

Exemption 6

RECEIVED

MAR 28 2016

DOI/AS-IA/OFA
Washington, DC

March 22, 2016

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1951 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Reference: Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan Guadalupe, Petition #5

To Whom It May Concern:

I am sending this information regarding the results of the City of Las Cruces recognizing The Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, and input of the other groups present. I am of Piro decedent.-, and was in the original petition until the dispute we had with the Roybals and was taken off the tribal roll.

Thank you very much for the consideration in this issue.

For more information please feel free to call me at (b) (6) or (b) (6) Las Cruces, NM 88001.

Natalia Melon

Natalia Melon
Piro woman

#0364

City council holds off on statement of support for tribe

Diana Alba Soular, Las Cruces Sun-News 8:20 p.m. MDT March 21, 2016



(Photo: Robin Zielinski / Sun-News)

LAS CRUCES - After two different tribal groups expressed conflicting stances, Las Cruces city councilors voted Monday to indefinitely postpone action on a statement of support for the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe in its quest for standing as a federally recognized tribe.

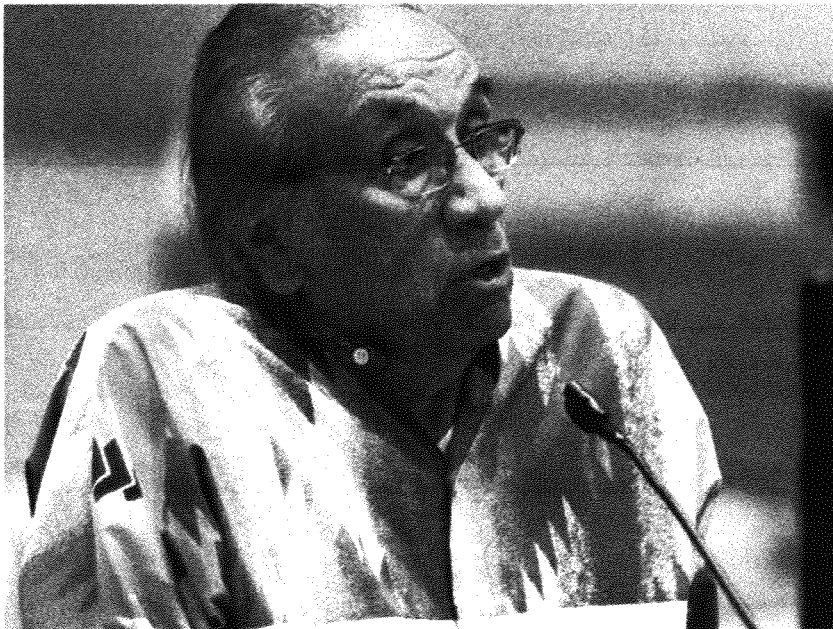
Some city councilors said they felt Monday's proposed statement of support would have forced them to choose one local tribal group over another.

But Las Cruces Mayor Pro Tem Greg Smith, who favored passing the statement argued that the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe has a documented heritage and is eligible to apply for federal status. He said that doesn't preclude any other tribal groups from petitioning the federal government for recognition as well. He noted, for instance, that among the Apache people, there are several tribes, such as the Mescalero and Jicarilla.

"We have this 'us' and 'them' mentality going on that I think is unfortunate," Smith said Monday.

The Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe is not officially recognized by the U.S. government. But the group has had a petition pending before the U.S. Department of the Interior since the 1970s. A 120-day comment period on its request to become a recognized tribe is set to end March 27, according to the federal government (<http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/OFA/PetitionsInProcess/Petition5/index.htm>). The second major group, Los Indigenes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, which organizes the large Our Lady of Guadalupe Fiesta (</story/news/local/2016/01/01/colorful-reflective-closing-ceremonies-annual-tradition/78195506/>) that takes place each December, also is not a federally recognized tribe or pueblo. It doesn't have an application pending before the U.S. government, but a tribal official told city councilors the organization, which is an incorporated entity, is considering a petition. Both groups attended the meeting in significant numbers Monday. A third, separate group that traces family lineage to the Piro people also was present but didn't address city councilors in the meeting.

Had the city council passed a statement of support, the letter would have been included in the feedback during the federal comment period on the Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe's request.



Edward Roybal, Piro-Manso-Tiwa casique, speaks at City Hall on Monday, March 21, 2016, asking city councilors to pass a statement favoring the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian Tribe's attempt to gain federal recognition. (Photo: Robin Zielinski / Sun-News)

But the fact that the council didn't approve the letter isn't a setback in the group's ongoing effort to gain federal standing, said Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribal leader Ed Roybal, who's known as the tribe's "cacique." He said the Piro-Manso-Tiwas have met seven criteria for becoming a federally recognized tribe.

"We're still in the process of federal recognition," he said after Monday's meeting.

Asked what changes federal tribal status would bring, Roybal said it could help his group access programs, celebrate its traditions and solidify the members.

"We don't have a place together," he said. "We need an area like everybody else has — an area to be in."

Roybal clarified, however, the tribe wouldn't automatically be granted land or a reservation, if the U.S. government grants the tribal status.



Arianna Fierro, president of Los Indigenes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, speaks at City Hall on Monday, March 21, 2016, to oppose the the statement favoring the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian Tribe's attempt to gain federal recognition. (Photo: Robin Zielinski / Sun-News)

Arianna Fierro, president of the Los Indigenes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, told city councilors that there's been "strife" between the two tribal groups for decades. She said the Piro-Manso-Tiwa group has made a number of allegations against the corporation and has laid claim to some of its artifacts. She said she was concerned that the Piro-Manso-Tiwa group, if granted federal standing, would displace Los Indigenes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and that a resolution like the one proposed to city councilors would have a detrimental effect.

"We respectfully oppose this resolution," she said before the vote.

City Councilor Olga Pedroza said she felt like she was being asked to favor one group over the other and she was concerned that if one group got federal standing, that would exclude the second group. She said the decision on the proposed statement of support for the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe was "difficult" because it seemed more like a question for the courts.

Smith asked members of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe who were in the audience to stand. About 20 people stood up. Pedroza followed that up by asking opponents to the proposed statement of support to stand, and about 30 people rose from their seats.

City Councilor Ceil Levatino asked Fierro if there were any protections the federal government could grant to the corporation, if federal officials do decide to designate the Piro-Manso-Tiwas as an official tribe.

Fierro said she didn't think so.

Levatino said she agreed with Pedroza's stance on the proposed statement of support.

City Councilor Jack Eakman said the discord between the groups could cause them each to lose out on the standing eventually. City Councilor Gill Sorg had similar remarks.

"I wonder if there's not something more important than this 50-year-old battle," Eakman said. "I wonder if there could be some way that you could start thinking about coming together for a higher purpose than just preventing someone else from having something."

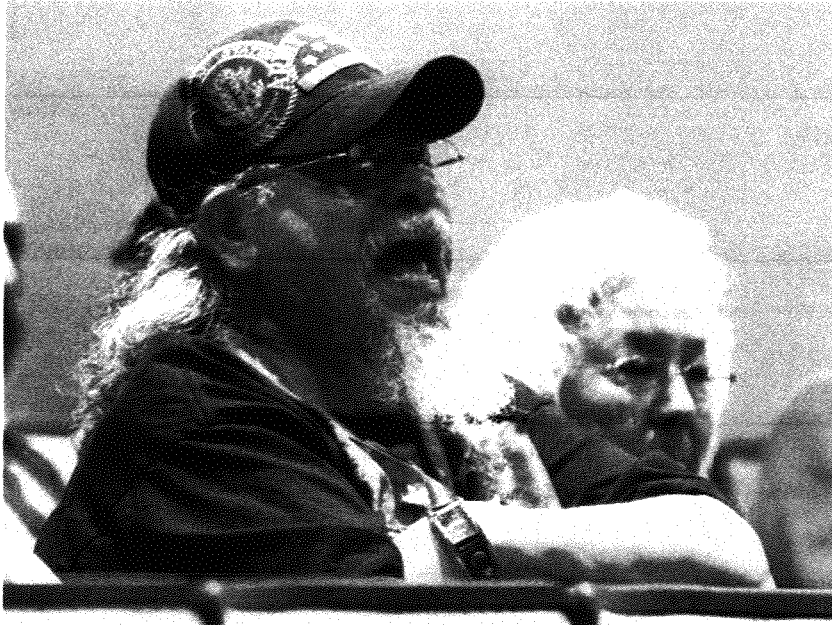
City councilors voted 6-1 to table the proposed statement of support indefinitely. Smith dissented.

Aundrea Lopez, 20, of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe, said after the meeting she was disappointed in the decision because the group has its evidence in order.

"They didn't take time to read our petition online," she said. "We want a place we could celebrate our way of life."

Lopez said a central aspect of the tribe's history is forced conversion to Catholicism by the Spanish. But the tribe has an identity that's apart from that. It has its own traditions, she said.

"We're not Catholic," she said.



← Brother-Guillermo Portillo Jr.
Natalia Melon of
Piro decedents

Guillermo Portillo Jr. reacts in the audience on Monday, March 21, 2016, as two tribal groups give presentations on a proposed statement of support by councilors in favor of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Indian Tribe's attempt to gain federal recognition. Portillo is part of a group that has ancestry linked to the Piro tribe which originated north of Socorro, New Mexico. (Photo: Robin Zielinski / Sun-News)

Guillermo Portillo Jr. said he and his family used to be affiliated with the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe, but ruffled feathers in the mid-'90s after asking questions about tribal members and organization, so they "threw us out of the tribe." Portillo said his family's ancestry stems from the Piro people, who lived north of Socorro, New Mexico, in the 1600s. That was until uprisings by Native Americans against the Spanish prompted a portion of tribal members to migrate south along with Rio Grande to the Juárez and El Paso areas. But a contingent of tribal members eventually made its way back north, settling in what's now Las Cruces.

The Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe is also requesting a statement of support from the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners, an item that will be voted upon Tuesday. That meeting starts at 9 a.m. at the county government center, 845 N. Motel Blvd., Las Cruces.

Also Monday, the city councilors recognized the Las Cruces Kings football team, an amateur team that's on a 14-game winning streak.

Diana Alba Soular may be reached at 575-541-5443, dalba@lcsun-news.com (mailto:dalba@lcsun-news.com) or [@AlbaSoular](https://twitter.com/AlbaSoular) (<http://twitter.com/AlbaSoular>) on Twitter.

Read or Share this story: <http://lcsun.co/1RgHfjO>

Compose

Archive Move Delete Collaborate All

Reference: Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the P... (2) People

Natalia Melon <pironmelon@yahoo.com> Mar 16 at 8:29 PM
To: kgandara@las-cruces.org, gsorg@las-cruces.org, jnickman@las-cruces.org, clevatino@las-cruces.org, opedraza@las-cruces.org and 3 more...

To all City Council and Mayor:

I, Natalia Melon, Frank Portillo, Guillermo Portillo Jr., Mary Lou Lascano, David Portillo, Leroy Portillo, Yolanda Padilla and Viola Coca are Piro descendants and are submitting reasons as to why we are opposing the City of Las Cruces not to recognize the Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of San Juan Guadalupe, Petition #5.

Ed Roybal Tribal Council are from out of town, had not lived here in Las Cruces since the 40's for reason that his father Victor Roybal had been banned from Las Cruces for reasons that Mr. Roybal would come from California and take the fiesta money and went back to California. Fifty (50) years later, the sons came back and want to be Indians and bring back traditional, cultures, prayers and dressing ways, but as Lakota. We are Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indians in this area.

My father, Guillermo Portillo Sr., and my uncles Luciano Avalos, Ricardo Portillo, Ernest Portillo, Robert Avalos and others, applied for federal recognition in Albuquerque, NM in 1972. In 1981 the BIA send a federal agent to do our research which was Terry Reynolds and was assisted by Historian Mary Taylor. During this research they were threatened by Louis Roybal and Ed Roybal, because they asked them questions about the years 50's-70's and they couldn't answer because they didn't live here so how were they going to know that information since they didn't live here during these years, so they had to stop the researched. Apparently by Terry Reynolds we would have been recognized at this time. Again, they returned in 1990's an since they were my dad's (Guillermo Portillo) cousins we joined them and started having ceremonies and were doing really good because since they didn't know the ceremonial ways we starting sharing with the Roybals, but we couldn't understand why they were performing Lakota ways, but still kept going with our ways. Some where along the years we got grant money to use and with that money we opened an office, which was run by Andrew Roybal, which we were than disappointed again by them, because Andrew Roybal was never in the office, the office was a house and Andrew and the girlfriend lived there rent free because it was getting paid thru grant money as the office as well as they were both getting paid a monthly sum for working there. So we ran out of money really fast. Later we found out that the reason that the office was always closed was because Andrew was working with a cousin and finishing his degree here at NMSU, during office hours. So in 1994 my dad Guillermo Portillo Sr., passed away, so my brother started asking them (the Roybals) questions, and we don't know what they were hiding so they starting giving us trouble and then in 1995 they threw us out of the tribe and starting sending us Cease and Descease letters and newspaper articles throwing all my family out of the Piro/Manso/Tiwa Tribe. All the years that we could have gotten recognized it has been the Roybal family that has made trouble and we have had trouble getting recognized. This petition was done when we were with them(the Roybals) that is why we feel that they should not be recognized by the City of Las Cruces or the BIA.

Our ancestors go way back to the 1200 and 1300 centuries. We were brought as slaves to the Juarez areas in the 1600's before the 1680 revolt. Our ancestors (Piros and Mansos) built the Guadalupe Mission in Juarez. We returned back to Las Cruces in 1848-1849 and settled in Las Cruces. Our Piro lands up north were ruins and the drought is reason why we didn't go back to the Piros land. Between 1910-1914 my Great-Aunt Francisca Avalos Roybal, was the Cacique and My Great-Grandfather Senobio Avalos was assistant Cacique, in Tortugas.

We feel that we have lost enough already, our land our language but we still thrive with what we have left and continue with it. A lot of our elder ancestors have already passed, but we have learned all of our elder ways and have kept it in our hearts and share them during our feast days in December which is the Virgin de Guadalupe Feast Day. All of our feast days are to honor our patron saint.

This is one of the main reasons we cannot let the Piro/Manso/Tiwa Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan Guadalupe, Petition #5 be recognized by the BIA or City of Las Cruces. The first thing they want to do is take over the land in Tortugas and make the people there sell or move if they are not Indians, they don't have a heart, and anything else that the city has that used to belong to any of our ancestors.

Speaking for all my family don't get me wrong I would love to get all this recognition from the City of Las Cruces and BIA because we want everybody to know we are here, our ancestors started this and also have been fighting for this all our lives, but not for the Roybals to get it and us to be left out. All hell will break loose in Las Cruces they represent all the families. Especially since they have people in the tribal roll that are not Indians.

Thank you for any consideration given to my request.

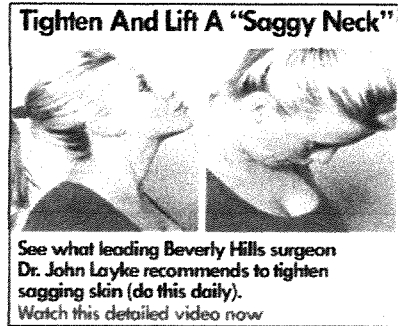
If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 575-650-1945 or 1116 Dove Lane, Las Cruces, NM 88001

Natalia Melon
Representing The Piro Family

Reply, Reply All or Forward | More

Greg Smith Thank you, Ms. Melon, I appreci Mar 17 at 9:26 AM

Click to Reply, Reply All or Forward



PLACE STICKER AT TOP OF ENVELOPE TO THE RIGHT OF THE RETURN ADDRESS. FOLD AT DOTTED LINE.

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

Complete items 1, 2, and 3.
Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.
Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.

Article Addressed to:
*Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary
Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1951 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20240*

A. Signature
[Handwritten Signature] Agent Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) C. Date of Delivery

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? Yes No
If YES, enter delivery address below:

RECEIVED
MAR 28 2016
DOI/AS-IA/OFA
Washington, DC



3. Service Type
- Adult Signature
 - Adult Signature Restricted Delivery
 - Certified Mail
 - Certified Mail Restricted Delivery
 - Collect on Delivery
 - Collect on Delivery Restricted Delivery
 - Insured Mail
 - Insured Mail Restricted Delivery (over \$500)
 - Priority Mail Express®
 - Registered Mail™
 - Registered Mail Restricted Delivery
 - Return Receipt for Merchandise
 - Signature Confirmation™
 - Signature Confirmation Restricted Delivery

2. Article Number (Transfer from service label)
015 1730 0001 2546 2440

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



First-Class Mail
Postage & Fees Paid
USPS
Permit No. G-10

Exemption 6

• Sender: Please print your name, address, and ZIP+4® in this box®

Natalia Melon

(b) (6)

LC, NM 88001

USPS TRACKING#



9590 9403 0654 5183 6471 05

(b) (6)

M. Melon
Las Cruces, NM

RECEIVED

MAR 28 2016

DOI/AS-IA/CEFA
Washington, DC

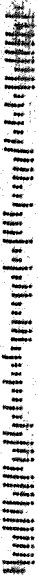
RETURN RECEIPT
REQUESTED

CERTIFIED MAIL



7015 1730 0001 2546 2440

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs
ATTN: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1951 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20240



U.S. POSTAGE PAID
LAS CRUCES, NM 88001
MAR 23 10
AMOUNT \$6.96
00104645-01