

CLARK, George Sr.

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GEORGE CLARK SR. OBITUARY

1917 - 2000

George Clark Sr., 82, of Oroville, California, a member of the Concow Maidu Tribe, who enjoyed going to pow wows, fishing and being around people, passed away of natural causes at his residence on Monday, January 24, 2000. Services will take place at a later date. Burial to follow cremation at Clark Cemetery, Yankee Hill, California. Arrangements entrusted to **Oroville Funeral Home**, Oroville.

NORTON, Grandma Bertha

The Sacramento Bee

10-26-2000

Grandma Norton dies at age 101 – or more

By Stephen Magagnini
Bee Staff Writer

Grandma Bertha Norton, thought to be California's oldest Indian, died peacefully in her sleep at her Sacramento home early Wednesday. She was 101, or perhaps older.

She was known for the ever-present twinkle in her eye and her lifetime service to Indian people.

Mrs. Norton was born in Wheatland, Yuba County, on Aug. 15, 1899, or 1898, said longtime family friend Cindy La Marr, director of Capitol Area Indian Resources.

"Considering the average life span of an American Indian is 49, for Bertha to reach 101 is incredible – can you imagine the history and heartbreak and

tragedy she's seen throughout her lifetime, and through it all she maintained such a strong sense of humor and a will to live."

In recent years, when she was feeling up to it, Norton would attend the monthly meeting of Indian elders, many of whom were in their 70s and 80s. "She'd say, 'Oh, I always enjoy seeing you kids'," La Marr recalled.

Mrs. Norton was the daughter of George Nye, a famous Maidu storyteller and dancer who, with his father, helped keep alive the Big Head ceremonial dances performed in a roundhouse. Her mother was of the Wintun tribe.

She recalled traveling through the hills of Butte County on horseback as a girl to



Bee photograph/José M. Osorio
Bertha Norton, believed to be California's oldest Indian, traveled through Butte County hills on horseback as a girl to Indian gatherings.

the "Big Time," as California Indian gatherings are called.

"She knew Ishi (long considered California's last wild Indian) as a child," La Marr said. "He would be seen at the ceremonies, but he didn't talk to anyone, and Bertha's mother

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Norton: She spent her life in service to the Indian community

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told her to 'leave him alone, he's grieving for his people.'

Mrs. Norton was born at a time when California's Indian population – thought to exceed 300,000 before the European Americans came – had dwindled to about 15,000. When she was a young

woman, Indians weren't U.S. citizens, had no standing in the courts, and were often punished for speaking their native tongues or practicing their religion.

She became a midwife for many Indian people. Well into her 80s, she drove from county to county in her Ford Fairlane, which she

called the "Blue Bomb," delivering food and muffins to needy families.

"She was a community person who loved people and teaching people what it was to be Indian by always being there to hand out a diploma, or she'd just smile and make you laugh," said one of her

six grandchildren, Diana Almen-dariz. "She was always there whenever anyone needed a place to stay, or if you were down, just go talk to Grandma – she'd make everything better just by being a wonderful human being. She did that unconditionally."

In recent years, she'd celebrate

her birthday at the California State Indian Museum near Sutter's Fort – an event attended by hundreds of well-wishers. At her 100th birthday party, she remarked, "I can't hear too good, I can't see too good, but just get me to a table because I sure can eat."

She had received numerous hon-

ors, and Gov. Gray Davis named her a national treasure, proclaiming her 100th birthday "Grandma Norton Day."

Mrs. Norton, who outlived her three children, is survived by six grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Native American contributions continue major role in Northeastern California

The Maidu Indians

The Indians who lived in and around the Sutter Buttes were the Southern Maidu or Nisenan.

These Indians, like all American Indians, were descendants of the migratory peoples that crossed the Bering Straits from Asia and then spread southward into the North and South American continents.

There is no precise way to date the American Indians' arrival in what is now the United States, but by 15,000 years ago, people were living throughout the Americas.

Currently, the best guess at the number of Indians living in present day California at the time of the arrival of the first Europeans is during 310,000 and 500,000.

Authorities agree that the Indians of California made up about 10 percent of the entire Indian population north of Mexico. The greatest concentration of Indians within the state was in the Central Valley.

The Maidu, which simply means "the people," in English, lived in the Sacramento Valley and surrounding foothills. The southernmost Maidu were the Nisenan.

Maidu society was organized in tribes. A tribe was a conglomeration of villages numbering from two to 20 or more.

One village was the main village, sort of the capitol, and this would be the site of the ceremonial and religious buildings such as the temescals or sweat houses.

Some villages had populations of 500 or more and others were made up of one or two families. The villages were very loosely organized. Leaders of the villages were mainly advisors, not decision makers. There might be one

leader for war, another for religious matters, but there was not a designated leader who could speak for the entire village on all matters.

Being hunters and gatherers, much of their energy went into food gathering and preparation.

As with most native Californians, the acorn was the staple of the Nisenan diet. It took a great deal of time to gather and prepare the approximately 2,000 pounds of acorns every adult ate in a year.

Acorn meal provides more calories per serving than either wheat or corn, an important factor in a hunting/gathering society's diet.

However, before an acorn can be used for food, it must be processed. Acorns contain tannic acid, and this must be removed prior to using them as food. The acorns would be gathered in the fall, with some being prepared immediately while the rest of the supply was stored in cone-shaped baskets for use over the winter months.

After shelling the acorns and removing the membrane that surrounds the meat, the meat was ground into a meal in mortars.

The meal was then placed in a sand basin near a stream or river and warm water was poured over the meal.

This was repeated until the water leached the acid out of the acorns and left the Nisenan with a nutritious meal that they could eat as a mush, soup or bread.

Besides acorns, the Nisenan utilized nearly everything that nature had to offer as a food source.

A few animals were not eaten, such as the grizzly bear, coyote or owl, but for the most part, the diet of the Nisenan was varied.

Fish, game, seeds, insects, nuts, berries and grasses all had places in their diet.

The Nisenan were not

farmers because there was no need to farm.

The valley and foothills provided enough food and shelter to meet their needs.

The Nisenan were followers of the Kuksu ceremony. This religion originated among the Patwin people and spread throughout the entire Central Valley.

Partially because of the abundance of food sources, the Nisenan had the time to develop and practice a very elaborate and intricate form of this religion.

The ceremonies consisted of dressing up in elaborate costumes and impersonating gods by performing ceremonial dances.

Death released a person's soul to travel west. A spirit might enter a coyote, an owl, a snake, a lizard or perhaps become a whirlwind and be transported to the final resting place.

If someone died in a home, the dwelling was abandoned, and the name of the deceased was never mentioned again.



Photo by Albert Bierstadt

This landscape was sacred to the local Maidu people. It is called, Among The Sierra Nevada Mountains, by German Artist Albert Bierstadt, 1830-1902.

The Nisenan cremated their dead and performed yearly mourning ceremonies to honor those who had died.

As with all Native Americans, the most deadly contact the Nisenan had with Europeans came in the form of microbes.

In 1833, a trapping party from the Hudson's Bay Company brought malaria into the Central Valley. Within a few short months, thousands of Indians had died. It is estimated that 75 percent of the Central Valley Indians died in this epidemic alone.

In a few short months villages that had numbered in the hundreds were empty. When the discovery of gold was made in 1848, thousands of men poured into the region to hunt for gold.

The fertility of the valley floor was soon recognized, and the farmers and ranchers began carving up the land.

The Nisenan's environment was altered forever, and those who remained were forced to live in a new society.

Information for this article can be found on the Internet at www.middlemountain.org

History of the ConCow Maidu

The "ConCow Maidu" as Euro-Americans call us, are the descendants of "Indians" located in the Feather River drainage.

All the tribes of the Feather River drainage spoke variations of the Penutian language and are culturally and socially akin.

They lived in family groups up and down our water ways, amid great natural beauty. We are a stable and highly social people.

They participated in the annual gatherings with other tribes for social events, games, and to fish for salmon.

To begin the story of the ConCow Maidu we travel back in time to the year 1828. Summer was coming to an end and the ConCow peoples were returning from their summer camps around Grassy Lake.

Grassy Lake is about 25 miles northeast of their more permanent winter home in the KonKow Valley and surrounding foothills. The KonKow Valley is about 20 miles north of present day Oroville, in Butte County, California.

The ConCow migrated with the water up the hills in the summer and back down in the fall of the year.

That is when, in the year 1828 that Jedediah Smith first met the ConCow. Jedediah and a party of trappers stayed the six months of winter with our people.

In 1833, trappers Michael Lafromboise and John Work spent the winter in the ConCow territory.

And between 1828 and 1836 the Hudson Bay Company sent more trappers to the ConCow territory.

As a result of the contact with the Euro-Americans, a malaria epidemic swept through the ConCow villages in 1833 killing an estimated 800 people.

In 1848 gold was discovered and by the year 1849 the ConCow territory was overrun by gold seekers and accompanying settlers.

Traditional food sources quickly became scarce and conflicts broke out between the Euro-Americans and the native population.

In 1850, the government attempted to end the the conflicts between the Indians and the Euro-Americans by creating treaties to place the natives on reservations. During 1850-51, Indian Agent Oliver Wozencraft was sent to negotiate with all the Maidu groups.

On Aug. 1, 1851, the headmen of the nearby ConCow territories were called to gather at the Bidwell Rancho on Chico Creek to conclude a treaty of Peace and Friendship with O.M. Wozencraft, U.S. Indian agent.

The treaties promised the Indians approximately 227 square miles of land roughly from Chico to NimsheW to Oroville.

Almost immediately after the federal Treaty of 1851, the California State Senate appointed a committee to look into the treaties and the governor decided to oppose any law that gave Indians exclusive right to foothill land that was high in gold bearing quartz or to valley land that was valuable to the settlers and farmers.

One year later, 1852, the U.S. Senate secretly rejected all the treaties.

In 1853 the Government authorized the Nome Lackie Resere.

In 1854 Indians from Marysville, the foothills near Chico and Yuba City were rounded up and driven to the Nome Lackie Reservation and forced to stay there.

During the 1850s diseases continued to decimate the ConCow peoples. It was estimated that by 1853 over 800 more ConCow died of pneumonia, influenza, tuberculo-

sis, small pox, malaria or cholera.

The ConCow Maidu Trail of Tears.

In the fall of 1862, a large number of Indians were on the Round Valley Reservation. Because of over crowding, lack of food, and unsanitary conditions, disease spread rapidly.

Winter was approaching, and the swollen streams surrounding the valley would isolate it from the rest of the world until spring.

The ConCow Maidu Indians realized what their fate would be. So one morning in September, a large number, from 300 to 500, packed their meager valuables and said good bye to Supervisor Short, and started for their old home in the Sacramento Valley.

They were stopped at the Sacramento River near Chico. Headman Tome-yanem told the soldiers that his people were starving and asked for work to earn food for the winter.

The ConCow were granted permission to camp about five miles from Chico for the winter.

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During the next year, more ConCow Maidu Indians were rounded up and corralled with the group from the Round Valley Reservation.

The remaining ConCow were ordered to be at the Bidwell Rancheria on Aug. 28, 1863, to be taken to the Round Valley Reservation at Covelo in Mendocino County.

If any Indians were found after that date, they would be shot on sight. And they were. Agents collected 435 Indians and placed them under control in Chico, as prisoners of war.

Captain Augustus W. Starr, Co F., 2nd Infantry, California Volunteers, in command of 23 mounted infantrymen, was assigned as escort to assist sub-agent Eddy in the removal of the Indians.

Fourteen wagons were commandeered from valley ranchers to carry supplies and many of the Indians as far as Thomas Creek.

This ill-starred trip has gone down in Indian history as an inhumane drive to a strange and inhospitable valley over a long, hot, dry trail through the Sacramento Valley and through the steep, rocky route of the Coast Range. Many of the Indians already were sick from being rounded up, marched, and corralled.

Leaving Camp Bidwell, about four miles north of Chico, on Sept. 4, 1863, the group spent the first night at Colby's Ferry. On the following nights, stops were made at the Kirpatrick Ranch and the James Ranch.

On Sept. 8, they reached the Laycock Ranch on Thomas Creek and the wagons were returned to Chico as planned. When the pack train from Round Valley did not arrive at Thomas Creek four days later, Captain Starr

ordered all the Indians to walk approximately three miles to Mountain House where they met the pack train.

On Sept. 14, the few who were well enough to travel were put on mule back, their children into one big wagon, and the rest had to go on foot.

One hundred and fifty Indians who were too sick from poor drinking water, unaccustomed food, fever, and exhaustion were left with sub-agent Eddy at Mountain House.

On Sept. 16, 1863, the wagon was left at Log Springs. Some of the women and children were put on mules or on the soldiers' horses, but most had to walk the rest of the way to Round Valley Reservation.

Making one-night stops at government camps and on the middle fork of the Eel River, they reached Round Valley on Sept. 18, 1863. Four hundred sixty-one Indians started the trek, 277 finished.

When Captain Douglas at Fort Wright heard that the sick ConCow Indians were dying along the mountain trail on their way back to the Round Valley Reservation, he appointed Supervisor James Short to bring them in.

Short took a pack train with food and some teams and wagons to carry the sick Indians.

For 13 days he worked to bring in a "portion of them."

He later commented that "about 150 sick Indians were scattered along the trail for 50 miles... dying at the rate of two or three per day. They had nothing to eat... and the wild hogs were eating them up either before or after they were dead."

Information for this article was obtained from the official Maidu home page located on the Internet, www.maidu.com

The land before time

The Maidu tended their own Eden

By Alicia Knadler

Indian Valley Editor

The Maidu, the first people of Indian Valley, knew no evil before the California Gold Rush brought floods of settlers into the garden created for them by the Creator, or Worldmaker, as he is known to Maidu.

Where the "white men" had the absolute good and evil of God and Satan, their religion was observed mostly on the Sabbath, or day of rest. For the Maidu, there was no absolute good or evil, and every aspect of their daily lives was surrounded in spiritual meaning.

The Maidu lived in the garden created for them by the Worldmaker. Any roughness in their world was attributed to Coyote, the trickster who enjoyed being mischievous and interfering with Worldmaker's creations.

Settlers brought their Bibles to read and learn about their religion and the "proper" way to live their lives. To the Maidu, stories passed down through families. Earth itself was like a Bible. Animals are related to the Maidu, according to their "Book of Genesis," and the Maidu watched and learned from them.

The Maidu was the largest of the Northern California Indian tribes, although each village was like a tribe unto itself. There were the Concow Maidu, the Taylorsville Maidu, the Big Meadow Maidu and others, although many village names have been lost over time.

And today, while the descendants of settlers are celebrating 150 years of family, industry and progress, the Maidu, whose lives were virtually unchanged for centuries before the new immigrants arrived, are struggling for their survival as a people. The Maidu story for the last 150 years is much different than that of the settlers. Theirs is a story of cultural genocide, bereft of the land that gave them life.

"We knew the land," Concow Maidu Frank Mullen said. "It was the garden the Creator gave us to care for—it's sad that history does not say this." Instead, written history highlights the exploits of explorers, like Peter Lassen, who was well known among the Maidu for his cruelty to their ancestors.

Written history taught to the nation's children has been going through drastic change over the last two decades, and some children are catching just a glimpse of what life was like for the first people of California.

"Before barbed wire, this must have been a beautiful place," Maidu Hallie Mullen said with a sigh.

Gone from the textbooks are the "red savage" stereotypes of popular western drama, but many assumptions made about the Indians survive. There are still people who refer to the Maidu story of creation as a myth, without giving it the same respect and freedom given to other religious beliefs, such as the tenets of Judaism or Buddhism.



Photo submitted

Thanks to the Joseph family of Indian Valley, Homer and Irene Joseph, and sons Darel, Dennis, David, Donnie and Dale, some pieces of Maidu heritage have been preserved. When their home burned down, the family saved the baskets made by Homer's grandmother Freida Davis Joseph. Her baskets were given to and are on display at the Indian Valley Museum in Taylorsville.



Louise and Seymour Smith were perhaps the most well-known Maidus to live and raise their family of 11 children in the Taylorsville area. Seymour was renowned for his prize fighting and long-distance running. Together, the couple were active in community and cultural affairs. Family members and friends hold an annual scholarship run from Taylorsville to Greenville, every September, in honor of Seymour Smith.

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There are also people who gather their ignorance around them like a security blanket, refusing to think about things that might make them feel uncomfortable. Instead of trying to understand what happened 150 years ago, they disparage the Indians and their struggle.

Before the settlers came, the Maidu knew little of sickness, but less than 50 years after settlers arrived, whole villages were wiped out because of diseases they had no immunity to fight. Estimates are that almost 90 percent of the Maidu population has been wiped out in this way.

With their families dying out, the remaining Maidu were starved out by the settlers who moved in and took away their lands.

In Taylorsville, the local Maidu were luckier than other tribes. In neighboring areas, Indian men, women and children were worth a \$5 bounty, for which they were hunted down and killed like animals.

Taylorsville founder Jobe Taylor frowned upon meanness to Indians. One time, he convened a jury that hung a settler for shooting an Indian in cold blood. Then too, Indians were killed if they were

caught stealing. For the Maidu, ownership of land and animals was just one of many foreign concepts to learn.

Dead Fall Lane, just outside Taylorsville, is where an old Indian man was killed while his family was off hunting and gathering. A nearby rancher thought he had stolen a cow and quickly dispensed his justice. Later, it was discovered that another rancher had given the cow to the family.

Many Maidu and other Northern California Indians were terrified and tried to remain hidden in the forest.

Their whole way of life was shattered. The lands that grew all of their food and material supplies was drained for farmland. Waterfowl disappeared, the grasses and reeds used for baskets and tulle boats disappeared, and the list goes on. In this way, Maidu were forced to learn "white man's ways" to survive.

Settlers used Indians as laborers and servants. In some areas not far away, parents were killed and children taken as indentured servants until they were in their 30s. All remaining Indian children were rounded up and taken away from their families, even in Indian Valley, and sent to boarding schools. Many siblings were separated and sent off to different schools.



Master basket weaver Lilly Baker has taught thousands of people about the Maidu way of life through her basket-weaving lessons. "Dancing With the Bear," a video about Baker and her basket weaving is available through the Plumas County Museum. Her nephew and frequent companion, Ennis Peck, is now earning his living making baskets with the skills learned from his grandparents and from "Aunt Lilly."

"They were so mean," Hal-
lie Mullen said. Her grand-
mother worked in the laun-
dry. It was her job to iron
sheets with an iron that was
too heavy for such a small
girl. If she was too slow, her
load of laundry was doubled
the next day.

Children were not allowed
to speak their native lan-
guage, and they were not al-
lowed to be together in
groups. Children of more
than one generation were
made to feel ashamed of their
culture, and here is where
much of that culture was
erased by damaging the tra-
ditional ways in which
knowledge was passed down
through families.

The list of atrocities com-
mitted against California In-

dians is a long one, with fre-
quent rapes and murders
among the top. While old tra-
ditions dictated that a con-
quering tribe pay a forfeit to
the loser, the US. government
has never paid for the atroci-
ties committed against the
California Indians.

Their land was taken away,
and an attempt was made to
pay them for it more than a
century later. They were giv-
en 1800s prices, which
amounted to about 25 cents
per acre after hefty legal fees.
Treaties were pigeon-holed
and never ratified.

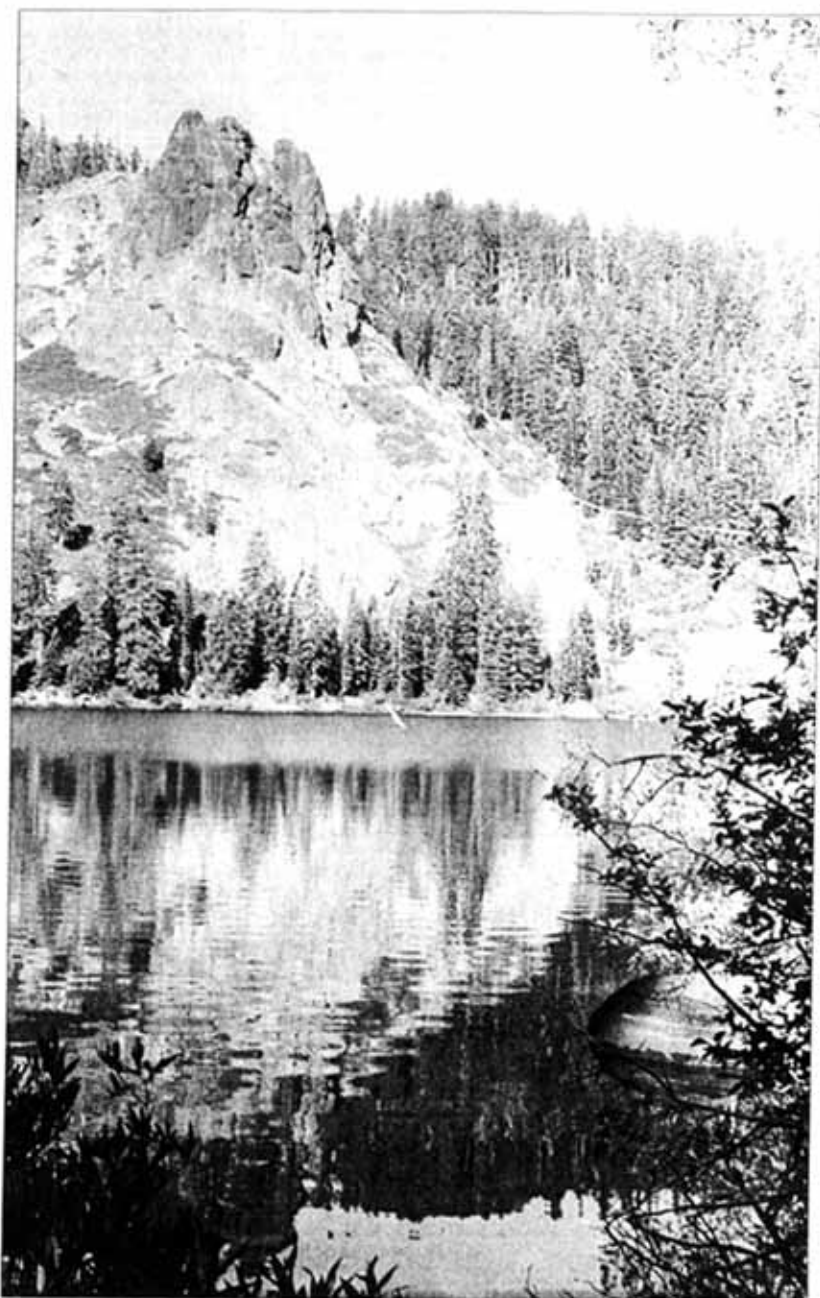
Some say the Maidu were
weak, and that is why every-
thing was taken from them.
Not only were they experi-



Maidu babies are traditionally carried in cradle baskets, their weaving and decoration is done with spiritual significance. The baskets can be inserted into the ground in a standing position, so the baby can see what is going on in the world. Babies pictured are Heinie and Fritzie. No surnames are recorded for the photo.



Although these baskets were made after the settlers arrived, they were woven by the late Homer Joseph's grandmother, Freida Davis. Several of her baskets, including those of traditional design, can be seen at the Indian Valley Museum in Taylorsville.



Photos by Alicia Knader

The silence that surrounds Homer Lake is almost tangible. Most Maidu have never seen the lake that is sacred to them, for their children are taught that only medicine people go there. In a newspaper clipping from 1896, a Maidu legend was printed that described how the whole valley was a lake, but when an outlet to the ocean was created, Worldmaker imprisoned a troublesome water spirit in Homer Lake. Once each year, the spirit is allowed to look around, and anyone unfortunate to be seen is drawn down into the lake and devoured.

encing a cultural death, they were faced with new upheavals in what amounted to multi-generational trauma. From first contact, their livelihoods were taken away; they were made to feel ashamed of themselves; they were forced to move away, literally ripped from the womb of their mother—Earth; and, after all this, they no longer knew how to be good mothers and fathers according to their traditions.

"Each time the government was forced to negotiate with the Indians, the Indians were treated unfairly," Frank Mullen said. Around the table, several Maidu agreed by nodding their heads. One says that government policies toward Indians were and still are designed for cultural genocide. "But we're not extinct yet," he said. More heads nodded.

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Today, Maidu are trying to put the fractured pieces of their culture back together. Educational programs to help them rediscover their culture and history are offered through the Roundhouse Council in Greenville.

Most Maidu living throughout the state are not federally recognized because it is almost impossible to meet requirements and an estimated 80-year backlog of applications to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Other are not acknowledged due to their unwillingness to become members of a regional collection of tribes, or because they were not given the opportunity to join.

For many of these unrecognized Indians, recapturing their heritage has become a major goal in their lives, as well as receiving justice.

Justice would include free fishing and firewood gathering rights, among other benefits. While they were paid off at minimal prices for the land that was taken from them, they never settled for timber, water or mineral rights. If settled today, those rights would be worth millions of dollars.

Access to information is al-

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so restricted for most of the Maidu. Because they are not recognized, they have no access to some archival information.

Why should Indians get benefits? Because the United States is responsible to native peoples, for the treaties, for social justice, one man answered. "This is our homeland, we are not immigrants."

They have upset others by wanting rights and privileges, but then others have already benefited from what was theirs first.

One of these others was upset at what seemed to be a lack of forgiveness among the Maidu.

"I am just relating history," was Frank Mullen's answer. He said he was not bitter, and that there was nothing for him to forgive. "Just what is our future, that is my concern."

Whatever the future holds for the Maidu, it will be tied to the land, for theirs is a land-based religion. That religion is not protected though, so words and applications must be framed as cultural, instead.

"Our cultural survival depends on the landscape," Farrell Cunningham, the Maidu stewardship program coordinator, said. "All the sites of power and other signs given

by the Creator are bigger than we are—we can't just leave it and be the same people."

His sister, Trina, describes 150 years of development to be like watching a beloved grandmother slowly withering away. And, to the Maidu, their elders are treasured members of the community. "This is why we can't leave the land," she said. "We can try, we can turn our backs on it, but we always come back."

Hallie Mullen shared a memory of her father traveling over Hatchet Mountain with a woman friend one day. They stopped several times, so she could leave gifts and give thanks to the Creator for allowing them to cross the mountain, for allowing them to swim in the water.

She is happy that children are now being taught the old ways, with help and support from friends. Some of those friends include the Maidu Cultural and Development Group, the Pacific West Community Forestry Center and Forest Community Research.

Together, they are seeking to revitalize the Maidu culture and language. Children learn through activities that celebrate the Maidu's language and traditional ecological knowledge. And, Taylorsville is where the most recent celebration of knowl-

Words rediscovered: Remembering

*Editor's Note: The following article written by Frank Joseph is quoted in *Plumas Memories, Vol. 46*, by the late historian Bob Cooke. Joseph, who was laid to rest in the Taylorsville Cemetery, was co-founder of the Spring Bear Dance held annually in Janesville.*

By Frank Joseph

Dec. 8, 1900-March 17, 1981

It was Sunday in the month of June, 1980, when the ceremonial Bear Dance was given at the Mankin's Ranch in Lassen County at Janesville where I asked the morning prayer. In the

afternoon I sang the Bear Dance song as they danced.

The Unforgotten Path

I walked very slowly to the path where I asked my morning prayers, and it is the same place each and every year. I walked with my two canes to guide me here and there on account of old age and sickness. The path is sparse with grass and the hard granite shows through.

My Prayer

The prayer of gratitude, joy and adoration. I am thinking of a morning a year ago in Janesville. I had risen

early and walked to the sacred ground to see the sunrise over the mountains. A solitary bird sang over and over one note then it ceased and I was alone in profound silence. Out of great joy and awe I found myself repeating aloud: The Lord in His Holy Temple: Let all the world keep silence before him. Gladys Mankins, the noted person who gives the Bear Dance and barbecue on Sunday once told me that the essence of prayer is a song. She was right, we need to sing our thanks. "All is given unto me in heaven and earth." Obedi-

ence cannot be an absolute demand. If I am willing to do my best that is all that can be asked of me. Down the path I cannot retrace then my desolate heart will break with the tears that I cannot shed. I shall bow my uncrowned head. This is my Joy and Glory, winning a lost world back again. The world itself remains a place of awesome beauty and wonder.

It is the greatest pleasure of my life to ask the morning prayer and speak to my own people.

I shall remain,
Frank Joseph

edge took place.

During a summer day camp for youth, activities included prayers for good harvests, reenactments of traditional food gathering and preparation, and the singing of songs. Even with the varied programs newly established for Maidu youth and adults, it is a huge effort to recapture, remember and revitalize traditional ecological knowledge, according to Farrell Cunningham.

Other groups are helping them through the long and convoluted government and scientific processes, including Forest Service officials who are helping with land management plans for a degraded area of forest north of downtown Greenville and with negotiations relating to the relicensing of the hydro-

electric project at Lake Almanor, which is where many Maidu lived prior to the 1920s.

Within the Maidu Cultural and Development Group, several ongoing projects are progressing. It is involved in teaching language, traditional archaeology at the college level, and they are involved in some local and federal decision making processes. Maidu are also working to protect their sacred sites, such as Soda Rock, where government officials had not explored the cultural significance prior to granting past mining permits.

Today, Maidu also face the same issues as other people, such as economic and ecological health.

"We are all responsible for how schools are run, how

workers are treated, and even how Maidu are treated," Cunningham said. "I am tired of hearing people say "that has nothing to do with me. We are all responsible. If we want to live in a just society, we are responsible for creating that society. If we live in a society that is founded on injustice, then until we fix that foundation, we shouldn't be surprised when we see injustices all around us."

Editor's note: Information for this article was provided by several local Maidu, some of whom were quoted; local historian Norman Lamb, who provided "The Archaeology and Prehistory of Plumas and Butte Counties, California: an Introduction and Interpretive Model" by Makoto Kowta and "A History of Indian Valley, Plumas County, California, 1850-1920" by Patricia Lindgren Krutz.

Other publications used include "Plumas Memories," volumes 8, 34 and 46, compiled by the Plumas County Historical Society; "The American Indian, Prehistory to Present" by Arrell Morgan Gibson; "Indians of the Feather River, Tales and Legends of the Concow Maidu of California," by Donald P. Jewell; "The Northern Maidu" by Marie Potts; "An Ancient Trail of the Mountain Maidu Indians," an automobile tour booklet sponsored by several local agencies and organizations; "From War to Self-Determination, a history of the Bureau of Indian Affairs" by C.L. Henson; "Fariss and Smith's "History of Plumas County, California;" and, the Summer 2002 Forest Community Research Newsletter.

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Caring for the Indian dead

By [Kristina Seward](#)

This article was published on [07.24.03](#).

He sits in a white plastic lawn chair, his pet Chihuahua, Chico, curled on a tattered blanket at his feet. He sits at the West Sacramento Avenue entrance of the Mechoopda Cemetery in the sweltering afternoon heat. He sits in protest.

The straight, rugged lines of his face and his brown, weathered skin reveal his Native American ancestry. Vernon Conway, 79, is five-eighths Mechoopda Indian, and several of his relatives are buried in the cemetery.



STANDING HIS GROUND
Vernon Conway stands in front of a homemade sign in front of the Indian cemetery on West Sacramento Avenue. Conway, 79, was protesting the decision by the Mechoopda Tribal council to hire another person to care for the cemetery, where many of his friends and relatives are buried.
PHOTO BY JOSH INDAR

His wife Charlotte passed away in 2002 after her fifth stroke and was buried there. Since then Conway has mowed and watered the lawn, pulled weeds and maintained the run-down cemetery grounds for free. But recently, he found out that the Mechoopda Tribal Council, the owner of the cemetery, was going to hire a groundskeeper. Conway offered to continue doing the job for \$180 per month, but they hired someone else—for more money.

His next-door neighbor, Ray Leloup, 56, went to the Tribal Council office to question why the council had not hired Conway.

“They said he was too old to do the job,” Leloup said, “which I know is not right. He’s very active for 79.” Leloup was very upset by the situation, saying, “This is discrimination against his age.”

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Conway was also bothered because the person they hired is not Native American. "It's in the [council's] constitution that all jobs be offered to members of the tribe first," he said.

On top of that, the council will be paying the person they hired \$250 per month, \$70 more than Conway had offered to do the job for.

Determined to fight for his cause, Conway set up camp at the cemetery entrance on July 18 and 19. When approached by passersby, Conway was friendly and shared his story, offering to show visitors his family's graves. On one such visit, he stopped first at his wife's grave, which doesn't have a headstone because he couldn't afford one. Instead, Conway has adorned her grave with things she loved —flowers, American flags, small plastic windmills, and a white statute of an angel. He also planted roses near her grave and propped up a small plaque that reads "Glory to God."

His mother's grave also lacks a headstone because he didn't have enough money. But, like his wife's, it is decorated with an assortment of items. The tour continues to his brother's, father's and uncle's graves, and along the way he points out several friends' graves.

"I know almost all the people buried here," Conway said. "I grew up with them."

Conway purchased small American flags for the Fourth of July and placed one at every single grave in the cemetery. But the council removed the flags, and he was told he could decorate only the graves of his relatives.

Conway has encountered frequent conflict with the council over his devotion to the cemetery. He said they consider him a "troublemaker" and want him to leave it alone.

Leloup stopped by frequently during Conway's two-day protest to keep his neighbor company and to make sure he drank enough water on the 100-plus-degree days. When asked why he is so devoted to helping Conway's cause, Leloup said, "We're veterans, so we kind of stand together." Conway served in the Marine Corps in World War II and Leloup in the Army during the Vietnam War.

Leloup said he respects Conway because "he is a very honorable man, with a deep-seated conscience of what's right and wrong."

The Mechoopda Tribal Council declined to comment on the situation.

VanCLEASE, Velma Eleanor
Chico Enterprise Record
6-12-2004

Velma Eleanor Van Cleave

👁️ [Obituary](#) ➡️ [Condolences](#)



A funeral will be held for Velma Eleanor Van Cleave, 90 of Chico, on Wednesday, June 16, 2004 at 10 a.m. at the Brusie Funeral Home. She passed away Friday, June 11, 2004 at Enloe Hospital. She was born March 11, 1914 to Oliver and Katie Josephson in Yankee Hill. She attended schools in Sterling City and Oroville High School. She worked as a waitress in the dining room for the Stolte and Conn Construction Co. at the Herlong Ammunition Depot. She worked as a machinist apprentice at Yard 2 in Richmond. While living in Humboldt County she worked as a filleter and packer for the Lazio and Eureka Fisheries. Velma enjoyed the outdoors and liked to camp and fish. Her hobbies included music, Indian bead work and crafts. She was a member of the Home League of the Salvation Army. Her survivors include: one brother, Frank Josephson of Medford, Oregon; four grandchildren; great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Velma was preceded by her daughter, five brothers and one sister. Visitation will be held from 5 - 8 p.m. Tuesday evening at the funeral home.

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Legacy.com
11-7-2004

JIM MADISON

📄 Obituary ➤ Condolences

Graveside services for Jim Madison, 60 of Yankee Hill, will be held Thursday, November 11th at 11 a.m. at Glen Oaks Memorial Park. Mr. Madison died in Paradise on Sunday, November 7th.

Jim was born in Spokane, Wash. on August 1, 1944, attended Notre Dame School, graduated from Chico High and attended Yuba and Butte Colleges. He enlisted in the Marines in 1962 and served in Vietnam from 1965-66, being awarded the Bronze Star Medal with combat V. He worked for Modern Building for a short time and P.G.&E. for 31 years in hydro construction as a Station Mechanic.

He is survived by his wife Carol; five sons: Chris Madison of Santa Rosa, Joe Sousa of Magalia, Tony Sousa of Bella Vista, Calif., Sonny Josephson of Eureka, Montana and Kris Josephson of Yankee Hill; two daughters-in-law, Robyn Sousa and Kacey Josephson; six grandchildren; one brother, Bob Madison of Chico; and two sisters, Shirley Rawley of Great Falls, Mont. and Mary Coyle Johnson of Herald, Calif.

Visitation will from 5 to 8 p.m., Wednesday at Brusie Funeral Home in Chico.

Published in Chico Enterprise-Record on Nov. 10, 2004

STEELE, Jason Nakoma
Chico Enterprise Record
11-17-2004

Jason was born in Oroville on April 27, 1978 and passed away November 13, 2004 at age 26.

He is survived by his mother, Teresa; sisters, Latasha and Amanda; brother, Steven; grandfather, Francis Steele; nephews, Nathan, Brandon and Dakota; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Memorial Services will be held Thursday, November 18, 2004 at 4:00 p.m. at the Berry Creek Rancheria.