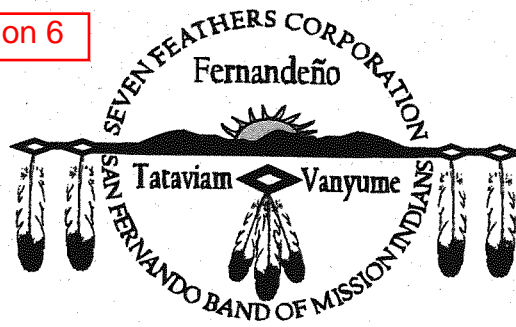


Exemption 6



March 18, 2016

Department of the Interior
 Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
 Office of Federal Acknowledgement
 MS-348-S1B
 1951 Constitution Ave, NW
 Washington, DC 20240

ATTN: R. Lee Fleming, Director

REF: PETITIONER #158 - Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

Dear Mr. Fleming,

The San Fernando Band of Mission Indians, Petitioner # 163, would like to take this opportunity to respond during comment period with regard to Petitioner #158, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (Rudy Ortega, Jr.).

It is in the best interest of all people involved and specifically members of the San Fernando Band of Mission Indians (SFBMI) that we clarify major concerns we have with portions of the petition submitted by the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI). These concerns pertain to the following issues: (1) lack of recognition that SFBMI is a separate group with a different political history than that presented by the FTBMI, (2) shared ancestry from a common progenitor for members of the two groups, and (3) genealogical errors in the petition submitted by FTBMI.

The San Fernando Band of Mission Indians is an independent group from the Fernandeño Tataviam tribe. Although FTBMI is claiming Leandra Culeta as an ancestor, the majority of her descendants are with our group, more specifically the Francis Garcia Cooke line. Specifically we take issue with part of the narrative pertaining to political leadership among the Garcia lineages that was included in the Supplementary and Updated Information submitted in September 2015 by FTBMI pertaining to Criterion 87.3(c). On pp. 23-24, quotations from a recently published biography of the late Charlie Cooke by Mary Cortini Gordon are used to suggest that the mantle of political leadership passed to Cooke in 1959 at the behest of his aunt Mary Cooke Garcia. Actually, Charlie Cooke was elected to leadership of the San Fernando Band of Mission Indians at a meeting held in Newhall about 1967. Charlie remained as leader until 1995, when a new election was held. At that time, John Valenzuela, grandson of Petra Garcia Valenzuela, was elected chairman of the SFBMI. Charlie Cooke continued to attend meetings of the SFBMI and in fact never relinquished his SFBMI membership prior to his passing in 2013.

This brings us to our second concern. It has only been recently that FTBMI has been able to use the Garcia Cooke genealogy as part of their argument for criteria 87(a), 87(b), and 87(c), claiming those from Francis Garcia Cooke line, including Charlie Cooke and some from the Mary Cooke family. Let us be clear, most descendants of Frances Garcia Cooke remain enrolled with the SFBMI, including Vice Chair Donna Yocum and Charlie Cooke's (b) (6). It is only within the past year that a number of Mary Cooke's descendants relinquished their membership with the SFBMI enrollment and joined with FTBMI led by Rudy Ortega, Jr. However, a number that have enrolled with Rudy Ortega's group did not relinquish from our enrollment prior to joining with FTBMI, and therefore SFBMI still houses their original records. Included within those records are those of Charlie Cooke and many from the Mary Cooke Garcia family, to name a few.

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The third concern that we have pertains to genealogical misidentifications in the FTBMI petition. One example pertains to the ancestry of Maria Josefa Leyva, the mother of Frances Cooke Garcia and Petra Garcia Valenzuela. In the Supplementary and Updated Information pertaining to Criterion 87.3(a), there is a conflation of identity between two different women, both named Eugenia on p. 26. One was the maternal grandmother of Maria Josefa Leyva, and another was Eugenia Mendez, a member of the Tejon Indian Tribe who was interviewed by John P. Harrington in 1916-17.

Maria Josefa Leyva's grandmother Eugenia, was baptized on September 17, 1817, the daughter of Francisco del Espiritu Santo and Teofila Giguico (Mission San Fernando Baptism no. 2298). Thus, she cannot be the same individual as Eugenia Mendez, who told Harrington that she was the daughter of former Mission Indians named Basilio and Rosenda. No baptismal record has been matched with this Eugenia, but her mother Rosenda's baptism occurred on March 1, 1835 at Mission San Fernando (Baptism no. 2842). Basilio and Rosenda are listed in the 1852 California State Census living at Piru, and Eugenia Mendez told Harrington that as a young girl she lived at Piru with her parents. Thus, Eugenia Mendez is about thirty years younger and has different parents than the Eugenia who was the mother of Leandra Culeta and grandmother of Maria Josefa Leyva. We recognize the difficulties in matching historically known individuals with their corresponding baptismal records from mission registers and only bring up this issue here because it directly pertains to ancestral information that will be presented in our own petition for federal acknowledgement.

Both the Fernandefio Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and the San Fernando Band of Mission Indians met in August of 2015 at the request of FTBMI to discuss the two tribes uniting as a merged tribal entity. Unfortunately, after much debate SFBMI could not agree to the other group's terms, and FTBMI would not agree with our counter proposal. Therefore the San Fernando Band declined the merge.

The San Fernando Band of Mission Indians has worked tirelessly for many years preparing for our petition to be submitted to the Office of Federal Acknowledgement seeking recognition as an Indian Tribe and we will continue until such time that, that is accomplished. And in doing so, we will continue to claim the Garcia Cooke line to be included in our petition.

It is not our intention to sabotage the petition submitted by FTBMI, but rather to point out facts that should be noted.

Sincerely,



John Valenzuela,
Chairman
San Fernando Band of Mission Indians



Donna Yocum
Vice-Chair
San Fernando Band of Mission Indians



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Newhall, CA 91322

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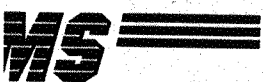
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