



May 21, 2019

Department of the Interior Office of the Assistant Secretary
Indian Affairs Attention Office of Federal Acknowledgement
1849 C Street, N.W. MS-4071-MIB Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Department of the Interior Office of the Assistant Secretary,

On behalf of CASA of Mariposa County, I am honored to write a letter in support of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation in their petition for Federal Acknowledgement.

CASA of Mariposa County serves children and families who are in the foster care system in Mariposa County. We provide volunteers who advocate for children to be in a safe, loving and permanent home as quickly as possible. Federal Acknowledgement of the Southern Sierra Miwuk, would mean that children of this tribe would be granted ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) status in the courtroom in dependency cases. Without federal recognition, the children who come into the foster care system who are Miwuk are not granted ICWA status.

Without ICWA status, the culture and community of these children is often in jeopardy or ignored. Culturally sensitive services for the family are not guaranteed; tribal customary adoptions are not available; and foster home placement options are restricted to the small number of foster homes we have in the county.

Although we are a rural county with a small population, the Southern Sierra Miwuk are the second largest ethnicity in Mariposa County. Therefore, Federal Recognition of this large and active tribe would open up numerous culturally appropriate foster home placement options, as well as the potential for adoption into these homes.

When a child is removed from their home and placed into foster care they lose everything. It is absolutely essential that their culture is maintained, or this too will add to the trauma that the system is trying to stop.

The Southern Sierra Miwuk are a flourishing, active tribe both in Mariposa and Yosemite. Members of this tribe hold positions in the Board of Supervisors, are owners of local businesses, hold leadership positions in local for-profit and non-profit entities, and are community leaders. In every classroom in Mariposa County there are children who are members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation. It is an honor to have grown up in Mariposa County and now work for CASA of Mariposa County. I grew up knowing the history of this land and knowing that the grinding stones in our back yards were made by the ancestors of the South Sierra Miwuk children whom I went to school with. The Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation is overdue for Federal Acknowledgement and it is hurting the families and children we serve. Please grant them recognition.

Sincerely,

Izzi Stalder
CASA Program Coordinator
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