

March 8, 2022

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary–Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1849 C Street NW, MS–4071 MIB
Washington, DC 20240

Regarding Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSMN), CA

Dear Assistant Secretary,

I have lived in Southern Sierra Miwuk territory for three decades, working as a teacher, librarian, educational-non-profit-manager (among other roles). In that time I have observed and attended numerous social and cultural events hosted by the SSMN such as traditional gatherings and ceremonies that predate, and survived, the arrival of Europeans. It is a given among all local people here (native or non-) that the tribe is and has always been a viable entity, a true Nation according to the current definition.

The California Gold Rush contained one of the most devastating ecocides and genocides known to humanity. The state and federal government acknowledged the presence of native people when bounties were placed upon their heads. It was not only *legal to kill native people here, it was rewarded*. The fact that descendants exist at all is testimony to their strength, creativity and resilience; and a deep bond to this place. And yet our government holds them accountable for how they survived: temporarily relocating to safer areas (or in recent years to areas with educational and economic opportunities, which this mountain region often lacks), while always keeping a connection to their ancestral home. The standard for recognition needs to take into consideration that these lands were seized and overrun in a very brief period of time, and that the ensuing economies have been in many ways exclusive against all but the most privileged in our society.

As an American citizen, it is disturbing to witness the Orwellian labyrinth that the SSMN has been forced to navigate in their quest for a well-deserved Nation-to-Nation relationship with the US government. That their ancestors were targeted for genocide, and they now must prove that they exist, is mind boggling. It is concerning that they, and other tribes, have encountered what I can only describe as sabotage. (My own Menominee ancestors were “terminated” in 1954 and fought to win recognition again a full 19 years later.) Let us please change this pattern, and finally end the genocide which in modern times manifests in the disappearance of languages and landscapes. Let us acknowledge the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation: they are who they say they are.

Regarding Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSMN), CA (cont'd.)

I have high hopes that the current administration will reverse the historic pattern of denying and revoking recognition, up through the most recent administration. I have faith that the current administration is sincere in its efforts to attain a truly representative government, and to reverse past wrongs.

Indigenous knowledge and cultures hold a valuable place in the American landscape and culture. For instance, as we face devastating wildfires, California tribes are leading the way in fire management practices, often advising state and federal agencies. With the collapse of butterfly, bee and other pollinator populations, SSMN is currently operating a program of native plant restoration to support pollinators, which are necessary to the perpetuation of all life.

It is my understanding that the SSMN has FOIA requests pending. Respectfully, I request that you answer these requests within the legal timeframe, accommodate the unique challenges facing native survivors of the California Gold Rush, and move forward with the recognition process in good faith and a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Roxann Mulvey
PO Box 684
Mariposa, California 95338

Cc: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation
ssmiwuknation@gmail.com