

DECRIMINALIZE SANTA CRUZ

Apology Letter to the Native American Church members in regards to the Inclusion of the Peyote sacrament in Santa Cruz's Resolution to Decriminalize Entheogenic Plants and Fungi

Dear Native American Church practitioners, members, and Indigenous Community,

Decriminalize Santa Cruz (DSC) apologizes for our lack of cultural sensitivity surrounding the Peyote cacti (*Lophophora williamsii*) and discounting Indigenous consultation in the process of decriminalizing entheogenic plants and fungi. We recognize that the inclusion of the Peyote cacti in our resolution is dangerous because it may contribute to the ongoing Peyote crisis in the sacred gardens of South Texas for generations to come.

Fundamentally, DSC's intention is to do no harm and to protect others from harm. When Decriminalize Nature Oakland (DNO) first decriminalized entheogenic plants and fungi in June 2019, we were inspired to repeat their success in our town of Santa Cruz. The organizers of DSC copied DNO's resolution verbatim and presented it to Santa Cruz City Council. We believe in the healing potential of entheogenic plants and fungi and we wanted to ensure that the Santa Cruz community's pursuit of healing, spirituality, and cognitive liberty will be protected by the law. However, we were insular in our activism and did not consider the harm we may cause to Indigenous communities who have been using this sacred plant medicine for millennia. Although we were well-intended, we were insensitive to the historical legacy of Indigenous culture and the sanctity of the religious sacraments and practices. We humbly apologize for our ignorance.

To rectify our mistakes, we will be amending the resolution to redact all explicit mention of Peyote and include a mention of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 and the Amendment of 1994. Additionally, we will include the board members of the National Council of Native American Church (NCNAC) and the Indigenous Peyote Conservation Initiative (IPCI) in our discussions if Peyote is involved in any future political developments. Once these actions have been completed, we pledge to educate ourselves about Indigenous history, culture, and spirituality to not repeat our mistakes. We will continue to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples as compassionate allies in your fight to maintain sovereignty.

Lastly, we'd like to express gratitude to Dawn D. Davis, Miriam Volat, Sandor Iron Rope, and Steve Moore of the Indigenous Peyote Conservation Initiative for their time and energy to speak with us about Peyote and the Native American Church. Thank you for your patience, support, and open hearts to trust in our sincerity to act righteously and to amend our mistakes. We humbly ask for your forgiveness.

Respectfully,

Grace Cepe

Pat Malo

Valerie Corral

Athonia Cappelli

Julian Hodge