

**Juaneno Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation Passes Tribal Resolution Opposing Canonization of Junipero Serra and Calling on Pope Francis to Rescind the Doctrine of Discovery and Support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

*Ancestral Homeland of the Acjachemen People, San Juan Capistrano, CA*—On September 6, 2015, the Juaneno Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation passed an historic Tribal Resolution opposing the canonization of Junipero Serra and calling on Pope Francis to rescind the Doctrine of Discovery and support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The resolution states in part, that the Tribe “formally opposes the Canonization of Junipero Serra due to his association with, uplifting of, and support for Church and State doctrinal policies aimed at the eradication of Indigenous cultural, linguistic, and spiritual beliefs and practices and the far reaching and long lasting negative impacts on the Indigenous Peoples of this hemisphere and around the world as a result of such policies and practices.”

According to Tribal Chairman Matias Belardes, “The process of sainthood and canonization is symbolic—and Father Junipero Serra was a symbol of colonization. It is the uplifting of this symbol, particularly in light of Pope Francis’ recent apology to Indigenous peoples, to which we object. Serra was a man of his time, and that time was a period during which the very humanity of our Ancestors was called into question by the legal and religious doctrines espoused by the Church and State. We do not believe that such a man, nor such a time period should be celebrated.”

Earlier this year, Pope Francis raised an old controversy when he announced his decision to canonize Junipero Serra as a saint. Although many Catholics applaud the measure, Native Nations and the descendants of the survivors of Mission Era colonial policies have objected strenuously to the canonization of a man widely considered to be the father of the California mission system.

The Tribe is sending a delegation to participate in the Peoples Tribunal on the Doctrine of Discovery which will be held next week in the ancestral homelands of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community in Arizona and will also have a presence at Indigenous-led events in Philadelphia scheduled for the time period when the Pope will be in the United States and is expected to formally announce sainthood for Serra.

The Tribe is hopeful that the passage of this resolution will help encourage a dialogue with the Church, inspire collaborative research designed to tell a more complete, less biased story of the Mission System and specifically Serra’s role in colonization, and lead to the development of increased Indigenous presence at missions to further educate the public, the Church, and the world about the Mission Era in California.

The Juaneno Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation is a sovereign Indigenous Nation with ancestral territories in the area now known as Orange County. The Tribe continues to work at the local, state, federal and international level to advocate for the protection of the Tribe’s sacred places and to support the continuation of Juaneno culture for all time.

For more information please contact:

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