

RICKARD (LaFONSO), Donna Mae

Chico Enterprise Record

5-15-2015

Donna Mae Rickard

Donna Mae Rickard

Chico Enterprise-Record (Chico, CA) - Friday, May 15, 2015

Omak WA United States

DONNA MAE RICKARD Donna Mae Rickard 101 of Omak, WA died May 9, 2015. Born in Chico, CA to Cipriana Genevieve Avalos and Elmer LaFonso June 24, 1913, she graduated from Chico High School, attended Chemawa Indian School & in 1935 wed Fred Rickard. 1950, they moved to the Colville Indian reservation, Nespelem, WA. Senior elder of the Mechoopda Tribe of Chico, CA she was preceded in death by her parents, husband Fred, grandson Dan, and niece Juanita. Survivors include her daughter Elizabeth Jean Berney (Buzz), grandsons Joe (Alice Thompson), Raymond, Geral (Yvonne), great-granddaughters Nicole Rider (Leonard), Jessica (Benn), and Jade, great-great-grandsons Ryland and Kyle & great-great-granddaughter Meliah Cipriana. Graveside services for Donna Mae will be held at Spring Canyon Cemetery, Grand Coulee, WA 2:00pm, Friday, May 15, 2015. Donna Mae's on-line register book is at www.stratefuneralhome.com.

WILLIAMS, Ezhno Christopher
Chico Enterprise Record
7-18-2015

EZHNO WILLIAMS Ezhno Christopher Williams, infant son of Christopher Williams and Shelly Salma, passed away on July 14, 2015. Other survivors include sister Salma and brothers Taimo and Hanio. Graveside service will be held on Monday, July 20, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. at the Mechoopda Cemetery on Sacramento Ave. in Chico. Dinner to follow at Wildwood Park. To send condolences online go to NewtonBracewell.com.

To Plant Memorial Trees in memory, please visit our [Sympathy Store](#).

FIREFIGHTING

MOORETOWN RANCHERIA HELPS BRING IN AIRCRAFT

Concow Maidu get federally-funded helicopter to assist during critical time in fire season



PHOTOS BY DAN REIDEL — MERCURY-REGISTER

Oroville Mayor Linda Dahlmeier and public safety director Bill LaGrone check out a helicopter Thursday that the Mooretown Rancheria, Oroville city government, the El Medio Fire Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs collaborated to bring to the Oroville Airport to help protect against wildfires on tribal and other local land.

By Dan Reidel
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OROVILLE » For the next few weeks, firefighters will have an extra helicopter to battle blazes that threaten the north state.

The Eurocopter A Star B3 helicopter is on short-term assignment for about three weeks at the Oroville Municipal Airport from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Mooretown Rancheria Fire Department Chief Ray Ruiz of the Concow Maidu Tribe said his department has been working for about 16 months to get the federally-funded aircraft to help out in the north state.

Ruiz said although the Mooretown Rancheria Concow Maidu Tribe reached out to the bureau, it wasn't just the tribal firefighters who contributed to getting the firefighting aircraft at a critical time in the fire season. The Oroville City Council and Fire Department,

along with the El Medio Fire Department and the Tribal Emergency Management Agency, which represents six tribes in the north valley, collaborated with the bureau to provide facilities and logistics to bring the helicopter to Butte County.

"Working together," Ruiz said, "you have strength in numbers."

The "light heli-attack" aircraft can carry four firefighters and has a bucket that suspends underneath to drop water on fires.

The aircraft won't be exclusively used for the tribal firefighters or the city. It will be a part of the North Operations Center which coordinates firefighting agencies in Northern California.

But having an asset like the blue helicopter that was parked on the tarmac Thursday morning is a boost to local fire suppression forces, Ruiz said.

The Bureau of Indian
HELICOPTER » PAGE 5



Mooretown Rancheria Fire Department Chief Ray Ruiz worked with the Oroville city government, the El Medio Fire Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to bring a helicopter to the Oroville Airport to help protect against wildfires in the area.

The Eurocopter A Star B3 helicopter is on short-term assignment for about three weeks at the Oroville Municipal Airport from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Helicopter

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Affairs pays for the helicopter and crew, which starts at about \$3,000 per day in operation, but can vary greatly day-to-day, said bureau regional fire management officer Josh Simmons.

Simmons said protecting tribal resources is part of the bureau's responsibility.

"It helps tribal lands throughout the area, but also helps others," Simmons said.

The helicopter is one of seven aircraft the bureau uses to protect resources. It moves to different locations where the fire danger is high to aid tribal and local forces. Most recently, the helicopter was at a fire

in Wyoming, though it is originally based out of Cortez, Colorado.

Simmons said Oroville is in a good centralized location that can serve multiple tribes and is close to the regional office in Sacramento.

"With moving helicopters, it's easiest to go to a place where you have facilities available," he said.

Luring helicopters

While the hangars at the airport are adequate for the aircraft, the City Council approved a design in June for a new fire and police station, called the Westside Public Safety Facility.

Public safety director Bill LaGrone said building the station would increase the likelihood of "potentially housing a bureau he-

licopter" at the airport in the future.

The new building will have 3,800 square-feet of fire and police space including restrooms, sleeping quarters, meeting and office space, kitchen and gear storage; two fire truck bays totaling 1,500 square-feet; and a 3,000-square-foot aircraft hangar, according to a previous Mercury-Register article.

Mayor Linda Dahlmeier said after checking out the helicopter Thursday that the funds for the new station come from about \$3.4 million in bond resolutions that must be used for public infrastructure.

"The council voted and this was the highest priority," she said.

LaGrone said he had hoped the facility would be completed by the end of the

year, but now he expects it to be done in the spring of 2017. He noted that running a new fire and police station in a different location will change the way those departments operate. But, the city-owned airport makes a percentage of fuel sold, and LaGrone thinks building a firefighting and police station at the location will bring more helicopters from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other agencies to the airport.

During large firefighting operations in the north valley, the tarmac has "helicopters everywhere" with crews setting up in tents, LaGrone said.

"I believe it makes for a better situation," he said. "We've taken tax dollars to make this. We have an obligation to putting a fire facility here."

Tribe petitions for national recognition

By Heather Hacking

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@HeatherHacking on Twitter

OROVILLE » Members of the Konkow Valley Band Maidu tribe gathered in a shaded pavilion at Riverbend Park on Saturday. The official business of the day was to sign a document to send to Washington D.C. requesting official federal recognition as a tribe.

This step is a big one for the people who can all link their ancestry to two Konkow Maidu women from the Concow, Yankee Hill area.

Already, the tribe has been recognized by city, state, county, academic and other tribal groups.

The group began the process for recognition about 18 years ago. Members have gathered documents that have been organized into thick binders — more than 500 pages, double-sided.

Mark Clark is a member of the tribal council and lives in the Portland, Oregon, area. His career was as a director of public works. With that know-how of government, he was able to help his group gather up the final touches for the most recent petition to the federal government.

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The fact that tribal members were able to hold onto important aspects of their tribal history and to reconnect shows a tenacity that has endured many generations.

Members of the tribe were taken to reservations during three separate “trails of tears,” Clark said, but people from the families kept returning to the Concow area.

Pieces of their tribal identity were retained even when there was a bounty for the head of native people, tribal chairman Wallace Clark Wilson said.

For generations, the people tried to hide their heritage and customs, Wilson noted. Now they are trying to share all that they can.

Wilson is a good example of how pieces can be put back together.

His father died in 1949 when Wilson was an infant, and Wilson was adopted by another family.

This separated him from his culture.

However, about 30 years ago he returned to his roots where he was able to learn his family’s Indian dialect and dances.

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Tribe

FROM PAGE 1

Among his goals, and those of the tribal leaders, is to create a cultural museum and community center.

During the discussion Saturday, Wilson said it is hoped the group will receive federal funding to help tribal members with health care.

In some ways, members of the tribe are a big, extended family, with common links to Yohema Clark or Eliza Gramps, both who married men who were miners generations ago. Years later, sisters Molly and Maggie Cayan added to the tribal lineage.

For the past several months, members of the tribe have met frequently to share collect stories, Mark



Margie Hartshorn, left, and other council members for the Konkow Valley Band of Maidu sign a petition Saturday to the federal government for recognition as an independent tribe at Riverbend Park in Oroville. Mark Clark, right, helps Hartshorn find the proper spots to sign in the document.

DAN REIDEL —
ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Clark said.

When he was a child, his father would bring him to the cemetery to tend to family graves, Clark said. He also remembers visiting tribal elders when he was a child. Meanwhile, other members of the tribe were visit-

ing graves as well, and perhaps visiting with other elder family members. They took part in similar activities, but some members of the tribe had not met until recently.

Other families continued traditions of spearfish-

ing, Wilson explained, which is important today. The Konkow Maidu are one of the few groups allowed to hunt with speeas along the Feather River.

Contact reporter Heather Hacking at 896-7758.

COLOR-FILLED DAY AT SALMON FESTIVAL



PHOTOS BY DAN REIGEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

California Department of Fish and Wildlife technician Joe Amaroso harvest eggs from a chhook salmon as people watch from the viewing platform Saturday during the Salmon Festival in Oroville.

Both banks of Feather River filled with festivities

By Heather Hacking
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@HeatherHacking on Twitter

OROVILLE » The day started with a splash of color Saturday for the 22nd annual Oroville Salmon Festival, which drew thousands to the downtown and more to the Feather River Fish Hatchery.

Mackenzie Coon, 13, and Justin Hickman were at the event, but crossed paths for only a brief, color-filled instant. Coon, who attends Central Middle School in Oroville, held a bucket filled with colored cornstarch. As runners crossed the finish line for the 3K race, her job was to pelt them with colored corn starch.

Hickman, 16, placed third in the race and had the blue eyebrows to prove it. He regularly runs 5Ks and even marathons, so he considered the 3K — 1.86 miles — as merely a workout. He ran with two buddies from the Las Plumas High School cross-country team, who placed first and second.

Hickman said his two teammates are almost certainly headed for state finals in running, and he's working hard to join them.

Thanks to the salmon

The Konkow Valley Band of the Maidu Indians had a strong



Dymond Kostenko, a 17-year-old Las Plumas runner, is covered in colored powder when he comes in first place in the Oroville Hospital 3K Colored Dash during the Salmon Festival.

group praying for the salmon, explained tribal chairman Wallace Clark Wilson. Baskets of flowers and another filled with acorns were placed in the center of a dance circle, along with a shiny salmon.

One of the songs is an expression of joy and another is a song of thanks, he said. There were also silent prayers made for people who have "physical maladies," Wilson explained.

The Konkow Band is in the middle of reconnecting and recently signed a petition asking for federal recognition.

Long-term goals include building a roundhouse, a project that will include a great deal of fundraising, Wilson said. The tribe currently does not own land.

Booths

Over the past two decades

the Salmon Festival has grown, and it changes each year. Part of the charm is that so many aspects of the community are represented. Families could shop for clothes or jewelry, grab deep-fried food, learn about community groups or toss a bean bag.

Oroville Hospital had a strong presence, with many information booths under

SALMON » PAGE 3

Salmon

FROM PAGE 1

one tent. Word has gotten out that free flu shots are available during the festival.

Kim Basham is an infection preventialist, and signed up people for flu shots as fast as nursing students from Butte College could grab syringes and sterile wipes.

This year, the fifth for the open-air flu shots, she came prepared with 700 doses. Flu shots are especially advised for people age 65 and older. It's fun to see children draw their parents over for a shot. Children get a poke in the arm for school immunizations, and get a big kick out of seeing their parents bare their shoulders, she said.

More pieces

Sharon Helton's job Saturday was to encourage people to take a look at a quilt hanging at the back of the booth for the Oroville Piecemakers Quilt Guild.

From a distance, the fabric is colorful with a center image of a tree. Up close, it becomes clear why the work took 35 women eight years to complete, a "piece of love," Helton said.

Now it's time to offer the quilt to the winner of a raffle, to be held Dec. 15. Each flower and stem, butterfly and critter is carefully stitched, with some detail as small as a pinpoint.



DAN REIDEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Dave Lunsford, a California Department of Fish and Wildlife technician, shows the crowd freshly harvested salmon eggs.



DAN REIDEL — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Scientific aide Shane Ransbury handles live salmon as he and Fish and Wildlife technicians harvest the fish.

Funds from the raffle help the group with supplies for lap quilts for local

organizations.

The quilt will be on display Oct. 1 and 2, at the



HEATHER HACKING — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Dancers Angel Lopez, Salvador Lopez, Xavier Gasca and Louie Lopez with the Konkow Valley Bank of Maidu Indians do a dance prayer during the Salmon Festival along the levee.



Cousins Cheenew Yang and Long Yang wait for more racers to pelt with colored corn starch Saturday during the Salmon Festival in Oroville.

HEATHER HACKING — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Beauty on the River 2016 quilt show, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Oroville Municipal Building. Admission

is \$7.

Focus on fish

Across the river from

the downtown street party, people learned more about the life cycle of fish through tours of the Feather River Fish Hatchery. Batches of fish clunked against the metal holding tank before being sliced open to remove eggs and milt. The process is gory, but necessary to reproduce millions of young fish that will be released into the Feather River. During the tour, visitors watched the process through windows.

Contact reporter Heather Hacking at 896-7758.

GRAMPS, Oliver Eugene

Chico Enterprise Record

10-30-2016

Death notices

GRAMPS: Oliver Eugene Gramps Sr., 77, of Oroville, died Friday, Oct. 28, 2016, in Oroville. Arrangements are under the direction of Oroville Funeral Home, 533-0323.

Chico Enterprise Record

2-23-2017

BOOK IN COMMON PROJECT

Native American women to share their stories at Chico State event

Staff Reports

CHICO » Native American women will share their experiences and stories during an event at Chico State University.

The university's 2016-2017 Book in Common project will hold the "Women of Wisdom" event on Friday. The event will include storytelling, learning and food, and takes place from 4-7 p.m. in the Bell Memorial Union room 203.

Several Native American women will share their wisdom, stories and experiences through traditional oral narration. According to a university press release, the event honors the traditions and philosophies of the country's preceding nations, and attendees will be able to gain a greater appreciation of the wisdom of today's tribal communities.

"We do have such a long history to tell," Assistant Director of Associated Students Programs and Government Affairs Sharleen Lowry Krater said in the release. "And we are on Maidu land, we're surrounded by all these tribes."

Krater, who has Maidu, Washo and Pit River ancestry, will serve as the master of ceremonies at the event and discuss how she con-

nected to her family and Native American roots after the death of her father. She wants to share her story in order to help students who face similar experiences and cultural expectations in their lives, she said.

Along with Krater, storytellers include: Sandra Knight (Mechoopda), Elizabeth Lara-O'Rourke (Yurok, Hupa, Chilula), Susan Campbell (Maidu), Joyce González (Apache, Pueblo, Eastern Cherokee), Kimberly Cunningham-Summerfield (Tsalagi) and Trina Cunningham (Mountain Maidu from Greenville).

This event is free and open to the public, although seating is limited. Along with the storytellers, there will also be a reception at 6 p.m., so that attendees will have opportunity to speak with the storytellers.

The "Women of Wisdom" event is one of several spring events planned around the 2016-2017 Book in Common, *My Life on the Road* by Gloria Steinem. According to the university, the women's rights movement leader inspires others to recognize the substantive contributions that indigenous women have made toward social justice.

MORE THAN JUST A CORNER LOT

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Chico parcel only bit of former rancheria a Mechoopda member was able to keep



STEVE SCHOONOVER — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

This lot at North Cedar Street and Rancheria Drive is the only piece of the Mechoopda Rancheria that a tribal member was able to keep after the rancheria was broken up in 1961. Before Donna Mae Rickard died in 2015 at age 101, she deeded the land back to the tribe.

By Steve Schoonover
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CHICO » To most people it's just a corner lot, a bit under a quarter-acre at North Cedar Street and Rancheria Drive, with several mature trees growing out of the dried grass. It might seem odd that it's vacant in the sea of student apartments that flank it, but it's still just a lot.

For the Mechoopda Indians however, it's quite a bit more: It's the only piece of land a tribal member was able to keep after the federal government chopped up the tribe's rancheria in 1961.

That member — Donna Mae Rickard — died May 19, 2015, a few weeks short of being 102 years old, and deeded the lot back to the tribe. It is now trying to have it placed in trust for perpetuity.

The past

The Mechoopda were Chico's original residents. The came under the care of — and

labored for — John Bidwell starting in about 1850.

At the time they lived in a village just behind the mansion, but when Annie Bidwell arrived in the late 1860s, she had them moved out to an area straddling West Sacramento Avenue, between Warner Street and the railroad tracks.

They lived there nearly 100 years. There was a Christian church and a traditional circular dance house as well. Tribal members lived in frame houses.

Annie Bidwell deeded the property to the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, to be held in trust for the tribe after she died. The federal government took over that role in 1939.

But in 1961, the feds decided to drop recognition of the tribe, and divvied up its land. The half of the rancheria south of West Sacramento Avenue somehow ended up in the possession of then-Chico State College. The land north

PARCEL » PAGE 5



CONTRIBUTED

Donna Mae Rickard, from her obituary in the Omak-Okanogan County Chronicle in Washington state.

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Parcel

FROM PAGE 1

of West Sacramento was divided into individual lots for the registered members of the tribe.

The lots came with tax bills the tribal members were unable to pay, so parcel by parcel the land was lost. Some went to tax auctions; others were sold to student housing developers at bargain basement rates, just to escape the tax debt.

Quickly the area filled with two-story apartment buildings, with only the Mechoopda cemetery and the tribe's name on a street as reminders of what had been there.

But there was still that one vacant lot on the corner of North Cedar and Rancheria.

Donna Mae Rickard

Judging from her obituary in the Omak-Okan-

ogan County Chronicle, by the time the rancheria was divided up, Donna Mae Rickard was working as secretary to the superintendent of the Colville Indian Agency in Washington state. That may have enabled her to cover the taxes on the lot.

She was a Mechoopda, born June 24, 1913, to Cipriana Genevieve Avalos and Elmer LaFonso, according to the obit.

She graduated from Chico High School and went on to learn secretarial skills at the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon. She met Fred Rickard there and they married in 1935.

In 1950 they moved to Nespelem, on the Colville Reservation in Washington, and she served as secretary to the superintendent for 37 years.

Mechoopda Vice Chair Sandra Knight described Rickard as "an amazing woman," who sent the tribe

\$100 each year to be used for cultural activities.

And before she died, she decided that last rancheria lot to the tribe.

The future

The Mechoopda regained federal recognition in 1992 after a six-year legal fight. Regaining something with historical and cultural significance like the Rickard lot is important in the revival of the tribe's bureaucratically-interrupted history.

"That whole area is important to the tribe," said Knight. "It was the last rancheria."

Knight said the tribe plans to keep the property as green space. "It's the only piece of dirt in downtown Chico that's never been built on," she pointed out.

The tribe has put a chain link fence around it, and

even though the lot is vacant, people have cut the fence to get inside, she said. She's hoping a streetlight there will solve some of those problems.

Right now the Mechoopda only hold the deed to the parcel. For it to become actual tribal land, the federal government needs to take possession of it, to hold in trust for the tribe.

That's what the tribe is trying to get done, but the process of putting land in trust has largely stopped under the current administration.

Knight wasn't sure if that's due to a policy decision, or because people just haven't been appointed to fill key positions in the Interior Department.

Reach City Editor Steve Schoonover at 896-7750.

ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Chico Enterprise Record

8-19-2017

The story behind 5 odd street names in Chico

By Steve Schoonover
sschoonover@chicoer.com

Chico's street names have meanings, some clear and some obscure.

New residents quickly learn that the first letters of Chestnut, Hazel, Ivy, Cherry and Orange streets — which line up east to west — spell out Chico, but there are a number of streets in the vicinity of Chico State University that aren't so obvious. They include:

Normal Avenue

Chico State University traces its roots to the state Normal School — a teachers college — that was established in 1887 on a cherry orchard Chico founder John Bidwell donated to the state.

Normal Avenue was originally called Sycamore Street, but the name was changed when the college arrived.

Normal is also a bit abnormal in that the vast majority the roads south of Big Chico Creek are streets, but Normal is an avenue. Most of the roads north of the creek are avenues.

Mechoopda Street/ Rancheria Drive

These two streets between West Sacramento and West First avenues, between Warner and North Cedar streets, reference the Indian rancheria that used to be located in the area.

The Mechoopda were the first residents of the Chico area and were taken in as laborers by John Bidwell on his Rancho Chico in about 1850. Their first village on the ranch was behind the mansion, but their funeral rituals reportedly upset Annie Bidwell when she arrived on the scene.

The tribe was moved to an area along West Sacramento Avenue and lived there until the 1960s, when the federal government withdrew its recognition of the tribe. About half the tribal lands were gobbled up by the state for addition to Chico State University and the remainder were parceled out to individual Indians, almost all of whom either quickly lost the land to taxes or sold it to developers.

The property was developed as apartments and the neighborhood became known as College Park.

The Mechoopda Cemetery remains in the midst of the development, and is still used by the tribe, which has regained federal recognition.

The rancheria also had a Christian church and a traditional dance house, but both are long gone.

Sowilleno Avenue

This little one-way street along the north side of Big Chico Creek, between Arcadian Avenue and The Esplanade, used to run all the way to Citrus Avenue before Holt Hall was built. One of its claims to fame was that its name was spelled differently on each of the street signs along its length.

The street is named after Maggie Sowilleno Lafonso, a Mechoopda woman who was a favorite of Annie Bidwell, according to Bidwell historian Nancy Leek in her Goldfields blog. Sowilleno was her Indian name. Leek said Maggie and her brother were frequent guests at the mansion and she was a big helper at the Indian church.

Frances Willard Avenue

Annie and John Bidwell were ardent prohibitionists, he being the Prohibition Party's presidential candidate in the 1892 election. Two streets in Chico are named for leaders in the anti-alcohol movement.

Frances Willard was one of them. She was the founder of Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Prohibition Party. She was also active in the women's suffrage movement.

The other street named for a prohibitionist is Neal Dow Avenue. Dow helped craft the 1851 "Maine Law," which outlawed alcohol in that state except for "medicinal, mechanical or manufacturing purposes." It became the basis for the 18th Amendment to the Constitution.

Flume Street

Sierra Flume and Lumber Co. ran a large lumber yard between Humboldt Road (now Avenue) and East Eighth Street, running from Orient to Alder streets. Logs were brought down via a large flume from Chico Meadows, near Butte Meadows, which included a huge trestle down Big Chico Creek canyon through what's now upper Bidwell Park.

John Bidwell was having trouble with water power to operate his flour mill, which was located on the north side of Big Chico Creek, across The Esplanade from Bidwell Mansion. Yes, where the Bidwell Mill Apartments are now located.

Bidwell made a deal to tap into the lumber company's flume and its more reliable supply of water. The flume was extended to Bidwell's mill along the line of what is now Flume Street.



Chico Enterprise Record

9-9-2017

CHICO

100-mile Nome Cult Walk starts today

The 22nd annual Nome Cult Walk from Chico to the Round Valley Indian Reservation in Covelo starts today and lasts to Sept. 16.

The 100-mile trek crosses through the northern part of the Mendocino National Forest and follows the route Native Americans were forced to march from Chico to the Nome Cult Reservation in 1863.

Descendants of Native Americans who took part in the original relocation and other supporters walk the route each year. The theme of the walk is "Honor their memory ... a path not forgotten."

The Mendocino National Forest asks that people traveling on forest roads along the trail route be mindful of the event and careful of the walkers to ensure their safety.

MECHOOPDA

Tribe wins appeal on casino

Butte County's bid to halt project fails in U.S. Court of Appeal

Staff Reports

WASHINGTON » Butte County has lost an appeal in federal court in its attempt to prevent a new casino from being built near the intersection of highways 149 and 99 by the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of the Chico Rancheria.

The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled Friday that the tribe should be able to proceed.

The county was appealing an earlier ruling by a federal judge who also sided with the Mechoopda.

The county has fought the concept for more than a decade and has spent more than \$600,000 in legal fees doing so, though the two Chico-area supervisors, Larry Wahl and Maureen Kirk, voted two years ago against continuing the court battle.

The court's 15-page decision, agreed to unanimously by three judges, dismissed each of Butte County's appeal arguments.

"The U.S. Department of Interior provided Butte County with ample opportunities to submit and rebut material as well as time to develop the reasoning behind its arguments. Ultimately, Butte County failed to do so," Mechoopda Chairman Dennis Ramirez said in a press release. "We thank the District Court and the Department of Justice for recognizing the weaknesses in Butte County's arguments and for acknowledging our historical connection to the land."

Ramirez added: "The Mechoopda Indian Tribe looks forwarding to advancing our proposed casino project. In doing so, we plan to drive economic development in Butte County for years to come."

If a casino is built, it would be the third in Butte County.

The county had argued that the federal government should not allow the proposed site to be taken into trust by the tribe. The Mechoopda argued the location amounted to a restoration of historic lands. The secretary of the Interior Department sided with the tribe and ruled twice, the last time in 2014, that the property constitutes "restored lands."

The Mechoopda first asked the government in 2002 to consider the 645-acre parcel as restored lands.

In an earlier article, County Counsel Bruce Alpert said the county had concern's about the project's location, which is not near any emergency services; a lack of water supply and sewer system; water quality and recharge issues; and traffic safety issues.

Briefs

MAGALIA

Butte Creek tour to review forest health

A Magalia forest health tour with a focus on Maidu cultural practices will be 9 a.m.-noon Wednesday, beginning at the Paradise Lake parking lot.

The tour of the Little Butte Creek watershed will be hosted by the Butte County Fire Safe Council in partnership with the Mechoopda Indian tribe.

Areas of forest health thinning and watershed protection will be reviewed on both Forest Service and Paradise Irrigation District lands, which have been funded by a grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Participants are asked to RSVP by Monday by calling 877-0984.

For more information call the Butte County Fire Safe Council at 877-0984, or go to www.buttefiresafe.net.

DESECRATION

Yolo County files lawsuit over bulldozed Native American burials

By Woodland Daily Democrat

A civil lawsuit has been filed against four companies who allegedly bulldozed Native American burials in West Sacramento.

Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced the filing of a civil suit on Friday.

The four defendants — Albert D. Seeno Construction Co., Discovery Builders, Inc., Seecon Financial & Construction Co., Inc., and A-S Pipelines, Inc. — are reputed to have disturbed the First Nation cemeteries during the construction of a large residential development.

According to the complaint, the defendants had

known for nearly two decades that the lands underlying their proposed residential development were suspected to hold human remains as well as other archaeological resources.

“Materials prepared for the proposed development in 1998, for example, informed the defendants that there ‘are significant cultural or archaeological sites identified in ... the project area,’” stated David Irej, assistant chief deputy district attorney. “And the defendants’ early development of the project confirmed the presence of Native American remains on the property, when the defendants found a Native American burial in 2001.”

Despite having this information, the companies, Irej claims, declined to inform those performing earthmoving work for the project that archaeological resources could be present on site.

“And when one of defendants’ subcontractors found human remains in 2015, the defendants instructed the subcontractor not to contact the police and to hide the remains,” Irej asserts.

“In the end, City of West Sacramento staff learned of the remains through other avenues and then promptly requested an archaeological review of the site. When archaeologists finally surveyed the site in late 2015, they saw the result of the

defendants’ previous misconduct: multiple human remains had been unearthed by prior construction and scattered across a widespread area.”

“The defendants’ unlawful conduct has resulted in the destruction and damage of countless Native American remains,” said Reisig. “The flagrant disregard of the sanctity of the burial site is indefensible and deeply offensive.”

The suit seeks civil penalties against the defendants and a court order that ensures that disturbed remains are properly re-interred and that bars the defendants from further unlawfully disturbing First Nation remains.

TEHAMA COUNTY

Signs marking tribal lands dedicated

By Jake Hutchison

jhutchison@redbluffdaily-news.com

CORNING » Members of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, Caltrans and California Highway Patrol gathered Wednesday morning near the fountain in front of Rolling Hills Casino to celebrate the creation of two new road signs that will mark tribal lands on Interstate 5.

As a Caltrans truck drove into the casino driveway, the 8- by 19-foot sign was hoisted up by the truck's built-in crane and slowly placed to the side of the bed for viewing.

This was the northbound sign that was placed on I-5 shortly after the ceremony near the Liberal Avenue exit. The southbound sign is expected to go up sometime over the course of the next few weeks. Both signs have been in the works for roughly a year and were made in partnership between the tribe and Caltrans District 2.

Tribal Chairman Dru Alejandre recalled the moment the tribe decided to pursue the signs during a trip south about a year ago.

"We were traveling to

"It's a way to represent who we are. The reservation is our homeland. We want to be able to share that with everyone."

— Tribal Chairman
Dru Alejandre

Southern California visiting tribes when one of our council members saw a sign with the tribe's name," Alejandre said. "We reached out to Kendee (Vance, of Caltrans) for help."

Alejandre said the signs are an important milestone in recognition for the tribe.

"It's a way to represent who we are," he said. "The reservation is our homeland. We want to be able to share that with everyone."

Vance, the tribal liaison for Caltrans District 2, said Caltrans tries to work with California tribes to help moments like Wednesday's happen.

"This is just one of the signing to tribal lands we've done," Vance said. "It's one of many ways Cal-

trans works collaboratively to create partnerships. We sign to tribal land just as we would cities and counties."

Tribal Member at Large Natasha Magana said she was proud of the signs and what they represent for the tribe as well as the community.

"It's an honor to have our sign here," she said. "It's a way for everyone in the community to know where we are, who we are and where we are from. It means so much to let people know we are a family and part of the community."

Tribal Secretary Luis Delara shared Magana's sentiment over the interstate's new markers.

"This is a big milestone for our tribe," Delara said. "It puts us on the map. We've been working hard to establish ourselves in the community."

CHP Lt. Commander Lou Aviles attended the ceremony with many of his officers.

"This is a great opportunity for the tribe to get recognition and for people to recognize that this is historically tribal land," Aviles said.



Southwest of Lake Almanor, Yellow Creek winds through Humbug Valley, now owned and managed by the Maidu Summit Consortium to conserve traditional Native American natural resources. Bud Turner - Feather River Land Trust

CALIFORNIA FORUM

Sierra stewards listen to the trees, and a California tribe regains an ancestral land



BY JANE BRAXTON LITTLE
jbittle@dypress.com



June 20, 2018 04:31 AM
Updated June 20, 2018 04:31 AM



In 2004 Lorena Gorbet stood and delivered a simple message: “We want our land back.”



Since then Gorbet, a Maidu Indian, has repeated her request at least twice a year to a council tasked with recommending new owners for 140,000 acres of Pacific Gas & Electric Co. land, designated for conservation under a 2003 bankruptcy agreement. Some of it once belonged to the Maidu.

Sacramento Bee

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WHAT STARTED AS A LAND OWNERSHIP ISSUE TOOK ON THE SUBTLE TONES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE. GORBET TOLD THE COUNCIL RETURNING TASMAM KOYAM TO THE MAIDU WAS AN OPPORTUNITY 'TO RIGHT SOME PAST WRONG.'

Last month it was the council that delivered: Five years after an initial recommendation, it named Gorbet and other members of the Maidu Summit Consortium owners of Humbug Valley, a 2,325-acre grassy meadow laced by Yellow Creek and rimmed by the granite peaks of the northern Sierra Nevada. The Maidu call this remnant of their homeland

Tasmam Koyom.

The unanimous recommendation by the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council marks the first time ancestral lands in California have been returned to a Native American tribe not recognized by the federal government. It also marks the launch of a land management plan that combines burning, pruning and other time-honored Maidu practices with the latest scientific technology.

For the Maidu, ownership of Humbug Valley culminates a process that has united nine diverse Maidu groups often historically at odds.

Sacramento Bee

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“At first it was just getting everybody to work together,” Gorbet told me. They were driven by the potential of owning the land of their ancestors as well as a vision of managing it to heal and nourish the places they had lost: restoring angelica to meadows; returning oak savannahs to hillsides; even bringing back the snapping turtles and salmon that frequent their songs and stories. They believed restoring the land would restore their culture and their people.

To achieve any of this they had to produce a management plan, baseline surveys, deeds – bureaucratic documents as alien to them as the concept of retaining natural fire on the landscape was, until very recently, to the mostly Anglo agency officials on the council. Meeting the demands of the Stewardship Council was sometimes tedious, and it involved working with groups with whom the Maidu had once had “not necessarily an equitable role,” said Ken Holbrook, Maidu Summit director.

What emerged is a plan for Humbug Valley and lands around Lake Almanor that total 3,000 acres. Along with cultural and visitor centers, they are designing a Maidu Cultural Park, modeled after national parks, with a system of trails featuring traditional ecological management.

The experience that has united and strengthened the Mountain Maidu has been a learning process for members of the Stewardship Council, too. When Gorbet first spoke up asking for land, many envisioned a casino in the relatively pristine Humbug Valley. When she and others mentioned listening to the trees to determine best management practices, some scoffed.

But when Gorbet asked the council to include a member representing Native Americans, they agreed. And when she showed up again and again with the same request, they pursued it. Conveying ownership of Humbug Valley to the Maidu Summit Consortium is one of the largest transactions approved by the Stewardship Council. By the time they finalized it, council members were referring to the valley as “Tasmam Koyom.”

What started as a land ownership issue for the Stewardship Council took on the subtle tones of social justice. At that initial meeting in 2004, Gorbet told the council returning Tasmam Koyom to the Maidu was an opportunity “to right some past wrong.” Council members insisted their task was simply a matter of finding an owner who could best manage the land for conservation. They were leaning toward the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Sacramento Bee
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But when they gave the valley to the Maidu Summit, Stewardship Council Executive Director Heidi Krolick noted that more than land was being returned. “Thank you for the honor of letting us be a part of this recovery. We will continue to rally from the sidelines,” she said.

The Maidus’ formal partners in managing Tasmam Koyam are Feather River Land Trust and the Fish and Wildlife Department, once its rival for ownership. They will jointly hold the conservation easement that limits development on the land, and most certainly precludes casinos.

The return of Humbug Valley to the Mountain Maidu took too long and represents too little. Still, using patience and quiet persistence, these Native Americans have accomplished what confrontation has so often failed to achieve. Their challenge now is to demonstrate that traditional land management techniques can restore natural resources at a landscape scale. Ours is to learn from this grand endeavor.

Jane Braxton Little, a freelance writer, covers science, natural resources and rural Northern California from Plumas County.

Professor who denied Mechoopda existence casts doubt on another tribe

By Will Houston
Butte Area News Group

Siskiyou County — A northern California congressman says his bill to restore the Ruffey Rancheria tribal nation would right a historic wrong, but a recent study of federal archives concluded there is nothing to restore because the tribe never existed.

Lewis & Clark College history professor emeritus Stephen Beckham concluded in his study that Congressman Doug LaMalfa's bill, known as the Ruffey Rancheria Restoration Act, is "intellectually dishonest."

Beckham questioned why the bill would seek to provide individuals claiming to be descendants of the Ruffey Rancheria tribal nation with the ability to exercise water and other resource rights, the ability to construct a casino and rights to federal resources when there is no evidence the Rancheria ever existed as a functioning tribal nation.

"What LaMalfa's bill is asking the federal government to do is restore a federal relationship with a piece of real estate, not with a tribe," Beckham said to the Eureka Times-Standard on Saturday. "There is no tribe. He hasn't documented a tribe."

Beckham is the same professor who was hired by Butte County in 2014 and came up with a report that Chico's Mechoopda Indians were not a real tribe. It was part of the county's failed \$850,000 battle to keep the tribe from building a casino off Highway 149.

The report had no impact on the dispute, which the county finally dropped earlier this year.

For his latest report, Beckham said documents dating from 1907 to 1960 that he reviewed at the Bureau of Indian Affairs' national archives in San Bruno showed there was no record of the Ruffey Rancheria being anything more than an unoccupied piece of brushy, forested hillside south of the Siskiyou County town of Etna.

Both LaMalfa (R-Richvale) and Tahj Gomes, a Chico-based attorney who represents himself as the Ruffey Rancheria chairman, are firing back against the report, calling it inaccurate, claiming it left out key documents proving the tribal nation's existence and calling Beckham biased. Both Gomes and LaMalfa said they have provided information to address the concerns of members of Congress and of more than 70 federally recognized tribes that have been raised about the bill.

Beckham and other concerned parties said they have yet to see any such documentation provided by either Gomes or LaMalfa.

LaMalfa's communications director Parker Williams said in a statement to the Times-Standard earlier this month that the study's conclusion that the Ruffey Rancheria is unknown is "inaccurate and disingen-



A U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs type map of Ruffey's Rancheria in 1958 located outside of the Siskiyou County town of Etna.

uous," but did not specify what the inaccuracies were.

"Because Congress terminated the tribe, only Congress can reinstate it," Williams wrote. "This is simply what his bill aims to do — and is consistent with the other California Rancheria restoration language."

Gomes called Beckham a "hired gun who is willing to draw whatever conclusion best suits his current employer."

"The Beckham Report is factually wrong," Gomes told the Times-Standard on Friday. "There is a list of members, the Tribe's members were resident on or near the original reservation lands or on other lands purchased or leased for the Ruffey Rancheria's members, and the correspondence between the Ruffey Rancheria and the Bureau of Indian Affairs is evidence of the government-to-government relationship."

"Beckham simply did not include the evidence that undermined the favored conclusion by his employer, the Karuk Tribe," Gomes continued.

Beckham's report concludes otherwise, finding that there was no documentation or evidence of there ever being a government-to-government relationship between the United States and any person or entity identifying as the Ruffey Rancheria and no tribal activity associated with the Rancheria from 1907 to 1960.

Beckham found that "Old Man" Ruffey, the tribal elder whom the Rancheria land was originally purchased for and named after in the early 20th century, never lived on the property, opting instead to live in a house outside the Rancheria boundaries.

Beckham was hired by the Karuk Tribe to produce the study. The tribe has questioned historical evidence of the Ruffey Rancheria's existence and the water, land and other rights it seeks to claim. The tribe has also accused LaMalfa of introducing the bill to disrupt an ongoing plan to remove four Klamath River hydroelectric dams, which La-

Malfa has publicly opposed.

The Karuk Tribe and about 70 other tribes have called for further hearings on the bill to address their concerns, but now Karuk Tribe officials say they have changed to their stance to staunch opposition to the bill.

"LaMalfa and Gomes are inventing a Tribe from scratch and offering virtually no information on who these people are or what their ancestral ties are to this place," Karuk Tribal Council Chairman Russell Attebery said in a statement earlier this month. "This effort diminishes what it means to be a Tribe and dishonors the concept of Tribal sovereignty for all Indians."

LaMalfa's bill narrowly passed through the House Natural Resources Committee earlier this year in a 19-18 vote.

The bill is next set to be heard by the House Rules Committee.

An agent and 'Old Man Ruffey'

Beckham said Bureau of Indian Affairs agent Charles Kelsey worked for the bureau for about 20 years, particularly focusing on non-reservation Native Americans of northern California in the early 20th century — a time when only two tribal reservations existed in the region. Traveling in 1905-1906, Kelsey estimated there were about 11,800 landless, homeless Native Americans in northern California who had been driven out by white settlers and Gold Rush miners, according to Beckham's report.

"Kelsey did a year of field travel in 1905 and 1906 to do a general population census of Indians and Congress appropriated money to purchase Rancherias," Beckham said.

One of the Rancherias that was bought was the 441-acre Ruffey Rancheria in 1907 for two bands of "Indians of Etna," according to letters penned by Kelsey. One of these "Indians of Etna" was "Old Man" Ruffey, a man in his 70s who had disputes with neighbors who had bullied his family, according to

Kelsey's letters. A land title dispute ended with a neighbor tying a chain around Ruffey's home and hauling it from the ground, prompting Ruffey to attempt to shoot one of his neighbors; Ruffey was prevented from doing so, according to Kelsey's account.

The Rancheria was meant to establish a new home for Ruffey and his relatives, but Beckham found no evidence of any Native American using the land.

A 1913 letter from Kelsey to the commissioner of Indian Affairs has proven a central and contentious document in determining which Native Americans the Ruffey Rancheria property was purchased for. The letter identified 57 individuals in the Etna area, which Gomes said establishes who the original members of the Rancheria were and whom their descendants are.

Gomes previously estimated there are about 350 people eligible for enrollment for the Ruffey Rancheria under LaMalfa's bill.

Congress eventually voted to terminate several rancherias in California, including the Ruffey Rancheria, in the late 1950s, with the former rancheria eventually being sold by Ruffey's descendants to the International Paper Company in 1960, Beckham said.

Gomes said there is no controversy in Beckham's findings that the Ruffey Rancheria land was not particularly suited for human habitation, ranching or farming. But Gomes said the report failed to locate or discuss "extensive archival correspondence" between tribal members and the Bureau of Indian Affairs detailing site visits by federal officials to the Rancheria, attempts "to relocate the Rancheria, subsequent land purchases and leases that provided land for its members, and efforts by the tribe to prevent trespass on the 1907 land up through the time of Termination."

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has also identified the Ruffey Rancheria as a tribe that had been terminated in a 1972 guidance document titled "American Indians and Their Federal Relationship."

The administration's position on the bill in September 2017 — about two months after the bill was introduced into Congress — was "unknown at this time," according to a congressional committee memorandum about the bill.

Will Houston can be reached at whouston@times-standard.com

Chico Enterprise Record
7-24-2018



INDIAN GAMING

SUPERVISORS' SUPPORT SOUGHT FOR MECHOOPDA CASINO PROJECT



STEVE SCHOONOVER — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

A metal gate that has posts tipped with arrowheads, blocks access to the property off Highway 149 in central Butte County where the Mechoopda tribe has indicated it wants to build a casino. After years of resistance, the Board of Supervisors is being asked Tuesday to write a letter in support of the proposal.

By Steve Schoonover
sschoonover@chicoer.com
@ER_sschoonover on Twitter

OROVILLE » After spending 16 years and \$850,000 fighting the efforts of the Mechoopda tribe to build a casino in Butte County, the Board of Supervisors Tuesday is being asked to approve a letter in support of the project.

Gov. Jerry Brown Wednesday signed the compact with the tribe — formally the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of the Chico Rancheria — that will allow construction of a Class III casino on

627 acres off Highway 149 near Highway 99 that the federal government is holding in trust.

The compact still needs to be approved by the Legislature. That is what the supervisors are being asked to support.

The county has battled the project in court since 2002, arguing among other things that the project violates the general plan. The county has lost repeatedly, most recently in April. Shortly after that the supervisors decided informally to drop the fight.

A Class III casino would include slot machines and table

games. The signed compact allows for up to 2,000 slot machines. There would also have to be a non-smoking area within the gaming area. The minimum age for gambling would be 21.

The Mechoopda did not return a call Friday seeking comment.

The compact requires a study off off-site environmental impacts, but specifies they would not prevent the casino from being built.

“Once the compact is ratified, the County is committed to working in good faith with the Mechoopda Tribe to enter

into a Memorandum of Understanding, for the purpose of fairly and adequately mitigating off-reservation impacts of the Tribe’s construction and ongoing operation of a contemplated Class III gaming facility,” reads the letter before the supervisors Tuesday.

The meeting starts at 9 a.m. Tuesday in the Board of Supervisors Chambers in the County Administration Building, 25 County Center Driver in Oroville.

Contact reporter Steve Schoonover at 530-896-7750.

MECHOOPDA

Supervisors back tribe's casino

By Steve Schoonover

sschoonover@chicoer.com

[@ER_sschoonover](#) on Twitter

OROVILLE » The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday to send a letter of support for the Mechoopda Tribe's plans to build a casino off Highway 149 in central Butte County.

The county has opposed the proposal in court since 2002, racking up \$850,000 in legal expenses, according to Supervisor Larry Wahl. It has lost cases repeatedly, most recently in April. After that the board informally dropped its opposition.

On Tuesday, County Counsel Bruce Alpert advised the board to actively support the proposal by approving the letter to the Legislature and beginning negotiations with the tribe to mitigate the impacts of the casino.

"It's to our benefit ... that we show our willingness to proceed," Alpert said.

The vote was unanimous, on a motion by Oroville Supervisor Bill Connelly. There was no discussion on the issue by the board.

The county's goal now is to negotiate a full "memorandum of understanding" that will lay out how the county and tribal governments will work together and

address the environmental and other impacts of the casino.

The federal government holds 627 acres off Highway 149 near Highway 99 in trust for the the tribe, formally the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of the Chico Rancheria.

Last Wednesday, Gov. Jerry Brown signed the legal compact that will allow the casino, but that still needs to be approved by the Legislature.

The compact is for a Class III casino that could include slot machines and table games. The signed compact allows for up to 2,000 slot machines.

There would also have to be a non-smoking area within the gaming area. The minimum age for gambling would be 21.

The compact requires a study of off-site environmental impacts but specifies they would not prevent the casino from being built.

If the casino gets built, it would be the third one in Butte County. The Oroville area has Feather Falls Casino and Gold Country Casino.



A metal gate that has posts tipped with arrowheads blocks access to the property off Highway 149 in central Butte County where the Mechoopda tribe has indicated it wants to build a casino.

STEVE SCHOONOVER — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Contact reporter Steve Schoonover at 530-896-7750.

STEELE, Francis Harold, Sr.

Chico Enterprise Record

2-5-2019



FRANCIS HAROLD STEELE, SR. Born February 4, 1935 in Dobbins, CA, died January 31, 2019 in Oroville, CA. Son of Luther and Gertrude Steele. He had 4 brothers, 10 sisters. Living siblings: Evelyn, Trudy, Valley, Mary and Eddie. He was married to Theda Steele from 1955 to her passing in 2002. They had 8 children, Debra Armus, Francis Steele Jr., Elliott Steele, Teresa Steele, Curtis Steele, Candace Steele, Tyrone Steele (passed April 30, 2006) and Laurie Steele-Chavira. (He delivered his twins, Curtis and Candace) 32 Grandkids, 44 Great Grand Kids and 4 Great Great Grandkids. He was Native American and an Airforce Veteran. He was extremely proud of his family. He was rich in family and love. He loved being surrounded by his family, the Easter gathering was his favorite. He enjoyed gardening, playing dice, horseshoes, handgames and tending his animals. He was a strong man who was everyone's best friend, he was loving and accepting of everyone. He was the jack of all trades. He worked on a cattle ranch, in the orchards, the forest service and the logging industry. Services are Sunday, Feb. 10 at 11:00 am at the Berry Creek Guild Hall located at: 1477 Bold Rock Rd.

Burial in Bald Rock Indian Cemetery

BIDWELL PARK

Maidu village proposed for former Chico deer pen

By Laura Urseny

lurseny@chicoer.com

@LauraUrseny on Twitter

CHICO » For decades, a fenced area to the east of the Chico Creek Nature Center held deer, but now there's a plan to build an interactive exhibit of a Maidu village there.

An application has been made to the state for about \$1 million in Prop. 68 funding to cover the cost of the project.

Representatives of the city, the Chico Area Recreation and Park District and the local Mechoopda tribe have been working for months on the project. The concept design and budget was submitted to the state last week, and if the project makes the cut, the city can expect a visit by state representatives for further information.

It's an exciting concept, according to Sandra Knight, vice chair of the local Mechoopda tribe, which sees the educational

benefit to be multi-layered.

To have what project coordinators call a "living village" allows young tribal members a deeper understanding of their culture, helped along by tribe elders, Knight said, along with giving the community another resource for furthering local history and cultural tourism.

According to the concept design, the exhibit would include a meandering trail that would connect aspects of the exhibit, including a shelter — a plank house — a native plant nursery, and interpretive displays about the tribe. Possible displays relate to housing, food, acorn processing, basketry and more. The project also includes a new bathroom, better lighting, and improved parking area for the area adjacent to the Chico Creek Nature Center on East Eighth Street.

While there are many examples of John and Annie Bidwell's legacy — like the

EXHIBIT » PAGE 8

FROM PAGE 1

Bidwell Mansion — there is little in the way of remembering and recognizing the Maidu, Knight said.

“There is very little to remind people about the tribal roots.”

Partnering

What makes this significant, according to City Manager Mark Orme, is the collaborative nature of the project, which has involved the Mechoopda tribe, CARD, the city, Bidwell Park and Playground Commission, and others.

The city would oversee the funding and would construct the project, which is on city-owned Bidwell Park property.

As an affiliated tribe, the local Mechoopda would oversee the cultural direction and educational aspects. The Mechoopda are one of several local tribes that are Maidu.

CARD would organize the programming and schedule events and tours, as well as leasing the exhibit from the city. CARD already leases the neighboring Nature Center from the city.

In addition, the California Conservation Corps would help with clearing the overgrown area, which lost the last deer in 2005.

Meetings

Several community meetings about the project are planned, according to Herman, including one at 6:30 p.m. March 7

at the Nature Center, 1968 E. Eighth St.

The project has already received support from the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission, and CARD’s board, but would need to go through environmental review and city permitting.

Park and Natural Resources Manager Linda Herman noted that Bidwell Park’s master plan includes a section on Cedar Grove and the Nature Center area.

“We’ve talked about improvements here,” said Herman.

Tourism

According to CARD General Manager Ann Willmann, the recognition for the Nature Center is growing, and a Maidu experience would be an additional

draw. Willmann said that over 2018, the Nature Center hosted 110 field trips, including schools from Placerville and Redding.

At one time the pen contained 15 to 20 deer, primarily rescued or collected by government agencies. In the ‘90s, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife (then called Fish and Game) decided the pen should be shut down. In 1995, the agency relocated some of the deer to a wildlife preserve, and directed a veterinarian to sterilize the remaining males, allowing the other deer to live out their lives. The last deer died in 2005.

At one time, there was a request to the Park Commission to turn the empty pen into a small-size dog park.

Contact reporter *Laura Urseny* at 530-896-7756.



A map of the proposed Maidu Living Village shows a plant nursery and shelter along a meandering trail. The proposed village would be in the now-empty Bidwell Park deer pen on East Eighth Street in Chico.

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PHOTOS BY LAURA URSENY — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

A bench built by the Chico Kiwanis Club provides a convenient resting place Feb. 4 to view the Bidwell Park deer pen on East Eighth Street in Chico, which is now empty.



Injured or captured deer once ran in the Bidwell Park deer pen on East Eighth Street, visible Feb. 11 next to the Chico Creek Nature Center in Chico.



Among the partners proposing a Maidu village in the former Bidwell Park deer pen in Bidwell Park are (left to right) Shane Romain and Linda Herman of the city, Ann Willmann of Chico Area Recreation and Park District, and Sandra Knight of the Mechoopda tribe, pictured Feb. 13 at the Chico Creek Nature Center in Chico.

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Building a village

Mechoopda, city and CARD collaborate on plan to create an interpretive exhibit

By Patrick Evans

This article was published on [02.21.19](#).



Sandra Knight says an interactive exhibit dedicated to the Mechoopda Indian Tribe, of which she is vice chair, would offer insight into current traditions as well as those from times of pre-European contact. PHOTO BY CHRISTINA MCHENRY

There are plenty of public parks, buildings and monuments that celebrate the history of Chico's settlers and founder Gen. John Bidwell. But there isn't a single park or monument named for the original inhabitants of Chico, members of the Mechoopda Indian Tribe—at least none that Tribal Vice Chair Sandra Knight can think of off the top of her head.

"None of our aboriginal names for the territory [are used], none of our tribe's names. Our members feel kind of invisible," Knight said.

The Mechoopda are looking to end that omission by building a cultural exhibit on a 3-acre plot of unused city land within Bidwell Park. The tribe is working with the city of Chico and the Chico Area Recreation and Park District (CARD) on the project, which is dependent on grant funding from the California Natural Resources Agency.

"It's been something we've wanted to do for a long time," Knight said, "to build some kind of cultural center where visitors could find out about the real story of the first people in the area, which is not in textbooks."

The Maidu Living Village is proposed for the fenced-off and unused deer pen next to the Chico Creek Nature Center. The plan is to create an interactive experience to teach visitors about the Mechoopda, a tribe of Maidu people, and provide a space for cultural activities like basket weaving and acorn processing.

Knight said the vision is for visitors to take a trip through the tribe's history, from precontact with settlers to the contact period and into the present. They would first assemble in an arbor area, and then take a guided tour through a native plant garden, a replica of a traditional precontact native home, and a replica of a wooden shack like one tribal members would have lived in at the rancheria. Visitors also could partake in hands-on experiences.

"We have some mortars and pestles, some very large mortars we could put there. It would be a good spot for people to actually touch them and grind acorns in them," Knight said.

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2-21-2019

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The project is contingent upon funding available through Proposition 68. Passed last June, it allowed the state to sell \$4 billion in general obligation bonds for grant programs for parks, water infrastructure and other environmental projects. It also authorized the state Legislature to appropriate \$40 million for a grant program administered by the Natural Resources Agency to fund projects that protect, restore or enhance California's cultural, community and natural resources.

Eligible projects must fulfill at least one of five requirements, which include protecting or restoring Native American cultural resources and developing visitor centers that educate the public about natural landscapes or the contributions of California's ethnic communities.

"The grant seemed like it was written for this project," Knight said.

The Chico Park Division is handling the grant proposal. The first phase of the process includes submitting a conceptual proposal with a rough estimate of the cost of the project and a sketch of the planned development. That was completed last week, according to Park Division Manager Linda Herman.

"The estimated costs and funds we are requesting for the project are approximately \$750,000, which includes a 10 percent contingency amount of \$68,156," Herman said in an email.

The city has contracted with North-Star Engineering to help put together the proposal and concept, but actual blueprints for the village won't be drawn up unless the grant is awarded. If the Natural Resources Agency approves the concept, the city will be invited to a second round of proposals later this spring, at which point City Council approval will be needed.

Herman said the city had long been looking for a use for the property, formerly an enclosure for injured deer rescued by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

A key component of the village would be connecting it to the Chico Creek Nature Center next door. As part of the three-way collaboration on the project, CARD would oversee day-to-day operations and maintenance. The center is also perfectly situated to coordinate field trips to the village, CARD Director Ann Willmann said.

"Our focus will be on the kids coming through. We already have field trips that come through the nature center; this will add the opportunity for kids to learn about the Mechoopda tribe," Willmann said.

Operational costs could be covered by the fee the Nature Center would charge for field trips, Willmann said.

The center includes Mechoopda and Maidu history in its field trip curriculum, but the village project would offer a completely new learning opportunity for students, she added.

Knight said that the idea for the village's interactive exhibits was inspired by the exhibits at the Gold Nugget Museum in Paradise, which burned down in the Camp Fire. Instead of focusing on the lives of white settlers brought to Chico by the Gold Rush, the village would teach students how the Mechoopda lived and worked as stewards of the environment, Knight said. The living village also would differ from the Maidu exhibit at the Lake Oroville Visitor Center by focusing specifically on the culture and history of the Mechoopda.

"We want to convey why we love this land so much, that everything here is sacred; the water, the land, the salmon, we're family with those things," Knight said. "We want to convey that to young people, so they can respect the land like us."

BIDWELL PARK



LAURA URSENY — ENTERPRISE-RECORD FILE

Injured or captured deer once ran in the Bidwell Park deer pen on East Eighth Street, visible Feb. 11 next to the Chico Creek Nature Center in Chico.

Details of Maidu Living Village plan available

Staff reports

CHICO » A chance for the public to see plans for the proposed Maidu Living Village comes with a meeting at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Chico Creek Nature Center, 1968 E. Eighth St.

The plan is to create an

interactive experience to inform visitors about the Mechoopda, which is a tribe of the Maidu people, according to a city press release. The site is the former deer pen that is next to the Chico Creek Nature Center.

The project is a coordi-

nated effort between the city, which owns Bidwell Park, the local Mechoopda tribe, and the Chico Area Recreation and Park District, which leases the nature center and its grounds from the city.

The groups are applying to the state for a Prop. 68

grant from the California Natural Resources Agency to build the site.

Information about the project will be available at the meeting, or contact the Chico Parks Division, 896-7800 or email parkinfo@chicoca.gov.

BIRD, Michael Edward
Chico Enterprise Record
5-26-2019

**MICHAEL EDWARD
BIRD**

Born May 31, 1943

Passed May 18, 2019

Michael Edward Bird passed away on May 18, 2019 at the age of 75. He was born in Long Beach, California on May 31, 1943. He spent his childhood in Redding, Ca where he graduated High School and graduated with a degree in Natural Resources from Shasta Community College. Michael joined the United States Navy at the age of 19 and proudly served his country from January 9, 1962 until July 8, 1968, much of that time in deployment in the Vietnam War. After his service in the military, he went to work for the State of California Department of Fish and Game, where he worked for 35 years, retiring in 2002. After retirement, Michael volunteered for the Yuba County Search and Rescue. He was also a volunteer for California State Park and Recrea-

tion at the Oroville Dam Visitor's Center in Oroville, California as a tour guide. He was very knowledgeable of the local Native American culture, more specifically the Mooretown Rancheria Concow Maidu Tribe of Indians, where many family members are tribal members. He was a voracious seeker of facts, historical knowledge and information, and thrived on sharing the knowledge that he had accumulated.

Michael Edward Bird is survived by his wife Barbara Bird, and sons Patrick Bird, Christopher Bird, Damian Bird, Mark Monteiro, Michel Legault and Matt Legault.

A Celebration of Life for Michael with family and friends will be held on Friday, May 31, 2019 at 11AM in Oroville, CA at the Log Cabin, located at 175 Alverda Drive. All family and friends are invited to attend.

STEELE, Franklin Elliott and Kaela Lynn

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KAELA STEELE FRANKLIN STEELE Kaela was born December 5, 1988 to Elliott and Charmaine Steele. She was a joyful addition to the family and she was instantly adored by her brother and sisters. Years later she became the proud big sister and role model of two younger brothers. Kaela was raised between Hopland and Oroville, where she spent her time surrounded by her large family. She was extremely proud of her Native heritage, being both Tyme Maidu and Kashia Pomo. As part of her culture, Kaela learned to feather dance with her family from the coast. As an adult she discovered she had a talent for weaving baskets. When the Tribe began to hold their own Hand Game Tournament she would eagerly participate in any capacity needed. When she wasn't dancing or helping with Tribal events she was with her family, always filling the room with her infectious laughter and beautiful smile. Kaela was happy, humble, kind and always there to give encouragement when needed or to just simply listen with an open heart. Kaela's life changed when at age 22 she gave birth to the love of her life, Franklin Elliott. From that day on she transformed into the wonderful mother we always knew she would be. Her days were filled with taking care of Franklin and when he began going to school she decided to set the best example for him so she enrolled herself in school and earned her G.E.D. Kaela was still striving for her High School Diploma and was only 6 credits away from graduating. Franklin arrived in the early morning hours on November 17th, 2010. The moment he was born it was love at first sight. He became Kaela's entire world and she was his. Franklin was a gentle, happy, and loving little boy. He loved video games, school and he was extremely smart. Had he been given the chance to grow into a man, there would have been no limit to what he could have accomplished. Franklin already possessed all the wonderful qualities of Kaela and with her guidance he would have become a great man. We are so blessed to have known and loved them. They will both be forever loved and missed. Kaela is survived by her parents Elliott and Charmaine Steele. Her siblings, Gavin Antone II (Yolanda), Menesa Steele (Gaston), Ellie Steele-Noel (Greg), Pebbz Brown and Everett Steele. Nephews and Nieces, Gavin Antone III, Yolanda Antone, Lena Antone, Reyna Steele, Elliana Steele, Gregory Noel-Steele and Liliani Antone. As well as numerous Uncles, Aunts and cousins. Kaela and Franklin were preceded in death by their grandparents, Franklin Martin, Francis and Theda Steele. An Uncle, Tyrone Steele and cousins Jason Steele and Melissa "BB" Steele. Services will be held on Saturday June 8, 2019 at 1 o'clock at Situ Cemetery in Berry Creek, California.

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CALIFORNIA

Local tribe responds to governor's apology

By Natalie Hanson
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MOORETOWN RANCHERIA » In a landmark statement, Gov. Gavin Newsom made an official apology to California's Native American citizens Tuesday.

The governor met tribal representatives at the future site of the California Indian Heritage Center, including council members from Butte County tribes, where he called the treatment of indigenous tribes "genocide."

In the meeting, Newsom also announced the creation of a council to analyze the state's role in historical campaigns of extermination of Native Amer-

icans and exploitation of land they lived on, a role which California's government was key to carrying out.

Several representatives of local tribes were present at the meeting with the governor. Chairman Benjamin Clark of the local Mooretown Maidu Rancheria tribe, a federally-recognized tribe headquartered in Oroville, was present for the entire statement.

Clark, whose rancheria owns and operates several businesses in Oroville including Feather Falls Casino, said he felt positive about the meeting and the governor's intentions.

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RICH PEDRONCELLI — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Assemblyman James Ramos, D-Highlands, of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, fifth from left, opens a meeting with tribal leaders from around the state, attended by Gov. Gavin Newsom, fourth from left at the future site of the California Indian Heritage Center in West Sacramento.

Apology

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"I felt he was sincere," Clark said, mentioning how the governor referred to massacres and other events which are not in textbooks used by many public schools in the state.

"I hope to see some action on these things," he said. "I know other leaders have said that it's a start ... but it's gonna take a lot of healing."

Clark felt what he called "historical trauma" is

passed down through a tribe's generations.

"Our identity was taken from us," he said. "It's caused a big gap in our people."

Overall, Clark said that he "feels good" about the promises Newsom made in the meeting, including efforts taken to improve his knowledge and relationship with California's indigenous peoples, although the governor has "a lot more to learn," he said.

"It's good to have a governor who knows California's real history," he said.

While other governors

have apologized for specific episodes in the state's history, Newsom is the first to apologize for all of the state's historical treatment of tribes and to call it "genocide." However, he has not yet called for any specific changes.

The Mechoopda tribe based in Chico could not be reached for comment for this story. The Berry Creek Maidu Rancheria declined to comment.

The Associated Press contributed to this story. Contact reporter Natalie Hanson at 530-896-7763.

TÁSMAM KOJÓM

PG&E donates Humbug Valley land to Maidu

Staff reports

CHESTER » PG&E has donated 2,325 acres of land in the Humbug Valley in Plumas County to the Maidu Summit Consortium.

This land will be protected by a conservation easement held by both the Feather River Land Trust and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, said a press release issued Friday by PG&E.

The section of land donated holds ceremonial and spiritual sites along with Maidu ethnobotanical resources, according to the release.

Acting Executive Director of the Maidu Summit Consor-

tium Kenneth Holbrook said the land holds great meaning to the Maidu, who call the area Tásmam Kojóm in their language.

“The Maidu People take solace in the knowledge that we will forever be connected to our homeland, engaged with our heritage and our ways,” Holbrook said. “By owning Tásmam Kojóm, we have now reclaimed a future for our children that is uniquely Maidu. Our lives are renewed.”

PG&E took control of the land in 1917 when the company bought Oro Electric Corp. where a reservoir was intended to be built but never came to fruition.



CONTRIBUTED BY PAUL MORENO

Acting Executive Director of the Maidu Summit Consortium Ken Holbrook addresses a group during a celebration of receiving the land via donation by PG&E.

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A 2003 settlement led to PG&E agreeing to conserve the land and in some cases donate parcels.

As of the release, 11,968 acres of land have been donated to 18 groups, each with protections.

“This is a historic event about which we all should be proud. PG&E

is pleased to donate land in this beautiful and culturally significant valley, knowing this critical resource will forever be protected by the consortium and continue to be available for the enjoyment of future generations of the Maidu people and the public,” said Mike Schoneherr, director of strategic agreements at PG&E and member of the Stewardship Council board of directors.



CONTRIBUTED BY PAUL MORENO

A section of Humbug Valley that was donated by PG&E to the Maidu Consortium.

CULTURE

OROVILLE CELEBRATES THE NATIVE WAYS



PHOTOS BY MATT BATES — ENTERPRISE-RECORD

Kyle Kleier, 9, listens to Irvina French speak about artifacts during the Native Ways event Saturday in Oroville.

By Mathew Miranda

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OROVILLE » Oroville residents were given the opportunity to experience the traditions and practices of native cultures Saturday.

The Lake Oroville Visitor Center hosted a free Native Ways celebration that offered families hands-on experiences to learn about Maidu history and their current practices and skills.

Maidu, which means man, are a Native American people of Northern California.

The celebration featured Maidu craftsmen and teachers, dance demonstrations, museum tours and movies telling stories of Native American tribes from the area.

The Maidu craftsman displayed their hand-woven baskets, jewelry and artistry.

State Park Interpreter Michael Hubbartt discussed why he believes it is important for visitors to experience these cultures.

“I think we need to draw from the values of these ancient cultures that are still alive and still practicing today, and apply those values to who we are and what we do,” Hubbartt said.

“It seems like our culture today is becoming so divisive and yet when we draw people together like this, we see that there’s so much more we share and have in common,” Hubbartt added.

Hubbartt said the event began eight years ago as a way to recognize the cul-



Gunner Nelson, 4, works on his coloring skills during the Native Ways event Saturday in Oroville.

tural history of this area, specifically the Native American presence.

“These people histori-

cally have a deep connection to the landscape, deeper than our modern contempo-

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Culture

FROM PAGE 1

rary society does," Hubbartt said.

Wallace Clark, cultural specialist for the Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians Tribe, helped lead a youth dance demonstration Saturday.

Clark explained why his group continues to share its culture.

"Some of the knowledge that we keep inside of us is not known to these people, the non-Indian people," Clark said. "I feel that we have to announce to the world that we're still here that they didn't get rid of us."

Hubbartt credited the in-

volvement of individuals like Clark who continue to participate in cultural events across the community.

"What makes this so powerful is meeting all the people, getting to see their skills, their talents and how their culture and creativity come out," Hubbartt said. "The biggest mistake people have

is this was long ago, and it's not. It's still going on today."

The Lake Oroville Visitor Center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 362 days of the year, excluding Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

Contact reporter Mathew Miranda at 530-896-7758.