



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

**APR 19 2012**

Ms. Sandra L. Vasquez  
P.O. Box 1200  
Mariposa, California 95338

Dear Ms. Vasquez:

The Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation AKA the American Indian Council of Mariposa County (Petitioner #82) is under active consideration for a proposed finding (PF) in the Federal acknowledgment process. The Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) is in the process of reviewing Petitioner 82's documented petition and has identified technical problems that need to be resolved in order to complete the review for the PF.

Most important, the SSM petitioner still is compiling its membership file vital records for each member of the group. A phone conversation between OFA and SSM petitioner, including its attorney Stephen Quesenberry on April 3, 2012, revealed that approximately 40 percent of the SSM members (350 of 872) still need to provide birth certificates. These vital records are critical in documenting current petitioner members back to the historical Yosemite tribe.

To help relieve part of this burden on the SSM Petitioner, OFA is pulling records from the Bureau of Indian Affairs' 1950 and 1972 "Indians of California" Distribution database. This Distribution required individuals to submit to the Department birth certificates to prove their descent starting with documenting themselves to their parents. Once the individual's claim was supported by the vital records, the documents were returned to the claimant. Although copies of the original birth records were not kept as part of the record, information was retained on a distribution document. The Pacific Region digitized these distribution documents for 1950 and 1972, and OFA has access to this database. During this extension OFA will pull copies of those current members to help show birth information and parentage, specifically the complete birth name of the individual, the date of birth, and names of parents. We will then be able to cross check this 1950 and 1972 "Indians of California" information with the California Birth Index (available through Ancestry.com) which provides birth names, dates of birth, and mother's surnames. In other words, in the absence of a birth certificate, OFA can combine and accept data from both a member's 1950 or 1972 "Indians of California" Distribution record and his or her entry on the California Birth Index. By finding a member listed on the California Birth Index, OFA would be assured that an original birth record is on file with the California State Department of Health Vital Statistics.

This process will not help with SSM membership born after September 21, 1968, the statutory date used for the 1972 distribution. The SSM petitioner will have to provide the vital information for membership born after September 21, 1968, and regardless of OFA's assistance should eventually have all the vital records for its entire membership on file.

The task of connecting current petitioner members to the historical Yosemite tribe will be aided by the OFA researcher's recent discovery of a "Census of the Digger Indians of Yosemite District." The document was compiled July 19-30, 1912, by United States Field Matron Eleanor E. Tebbetts. The OFA researchers need to determine why the census was created and for what purpose. This document could have a critical impact on the SSM petition and could directly connect the petitioner's 1912 census ancestors to signers of a previous historical 1891 "Petition of the Yosemite Indians."

In addition, the recent release (Monday, April 2, 2012) of the 1940 United States Federal Census should provide critical data regarding ancestors (parents and grandparents) of the current SSM petitioner. Combined with earlier Federal census materials, the 1940 U.S. Federal Census will help provide a better understanding of the SSM petitioner's ancestors and their connections to the historical Indian tribe.

For the above reasons, the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs found good cause to suspend the date for issuance of the PF under §83.10(g) by 180 days, to Monday, October 29, 2012. This will allow Petitioner #82 time to finish compiling membership file vital records.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Federal Acknowledgment, 1950 Constitution Avenue, N.W., MS: 34-SIB, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Lee Fleming". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Director, Office of Federal Acknowledgment

cc: Interested Parties