

Members of the New Mexico Land Grant Committee:

My name is Nobert J LeDoux. I am currently the chairman of the Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant. I am an heir to the land grant from both sides of my family. My family has lived off the land grant for generations. We would take the sheep to the grant for grazing, cut firewood, dig for sand and collect any building materials we may have needed. For as long as I remember the community has used all parts of the land grant for the betterment of our people. There are historical sites to the land grant that are only found there such as La Cueva de la Tierra Blanca, la Cueva de la Tierra Vaita. These two caves are crucial to the community for the restoration of our historical churches and buildings. During the winter months it serves as a wildlife preserve. Our community has harvested animals from the land grant for the sustainment of our people. It is also home to the Llano Quemado Hot Springs where our people used to bathe, wash clothes and tan hides.

In 1710 Cristobal de la Serna petitioned the king of Spain for the land and in 1715 his petition was granted. Serna is said to have settled on the land and occupied it continuously until his death in 1720. After his death, his sons sold the entire grant to Diego Romero in 1724. When Diego passed in 1764 the land was divided into three sections amongst his three children. The remainder of the land was recognized as being held in common amongst the rest of the settlers along the Rio Chiquito and the Little Rio Grande. The grant was given for the betterment of the people. Parts of the grant were given for homesteads, houses and agriculture. The mountain was to be held in common between the heirs for the purpose of grazing livestock and building materials.

Our land grant, like various other grants, has had its share of people and/or other entities try to use the land grant for their benefit and not for the betterment of the legal heirs. Our land grant is different from most grants to the fact that the parcels of land are only 3 ft. wide and run up the mountain. The first survey in 1887 shows the lines as running straight up the mountain, but the survey of 1941 changed everything the surveyor squiggled the lines up the mountain. The titles of the land do not give a description as to where the land is because the titles are all the same. This is what leads up to the problem we have today that people have no clue where their lines are and we have people claiming land that does not belong to them nor are they even legal heirs to the grant. People have built roads, homes and fences that have kept out legal heirs. The biggest downfall of the heirs is that we do not have the money to fight for the land. People and corporations with money come in and put claim to the land and take it. Cristobal de la Serna Land Grant is currently attempting to buy back the lines from holders to try and preserve what is left of the land grant. We have had limited success because those we have approached who are willing to sell back to the Grant for what we offer are being approached and offered more money for their land by other private individuals.

Cristobal and de la Serna Land Grant has helped facilitate cultural enhancement programs that help teach the children of our community the traditional songs and dances performed by Los Comanches de la Serna, which is a big part of the land grant history. Los Comanches de la Serna Feast Day is on January 1st which honors Christ through the name of Emmanuel. On this

day, Los Comanches dance at houses of families that live in the land grant boundaries who carry the name Emmanuel in any form. We are also currently working with the Forest service, Taos County and JR Logan on a lenero project. This project is located on historical land grant boundaries but is owned by the Forest service. The 136 acres is used as a fire mitigation program that allows people to apply for a 1 acre partial and are allowed to cut all unmarked trees to be used as firewood or material. Once the parcel of land is cleared. The lenero receives a \$300 stipend and is eligible for another lot. The project has been extremely beneficial to the land-grant community. The Cristobal de la Serna Land grant oversees the project because it is within the boundaries of the grant. For two consecutive years we have put on a community matanza to bring awareness to the people about the land grant, increase membership and share our goals. Each matanza has produced around 400 participants. It also allowed for our Comanches to perform for the community as well as other entertainment native to our culture. We traditionally processed and cooked off around 400 pounds of meat for the event which also included many other traditional Northern New Mexico foods.

The Cristobal de la Serna Land grant has come a long way from where it started, facing hiccups along the way, but working diligently to fix problems and learn from previous mistakes. The goal of the grant is to be able to preserve what is left of our land grant for the sustainability of the remaining heirs and community as it has been a part of for hundreds of years.

We would like to sincerely thank all elected officials who have helped Cristobal de la Serna and all the other land grants of New Mexico in our continuing journey of preservation.

Muchisimas Gracias!