

FRESNO, Calif., Sept. 15, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- A quorum of all voting members of the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians came together Saturday to affirm Reggie Lewis as Chairman of the Tribe. This was only the second time since the Tribe adopted its Constitution in 1988 that a general council meeting reached quorum and was able to conduct business on behalf of the Tribe. The outpouring of support is a stark contrast to the 25 friends and family that Nancy Ayala was able to attract to an illegitimate general council meeting she attempted to convene one week earlier.

"When you exceed the quorum of all tribal membership at a general council meeting for only the second time in 25 years, it shows how serious tribal members are about properly establishing the leadership of the Tribe," said Reggie Lewis, Chairman of the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians. "Tribal members spoke loud and clear on Saturday. They are ready to move on and indisputably recognized that there is only one Chukchansi Tribal Council. The Tribal Council looks forward to continuing its work of providing essential Tribal member services such as child care, elder care, tuition assistance, healthcare, and per capita payments."

All eligible voting members of the Tribe were invited to attend the meeting, where hundreds of Tribal members passed several important resolutions on behalf of the Tribe. The Tribal members affirmed that the Tribal Council is made up of Reggie Lewis – Chairman, Carl Bushman

Vice Chairman,

Irene Waltz

– Secretary,

Chance Alberta

– Treasurer,

David Castillo

– Member at Large,

Lynn Chenot

– Member at Large, and

Melvin Espe

– Member at Large. The Tribal membership also voted to remove any membership restrictions from individuals who had previously supported

Morris Reid

and affirmed the removal of Ayala from her seat on Council. In addition, the Tribal members also directed management of the Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino as well as all financial institutions to terminate their relationships with Ayala.

Several tribal members in attendance stated other Tribal members wanted to attend, but feared management at the Chukchansi Casino, which was hired by Ayala after she attempted to take over the Tribe in February, would fire them for not supporting Ayala. "Ayala, fearing that the Tribe's membership would speak loud and clear denouncing her illegal actions, had sent the membership a notice last week threatening them should they attend the Tribe's Quarterly Meeting," Chairman Lewis stated.

Indian Dispute Resolution Services based in Sacramento, which was recommended by the BIA as a neutral third-party and has assisted tribes all over settle similar disputes, tabulated and certified the votes.

The unified showing of support Saturday was just the latest of several recent successes for Chairman Lewis in his effort to restore order and protect the best interests of the Tribe. Under Chairman Lewis' leadership the Tribe was recently awarded a special Historic Preservation Grant by the National Park Service to assist the Chukchansi Tribe with its cultural preservation efforts.

On Thursday, a federal judge in Fresno granted Chairman Lewis' motion to intervene to protect the best interests of the Chukchansi Tribe in a lawsuit Ayala had filed against Chairman Lewis, Yosemite Bank, and United Security Bank and then the court dismissed the litigation. The frivolous lawsuit was one of several filed by Ayala against Chairman Lewis, the Tribe's legitimate Tribal Council, and local banks in an effort to compel the banks to stop recognizing Chairman Lewis and the duly elected and installed Tribal Council as the governing authority of the Tribe.

Ayala's actions demonstrate that she is only looking out for her own interests and not the interests of the Chukchansi Tribe. Over the past two weeks, two federal agencies also withdrew funding for the Chukchansi Tribe after Nancy Ayala misrepresented to them that she was Tribal Chair by cropping portions of a letter from the BIA.

Chairman Lewis added, "The recent court decisions, actions by federal agencies, and actions taken by members of the Tribe point to only one conclusion. Ayala represents a small minority of the Tribe and is willing to lie to anyone to keep her lie going. There is only one Chukchansi Tribal Council affirmed on Saturday that represents the over 800 Tribal members of the Chukchansi Tribe."

SOURCE Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians