

THE SANTA YNEZ
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As I See It

by Alison Herson

Scratching the Surface to Be Heard

Valley organizations POLO (Preservation of Los Olivos) and POSY (Preservation of Santa Ynez) have filed a lawsuit against the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the federal government. Both groups have jointly challenged a decision made by the Interior Board of Indian Appeals that refused standing to the groups on the question of the annexation by the Chumash of a 6.9-acre parcel placed in a tribal trust. Once in trust, the property will no longer be covered by state and local regulations. A smart move by the Chumash, considering they can have all this land tax-free. Hence, the argument remains; why not make things equal by leaving the property trust-free and adhering to the same rules as everyone else? And, even more importantly, why shouldn't the surrounding community have a say in such an important decision?

We were surprised when the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 *not* to file an appeal against annexation. The Board of Supervisors had automatic standing. Now, only POLO and POSY stand in the way of this move.

Both groups say their suit is not simply about potential development of the property into a cultural center or even another casino; it *is* about being shut out of a process involving something that could significantly affect the Valley's landscape.

We agree. This is not a battle of over how casinos may or may not corrupt an area, or the earned rights of Native Americans; it's a demand that surrounding and impacted residents have the right to be heard. For more on the subject, read James Buckley's interview with members of POLO and POSY, beginning on page 5.