

Thad Randall Nodine, Ph.D.

California 95060

March 3, 2025

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

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DOI/OS/AS-IA/OFA
Washington, DC

Dear Office of Federal Acknowledgment,

As a community member of California's Central Coast, I am writing to express my strong support for petition #406 for federal recognition and acknowledgment of the Salinan Tribe of Monterey and San Luis Obispo Counties, CA (Salinan Tribe). The Salinan Tribe is a vibrant and interrelated body of individuals and families who enjoy direct lineage to and who maintain the political, economic, linguistic, and cultural heritage of the T'epot'aha'l People—now referred to as Salinans—whose traditional lands for 10,000 years have been in Central California from the Pacific Ocean east to the Temblor Mountains.

Many California tribes are unique, when compared with other tribes throughout the United States, in that they suffered the loss of their land in totality. That is, they were not provided with reservations or other land holdings where they could continue their political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and spiritual practices. Secondly, they lost all of their land despite the fact that they were relatively peaceful in accommodating the three primary waves of foreign settlers who brought their political, economic, and cultural practices to California—first the Spanish missionaries in 1769, secondly the Mexican Rancheros with Mexican independence in 1821, and third the Americans with the Treaty of Hidalgo in 1848. Since first contact, the Salinan Tribe has been one of the most peaceful tribes in the United States and yet they lost all their land.

Being landless, without citizenship, and without access to their traditional food supplies after California gained statehood in 1850, the Salinan People suffered from impoverishment and hunger. The loss of land also meant that they did not have access or authority to use historical sites where they had always met together, practiced their traditions, and passed these traditions on from elders to grandchildren.

Nonetheless, as petition #406 substantiates, the Salinan People continued to meet together to maintain their political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and spiritual practices. Evidence of this continuity can be found through two key sites in the historical record. First, the Encinales family established residency and ownership at a remote site called The Indians Ranch, near Mission San Antonio de Padua, from the desecularization of the missions until the 1880s. Second, when they were forced to leave The Indians Ranch due to fraudulent

land grant implementation, they moved to another remote location called Toro Creek where they again established residency and ownership. They were forced to leave this land through similar means in 1929, this time by a powerful land and cattle company.

Most of the news media and academic research from 1850 to 1950 depicted Indians and Indian culture as vanishing—a bygone era. This was a difficult and challenging period for the Salinan People, but they persisted. The evidence shows that at The Indians Ranch and at Toro Creek, the Salinan People were able to continue their political, economic, cultural, linguistic, and spiritual practices.

Today, the Salinan Tribe deserves federal recognition so that Salinan culture can continue to thrive and Salinan elders can continue to pass along their traditions to their grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Thad R. Nodine, Ph.D.