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Human Relations Council
of the Greater Hemet, San Jacinto and Menifee Regions

PO Box 3036, Hemet, CA 92546 * Phone: 951-766-8659 x 224 * Fax: 951-929-9758 * Email: vrctwohip@aol.com

**REQUEST FOR THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HEMET TO DECLARE A FIRST
PEOPLE'S DAY HOLIDAY FOR THE CITY OF HEMET, CALIFORNIA**

To: The Honorable Mayor and City Council of the City of Hemet

1. We the citizens of the cities of Hemet and San Jacinto recognize the rich and deep history of this valley. The diverse traditions and values born out of those First People who founded and lived in this valley are assets we would like to preserve and pass on to the next generation of residents. It is important that the current and the next generation of residents in the San Jacinto Valley be aware of our great past and illustrious first people.
2. The Native Americans, the Spaniards, the Mexicans and finally the early American settlers make up the first people of the San Jacinto Valley. The first native people settled in the San Jacinto Valley thousands of years ago. Later, the Serrano and Cahuilla people arrived. They were hunters and gatherers. The Soboba Indian Reservation, just east of San Jacinto, is now the home to the descendants of some of these people. The first Spanish explorers entered the San Jacinto Valley in the early 1770s. The Spaniard Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza led two expeditions up from Mexico, crossing the Colorado River at Yuma and continuing across the Sonoran Desert and up Coyote Canyon. Cattle ranching were the main economic industry of the valley. After California had passed from Spanish to Mexican rule, the San Jacinto valley was taken over by the government, and its lands granted to private individuals.

OUR MISSION:

***To promote cooperation and positive human relations
in the community.***

By the 1870s, the Valley's economy had moved from cattle ranching to horticulture. The area in which Fremont is located was first inhabited by members of the Cahuilla Indian tribe. Then, in the early 1800's, it became a cattle ranch for Mission San Luis Rey and was called Rancho San Jacinto. When the missions were broken up by the Mexican government, the land was awarded to Jose Antonio Estudillo in 1842.

The City of Fremont owes its inception and initial growth to two ironic events and the dedication of two wealthy men. The first event was the visit that Ramona author Helen Hunt Jackson made to the San Jacinto Valley in 1883 in order to gather material on the Sobobas, a group of Mission Indians living on the east side of the San Jacinto River. Mrs. Jackson was accompanied to the valley by her interpreter, Abbot Kinney.

During their visit, Jackson and Kinney stayed at various ranches and met numerous valley and mountain residents, notably Charles Thomas and Hancock McClung Johnston. Thomas and Johnston owned ranches in the San Jacinto Mountains where they raised race horses in what was then called Fremont Valley. Early American ranchers settled in the Valley and had grown grain, then apricots, walnuts and citrus. Area farmers used irrigation water from the Fremont Dam irrigation water to grow alfalfa fields, fruit orchards and row crops, particularly potatoes. Events which took place in the Valley were the inspiration for Helen Hunt Jackson's book, Ramona. Family life as it was practiced at the Valley Farms back then, as well as the rich diverse culture had great social values and is embedded in the great formation of the cities of Fremont and San Jacinto.

3. Two centuries have passed since the founding of the San Jacinto Valley; 100 years ago the City of Fremont was incorporated. Much has changed. Today there are over 100,000 residents of the valley from different backgrounds. As demographics change, so does values. Except for the annual outdoor play "Ramona" there are very few opportunities to relay the rich history and the role of the first people in forming our community values. Although the play has been one of the main attractions of the valley for the last 80 plus years, it continues to face financial challenges and competition from other regional attractions. The First People's Day holiday project aims to preserve the play, message and history of

Ramona" and the San Jacinto valley, by declaring First People's day as a the valley's official holiday where the entire community can participate. This will bring schools, businesses, churches, and government and home owners together to preserve the local history for the next generations to learn and appreciate.

4. The First People's day is an Economic Opportunity for the Valley! If planned right, the declaration of a First People's day as a local holiday can promote the much needed tourism dollars for the area. On that certain day, the streets of Elmet and San Jacinto can transform back to its old history where residents and visitors will be able to re-live the culture and characters of the old valley. Horse riders and costumed individuals can ply the streets of the valley, while restaurants and shops can create a fiesta atmosphere. Parks and open spaces can have fairs with booths selling crafts, souvenirs and food. Schools can commemorate the day with short programs. In short, bringing Ramona alive from the bowl to the streets of the valley. This fiesta holiday celebration can be popular and a good marketing tool for the valley and the two cities. Not to mention it can enhance the attraction that Ramona has been known for. This holiday celebration can also create a new cottage industry that can supply souvenirs and promotional items commemorating First People's Day. The holiday can commence during the Ramona parade, a precedent event to the grand opening of the annual outdoor play.

The mild outdoor temperature of the valley during the spring season provides a perfect setting for the First People's Day holiday. The holiday can be officially on the second Friday of April.

5. The Human Relations Council of the greater Elmet and San Jacinto and the citizens of Elmet are seeking a non day off holiday declaration so it will not have a fiscal impact on the city. Although as the holiday is celebrated annually, becomes popular, and draws much needed tourism dollars, the city can decide what the best approach is.

We, therefore, hereby ask the honorable Mayor and City Councils of the City of Elmet to pass a resolution declaring "First People's Day" an official local holiday.