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Honorable Yvette Ayala Henderson Named Chief Judge for San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

Veteran Jurist Experienced in Overseeing Both Tribal and State Courts

HIGHLAND, Calif. (February 1, 2024) -- The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians has appointed the Honorable Judge Yvette Ayala Henderson as Chief Judge for the San Manuel Tribal Court. She was sworn in on January 29, 2024. She will serve as the chief administrator of both the trial and appellate courts of the San Manuel Tribal Court system, along with sitting as a trial court judge and carrying out other duties set out in the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation Constitution and San Manuel Judicial Code. The San Manuel Tribal Court system exercises civil jurisdiction over San Manuel Tribal Citizens and others who have consented to the Court's jurisdiction, whether by contract, presence on the Tribe's Reservation, or otherwise.

Judge Henderson brings close to 20 years of jurisprudence to this role. Before joining San Manuel, she served as Chief Judge of the Fort Mojave Tribal Court for the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe of Arizona, California, and Nevada, where she presided over civil and criminal proceedings for both adults and juveniles. She also served as Magistrate (16th Judicial District) and Chief Magistrate (13th, 14th, and 16th Judicial Districts) in the Office of the Executive Secretary for the Supreme Court of Virginia.

"Chief Judge Henderson's experience in tribal court systems gives her a deep understanding of how a sovereign tribe's unique traditions, principles, and values shape jurisprudence within Native nations," said San Manuel Chairwoman Lynn Valbuena. "This coupled with her service in state courts is a welcome addition to San Manuel Tribal Court, which works across jurisdictions with other courts and legal systems."

Apart from her legal experience, Judge Henderson earned the rank of Captain in the United States Army, receiving the U.S. Army Meritorious Service Medal and U.S. Army Achievement Medal. She holds a Juris Doctor from the University of Richmond School of Law, a Master of Science in Human Resources Management from Troy University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Hampton University.

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About the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians is a federally-recognized Indian tribe located on the San Manuel Indian Reservation near Highland, California. San Manuel exercises its inherent sovereign right of self-governance and provides essential services for its citizens by building infrastructure, maintaining civil services, and promoting social, economic and cultural development. As the Indigenous people of the San Bernardino highlands, passes, valleys, mountains and high deserts, the Serrano people of San Manuel have called this area home since time immemorial and are committed to remaining a productive partner in the San Bernardino region. For more information, visit <http://www.sanmanuel-nsn.gov>