

Exemption 6

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

Leon Worden

(b) (6)

March 17, 2016

Ref: Petitioner #158: Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of federal recognition for the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

By way of background, I have lived since 1970, at age 7, in the Santa Clarita Valley area of North Los Angeles County, where the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (Fernandeno-Tataviam) is recognized as the local tribe.

One of my earliest memories of the Santa Clarita Valley is accompanying my mother in 1971 on a UCLA Archaeological Survey dig of Pinga/Piibit, a Tataviam village in Elderberry Canyon that was subsequently inundated by the manmade Castaic Lake Reservoir. Some of the artifacts from that dig are on display at the museum in Newhall operated by the Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society (SCVHS), of which I later became president.

I continue to serve on the SCVHS board and as a director of several other local historical organizations within the Tataviam sphere, such as Friends of Mentryville (Pico Canyon section of Newhall) and Rancho Camulos Museum (site of a former Tataviam village in the Piru area). As a board member for William S. Hart Park and Museum in Newhall, I am the chairman of the committee responsible for organizing the annual all-nations Hart Park Powwow and work closely toward that end with members of the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians such as Ted Garcia, the powwow's spiritual leader.

From the late 1990s to 2007 I was an editor (business editor, then city editor, then editor) of the local newspaper in "our half" of North Los Angeles County, The Signal

newspaper. Throughout my tenure there, The Signal newspaper recognized the Tataviam Indians as our local tribe and reported on the activities of Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal members such as Charlie Cooke, Rudy Ortega Sr. and Rudy Ortega Jr.

Since 2007, I have been president and CEO of SCVTV, which operates the local television channel (news, sports, entertainment, history) for our half of North Los Angeles County under contract with a consortium of governmental entities including the City of Santa Clarita, College of the Canyons, the William S. Hart Union High School District, and the Newhall, Saugus, Sulphur Springs and Castaic elementary school districts. Independently, SCVTV has the Santa Clarita Valley's largest online media footprint, in terms of viewership, through SCVTV's four main platforms (SCVTV.com, SCVNews.com, SCVHistory.com and the college news site, CougarNews.com). SCVTV, both on television and online, has always recognized the Tataviam as our local tribe and has often featured the activities of Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal members.

While I do not speak for the city or the college or local school districts, I am personally aware that each of those local government agencies recognizes the Fernandeano-Tataviam as our local tribe. Some examples: The City of Santa Clarita notices the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians on development applications. College of the Canyons history instructors teach about Tataviam lifeways. SCVHS members work with local school teachers in the development of curriculum and expose schoolchildren to the history of the Tataviam through guided museum tours (using the aforementioned artifacts as a teaching tool).

Also, I am personally aware that the Santa Clarita Valley's largest housing developer, The Newhall Land and Farming Co. (Newhall Land), recognizes the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians as the local tribe, as reflected in various Environmental Impact Reports for Newhall Land projects; and it has executed one or more agreements with the Fernandeano-Tataviam for future activities. Also, subsequent to Newhall Land's excavation of a particular Native American archaeological site (CA-LAN-3043), Newhall Land conveyed its 7,000 artifacts to SCVHS and effected the participation of Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal members, including Rudy Ortega Jr. and Charlie Cooke, in a conveyance ceremony on Nov. 15, 2007.

I am also personally aware that Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal representatives are routinely recognized by many other government agencies and officials, including the County of Los Angeles and Members of Congress. Two recent illustrative examples: In February 2015, Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal representatives participated in the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation's dedication of the refurbished Placerita Canyon Nature Center; and in August 2015, the County of Los Angeles, together with U.S. Rep. Steve Knight, invited Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal representatives to participate in a press conference announcing legislation to protect certain lands within the Tataviam sphere.

Since launching our community's large online history archive (SCVHistory.com) in 1996, it has been my pleasure to work closely with archaeologists, authors, academicians and dozens of Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal members to trace the history of the Tataviam from prehistoric through modern times. Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal members and their ancestors have been active members of our Santa Clarita Valley community for a long time, and their activities are well documented – from first contact in 1769 to their removal to the Mission San Fernando in the late 1700s-early 1800s to their subsequent return to their ancestral homes. The archive includes reports on land disputes in the late 1880s, photographs of Fernandeano-Tataviam tribal members and their ancestors as school children in Newhall in the 1910s-20s-30s and beyond, and as vital community members today with a strong sense of family and tribal identity. (Note: By design, the SCVHistory.com archive focuses on the Santa Clarita Valley portion of the Fernandeano-Tataviam territory. A work in progress, it is incomplete with respect to descendants living in the San Fernando Valley.)

It is in the sincerest terms that I encourage the Department of the Interior to recognize the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians as a sovereign nation whose roots in the Santa Clarita Valley, and whose continued contributions to the Santa Clarita Valley community over the decades, and whose practice and furtherance of traditional Tataviam lifeways, it has been my pleasure to document and publicize.

Sincerely,



LEON WORDEN

CEO, SCVTV

Director, Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Director, Friends of Hart Park and Museum

Director, Rancho Camulos Museum

Director, Friends of Mentryville

Cc:

Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians

Hon. Steve Knight, Member of Congress

Hon. Bob Kellar, Mayor, City of Santa Clarita

Alan Pollack, President, Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society

Hon. Laurene Weste, President, Friends of Hart Park and Museum

Judith Triem, President, Rancho Camulos Museum

James McCarthy, President, Friends of Mentryville