

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR MERRI LOPEZ-KEIFER

Merri Lopez-Keifer is Luiseño and a member of the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians. Merri graduated from Boston College Law School and became a member of the California Bar in 1998. Merri started her career at the San Francisco District Attorney's Office as an Assistant District Attorney where she practiced criminal law for 6 years, specializing in domestic violence prosecutions. For the last 19 years, Merri has been the Chief Legal Counsel for the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians. She has successfully fought for the protection and preservation of her tribe's Native American tribal cultural resources and burial grounds. Merri has also been instrumental in building meaningful relationships with local, state and federal government agencies within her tribe's traditionally and culturally affiliated territory. In her role as Chief Legal Counsel, Merri has successfully conducted hundreds of government-to-government consultations with CEQA lead agencies, local governments, state government agencies and federal government agencies.

In June of 2015, Merri was appointed by Governor Brown as a Commissioner to the Native American Heritage Commission, a 9-member, all California Native American commission charged with the responsibility of protecting California's Native American tribal cultural resources and sacred places. On September 23, 2016, Merri was honored with a Resolution by the California Legislature for her exemplary service as a Commissioner and her diligent efforts in protecting and preserving California's tribal cultural resources. In 2017, Merri became the Secretary of the Native American Heritage Commission.

Merri has been a contributing panelist for many trainings and seminars on how to effectively and respectfully consult with California Native American tribes. These seminars and trainings benefited many organizations and government agencies, such as the California Bar Association, Environmental Law Section, the American Planning Association California, the California Historic Society, the California Preservation Foundation, CLE International, the San Francisco Bar Association, Environmental Law Section, the Native American Heritage Commission, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Caltrans, and the Society for California Archaeology. In addition, Merri was given the honor of presenting the keynote address for the 31st Annual California Indian Conference held at San Diego State University in 2016.