

Letter to the Editor, Mariposa Gazette, sent September 11, 2020

Dear Editor:

The Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Mariposa County is writing this letter to publicly support the effort of the Tribal Council of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation in their effort to secure status as a Federally recognized Native American Tribe.

As we all know, the Southern Sierra Miwuk were the first inhabitants of this part of the central Sierra Nevada range that we all love so much; they were here centuries, nay millennia, before the arrival of European-Americans and other immigrants.

Before the pandemic, the Tribal Council had planned to hold several local public fundraising events to help them with the various expenses, especially legal expenses, connected with the application process: their budget goal is \$25,000.

The Mariposa Bahá'í Community has made a gift to the Council to assist with these expenses. We encourage all community members and organizations who can to make a contribution towards the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation's efforts to secure Federal tribal recognition from the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs; we especially encourage other local faith-based organizations to participate.

If we, as residents of Mariposa County descended from immigrants who arrived in North, Central, and South America in or after 1492, reflect on our collective past for a few moments, we surely will recognize that our Native American neighbors must be treated with fairness and dignity. Clearly, achieving Federal Tribal recognition cannot change the unnumbered injustices they have suffered over the past 500 plus years. Yet, as we all begin to learn more about this history and acknowledge the wrongs of the past, we can see how Federal Tribal recognition is a critical step towards restoring justice and honoring this community's history and heritage. Federal recognition will also provide access to community building resources not otherwise available. This will enhance efforts to reclaim and maintain important cultural aspects that have been weakened over the years — religion, language, traditions, local environmental knowledge, and Tribal history, among others—as efforts to rebuild a cohesive and whole community continue. No doubt, this will help strengthen the entire Mariposa County community as we move together into an uncertain future as one diverse, yet united, community.

To give a tax-deductible donation to their non-profit: The American Indian Council of Mariposa County (AICMC), checks can be sent to PO Box 186 Mariposa, CA 95338, **or** made online at <https://www.southernsierramiwuknation.org/get-involved> (scroll down to "**Make a Donation**").

Sincerely,

Phyllis Becker

Chair, Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Mariposa County