



**California Public Utilities Commission**  
**505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **CPUC ADOPTS NEW TRIBAL LAND TRANSFER POLICY**

SAN FRANCISCO, December 5, 2019 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today adopted a new policy that prioritizes land transfers from investor-owned utilities to Native American Tribes with a historical interest in the land.

Today's decision provides Native American Tribes an opportunity to regain lands stolen through bias and unfair means in the late 1800s/early 1900s. When a utility tries to dispose of any interest in land that it owns, this policy states a preference that the land go to the native tribe to which the land belongs. Therefore, when the proposed transfer comes before the CPUC for its approval under Section 851 of the Public Utilities Code, this policy establishes an expectation that a transfer to an interested tribe is in the public interest.

The new policy complies with the CPUC's existing [Tribal Consultation Policy](#), which was adopted in April 2018 and recognized the following goals:

- Recognition and respect for tribal sovereignty
- Encouragement and facilitation of tribal participation in CPUC proceedings
- Meaningful consideration to tribal interests in issues within the CPUC's jurisdiction
- Protection of tribal cultural resources

"Through the adoption of today's Tribal Land Transfer Policy, the CPUC recognizes the important tribal interest in return of stolen lands and gives voice to meaningful consideration and prioritization of this important tribal interest," said Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves.

Added Commissioner Clifford Rechtschaffen, "Under the policy, utilities will offer tribes a first right of refusal to purchase any real property it is selling within the tribe's ancestral territory,



restoring historical, spiritual, and other significant land to the tribes. This can be a model for other state agencies.”

This policy builds on existing statute and two executive orders: Governor Brown’s Executive Order B-10-11 and Governor Newsom’s Executive Order N-15-19. Last June, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-15-19 that recognized California’s history “fraught with violence, exploitation, dispossession, and the attempted destruction of tribal communities.” This policy, which the CPUC developed after comment from utilities and tribes, furthers the CPUC’s goals of recognizing and respecting native sovereignty, and of returning tribal lands to their rightful owners.

For more information on CPUC’s Tribal Consultation Policy, please visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov/tribal](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/tribal).

The CPUC regulates services and utilities, safeguards the environment, and assures Californians’ access to safe and reliable utility infrastructure and services. For more information on the CPUC, please visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov).

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