

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

Re: Petition #404—Chihene Nde Nation of New Mexico

August 6, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

As a recently retired federal archaeologist working in Socorro and Catron Counties for 24 years, and with a special interest in Apache history, I was stunned to discover this band of Gila Apache who were settled farmers. I found it exhilarating. Their case for federal recognition is well-researched and compelling.

I 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.

Sincerely,

Brenda Wilkinson, Archaeologist (Retired)

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Socorro, New Mexico
87801
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