story/news/local/2016/01/01/colorful-reflective-closing-ceremonies-annual-tradition/78195506) that takes place each December, also is not a federally recognized tribe or pueblo. It doesn’t have an application pending before the U.S. government, but a tribal official told city councilors the organization, which is an incorporated entity, is considering a petition. Both groups attended the meeting in significant numbers Monday. A third, separate group that traces family lineage to the Piro people also was present but didn’t address city councilors in the meeting.

Had the city council passed a statement of support, the letter would have been included in the feedback during the federal comment period on the Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe’s request.

Edward Roybal, Piro-Manso-Tiwa cacique, speaks at City Hall on Monday, March 21, 2016, asking city councilors to pass a statement favoring the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian Tribe’s attempt to gain federal recognition. (Photo: Robin Zielinski / Sun-News)

But the fact that the council didn’t approve the letter isn’t a setback in the group’s ongoing effort to gain federal standing, said Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribal leader Ed Roybal, who’s known as the tribe’s “cacique.” He said the Piro-Manso-Tiwas have met seven criteria for becoming a federally recognized tribe.
"We're still in the process of federal recognition," he said after Monday's meeting.

Asked what changes federal tribal status would bring, Roybal said it could help his group access programs, celebrate its traditions and solidify the members.

"We don't have a place together," he said. "We need an area like everybody else has — an area to be in."

Roybal clarified, however, the tribe wouldn't automatically be granted land or a reservation, if the U.S. government grants the tribal status.

Arianna Fierro, president of the Los Indígenes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, told city councilors that there's been "strife" between the two tribal groups for decades. She said the Piro-Manso-Tiwa group has made a number of allegations against the corporation and has laid claim to some of its artifacts. She said she was concerned that the Piro-Manso-Tiwa group, if granted federal standing, would displace Los Indígenes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and that a resolution like the one proposed to city councilors would have a detrimental effect.

"We respectfully oppose this resolution," she said before the vote.

City Councilor Olga Pedroza said she felt like she was being asked to favor one group over the other and she was concerned that if one group got federal standing, that would exclude the second group. She said the decision on the proposed statement of support for the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe was "difficult" because it seemed more like a question for the courts.

Smith asked members of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe who were in the audience to stand. About 20 people stood up. Pedroza followed that up by asking opponents to the proposed statement of support to stand, and about 30 people rose from their seats.

City Councilor Ceil Levatino asked Fierro if there were any protections the federal government could grant to the corporation, if federal officials do decide to designate the Piro-Manso-Tiwas as an official tribe.

Fierro said she didn't think so.

Levatino said she agreed with Pedroza's stance on the proposed statement of support.

City Councilor Jack Eakman said the discord between the groups could cause them each to lose out on the standing eventually. City Councilor Gill Sorg had similar remarks.

"I wonder if there's not something more important than this 50-year-old battle," Eakman said. "I wonder if there could be some way that you could start thinking about coming together for a higher purpose than just preventing someone else from having something."
City councilors voted 6-1 to table the proposed statement of support indefinitely. Smith dissented.

Aundrea Lopez, 20, of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe, said after the meeting she was disappointed in the decision because the group has its evidence in order.

"They didn't take time to read our petition online," she said. "We want a place we could celebrate our way of life."

Lopez said a central aspect of the tribe’s history is forced conversion to Catholicism by the Spanish. But the tribe has an identity that’s apart from that. It has its own traditions, she said.

"We’re not Catholic," she said.

Guillermo Portillo Jr. reacts in the audience on Monday, March 21, 2016, as two tribal groups give presentations on a proposed statement of support by councilors in favor of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian Tribe's attempt to gain federal recognition. Portillo is part of a group that has ancestry linked to the Piro tribe which originated north of Socorro, New Mexico. (Photo: Robin Zielinski / Sun-News)

Guillermo Portillo Jr. said he and his family used to be affiliated with the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe, but ruffled feathers in the mid-'90s after asking questions about tribal members and organization, so they "threw us out of the tribe." Portillo said his family's ancestry stems from the Piro people, who lived north of Socorro, New Mexico, in the 1600s. That was until uprisings by Native Americans against the Spanish prompted a portion of tribal members to migrate south along with Rio Grande to the Juarez and El Paso areas. But a contingent of tribal members eventually made its way back north, settling in what's now Las Cruces.

The Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe is also requesting a statement of support from the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners, an item that will be voted upon Tuesday. That meeting starts at 9 a.m. at the county government center, 845 N. Motel Blvd., Las Cruces.

Also Monday, the city councilors recognized the Las Cruces Kings football team, an amateur team that's on a 14-game winning streak.

Diana Alba Soular may be reached at 575-541-5443, dalba@lcsun-news.com or @AlbaSoular on Twitter.

Read or Share this story: http://lcsun.co/1RgHfjO
To all City Council and Mayor:

I, Natalia Melón, Frank Portillo, Guillermo Portillo Jr., Mary Lou Lascano, David Portillo, Leroy Portillo, Yolanda Portillia and Viola Costa are Piro descendants and are submitting these reasons as to why we are opposing the City of Las Cruces not to recognize the Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the P... (2) San Juan Gaudalupe, Patton #9.

Ed Royal Tribal Council are from out of town, had not lived here in Las Cruces since the 40’s for reason that their father Victor Royal was had been banned from Las Cruces for reasons that Mr. Royal came from California and take the teal money and went back to California. Fifty (50) years later, the sons came back and want to be Indians and bring back traditional, culture, prayers and dressing ways, but as Lakota. We are Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indians in this area.

My father, Guillermo Portillo Sr., and my uncles Luciano Avilez, Ricardo Portillo, Ernest Portillo, Robert Aviles and others, applied for federal recognition in Albuquerque, NM. In 1972, in 1981 the BIA send a federal agent to do our research was Terry Raynolde and was assisted by Historian Mary Taylor. During this research they were threatened by Louis Royal and Ed Royal, because they asked them questions about the years 50’s-70’s and they could’t answer because they didn’t live here so how were they going to know that information since they didn’t live here during those years, so they had to stop the researched. Apparently by Terry Raynolde we would have been recognized at this time. Again, they returned in 1980’s on since they were my dad’s (Guillermo Portillo) cousins we joined them and started having ornamentals and doing really good because since they didn’t know the ornamental ways we were sharing with the Royal, but we couldn’t understand why they were performing Lakota ways, but still kept going with our ways. Some where along the years we got grant money to work with and with that money we opened an office, which was run by Andrew Royal, which we were then disappointed again by them. Because Andrew Royal was never in the office, the office was a house and Andrew and the girls lived there rent free because it was getting paid thru grant money as the office as well as they were both getting paid a monthly sum for working there. So we saw out of money really fast. Later we found out that the reason that the office was always closed was because Andrew was working with a crew and finishing his degree here at NMBU, during office hours. So in 1985 my dad Guillermo Portillo Sr. passed away, so my brother started asking them (the Royal) questions, and we don’t know what they were hiding so they started giving us trouble and then in 1995 they threw us out of the tribe and started sending us cases and Dismissed letters and newspaper articles throwing all my family out of the Piro/Manso/Tiwa Tribe. All the years that we could have gotten recognized it has been the Royal family that has made trouble and we have had trouble getting recognized. This petition was done when we were with the Royal (Royal good) that is why we felt that they should not be recognized by the City of Las Cruces or the BIA.

Our ancestors go way back to the 1200 and 1300 centuries. We were brought as slaves to the Jemez area in the 1000’s before the 1800 revolt. Our ancestors (Piro and Manso) built the Guadalupe Mission in Jemez. We returned back to Las Cruces in 1844-1846 and settled in Las Cruces. Our Piro lands up north were away and the draw is reason why we didn’t go back to the Piro land. Between 1915-1914 my Great Aunt Francesca Avila Royal, was the Conique and My Great Grandfather Sebastian Aviles was assistant Conique in Tortugas.

We feel that we have lived enough already, our land our language but we still thrive with what we have left and continue with it. A lot of our elders ancestors have already passed but we have learned all of our elders ways and keep it in our hearts and share them during our feast days in December which is the Virgin de Guadalupe Feast Day. All of our feast days are to honor our patron saint.

This is one of the main reasons we cannot let the Piro/Manso/Tiwa Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan Gaudalupe, Petiton #5 be recognized by the BIA or City of Las Cruces. The first thing they want to do is take over the land in Tortugas and make the people there sell or move if they are not Indians, they don’t have a heart. and anything else that the city has that used to belong to any of our ancestors.

Speaking for all my family don’t get me wrong I would love to get all this recognition from the City of Las Cruces and BIA because we want everybody to know we are Indians, our ancestors states this and also have been fighting for this our lives, but not for the Royals to get it and us to be left out. All hail will break loose in Las Cruces if they represent all the families. Especially since they have people in the tribal roll that are not Indians.

Thank you for any consideration given to my request.


https://us-m04.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?._rand=0du8u2r6aadin 3/21/2016
Complete Items 1, 2, and 3.

Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.

Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.
Exemption 6

- Sender: Please print your name, address, and ZIP+4® in this box
  Natalia Melon
  (b) (6)
  LC, NM 88001

USPS TRACKING#

9590 9403 0654 5183 6471 05