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Fort Sill Apache Tribe Wins Lawsuit in New Mexico Supreme Court *Fort Sill Apache Tribe Legally Recognized as a New Mexico State Tribe*

Akela, New Mexico (April 14, 2014) — Today, the New Mexico State Supreme Court unanimously ruled in favor of the Fort Sill Apache Tribe (FSA) requiring Governor Martinez to recognize the Tribe under state law and include FSA in the annual State-Tribal Summit.

“Today we jumped a major hurdle in our path to returning to our home,” said Tribal Chairman Jeff Haozous. “We have been fighting to return to New Mexico since our ancestors were forcibly removed from these lands in 1886 and today we are finally being welcomed home,” he added.

The case, filed last December by FSA against Governor Susana Martinez and her administration, asserted that the Governor was violating a state statute in refusing to recognize FSA as a New Mexico tribe. The lawsuit alleged that the Governor and her administration have ignored the fact that FSA is a federally recognized tribe located in southwestern New Mexico. It stated that by failing to recognize FSA, the State was discriminating against the Tribe by barring it from the State's annual State-Tribal summit and by refusing to include it on a list of recognized New Mexico tribes, which, in turn, impeded FSA from obtaining access to State capital projects funding and other State programs and benefits.

FSA filed the lawsuit after repeated attempts to obtain legal recognition by the Governor and her administration had failed.

“Today’s victory will open the door to collaboration, benefits and recognition enjoyed by every other New Mexico tribe and Pueblo,” said Haozous. “We look forward to working with the Governor and her staff and are excited to continue our journey home.”

The Fort Sill Apache Tribe is the successor to the Chiricahua & Warm Springs Apache Tribes. In 1886, they were taken as prisoners of war by the U.S. Army and removed from their homelands of southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona to Florida, Alabama and Oklahoma, where they were released. They organized as the Fort Sill Apache Tribe after a Federal Court affirmed their claim for the loss of over 14.8 million acres of their homeland. The Tribe has always maintained both its independence as Chiricahua – Warm Springs Apaches and its desire to return to its rightful home. After receiving an invitation from the Governor of New Mexico in 1995 and again in 2000 to return to New Mexico, the Tribe purchased the property at Akela Flats in 1998. It was made tribal trust land in 2002 and designated a Reservation in November 2011.

For more information and updates on the Tribe, please follow us on [Twitter](#) (@FortSillApache) and [Facebook](#) (Fort Sill Apache Tribe New Mexico).

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