

## **Statement Regarding Proposed Verizon Cell Tower Near the Washoe Family Cemetery**

My name is Dwayne Anthony Washoe Jr., and I am here today to speak on behalf of the Washoe family and the Washoe family cemetery.

The Washoe Cemetery is more than just a resting place. It is sacred ground, a place of history, remembrance, and respect for our loved ones and ancestors. Families come here to grieve, to honor, and to find peace. For generations, this land has been set aside as a place of dignity and reflection, and it holds deep personal and cultural meaning to us.

The proposed construction of a Verizon cell tower on Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) land in such close proximity to this cemetery raises serious concerns. The burial grounds of the Washoe family cemetery are positioned to face west, in alignment with long-held spiritual and Native beliefs. This orientation is deeply meaningful and intentional, reflecting respect for tradition and cultural practices. The fact that this tower would stand in clear eyesight of these sacred grounds directly disrupts that spiritual connection and the peace this place is meant to provide.

It is also important to note that the Washoe burial sites are not limited to the marked cemetery. There are older, unmarked burial grounds outside the cemetery boundaries that date back hundreds of years. These sites cannot be easily seen today, yet they remain sacred, carrying with them history and ancestral ties that must be respected. Any development in this area risks disturbing these unmarked graves and erasing pieces of history that cannot be replaced.

We are also concerned about long-term impacts to the land itself. Construction activities could risk disturbing the soil, water, and natural setting around the cemetery. The presence of heavy equipment and infrastructure may alter the environment in ways that are permanent and irreversible.

Beyond physical impacts, there is the moral obligation we all share to protect sacred ground. Cemeteries and ancestral burial sites are places that deserve respect, quiet, and preservation. Allowing such a project to move forward here would set a precedent that commercial interests can outweigh the dignity of our families and our history.

We are not against progress, technology, or better communication services. But there are countless other locations where a cell tower could be placed without encroaching on a cemetery or ancestral burial grounds and the sacred memories they hold.

On behalf of the Washoe family and all who care about preserving this place, I, Dwayne Anthony Washoe Jr., respectfully urge Verizon and Sierra Pacific Industries to halt ongoing construction immediately and reconsider this project's location. We ask that the sanctity of the Washoe Cemetery, along with the unmarked ancestral burial grounds surrounding it, be honored and protected, and that a new, more appropriate site be selected—one that does not come at the expense of our history, our culture, and the respect due to those who came before us.

Thank you. D.A.  Date: 9-1-25