



July 17, 2024

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Washington, DC

Department of the Interior  
Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs  
Attention: Office of Federal Acknowledgment  
Mail Stop 4071 MIB  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Bryan Newland,

Hello. My name is Dr. Tiffany S. Lee. I am Chair and Distinguished Professor of Native American Studies at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. I am writing to support the re-acknowledgment of Petition #404—Chihene Nde Nation of New Mexico. This tribe's rich history is not part of a singular Chiricahua Apache history. The term Chihene describes the tribe's connection to the Greater Gila region. This tribe comprised of Gila Apache are the treaty signers' descendants, making their identity unambiguous. The tribe was historically known as the "Rio Mimbres and Rio Gila Apaches" of 1853 and the "Mimbres Bands of Gila Apache" of 1855. Before U.S. occupation, the tribe signed multiple treaties with Spain and Mexico. Given the tribe's unambiguity, it should only be assessed on the minimum three criteria described in 25 CFR Part 83. Its historical presence and contributions to the region are undeniable and deserve recognition. Tribal elders have now directed the next generation to petition the federal government to preserve its language, identity, and ongoing culture. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the handwritten signature of Dr. Tiffany S. Lee.

Tiffany S. Lee, Ph.D. (Diné & Lakota)  
Distinguished Professor and Chair  
Native American Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of New Mexico