



# SUSANVILLE INDIAN RANCHERIA

July 1, 2016

Ken Collum, Field Manager  
Bureau of Land Management  
Eagle Lake Field Office  
2550 Riverside Drive  
Susanville, California 96130

Re: SUSANVILLE INDIAN RANCHERIA RESPONSE TO THE DESECRATION OF  
SACRED SITE (TUCKER CAVE)

Dear Ken:

It is with a very heavy heart, and a bit of anger that I am sending this communication to you. On Tuesday, Melany Johnson informed me that an indigenous site has been desecrated. Naturally I was very concerned about this news, and eager to learn more. Melany presented photos to me for review, and the initial picture was immediately recognizable to me as a pictograph. Ms. Johnson informed me that this photo was taken from Tucker Cave in the Honey Lake Valley. This site, though not used by the Wadatjuta people anymore, is an extremely important place. This is a sacred site to the Northern Paiute people of Honey Lake. As I went through the photos I was disgusted to find what people have done to it.

As a Field Manager with the BLM, I am sure you are aware of the Tribe's feelings in regards to the many culturally sensitive areas in our region, especially medicine sites. In times like these, when we are shown the hurtful deeds of others towards our ancestry, we are reminded of a painful past that many who inhabit this Valley do not think about. I would like to share my perspective with you in the hope that it will motivate a sense of urgency.

As a little boy I used to imagine the old people living in the many areas I was told that they stayed in. Those thoughts gave me solace and pride in being an American Indian. While I am not full blooded, I have always been a Paiute. I often imagine the Valley before the invasion of non-Indians. There are no roads, no farms, cattle, or prisons. I can see the sun rising over the east shore of a water filled Honey Lake. There are fish in the rivers and tributaries, our four legged and winged relatives are in abundance and sharing the ground with us. I can smell the fires from a small family camp, and as I turn my head I see a group of Indian people. We are looking at each other, unable to speak because of a language barrier. Though the looks we share tells me that I am a part of them. They are my family. Me and my peoples' connection to the old ones is still very much alive. That is why this news of desecration is so hurtful us.

When I see vulgar words spray painted on a site like Tucker Cave I feel rage and a need to find the person, or people that have done this. The relatives of the people from the Susanville Indian

Rancheria have walked the Valley floors for thousands of years. They have made it through countless winters, the scourge of disease, and through the invasion of those who sought to take everything. We are their grandchildren, we are the descendants of survivors, and we are still here.

I pray that the Bureau of Land Management does all that it can to investigate this tragic event. In an effort of good faith, and to show the BLM that the Tribe is invested in the conviction of the people responsible for this, the Tribal Business Council of the Susanville Indian Rancheria is prepared to offer \$2,500 as a reward for tips that lead to a conviction of the responsible party.

The TBC respects the duties and capacity of the BLM. That said, we are asking that your Department construct a boundary, or fence sufficient enough to disallow entry of the Cave to the public, as it is clear to the Susanville Indian Rancheria that the public does not respect the sacred nature of our sites. Though this Cave is not on land held in trust by the Federal Government, it is still a site dear to the people of the SIR. I hope that you can understand our concerns and appreciate our requests. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Brandon D. Gutierrez  
Tribal Chairman

c.c.: SIR Tribal Business Council; SIR Natural Resources Department