



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 12, 2018

Amah Mutsun Tribal Chairman Speaks at United Nations to Call for Protection of Tribal Sacred Site from Surface Mining Proposal

Chairman Valentin Lopez of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band announced today that he will speak on the floor of the United Nations in New York on Tuesday, April 17th, during the 17th Session of the United Nation's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Chairman Lopez will be calling the world's attention to the proposed sand and gravel mining proposal at Sargent Ranch in Gilroy, California Located on the southern border of Silicon Valley. The site, known to the Amah Mutsun as Juristac, is the location of the tribe's most sacred ceremonies and home to its spiritual leader, Kuksui.

For thousands of years and hundreds of generations Bighead dance ceremonies conducted at Juristac were the most important spiritual ceremonies of the Mutsun People and, as a result, the gentle hills and lands of Juristac were considered and remain sacred landscapes for the tribe. Since the days when their sacred ceremonies were conducted in peace at Juristac, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band experienced three different periods of brutal colonization; the Spanish/Mission period, the Mexican period and the American period. During these times, waves of successive colonizers sought to destroy and dominate the Mutsun people, their environments, spirituality and culture. Unfortunately, the destruction of Mutsun culture continues to this day. As Chairman Lopez explains, "The destruction and domination of our people never ended, it just evolved into the immoral laws and regulations that exist today. These laws allow governments to ignore Native American history, culture and spirituality. These laws allow our cultural and spiritual sites to be desecrated and monetized." Today there are very few Amah Mutsun cultural sites remaining within the tribal territory and the Tribe is determined to do all it can to ensure Juristac, its most sacred site, is permanently protected.

In addition to speaking on the floor of the United Nations, Lopez will also hold a press conference before the International Press Corps on Friday, April 20th and co-host a side meeting with international indigenous leaders on Tuesday, April 17th.

Chairman Lopez is attending the United Nations as a delegate of the American Indian Movement (AIM) – West. AIM-West Director Antonio Gonzales said, “The issues of lands, territories and natural resources are inextricably linked to sustainable development and self-determination. While attending the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues AIM-WEST delegates will bring attention to and hold extractive industry projects, who are also the number one threat to climate-change, on our lands, water and territories, by initiating a movement toward a globally binding instrument to hold them accountable.”

The Amah Mutsun working through their Amah Mutusn Land Trust and with many committed partners are calling on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors to acknowledge the difficult truth regarding the history of California Indians. “Please understand, we do not expect apologies,” said Lopez. “What we want is for Santa Clara County to deny the Sargent Ranch/Juristac mining proposal. This proposal will forever alter one of the few remaining sacred lands of our people. The impact of this mine to the Silicon Valley economy will be miniscule, the impact to this sacred land and to our people will be catastrophic.

For more information please contact:

Valentin Lopez, Chair
Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
916-743-5833

<http://www.protectjuristac.org/>
<http://amahmutsun.org>
<https://www.amahmutsunlandtrust.org/>