



QUECHAN INDIAN TRIBE
Ft. Yuma Indian Reservation
Office of Tribal Administration

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Statement on the Passing of Judge Kelly Smith

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Judge Kelly Smith, a devoted servant and distinguished ally who contributed so much to the Quechan community. Judge Smith passed away on July 17, 2024 with her loved ones by her side.

Judge Smith had a profound impact on our community, particularly through her dedicated work with Quechan children in the County Juvenile Courts. As a Public Defense Attorney in Imperial and Yuma Counties, she tirelessly advocated for the rights and well-being of our tribal youth and their parents.

A firm believer in the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," Judge Smith stood by this principle and fought hard to keep children with their parents. She served as a court-appointed attorney to represent children in juvenile dependency and Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) cases. This is where the Tribe initially found her and convinced her to serve the Quechan people. Her dedication to ICWA cases showcased her deep commitment to preserving family bonds and protecting the rights of Native children and their families.



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On April 22, 2020, during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Judge Smith was sworn in by Chief Warden Gordan E. Osborne before the Quechan Tribal Council. Her tenure as a tribal judge was marked by unwavering dedication to justice and the preservation of our Court's integrity during unprecedented times.

Judge Smith's career was distinguished by her commitment to justice, her meticulous legal expertise, and her compassionate approach. She presided over many significant cases and was instrumental in navigating the complexities introduced by the pandemic, ensuring that the Court remained a pillar of justice for our community.

She was a beacon of hope and strength, not only to those she served directly but to all who knew her. Her contributions extended beyond the courtroom; she was actively involved in numerous community initiatives and worked passionately to improve the lives of those around her.

Judge Smith received several accolades throughout her career, reflecting her exceptional service and dedication. She will be remembered for her sharp intellect, her fairness, and her unwavering commitment to justice and community welfare.

Her legacy will live on in the many lives she touched, the reforms she championed, and the justice she upheld. We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing and working with her.

May her memory be a blessing.

With respect and remembrance,

President Jordan D. Joaquin, & Quechan Tribal Council