



March 30th, 2020

American Indian Cultural Center
1446 Market Street
San Francisco, CA, 94102

RE: Public Comments on the American Indian Cultural District Introduction

Hello Victor,

Below are the Public Comments that were provided to us after formal notice at 12 pm (PT). Please note for the record that today's technical difficulties prevented Public Comment from eight plus individuals that were dialed in to share their thoughts on the American Indian Cultural District Ordinance.

April McGill:

I wanted to submit public comment for today's Rules Committee Meeting for the introduction of the American Indian Cultural District. Due to the COVID-19 precautions the meeting was streamlined and community was allowed to call in for public comment on the introduction but we were muted and not able to. With that said, we would like to have on record that American Indian community was present for the meeting and would like to have our voices heard in favor of the American Indian Cultural District to be approved quickly for the urgent needs of the American Indian (AI) community during this time of COVID-19.

As a California Indian tribal member of Round Valley Indian Tribes and San Francisco resident, I think it is even more important that we the AI community has a cultural district. As the nation is dealing with this epidemic, tribal nations and urban Indian communities are highly effected by this epidemic due to the high risk of not only being exposed to the virus, but AI have the highest disparities of health conditions such as diabetes, lung cancer, asthma and heart disease. AI receive only one percent of federal Indian health dollars in urban communities. Therefore our urban Indian organizations are left to tackle this epidemic alone. Our AI community is facing many issues right now from loss of work to layoffs, our artists are not able to attend social gatherings where they depend on selling their arts and crafts, they are facing potential evictions and not to mention the potential to suffer high numbers of depression, substance use disorder and relapse due to lack of resources and isolation. Not to mention, a lot of our Native youth do not have resources to home school in this tech age, have single parents supporting them and may also be leaving them with relatives to watch them with no childcare support. We also have some parents who can work from home but lack the support or education to for their children.

We see this opportunity of having an AI cultural district as a way to help the AI community with support of resources and wellness as they will see that there is a place they can identify with that can bring them comfort in this time of crisis. We see this time as a way to uplift our community during a stressful time to give them hope as other cultural districts scramble to provide support to their communities in San Francisco.

California has the highest number of AI in the state with the largest urban Indian population in cities like San Francisco. We see other tribal and urban communities across the nation with similar cultural districts.

An AI cultural district provides identity, community and wellness to all people as we exchange cultural norms and values.

I want to thank supervisor Ronen, Paul, Vallie Brown and all of the other supervisors and sponsors that hear the need to for an AI cultural district.

Yahwee (Thank you)

Sincerely,

Sharaya Souza:

My name is Sharaya Souza, I am the Program Manager and Operations Director for the American Indian Cultural Center. My traditional ties to this land are Taos Pueblo, Southern Ute, and Kiowa.

I would like to start off by my Public Comment by recognizing our Ohlone relatives. We are guests on their traditional lands. I would also like to thank Supervisor Ronen's Office for deciding to move forward on this important piece of legislation during these critical times. As you may know, Native American peoples are the only group are traditionally and culturally connected to the United States since time immemorial. Yet, as a community we have to continuously prove everyday not just who we are, but most notably that we are still here.

While this Cultural District will eventually be a place to call home and a space to celebrate and honor our culture, right now what this Cultural District legislation represents is a much-needed response to ensure the American Indian community can begin the process of developing emergency response notification platforms, infrastructure to ensure residents avoid homelessness, and that children and elders receive necessary support and information needed during these times.

Laura Cedillo:

My name is Laura Cedillo and I am in support of the American Indian Cultural District Ordinance. I also wrote a letter of support in 2019. I am Looking forward to what our community will create in the near future.

Janien Laiwa:

My name is Janine V. Laiwa, born and raised in SF and I'm California Indian, Pomo. I am also a board member for the AICCSF, for the past year or so. It gives me great pleasure in learning these different phases of this process. I am very happy with the mapping of the cultural district for the AICD and that it will provide an area in which our Community will be happy with and utilize as their home base. There are four programs and another one down the road from the mapping area, which is NAHC WELLNESS PROGRAM. It will be great to finally see our programs in the same vicinity so that our community can thrive once again.

Mary Jean Robertson:

Dear Supervisors, I have been working for almost 10 years toward a new Physical American Indian Center and I have been participating in the American Indian Center since I moved to San Francisco in 1969. As a long time member of this community, I have some history of what we were able to accomplish even without a Cultural District. First, you have to remember that almost all non-native people thought

that the American Indians no longer existed and if they did their demographic was so small that they did not matter. I just wanted to let you know that Native People here in San Francisco were and are on the front lines to get laws passed, HealthCare and programs for our people. The 1968 American Indian Civil rights act gave us the right to participate in the governments who created the laws that we have to live by. We were able to do some organizing here in SF to help get the Native American Heritage Act passed first here in California and then Nationally, The American Indian Child Welfare Act was passed due to organizing from here and the San Francisco Child Welfare workers went to work to implement the act before many agencies even knew what it was. In the '70's I worked for the Art Commission's Neighborhood Arts Program challenging the concept that only the Opera, Ballet and symphony were "Art". We built the Cultural Centers and the American Indian Arts workshop with the CETA grants employed 10 people with a living wage for the first time to be able to be paid to teach our songs, our crafts, our dances and our culture to ourselves and share them with the city of San Francisco. In 1978 there were 17 bills before congress that would terminate the tribes and endanger our children and our health. The longest Walk left from San Francisco and arrived in Washington, DC 6 months later to prevent all the laws from being passed and getting the AICWA passed. The Native American Grave Repatriation Act was passed to allow protection of our bones and graves. The founding meeting of the Women of All Red Nations was right here at a kitchen table on Anderson Street. As you can see given just a little bit of help we can accomplish miracles and I hope that you will approve our American Indian Cultural District so that we can continue this work. Thank you for your time, Mary Jean Robertson "Voices of the Native Nations" programmer on KPOO radio in San Francisco.

Public Comment in Support of the American Indian Cultural District of San Francisco by Michelle Antone 03.30.20

First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the original people of this land, the Ohlone people and thank them for allowing us to be here on their land. My Name is Michelle Antone and I am an enrolled member of the Tohono O'odham Nation. I am here to speak on the importance of having an AI cultural district in San Francisco. My family is originally from Arizona and came here to SF through the relocation program, a program which brought many American Indian families to the city with the promise of better jobs and opportunities. My siblings and I, and our children, were born and raised here in San Francisco in the Mission district. Growing up here in San Francisco I didn't have the convenience of having family gatherings with my extended family because they did not live in California. However, I am most grateful to have had many fond memories of community events at the Indian Center which was located on Valencia St. and the tutoring and family gatherings at the Indian Education program which was located on 16th & Mission St when I was a child. For as long as I can remember, our family received our medical and dental care at the Native American Health Center when it was located on Julian St. Throughout the years we've been part of lots of wonderful community gatherings at the Friendship House also located on Julian St. Pow wows which were held on Valencia St in front of the old Indian center and later on Julian St near the Friendship House brought much joy to our community. Lots of good memories with the community in the Mission. This area has lots of relevance for the American Indian community of San Francisco. Fortunately, our family benefitted from having the "Indian Center" a community hub which gave us a connection to the community since we were living away from our own traditional homeland. This area in the Mission, in a way, has already been functioning as an unofficial American Indian cultural district because many of the American Indian organizations were and still are located there. Knowing we had these organizations has helped my family adapt to the urban Indian experience and is why my family stayed and made San Francisco our home away from home. Having a hub for our American Indian families has helped them thrive in this City, since most of us are away from our tribal communities. The American Indian community is strong and thriving and continues to be a strong support to our intertribal families who live here, as well

as being an invaluable resource to educate the wider community of SF about our heritage. Our community adds a rich and vivid cultural identity and diversity to our City. As the American Indian community are the descendants of the original caretakers of this land, this nation, it only seems natural that our community would be recognized and respected with a cultural district of our own. In fact, I feel every city across this Nation should honor the American Indian communities with a cultural district. It's a shame that our community has to ask for a cultural center and a cultural district. I urge you all today to support our community and vote to approve the American Indian Cultural District of San Francisco. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Michelle Antone

Michelleeantone@gmail.com

(415) 933-1330