



Opposition to Koi Nation's Application for Gaming Facility in Sonoma County

My tribe, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, strongly opposes the Koi Nation's attempt to acquire 68 acres of land in trust for a casino and hotel in Santa Rosa, Sonoma County. This is an egregious attempt at reservation shopping outside the Koi Nation's traditional territory and within the territory of other federally recognized tribes.

The consensus among ethnohistorians is that the Koi Nation's ancestral roots are in the Lower Lake area of Lake County. In 1916, the federal government acquired a rancheria for the Koi Nation in Lake County. In fact, the Koi Nation was previously known as "Lower Lake Rancheria," a reflection of its geographic and cultural ties to the area, but changed its name in 2012, amid prior attempts to acquire a gaming site in the Bay Area. This attempt by the Koi Nation to manufacture a connection to Sonoma County is an affront to Sonoma County tribes such as our own, who have an extensively documented presence here. The Koi Nation has never been associated with Sonoma County, linguistically or culturally, as a people indigenous to its landscape. As an endowed chair and professor of American Indian history and literature for over 30 years, and having worked closely with renowned ethnohistorians and linguists, I can attest that the Koi Nation has no ties to Sonoma County. The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria are comprised of Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo people, the latter of which have strong ties to the cultural landscape in the County. We have distinct names and village sites. Our stories and traditions are tied to this cultural landscape. Our ancestors are buried here. All of Sonoma County is indigenous to the Southern and Southwestern Pomo language groups. The Koi Nation, a Southeastern Pomo tribe, has no ties or affiliation here. The Southeastern Pomo are indigenous to Lake County, specifically Lower Lake (Clear Lake).

The Koi Nation's attempt to push through a proposal to jump into other tribes' territory is wrong. Moreover, this is not the Koi Nation's first attempt at reservation shopping. In the early 2000s, the Koi Nation unsuccessfully attempted to acquire a reservation and build a casino near the Oakland International Airport. Then in 2014, the Koi Nation proposed a reservation and casino on Mare Island in the City of Vallejo, again failing. The Koi Nation now seems to be reviving its attempt to gain access to the Bay Area market through its most recent application for the Shiloh Road site. This effort ignores federal law requiring restored tribes to demonstrate a significant historical connection to the lands on which they propose to game. Clearly, they have no ties to this County.

Greg Sarris, Chairman, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria

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