

May 20, 2019

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

Subject: Petitioner # 82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, California Petition for Federal Recognition

To the Respected Officials of the U.S. Office of Federal Acknowledgement -

My name is Tišina Ta-till-ium Parker. I am a member of the **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation** of Mariposa/Yosemite and a descendant of legendary basket maker Lucy Telles and the grand daughter of Ralph and Julia Parker. The lineage of my ancestors is of **Southern Sierra Miwuk**, Mono Lake Paiute & Kashia Pomo Tribes. Like many Indigenous contemporary Natives, I have mixed tribal blood, yet by birth have ties to the sacred traditional land of Yosemite & Mariposa. My tribal affiliation is strongly identified as **Southern Sierra Miwuk**.

I was born just outside of Yosemite in the foothills of Mariposa, CA. I have been connected and participating as an active tribal member in cultural gatherings and activities of my tribe, **Southern Sierra Miwuk** since I was born. My first memories are of sitting by my Grandmother Julia's side entranced with her, asking questions of learning basket weaving. I was raised going to ceremony in the Yosemite roundhouse, memories of Miwuk dancers dressed in feather capes and buckskin silhouetted against the flickering flames of the fire. I would often fall asleep on the sacred earthen ground inside the roundhouse and awaken to smoke snaking through the purple skies of the breaking daylight illuminated through the center of the roundhouse that faced up toward the sky, the towering granite rocks and majestic Yosemite falls above. As a young girl I learned to bead collars and intricate beadwork in the **SSM** tribal office cultural craft programs. For decades I have walked the mountains of Yosemite through the Sierras on the trails of my ancestors, walking in sync with my **Southern Sierra Miwuk** cousins, aunties, uncles, elders on our annual "Traditional Walk" which is a cultural journey that brings tribal members back to our sacred homeland. With my family, my Grandfather Ralph Parker, a direct descendant of the territory claimed as traditional land of **Southern Sierra Miwuk**, and my Grandmother Julia Parker who married into this tribal community, my family has been residing in our ancestral territory and actively creating/participating in the **SSM** tribal community our entire lives.

The **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation**, through generations of inter-tribal basket weavers, cultural carriers, craft people, spiritual leaders, community organizers, is one of most prolifically known Indigenous tribal groups of California. Before the founding of Yosemite as a National Park in 1890, my ancestors have been acknowledged as Indigenous people to the Yosemite/Mariposa and wider reaching areas. As generations passed, tribelets have intermarried and intermingled and formed the banded unified group today known as the **Southern Sierra Miwuk**. Our tribal legacy as people Indigenous to this territory is widely documented throughout history. Pictures, artifacts, stories of my family and ancestors are used as cultural attractions at the Yosemite Indian Museum operated by the US Federal Government. This museum visited by millions of visitors per year tells the story of our ancestors, our connection to our tribal homeland, and historically documents interactions with the US Government. Current tribal members, crafts people, community leaders and spiritual leaders have been interacting here with tourists since the first days the museum came into existence. Documented proof of my **SSM** ancestors, tribal leaders and community exists throughout the well recorded history of the European settlement of the Yosemite/Mariposa and surrounding areas. To deny that our tribal group, **Southern Sierra Miwuk** did not and has not continuously existed as a distinct tribal community tied to the land in question is a blatant distortion of the truth.

As a distinct cultural group Indigenous to the Yosemite/Mariposa and surrounding areas, the **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation** has carried on our cultural, spiritual and community practices since before European Settlers first happened upon our tribal territory. Since the re-creation of our roundhouse in Yosemite, **Southern Sierra Miwuks** have been holding and hosting cultural Bear Dance healing ceremonies and round house dances that bring other California tribal communities to our traditional homeland of Yosemite. The ceremonial use of our roundhouse, which was re-established in the 1970's under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, gave back our rights to practice traditional ceremony on our sacred homeland. Since then our Yosemite roundhouse has been a consistently used as a ceremonial gathering and worshipping location for thousands of people in the wider California American Indian community and continues to be a vibrant cultural hub for contemporary Indigenous spiritual practices. It could be said that our prolifically active roundhouse and ceremonial practices helped revive ceremonies in other Indigenous communities throughout the entire state who had lost their ceremonies prior to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Today the SSM Yosemite roundhouse continues to be an active location for California native ceremony and the building of our new roundhouse on the site of Wahhoga in Yosemite is an example of the thriving, contemporary cultural and spiritual community of the **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation**.

Since the beginning of colonial contact **Southern Sierra Miwuk** people have been culturally relevant and a notable, distinct Indigenous community of California. Today our tribal people, though many of us live in poverty due to lack of profitable work opportunities, poor access to higher education/job training, homelessness/no access to landbase, racist policies against our people, etc., we continue to practice our cultural ways on the very same land our ancestors have resided for thousands of years. Throughout the decades **SSM** people have been creating positive relationship with the land gathering traditional medicinal cultural wild foods and plants, basket materials and telling the ancient stories of our people. We have supported our Indigenous **SSM** tribal community with opportunities to scholarship funds through our non-profit the American Indian Council of Mariposa County. We have consistently hosted cultural events throughout the years such as BIG TIME in Yosemite, a ceremonial and celebratory gathering of our people open to the public, the Mariposa Powwow, hundreds of Bear Dance ceremonies in our Yosemite roundhouse, our annual cultural Walk over the Sierras, taught traditional craft and basket classes to our youth, held ceremonial sweats and hosted many, many more cultural gatherings. In the generations before and in our contemporary tribal community, there is no doubt that the **SSM** have continued to be a distinct tribal group Indigenous to the Yosemite/Mariposa area, our cultural activities and long documented history show this fact.

As an Indigenous person, descendant of the original people of the sacred land of Yosemite/Mariposa and a member of the **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation** I urge the Office of Federal Acknowledgment and the Office of Interior of the U.S. Government to do what is right and grant Tribal Recognition to the people of the **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation**. To deny this rightful acknowledgement would be a horrific shame of the American people and would effectively deny cultural personhood, and erase the acknowledged history and important cultural impact that the **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation** has made on the historical and contemporary fabric of Native America and our country as a whole. As public servants to our Nation, law makers, educated historians, ethnographers, genealogists, anthropologists, this is your time to act in retribution to an entire Indigenous community who has survived the genocide that has marred the creation of this country. This is your chance to right what has been wronged and acknowledge that the people of the **Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation** have and do exist as a legitimate tribal community Indigenous to one of the most celebrated and visited locations on our beloved Earth. **Grant the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation U.S. Federal Recognition status.**

Respectfully submitted,



Tishina Ta-till-ium Parker

Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation - Member

www.southernsierramiwuknation.org

To: Department of Interior
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Indian Affairs
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From Robert Stanley Rust
Subject:
Letter of support Petitioner #82
Southern Miwok Nation.

Hello I am Robert Rust writing you this letter in support of my people.

A little history on myself my father James Calvin Rust born in 1904 died in 1999 California roll number 55519 his mother Grace Hinks daughter of Maria Labrado Ydrte Daughter of Chief Tenya of the Yosemite Indians (Awhaneechi). So I'm just a few generations removed from Yosemite. Which I still call home regardless where I lay my head.

In Yosemite's visitor center you can hear my great grandmother's story of how soldiers came and burned the village. Then there are the pictures of her and my grandmother making baskets and manzinita cider in the cultural area. When I was a young boy in Yosemite Valley I remember in helping (Playing) in the rafters of the round house and umacha's (Bark houses) and the sweat lodge. That was around 1975. We still use these Dwellings today for ceremonies. And with any luck and work schedule I will be afforded the opportunity to help rebuild the old village (wahhoga).

Since leaving home in Midpines California (in Mariposa county) to go into the U.S. Navy from 1986-1995 I would still find a way to participate in our ceremonies when home on leave. Most of these ceremonies dates and time are like our language, Traditions, history, and folk lore are by word of mouth and are alive and well today.

Today my biggest task is teaching my six children our customs and our way and language. Being an aircraft mechanic on aerial fire fighting aircraft this can be a challenge with fire seasons getting longer every year but still find time to make ceremonies whether in Mariposa or in Toulumne California. Because Miwok is not where you are, it's who you are.

So on this subject of tribal recognition even though we have blended into today's society we are still here and thriving. Having the benefits of tribal recognition to help the elders of our community and the children which is our future is so important to me.

So how can you not recognize someone the United States had a war with (Mariposa Indian War)? Do we not recognize Iraq, Germany, Viet Nam, North Korea?

Or how can you not recognize a people that had an influence on a state's history? Or nations history by having president's and queens visit our home land and talk of the beauty of the land and it's people. Still today we are having an influence on our state and nation by who we are and what we do.

So in closing I'm attaching reports from LT. Tredwell Moore pacific division on the Mariposa Indian war. From the national park service site on Yosemite Indians, the surviving communities of which several are recognized along with a little piece on my Great Grandmother Which the park service recognizes. Copy of fathers California Indian roll number.

Thank You
Robert S Rust



