

Wassuma Village, California
May 1997

COMMUNIQUE NO. 17

CALIFORNIA CONCERNS

The Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth held its 1997 International Council at an ancient site near Wassuma Village in the homelands of the Miwok people. The Circle acknowledges that our hosts are indigenous to this village and to the surrounding areas, and confirms that the Miwok people should have federal recognition. Having had a village in the base of Yosemite Valley, their presence and their relationship to this area is of long standing and was well known. The Circle was privileged to gather for one day in the roundhouse built by Miwok forebears in the Yosemite Valley. The experience of entering that very special place, and sitting where the ancestors had gathered was a high point of the Council. Perhaps it is a fear of the connection to Yosemite and the surrounding areas that prevents the U.S. Government from giving federal recognition to the Miwok.

The Circle recognizes the confusion caused by split jurisdiction between federal and state governments. As this legacy plays itself out in California, there are frustrations that all too often lead to violence. The Mendocino County Sheriff's occupation of Round Valley is an example.

The Circle reminds all Nations that sovereignty is granted by Creation, not by government. The fact that government may not recognize the sovereignty of a given people does not refute it. Our sovereign responsibilities are to Creation. If we honor those responsibilities we will not only strengthen sovereignty, but also the lives and wellbeing of all our people.

The Circle has been honored to share in these ceremonial responsibilities during our visit to the territory of the Miwok people.

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