

The Sacramento Bee  
4-21-1995

# Tribe set to build community center

By Leslie Layton  
Bee Correspondent

OROVILLE – The Concow Maidu Indian tribe announced Thursday the start of construction on a \$6.7 million complex that will provide the formerly landless Butte County tribe with its first community center.

Before a groundbreaking ceremony at the complex site southeast of Oroville, Concow Maidu leaders said construction on the community center and 50 houses has been slated to begin May 1.

"It's been a long time in coming," said Sharon Arnold, the tribe's program director.

The Tribal Community Center, funded by a 1992 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and

Urban Development to the Mooretown Rancheria Concow Maidu Indian tribe, will be built on 34.7 acres at Lower Wyandotte and Ophir roads.

The complex will include a 7,500-square-foot community center that has been designed to resemble the Maidu's traditional roundhouses that served as meeting and ceremonial centers. It also will include 50 houses that will provide tribe members with low-income rental housing.

The Concow Maidu, the largest of the remaining Maidu tribes, today has 1,095 members, said Marijane Brown, tribal administrator. The tribe was landless for more than 30 years after losing recognition by the federal government in 1961, as well as its land near

Feather Falls.

The Concow Maidu regained its tribal status under the law in 1983. In 1992, the tribe purchased the land where the complex will be built with part of the HUD grant. Two years later, the federal government placed the 35 acres in trust for the tribe, a step that had to be taken before development could begin.

Brown said the community center, which will be completed in November, will help renew interest in Maidu traditions and culture. Beside housing a Head Start program and youth and health centers, it will also provide space for Maidu language classes and a museum that will feature the Maidu's trademark basketry and other artifacts, she said.

WOOD, Oliver D.  
The Palm Beach Post  
7-1-1997



**OLIVER D. WOOD**

Age 82 of West Palm Beach, Florida, passed away Sunday, June 29, 1997. He lived here since 1945 coming from California. He was the former owner of Southern Upholstery for many years, retiring in 1975.

He is survived by his loving wife, Evelyn

(Huffman) and several brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews.

Arrangements are under the direction of the MIZELL-FAVILLE-ZERN SOUTHDALE CHAPEL, 4101 Parker Avenue, West Palm Beach, Florida 33405.

# Maidu set out to prove who they are

---

By Victoria Metcalf  
Staff Writer

---

What would you do if someone asked you to prove you are who you say you are?

Show them your driver's license?

Dig out your birth certificate?

That's not good enough. At least when the federal government is concerned.

And the federal government is concerned in this case. It is requesting members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu to not only prove who they are as individuals, but to prove they are a legitimate Native American tribe that has always existed in the Quincy, Meadow Valley area.

And that's not easy. But it's a challenge members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu have taken up. It's a goal that has become important to the tribe because those members want federal recognition and equality with other recognized Native American tribes that goes along with it.

Two Quincy women, one a member of the American Valley Mountain Maidu, the second only a member in the sense of her relationship to the group, and her extreme interest in Native American people and their culture, and her marriage to Heyden Hedrick, a member of the tribe; have set out to prove historically of the tribe's existence.

"Vivian and I are doing a one

on one," JoAnn Hedrick explained about the three-year research process she and Vivian Hansen have undertaken.

That research process has taken them through the files of Plumas County newspapers just as far back as they exist, through the files at the Plumas County Museum and through any documentation, books, records and other sources they believe might have a scrap of evidence about the existence of the American Valley Mountain Maidu people.

"We work on it all the time," Hedrick said about the pair's commitment to the project.

And with the completion of all the research they are doing they are hoping first to have enough valid documentation to convince the federal government their people have always existed in this part of Plumas County. They are also planning to put all their information together in one book.

Written records of the Maidu people only exist since the time of the white man's appearance into what is now Plumas County.

Drawn by prospects of mining adventure, and later as support services to the miner's, whites brought in a new and much varied way of life to the Native Americans who had called the mountains home since human inhabitation began.

Records — pre-white man settlement — were kept in the

Maidu's own way, through story-telling that was passed down through generations. Unfortunately, written records are considered more valid, making it difficult for members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu community to collect information further back.

And even if the stories could be counted as valid research, the white man's interference with changing the Native American culture, especially encouraging them to give up their language and adopt English, made it increasingly difficult for the stories — those that told about the existence of the tribe and its history — to pass from the old generations into the next. The language barrier in a way cut off one generation from the next.

And for a time, thanks to the white man's influence, many of the Native Americans were discouraged from looking back and learning about the old ways. They were encouraged to adopt the new ways and look to the future.

Going back, finding the roots of their ancestors or at least the proof of it that the federal government will credit, means rebuilding their own culture.

To do this, Hedrick has been familiarizing herself with the language of her husband's people.

Learning the Maidu words helps build a solid base for making their findings more meaningful.

In doing their research, the pair of local women have combed the files of old newspapers. This information gives them accounts about the skirmishes various tribes were

still having with one another, Hedrick said. That information is useful in that it uses at least the white names for the tribes and puts them in this location at that particular date.

Census reports also have a place for Native Americans, yet Hedrick said they are not complete.

Census takers in the 1800s counted the men, giving their names, but when it came to their wives the Maidu word for woman was used instead of a name.

"As a genealogist, do you know how hard that is to trace?" Hedrick asked.

And there is physical history the pair has visited, recorded and collected.

Early photographs taken of the Maidu have been collected validating the people's existence in the area.

And then there are the archeological sites — where burnings were held, or where bear dances took place.

Explaining about the importance of the burnings, Hedrick said that following the death of a Maidu, that person's name was not mentioned until a burning was held.

During a burning, all the possessions of the deceased were brought and put into a pile. What could not be sold or traded, was then put into another pile and burned.

Once this process was completed, that person's name was once again mentioned by his people.

In seeking more evidence of the early Maidu, Hedrick and Hansen have visited Stivers Cemetery, also known as the



Feather River Bulletin  
3-11-1998, page 3 of 3

**Indian Cemetery on Chandler Road.**

There a number of the names match up with the records and other bits of evidence the women have located in recording their local history.

Through their information gathering, Hedrick talked of what they learned of the American Valley Mountain Maidu and their dealings with whites in the early days.

"You have no idea of the graft that went on," she said about what she learned through records.

"I have documents that make you just want to set down and bawl."

And much of what Hedrick calls graft was in connection with the whites taking away what little land the Maidu did accumulate.

"It's hard to prove you're Indian when they've taken everything away from you," she explained.

"We have to prove who we are," put in Don Ryberg

administrator for the American Valley Mountain Maidu. "And not too many groups of people have to do that."

"What we want is equality," he explained.

Members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu are meeting Saturday, March 21 at 11 a.m. at the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Quincy to discuss their case.

Members of the tribe — about 500 of them — are asking the federal government to recognize them as a legitimate tribe.

As a legitimate tribe, members will receive benefits available to other Native Americans who have been recognized under the federal process.

Although members do receive medical benefits through their adopted situation with the Concow Maidu tribe, they want to also be eligible for special grants and loans made available to other recognized tribes.

## How California's Native Americans lost out

---

**By Victoria Metcalf**  
*Staff Writer*

---

In their struggle for federal recognition, members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu are prepared to go it alone.

While suggestions of legislation that will help unrecognized members of the California Native American population achieve federal status are bandied about by state and federal legislators, members of the tribe aren't counting on their help.

Anytime the Native American people join together in an attempt to promote themselves, representatives put up a smoke screen of assistance, stated Don Ryberg administrator for the Yahmonee Maidu of the Si Lom Koiyo — the Mountain People of the American Valley.

While his tribe is soliciting support, he said they are not counting on it.

The concern Ryberg is voicing appears in the final reports and recommendations of the Advisory Council on California Indian Policy, dated Sept. 1997. That committee, appointed in 1992 to investigate Native American issues in the state, has sent its finding to Congress.

"The reports of the Advisory Council focus on the contemporary and continuing effects of the federal government's unjust and inequitable treatment of the California Indians," the report

states.

"Not injustice isolated in time or effect, but a pattern of injustice that stretches across the better part of two centuries and threatens to enter a third. Not injustice based on ignorance or inadvertence, but injustice that has been acknowledged, documented and studied by the federal government — then to a large extent ignored."

Loaded with this knowledge, Ryberg's tribe has come up with its own approach in seeking recognition.

"We don't want to go in with the poor me attitude," Ryberg explained about the tribe's attempt to gain federal equality with landed tribes throughout the United States.

And that equality represents a chance of more federal funding and programs already available to tribes who have been granted their own lands.

"We just want equality," Ryberg has stated numerous times in his pitch to see his people gain just that.

"We don't want to just cry the blues, because that don't get us nowhere," he explained in his own way about past failures he's seen from other groups.

"That's old stuff. That's never worked in the past."

But through this chosen strategy Ryberg said, "We're not door mats either. We are a proud people."

What Ryberg and his group of American Valley Mountain

# Feather River Bulletin

## 3-18-1998, page 2 of 5

Maidu people — those who originally lived in the areas from Meadow Valley, through American Valley to possibly as far as Sloat, and west to about the Greenville Wye — are doing is completing the footwork and paperwork required by the federal government in initial steps to being considered as a legitimate Native American tribe in California.

In that process, the names of high powered attorneys aren't being tossed about, and large amounts of funding haven't been made available through either public or private sources. Members are doing the work themselves. Funding is coming from their own pockets.

And in taking the process one step at a time on their own, members of the tribe have to date written a tribal constitution as required by the federal government, gleaned information about the tribe's historical existence in the area they are claiming they have lived in, and are on the verge of initiating the nomination process for electing officers for the tribe.

What members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu are attempting to do, is part of a movement in California by members of unrecognized Native American people. Currently, California has the largest population of Native Americans of any state, and of the some 300,000 reported, 75,000 from 80 tribes are

unacknowledged by the federal government.

And nationwide, the American Valley tribe is just one of 139 tribes seeking federal recognition.

These are not new tribes. These are tribes of Native Americans who have been passed over, ignored and forgotten in the federal scheme of events concerning the development of California.

One question seems to come to the front concerning this issue of California's Native American population — why were they treated differently than Native Americans throughout the United States?

Historically as the U.S. developed and land was opened to whites, Native Americans were traditionally given land — often connected with reservations — and their own rules and regulations with which they were governed.

But California's development differed.

### **California historically**

If gold had not been discovered in the state in 1848 — just a short time before the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between the U.S. and Mexico — things might have gone differently for the area's Native American population.

In the treaty, the U.S. gained 70 million acres of land in what is now California. And according to the Advisory Council, California Indians had aboriginal

# Feather River Bulletin

## 3-18-1998, page 3 of 5

title to that land.

"Although the United States initiated efforts to investigate and resolve the Indians' claims, these efforts were thwarted by the discovery of gold in California in 1848 and the subsequent influx of thousands of Anglo-Europeans, hungry for California's mineral wealth and its vast fertile valleys, who immediately clashed with the Indians."

As California was admitted to the union as a state two years later, any attempts made by Native American groups were further delayed or resisted.

By 1851, the U.S. was negotiating 18 treaties with what was estimated as one-third to one-half of the tribes in California, and those were never ratified. If ratified, 8.5 million acres would have been made available to Native American settlement.

According to the Advisory Council, not only were the treaties not ratified, but they were sealed and not acknowledged by the government until 1905 — 54 years later.

Without the treaties, California Indians with the exception of Mission Indians with Spanish land grants and those housed on four existing reservations that seem not to have been adequate to address the population's needs, became homeless.

To worsen the condition of the California Native American, in 1887 the General Allotment Act opened up parts of the four reservations and further depleted their lands.

And with these circumstances population records show a rapid decline. In 1851, a population of 100,000 Native Americans were conservatively estimated in the state. By 1890 the Commissioner of Indian Affairs showed a population of just over 15,000.

"Indian people were forced off their land, relocated away from populated areas, and often served as a source of indentured labor for the largely white population," according to the Advisory Council report.

By 1905, when the Senate opened information on the 18 unratified treaties from 1851, Congress passed legislation setting up a study of the Native Americans entitled the Indian Appropriation Act.

Under that act, C.E. Kelsey

investigated Indian settlements "between the California-Oregon border and Mexico."

The result of those studies was that between 1906 and 1910 funds were provided to purchase small amounts of land in central and northern California, and restored to some of the California Native Americans resulting in the rancherias.

While the rancherias only affected some of the state's Native American population, they did serve more of the population.

But by 1944, what the federal government created, it began to take away through proposals within the Bureau of Indian Affairs to reduce the rancheria system. By 1958, Congress had targeted 41 rancherias for termination, according to the Advisory Council.

What these two movements did through the BIA process which provides funding to Native Americans based on land holdings, was to build up the funding process to some of the state's Native American population involved with the rancherias, then strip it away as it reduced the number of rancherias.

This action was not permanent, however. By the late 1960s California's Native American population filed suit against the federal government, and ultimately 27 of the 38 rancherias were restored, according to the Advisory Council report.



# Feather River Bulletin

## 3-18-1998, page 4 of 5

Also during the last part of the 1960s, the Indian Self-Determination Policy was established and California Native Americans of all status — federally recognized, terminated and unacknowledged — have been seeking to "reverse the effects of inconsistent federal policies and institutionalized federal neglect..." according to the Advisory Council's findings.

The four main categories these groups are dealing with, as applying to each group, include equal treatment in funding under the BIA system; restoration of federal recognition and services; implementation of federal acknowledgment; and eligibility of non federally recognized California Native Americans.

And because of this lopsided accountability of Native Americans by the BIA, California receives far less federal funding than neighboring states with lower totals of Native Americans but more land base.

For instance, Native

**Americans in Idaho, Washington and Oregon receive \$144 million in federal funding annually, compared to California's \$25 million, Ryberg said he has learned.**

Along the lines of federal funding, in 1994 it was reported that Sacramento's per capita funding was \$700.30 compared to BIA-served Native Americans who received \$1,310.51 in funding according to an American Indian Studies Council report from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Health care funding for the state's Native American population is also 30 to 40 percent less than nationwide figures, according to the UCLA report.

The bottom line, according to the report is, "When compared to non-California reservation Indians, California Indians have higher rates of poverty, lower household income, slightly less education, less post-secondary education, and higher rates of unemployment."

### **American Valley's Maidu**

But looking at the members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu, they have never fit in anywhere in the federal recognition and funding scheme.

According to the federal government, members of this tribe do not exist.

And they are not alone. Of California's Native American population of over 300,000, the BIA recognizes only 58,000 — those Native Americans affiliated with a tribal land base, according to Ryberg.

While members have gained federal health care allotted to recognized tribal members through the adoption process with the Concow Maidu of Oroville, they are not eligible for other services and advantages, according to JoAnn Hedrick, one of the tribal background researchers for the American Valley Mountain Maidu, and the wife of one of the tribal members.

What Native Americans who have a land base and are counted under the BIA system receive includes options for housing assistance, grant eligibility, health care and education benefits and certain protections.

Members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu have fallen short when it comes to claiming a land base. Although they can easily trace themselves to the early days of Plumas

# Feather River Bulletin

3-18-1998

page 5 of 5

County's gold rush, they have never been granted any land tracts.

And although the rancharia exists in Indian Valley, that land belongs to the Maidu who have lived and continue to live in that area. The American Valley Mountain Maidu are a separate tribe and must find its own land, according to Ryberg.

While Ryberg and members of the tribe work with Forest Service representatives to locate a suitable land base on public lands, no clear amount has been determined.

Ryberg said the exact location and the amount of land allotted — if approved — is up to the federal government.

Another consideration that the American Valley Native Americans are counting on is the trend toward allowing Native Americans to affiliate themselves with their tribe without exactly living on the land base.

Many of the estimated 500 American Valley Mountain Maidu do not live in this area. Ryberg lives in Grass Valley

although he was born in East Quincy and considers the area his home. He said when he was growing up his father had to leave this area to find employment.

And that is often the case with most of the state's Native American population. They cannot remain on their tribal land base — if there is one — and earn a living.

Currently, task forces such as the Advisory Council and the UCLA group are encouraging the BIA to eliminate its strict adherence to counting on those Native Americans who are on or near their land base.

"...And should count all members of unrecognized tribes who meet eligibility standards under the 1988 amendments to the Indian Health Care Improvement Act."

These groups are encouraging the BIA to use census figures when counting the Native American population.

Members of the American Valley Mountain Maidu are meeting Saturday, March 21 at 11 a.m. at the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter Day Saints in Quincy to continue discussions.

In considering what the tribe will gain if it receives federal recognition, Ryberg said his tribe is not interested in exstablishing a local gaming casino.

For one thing the tribe does not have the financial backing, but that is not the reason why the tribe is seeking recognition, according to the members.

When asked if the members of the tribe will gain financially from previous years of neglect by the federal government, Ryberg said there is no back reimbursement of money available through the process.

What would be made available and what is important to the tribe, is what it is eligible for in the future.

"Our main interest is in cultural preservation," Ryberg explained.

"We want back what's left and re-establish the rest," he said about the old ways and traditions.

"Hopefully it's not lost forever," he said.