

Tribes clash, vying for place in Yosemite history

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, Calif. (AP)—Visitors to Yosemite Valley have for decades been taught about the Southern Sierra Miwok, whose ancestral ties to the park are venerated in books, brochures and a replica village built near the park's roaring falls.

Now, another band of American Indians is calling part of that story a total invention.

Joe Rhoan, who traces his ancestry to Paiute peoples from the park's eastern edge, claims his elders were Yosemite's first stewards and that the Miwok are playing down the Paiute role in the area.

"The park manufactured a lot of its history," said Rhoan, of Roseville, a suburb of Sacramento. "You've got living direct descendants of the people in old photos displayed in exhibits telling the park they have the wrong signs up, and they're not listening to us."

Yosemite historians chafe at

the suggestion their exhibits could be wrong, and say they've been crafted over years drawing from academic research, geological records and consultations with seven American Indian tribes that advise the park on its interpretive programs, including two Paiute bands in the Eastern Sierra.

Such disputes are beginning to surface as the nation's parks start to reconcile the sometimes brutal events that helped to create today's cherished preserves, said Bob Sutton, the National Park Service's chief historian.

"In the past, we operated with this idea that great men made American parks what they were, so we wrote stories about a lot of great white men," Sutton said. "In some instances, the history we have on the books may not be accurate, and we need to take a lot of care in making sure we're telling it correctly."

Rhoan's great grandmother Maria Lebrado was one of few

survivors of a massacre in 1851, in which white settlers drove out the native families who lived in and migrated through the valley.

Five years later, tourist magazines were promoting Yosemite as a pleasuring ground for the moneyed classes of San Francisco. By 1892, most surviving Indians had left the area, or had taken jobs working as maids, tree fellers or dancers to entertain visitors.

Tony Brochini, chairman of the 800-member Southern Sierra Miwok tribe, was born in the last Indian village in the valley in 1951, and grew up exploring the park's flowering meadows and swift rivers as his backyard.

He says the Miwok have been working to keep Indian cultural and spiritual traditions alive in Yosemite. The tribe plans to build a new cultural center on the old village grounds with a sweat lodge and a roundhouse they propose as a gathering place for all area tribes.

"We're the indigenous people of Yosemite Valley and have the most lineal descent to this area, and are the spiritual leaders for all tribal activities," he said. "The disgruntled ones want that whole history changed."

Rhoan and another Paiute activist, David Andrews, have sent Yosemite's tribal liaison reams of information they say demonstrates the park's improprieties. Andrews, a member of the Walker River Paiute reservation in Nevada, cites early photos of Yosemite as evidence that early inhabitants were Paiute.

Brochini, a Park Service employee who also has Italian and Paiute blood, acknowledges that intermarrying means some early valley residents were Yokut, Chukchansi and Mono — as well as Paiute.

Rhoan is a distant cousin of Brochini.

Paiutes are already mentioned in displays at a refurbished visitor's center that

opened last year, and on signs in the native museum.

But Andrews wants the park to go further: he'd like to see signs rewritten and photographs relabeled to say the park's original stewards were all Paiute. He also objects to the thousands of dollars in payments for cultural services the park has made to the nonprofit organization the Miwok tribe formed as they seek federal recognition.

Officials said such criticisms have in part spurred park historians to consider taking a second look at its Indian historical materials when funding is available.

Gerard Baker has been overhauling exhibits at Mount Rushmore National Memorial since he became the park's first American Indian superintendent in 2004. This spring, he organized a summit of Lakota, Nakota and Dakota elders to discuss issues including ways to help heal wounds stemming from the country's violent his-

tory with American Indians.

In Death Valley National Park, members of the federally recognized Timbisha Shoshone Tribe are working under a Park Service grant to map sites of cultural and historical significance. In 2000, after decades of negotiation, the tribe was ceded acres of park land as a part of their ancestral territory.

Pat Parker, chief of the Park Service's American Indian liaison office in Washington, lauded such efforts, and said the agency plans to issue guidelines detailing how parks should work with tribes to ensure visitors are told a complete history.

"What people know about the landscape in our parks, the body of knowledge that they've carried through from generation to generation and have memorialized in songs and stories, is a resource to be protected just as much as the trees and the rocks and the fish," Parker said.

Mohegan medicine woman follows great aunt's path

NEW LONDON, Conn. (AP)—As a child she spent much of her time at the Tantaquidgeon Museum with her great aunt Gladys, its founder.

Melissa Tantaquidgeon Zobel would take in as much information as she could about the Mohegan Tribe's past and its cultural richness. And for most of her life, Zobel could look to Gladys Tantaquidgeon for guidance.

So it was difficult for her to imagine herself ever assuming the role of medicine woman, which was left vacant after Gladys died in 2005 at the age of 106.

But when the Mohegan Tribe's Council of Elders came to Zobel last month,

asking if she would be willing to take on the position of medicine woman, she accepted. The council said Zobel would be "preserving the spiritual, physical and emotional health of individual tribal members."

While the appointment will not change her life dramatically, it signals a shift. For so long she and other tribal members had Gladys, who was wholly dedicated to her tribe and community, to turn to.

And now, at the age of 48, Zobel has become that person.

"This is a position that I really, really had terrible trepidation about ever even thinking about assuming," Zobel said. "I think it's knowing that you no longer have someone else to go to."

While some people may envision the medicine person as

someone with vast knowledge in ancient herbs and healing techniques, Zobel said different people have different gifts.

She said that within tribes sometimes there is an individual who is a "seer." Some may practice herbal healing and yet others may have a gift for working with children or the elderly. But no matter what someone's gift or strength is, Zobel said the intent never changes.

"The goal is simple: to do what's best for your tribe and for the community as a whole," she said, "to bring good things to the place that you live and the world that you live in."

Joseph Gray, vice chairman of the Council of Elders, said the position is meant to promote "harmony and well being in the tribe as a collective whole."

"The official duties are just being the medicine woman period," Gray said.

The role of medicine woman is defined by the person occupying the position.

Gladys' way was to spend her life researching the history and traditions of the tribe. In doing so, she created, along with her brother and father, Harold and John, the Tantaquidgeon Museum, which the Mohegans believe to be the oldest native-owned and operated museum in the country.

"(Gladys) focused on learning more about our ancient traditions as a way to make our people whole," Zobel said. "And because I saw so much success in what she did, that's the path that I wanted to follow."

In many ways Zobel has fo-

cus on similar projects. "Personality-wise, we're very different and yet there are very few people with whom I would rather (have) spent time during my life," Zobel said.

Gladys, among her many accomplishments in life, entered the University of Pennsylvania in 1919, co-founded the museum in 1931, did social work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the mid- to late 1930s and in the 1990s provided documentation that helped the Mohegan Tribe achieve federal recognition.

As medicine woman she will have no official duties to perform and she will not have to wear any special regalia.

Currently, her regalia consists of a blue satin top, a velvet collar and a black skirt that Gladys

embroidered for her about 30 years ago.

When she wears the regalia, she also wears two downturned turkey feathers in her hair. The angle of the feathers symbolizes that the individual comes in peace.

Zobel said no one in her family was entirely surprised by her appointment but she expects her three children, David Uncas Fayet, 17, Madeline Fielding Fayet, 18, and Rachel Beth Fayet, 22, may get the biggest thrill of all.

"I don't think anyone expects their mother to be the medicine woman," she said. "I think for them, this will be interesting to explain to their friends."

Committee grants protection of Mount Taylor

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP)—A state committee has approved a proposal from five American Indian tribes to give central New Mexico's Mount Taylor temporary protection as a cultural property at a contentious meeting attended by hundreds of people.

The state Cultural Properties Review Committee voted 4-2 Saturday in Grants for an emergency listing of more than 422,000 acres (660 square miles) surrounding the mountain's summit on the state Register of Cultural Properties.

The Navajo Nation, the Acoma, Laguna and Zuni pueblos and the Hopi tribe of Arizona asked the state to approve the listing for a mountain they consider sacred to protect it from an anticipated uranium mining boom, according to the

nomination report.

The listing lasts for a year, after which the committee would determine whether the mountain that can be seen from many regions of New Mexico should be listed permanently.

"We're quite happy," said Acoma Pueblo Lt. Gov. Mark Thompson, who attended the meeting.

But he said those who support the mountain's listing on the state registry have a lot of work ahead of them. He said the tribes will welcome help from other communities that support the cultural property designation.

"We have to try to mend some fences. There were a lot of misperceptions," Thompson said. "We need to try and educate people more, if they're willing to listen and learn and trust."

Opponents of the temporary

listing say it will open the door to more government control of natural areas across the country.

"If this is allowed and permitted here on this mountain, then the Sandias (near Albuquerque) are next and this will go across the nation as a way to control property," said Ronny Pynes, a Grants businessman concerned about how the listing would affect outdoors enthusiasts and nearby property owners.

Pynes and others said the meeting was very divisive with opponents and supporters of the listing sitting opposite each other across a high school gymnasium.

"It's a very dividing issue for the community," Pynes said. "It's created a lot of animosity, more than I've ever seen."

Mount Taylor rises to 11,301 feet. The 422,840 acres that would be protected under the

emergency designation includes the summit and mesa tops above 8,000 feet, except on the southwest boundary where the area drops to 7,300 feet.

Those who support having the mountain listed on the state register permanently have one year to make their case. If they fail to do so, or if their application is rejected, they must wait five years before trying again, said state historian Estevan Rael-Galvez, the committee chairman.

Rael-Galvez, who did not vote, said the listing would not have an impact on property rights or use of the mountain.

"It does not have prohibitive restrictions on how the property can be used, how it can be sold, in terms of public access, in terms of maintenance and the use of it," he said.

PBS taping Trail of Tears documentary

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (AP)—Some of a five-part documentary on the Trail of Tears is being taped in Tennessee and Georgia for the Public Broadcasting Service.

A crew of about 100 is making the documentary, "We Shall Remain," for PBS. They have been taping at the Chief Vann House Historic Site in Chatsworth, Ga., the New Echota Historic Site near

Chattahoochee, Ga., and Red Clay State Historic Park in Cleveland, Tenn.

A PBS spokesman described the series as "a provocative multimedia production that establishes Native American history as an essential part of U.S. history." The entire series covers 400 years, ending in 1973 with the occupation of Wounded Knee.



Photograph courtesy of the Gladys Thompson Family. Pictured: Aveline Irene Thompson Torne and sister Marjia Menthom.

Thursday, June 26, 2008
The Museum Grounds

Please join The Museum At Warm Springs as we provide the opportunity to Warm Springs Tribal Members to show their horse Regalia and to pay respect to their Loved Ones that are now gone and free their bereavement. Walkers are welcome!
Time starting at 10 am with "Spirit of the Horse" reception and exhibit opening to follow. The Changing Exhibits Gallery and Gift Shop will be open until 6 pm.

With permission, photographs will be taken of Horse regalia for individual records and one copy towards the Museum's Archives during this event.

For additional information and horse trailer parking, please contact Rosalind Sampson, Beulah Tsuempti or Natalie Moody at 541 553 3331/3336 Fax. Adult Volunteers are requested.

Citizens group opposes Seneca-Cayuga tribal casino at Grand Lake

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Calling it a "black hole" that will be a drain on the city's economy, a group of Grove citizens is working to prevent the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe from building its proposed \$60 million casino at Grand Lake.

The group, called "No Casino In Grove," planned a luncheon Saturday to encourage

citizens to contact lawmakers and write letters opposing the Miami-based tribe's plans for a lakeside complex that would include a five-story hotel, three restaurants and a convention center.

Darrell Mastin, a Grove financial adviser who serves as a spokesman for the "No Casino" group, said he envisions patrons ignoring other city

businesses as they drive to and from the casino.

"I look at a casino coming in here as allowing a black hole to develop right in the middle of your economy," Mastin said.

The Seneca-Cayugas already operate the Grand Lake Casino, located about five miles northeast of downtown Grove, and announced plans last year to build a 100,000-square-foot

lakefront facility that would employ about 450 people and have about 1,000 gaming machines.

A telephone message left for Chief Leroy Howard and Secretary-Treasurer Ray Rodgers at the Seneca-Cayuga main office Friday was not returned.