



News Release

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Task Force Begins Work on Indian Cultural Center and Museum

SACRAMENTO – State Parks Acting Director Ruth Coleman today announced formation of a nine-member task force to begin planning creation of a new California Indian Cultural Center and Museum. Six of the task force members are California Indians.

“State Parks has been meeting with Indian groups throughout the state to help make the dream of a statewide Indian Center a reality, and formation of this task force created by the Legislature is a major step forward,” said Coleman, who will serve as executive secretary of the task force. The legislation creating the task force was last year’s SB 2063 by Sen. Jim Brulte.

“This task force will soon begin evaluating the location for construction of the center, which will draw people from not only around the state but from around the nation,” she said.

Sen. Brulte said, “Members of the Task Force have a challenging and rewarding job before them. The Indian Cultural Center and Museum will be a great resource for all Californians to learn and understand the journeys of native tribes; and will be a symbol of pride for the California Indian community.”

The Davis Administration has been a major supporter of the effort to create the California Indian Cultural Center and Museum. The facility will serve as a central place for Indian people from throughout the state to celebrate and preserve their past, and promote the continuation of their traditions. It also will be a place where California students, teachers, and families can learn about the history and heritage of California’s indigenous people and contemporary Indian life.

Preliminary plans for the museum include exhibit galleries and a theater, outdoor village recreations, native plant gardens and ceremonial areas. The estimated 60,000-square-foot structure will feature curation facilities, a research center and meeting rooms. The grounds will include areas for special events and traditional gatherings.

Building the museum will take place in phases, and when completed is expected to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

One of the first duties of the task force will be to recommend a location for the Center, which will serve as the hub of Native American cultural activities throughout the state by networking existing and emerging local, state, and tribal museums through electronic media, training programs, and shared exhibitions.

The Center will be developed and operated as part of California's State Park System, in collaboration with the California Indian community. An initial \$5 million in voter-approved parks bond funds allocated for the project this year will provide funding for the preliminary phase, which will include a master plan and some site development.

Subsequent phases of the project are expected to be paid for with a combination of state and private funds. The Center will be governed in partnership with a non-profit foundation and Native American advisory boards that will ensure that it reflects the values of California's Indian people.

Updated information about the new facility will be made available on a new website, www.ciccm.org.

Cindy La Marr, Executive Director of Capitol Area Indian Resources, Inc., and a member of the new task force, said the Center "will recognize the untold contributions that were made to our state's history and finally, formally acknowledge its original inhabitants with the respect that is deserved."

Another member of the task force, Larry Myers, Executive Secretary of the Native American Heritage Commission, said, "The vision is for a great facility that the people of California will be proud to support."

As provided for in the Brulte legislation, State Parks Acting Director Coleman named three public members from different Indian tribes representing Southern, Central and Northern California, respectively. They are:

- **John A. Gomez, Jr.**, (Pechanga Band of Luiseno Mission Indians), who currently works as the Band's coordinator for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and serves as its elected representative to the Luiseno/Cupeno International NAGPRA Coalition. Prior to his employment by the Pechanga Band, Gomez was a paralegal with California Indian Legal Services in its Escondido office.
- **Genevieve Denton**, (Ione Band of Miwok Indians), a member of the Citizens Advisory Group at Chaw'se, who served as a member of the California Department of Parks and Recreation's work group that produced the exhibit, "Discovery, Devastation and Survival: California Indians and the Gold Rush" at the California Indian Museum at Sutter's Fort. She is a member of the Sierra Native American Council.
- **Loren Bommelyn**, (Tolowa from the Smith River Rancheria), a tribal leader and expert in the Tolowa language. He serves as a resource for Tolowa history, and is an educator of tribal and community youth. He has a Masters Degree in linguistics and has been a teacher in the Del Norte County Unified School District since 1980. He serves on numerous boards and

committees, was a National Endowment of the Arts fellow in 2002, and Smithsonian Cultural Research Participant, National Museum of the American Indian last year.

The other public members of the task force appointed by the Native American Heritage Commission secretary are:

- **Cindy LaMarr**, (Pit River/Paiute), since 1992 has served as Director of Capitol Area Indian Resources, where her work includes conducting summer programs for Indian youths and helping Indians resurrect their native languages. She recently was elected president of the 4,000-member National Indian Education Association. LaMarr was instrumental in the development of the legislation that established the California Indian Cultural Center and Museum and the Task Force (SB2063).
- **William Mungary** (Apache/Paiute), has served as chairperson of the Native American Heritage Commission since 1990. He was the recent recipient of the Roy D. Hoover Memorial Award by the National Association for County Community and Economic Development. He has served on numerous boards and councils, including the California Rural Development Council as representative for tribal governments. Mr. Mungary retired as Director of the Community Development Department for Kern County.

The ex-officio members of the task force are:

- **Mary Nichols**, Secretary, Resources Agency. Mary D. Nichols was appointed Secretary of Resources in 1998. As head of the Agency, Secretary Nichols sets policy for 27 departments, commissions, boards and conservancies including the Departments of Conservation, Fish and Game, Forestry and Fire Protection, Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, and the California Coastal Commission. The Agency also is responsible for interpreting the California Environmental Quality Act. Nichols reports directly to the Governor's Office on Resource issues, including matters of cultural resource stewardship.
- **Ruth Coleman**, Acting Director, California State Parks. As Acting Director, Coleman is responsible for 273 parks in the State Park System, which include five Regional Indian Museums, historic and pre-historic California Indian sites, cultural landscapes, and a large collection of Native American cultural objects. Coleman joined the department as Deputy Director for Legislation in December 1999. According to SB 2063, Coleman will serve as the Executive Secretary to the Task Force.
- **Larry Myers** (Pomo), Executive Secretary, Native American Heritage Commission. Myers has been Executive Secretary of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) since 1987. The NAHC advocates for and enforces protections of Native American burials and cemeteries, and the preservation of sacred shrines, ceremonial sites, and places of worship in California. Myers was instrumental in the creation and installation of the Commemorative Seal on the front steps of the State Capitol that memorializes contributions of California Indians.

- **Kevin Starr**, State Librarian. Starr has been State Librarian since 1994. The State Library is the main research library for all state government, providing reference and information to the Legislature, the Governor's office and other state constitutional officers. The State Library also administers the California's First Peoples Project that supports and promotes better education in grades K-12 about the unique identities and cultural contributions of California Indians. Dr. Starr is a distinguished scholar and author of numerous books and articles on California history.

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