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Resiliency of Native American Women Basket Weavers from California, Great Basin, and the Southwest

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Native American women from the American Southwest have always used basket weaving to maintain relationships with nature, their spirituality, tribal histories, sovereignty, and their ancestors. However, since the late nineteenth century, with the emergence of a tremendous tourist industry in the American West, non-Indians have perceived Native American basketry as a commoditized practice with no connection to tribal traditions or spirituality. Non-Indians often viewed Native American women basket weavers as submissive individuals who became part of the market economy and abandoned their tribal traditions. In the early twentieth century, anthropologists and art historians believed in the narrative of the "Vanishing Indian," which led museum officials to collect baskets as the last remnants of a "once proud people." Officials maintained these ideas until the 1990's. During the last decade of the twentieth century, Native Americans scholars pushed back against these dominant narratives by acknowledging the harsh realities of settler colonialism. Even more extraordinary, researchers placed Native American women at the center of their arguments to affirm their adherence to cultural traditions and their continual commitment to tribal continuity. Despite these

accomplishments, however, scholars have not applied this research to American Indian women basket weavers. Because of this absence in the historiography, numerous non-Natives continue to believe indigenous basketry of the American West is an art form that lacks traditional methods, continuity, techniques, and cultural connections to communities.

To combat these preconceptions, the following dissertation will examine the lives and works of four Native American basket weavers from California and Nevada. Basketry has always been a way to honor traditional values and assert a woman's individual sovereignty, as a tribal member and artist. This is because since ancestral times American Indian basketry has played a significant role in indigenous communities in California and Eastern Nevada. More importantly, this dissertation will focus on exploring the tremendous amount of power these women exerted when establishing boundaries over who they would teach their art form. Overall, the four indigenous women in this dissertation all show that basket weaving manifests unique pieces of art and have always been an important part of their identities and communities.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to a number of people, all of whom have been a constant stream of support and love throughout my graduate school career. First and foremost, I am unbelievably thankful to my parents, Tad and Melinda Roberts, for their unwavering love, strength, and encouragement. I am profoundly grateful for the love and selflessness of my grandparents, Willie and Diane Roberts. Thank you both the long road trips, exposure to new lands, and love of nature. To my grandfather Joe Gonzales, we did it! I wish you could see all of our dreams come to fruition, but I know you are proud. Grandma Alita, there are so many things I want to tell you, but for now, I will say thank you for teaching me patience and for trying your best; I will see you in my dreams. To my ancestors in Nevada, I know you walk with me every day. I hope this writing honors you and your sacrifices.

To my husband Will, there are no words that can adequately describe my feelings for you. Thank you for your love, patience, and late-night chocolate shake runs. We are a great team, and I will never forget all that you have done for during this time in our lives. Thank you for coming to Chicago with me so I could fulfill this part of my dream. You are my heart.

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And to all the young Native/Chicana girls who have been criticized and discriminated against. You are worthy. You are beautiful. You are intelligent. You are sacred. Never stop dreaming or doing what you are passionate about. I promise if you find love in yourself first, the rest will follow.

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Introduction

By exploring the lives of four Native American women basket weavers from California and Nevada, this study will present how each woman used tribal basketry to teach tradition, religion, language, sovereignty, and pride for their tribal communities. Most importantly, each woman's story highlights the history of her respective communities and the various events that shaped the way basketry became observed. Women at the heart of this story include Dat So La Lee (Washoe), Elsie Allen (Makahmo Pomo), Lorene Sisquoc (Fort Sill Apache/Mountain Cahuilla), and Donna Largo (Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians). With a special emphasis on the cultural significance and strengths of each woman, this study will present how they have used tribal basketry to teach tradition, religion, language, sovereignty, and pride for their tribal communities, while providing money for their families through the market economy.

My interest in basket weaving comes from my studies involving the Northern Paiute people, especially the Prophet Wovoka and the material culture that had been used in performing the Creation Dance ceremony, including feathers, white/red paint, and wood.[1] While no accounts suggest that baskets had been used in this ritual, it is fair to say that this intricate basketry had been one of the things that Wovoka hoped to preserve through his divine revelations, given to him by the Great Spirit *Sumatea*. His vision of preserving cultural elements, including basketry has become a reality. Wovoka's communication with the Great Spirit took place on January 1, 1889 when he fell

[1] Northern Paiutes typically refer to Wovoka's teachings as a Creation Dance. It was not until his message began to spread to eastern tribes that his revelations became known as the Ghost Dance. More about this will be said further along in the report.

unconscious and "died."[2] During this time in death, Sumatea gave Wovoka instructions regarding a round dance that had to be performed in five-day intervals. Upon completion of this dance, and the prayers that accompanied it, all Natives could once again live in a world without white interference and where Native livelihood would be restored to its fullest extent. Unfortunately, the potential of the Creation Dance did not become fully realized due to the events at Wounded Knee Creek in 1890. However, it could be said that some of what Wovoka wanted for all Native people did come to life. Certainly, Native American women preserved the art of basket making. Indigenous basket weavers have been able to promote their own forms of teaching, separate from those of the general public. Parts of Wovoka's doctrine can also be seen as successful because of how Native basket weavers have asserted their sovereignty by creating a small place for themselves in American culture that does not necessarily involve white infringement. As a result, this small space of basket making has enabled these carriers of culture to produce some of the most prized and valuable baskets in the world.[3]

The complex understandings of Native women and their identity, spirituality and sovereignty are concepts that I confront every day and are some of the reasons why I have decided to pursue my education. In fact, my decision to enter graduate school was based on my sense of loss regarding my Native American and Mexican cultural traditions

[2] Michael Hittman, *A Numu History: The Yerington Paiute Tribe* (Yerington, NV: Yerington Paiute Tribe, 1984), 30. Wovoka referred to his time with the Great Spirit as the time that he passed on to another realm. Some scholars believe that the fever he had on January 1, 1889 is what contributed to him experiencing delusions.

[3] Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 80. The idea of a 'Small Place' comes from Jamaica Kincaid's discussion about the effect that colonization and tourism have had on the island of Antigua.

that affected both sides of my family as a result of colonialism. My studies have allowed me to construct a sense of identity that I am comfortable with. The academy has provided me a place to belong and to know more about my familial lineage. For example, during my research, I discovered that my paternal great-grandfather was a Northern Paiute by the name of Chief Joaquin. I further learned that my great-great-great grandfather, Blind Bob Roberts, had been known as a *Tuneggwukeadu*, which when interpreted from the Paiute language loosely means a type of spiritual translator. In fact, Blind Bob worked closely with Wovoka, since the Prophet needed to communicate his divine messages to Paiute people. Finally, my paternal great-grandmother was a bead artist and had taught me some of her techniques before she passed away. As such, I have come to appreciate that what I have chosen to study by way of the Prophet and basket weaving is not necessarily by chance. Rather I have considered many times if I have been chosen to tell these stories because of the blood that runs through my veins. This close bond that I have with the subjects in this report are why I have decided it is necessary to offer a voice for Native weavers and why it is important to make their efforts for their communities known to a larger audience.

The journey of providing insight to a world that is not always acknowledged began when I traveled to Reno, Nevada, in January 2015 in order to attend a class hosted by Shoshone elder Leah Brady for the Great Basin Native Basket Weavers Association (GBNBA). Held at the Senior Center at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, I met a group of women who mostly came to visit with one another and to learn from Leah about how to make a traditional burden basket. When talking to Leah, I learned that the group consists

of Paiute, Shoshone, Washoe, and White Knife women and that they have all had a lack of support from their various tribal governments in promoting basketry classes due to the lack of large revenue derived from basket weaving. Leah also informed me that since her mother's generation did not want to teach their children about any ancestral traditions, because of the level of hurt that they had experienced as a result of forced assimilation, trying to recapture customary basket weaving techniques has been a challenge. Therefore, Leah and her peers have been adamant in correcting the hurt that their families have experienced and have applied their individual agency in teaching Native children about how weaving is an integral part of their past and future.[4]

While visiting with these women, I remembered when my great-grandmother taught me beadwork and how my hands felt when creating bracelets. Yet nothing prepared me for the way my hands would feel when trying to properly strip and split willow. After a few minutes, Leah sat down next to me and had to explain the process more than once. After losing my patience a few times, Leah asked me to stop and not to get angry since that negative energy could become trapped in my materials. From that point forward I watched in awe, as the other women in the room moved their hands and manipulated their material in ways that I had never seen before. While they worked, I tried to strike up conversation.

One weaver named Francis Shaw provided a significant discussion as she told me that one of her children had asked her to make a traditional infant carrier for their

[4] Oral Interview of Leah Brady with Meranda Roberts, January 18, 2015, Reno-Sparks Colony in Reno, Nevada. Hereafter cited as Leah Brady Interview.

newborn.[5] Francis informed me that when asked by tribal members or her family to make these particular objects that she is more than willing to fulfill their requests, yet when non-Natives ask her to construct these same objects she tells them that she does not know how to make what they desire. She uses this method of control because she wants the basketwork that she creates to actually be used in the manner for which they were traditionally intended before American encroachment, and not just to be appreciated for their artistic value.[6] Instead, the basketry that she decides to sell is more contemporary and is not necessarily reflective of ancestral basketry. By deciding who receives a certain category of her basketwork, Francis is demonstrating her power as a Native woman and is also correcting her relationship with Mother Earth by making baskets that are to be used the way that Mother Earth envisioned for her people in the old days; which means respecting basket materials through ceremony, thanking the Earth for her abundance, and reconnecting to the teachings of the ancestors.

Needless to say, after learning from these women, I returned to my hotel room and cried. Not because I had been sad but because I felt peace and a type of connection that I have rarely had with anyone outside of my family. I gave thanks to the Creator for allowing me to experience this journey and for allowing me to share these weavers' stories of survival and resilience. Wovoka's prophecies clearly live through this group and through me, since we are creating a sense of the world that Wovoka had seen in his revelations.

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[5] Oral Interview of Francis Shaw with Meranda Roberts, January 18, 2015, Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. Hereafter cited as Francis Shaw Interview.

[6] As will be highlighted throughout the paper, Native women use different mechanisms of control to determine who receives certain categories of their work and who does not.

Upon returning home, I furthered my research and appreciation for Native basket weaving by accepting an internship at the Riverside Metropolitan Museum in Riverside, California. Dr. Brenda Focht, Senior Curator at the Metropolitan took me on as an intern. She guided me into the rich basket collections at the museum and I learned about how basketry is represented in museum exhibitions.

Located in Historic Downtown Riverside, California, the Riverside Metropolitan Museum was originally known as the Cornelius Earle Rumsey Indian Collection and was housed in Riverside's original city hall until 1919.[7] According to Dr. Brenda Focht, the Rumsey collection is unique in the sense that Rumsey enjoyed gathering baskets that he knew Natives had used in everyday life and not necessarily baskets that were only considered aesthetically pleasing.[8] This is an important aspect of the Rumsey collection to keep in my mind because during the early twentieth century when Rumsey avidly collected, a majority of other basket collectors were only concerned with how baskets could be exhibited for artistic value inside homes. Rumsey's nondiscriminatory approach in the acquiring of baskets is the reason why the Metropolitan has one of the most significant and extensive collections of Native baskets in Southern California. During my six-month internship at the Metropolitan, I cataloged and inventoried, a majority of the baskets that Rumsey had collected from Northern Paiutes in Nevada's Great Basin.

[7] Christopher L. Moser, *Native American Basketry of Central California* (Riverside, CA: Riverside Museum Press, 1987), 4. Cornelius Rumsey had founded the Nabisco Company in 1898, which afforded him a great of amount of wealth that fueled his desire in collecting Native American basketry after his retirement in 1900. After his death, Rumsey's widow donated her husband's collection of Native artifacts to the City of Riverside.

[8] In this report, The Metropolitan Museum in Riverside, California will be referred to as the Metropolitan from this point forward.

It was honor to work with Dr. Focht, not only because of her extensive knowledge of basket weaving and the Metropolitan's collections, but also because of how she has included Native Americans in the planning and execution of the Metropolitan's exhibits. For example, she included many Native American consultants when planning and exhibiting "Cahuilla Continuum," which tells the story of Southern California indigenous people. I will never forget how enthusiastic Brenda was when I started my internship, since she knew how rewarding it would be for me to touch some of the pieces that Northern Paiutes had made. However, before I could actually pick up any one of these pieces, Focht made sure that I familiarized myself with the museum's catalog system.

On the first day of my internship, I used the museum's online organizational program to flag all of the Northern Paiute baskets that the museum has in their possession. After printing reports on baskets, I organized them by accession number. This process took several days because I had to make sure they were arranged in numerical order. I also double-checked to ensure I did not have multiple reports for one object. Since Focht had other projects that she was working on, we did not travel directly to the off-site storage location that houses the baskets. Instead, Focht provided me with two books about Native basketry that had been published by the museum's former curator, Dr. Christopher L. Moser. Reading these two books took over two days at the museum, since they cannot leave the facility. Nevertheless, they proved to be great contextual resources that guided my appreciation of the baskets that I eventually came into contact with.

The first publication I read was released by the Riverside Museum Press in 1987 and is titled *Native American Basketry of Central California.* The purpose of this text is to inform interested audiences about the basketry that the museum preserves from the Western Great Basin, Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, the Central Valley and the California coast. The book is broken up into different chapters and is organized by tribal location. In terms of the Northern Paiute section, I learned about the varying techniques and materials, such as coiling, twining, willow, and sumac that women used in traditional basket weaving.[9] Although I learned about twining from Leah Brady during my trip to Reno, I did not fully understand the intricacies of the concept because I only concerned myself with stripping willow. As such, looking at images of this technique in Moser's book provided a firm grasp of what it looks like to twine successfully. Another great aspect of this chapter included a general history of the way that Northern Paiutes customarily used baskets for storing water, food, and plants.[10] These storage baskets were mostly utilized when Paiute families moved from one location to the next in order to survive the desert's changing seasons.[11] The assessment of Paiute basketry concludes with the recognition that before American encroachment in the 1840's, traditional Paiute baskets rarely had any designs woven into them. Overall, this text gave me a better

[9] Moser, *Native American Basketry of Central California,* 21.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid. "Twining is a type of weaving in which two or more flexible weft elements engage one or more rigid warp elements, interlacing with the warps or being twisted between them. Twining produces flexible or rigid products, making it a useful technique for constructing various basket forms." Some of the baskets that are constructed through the twining method are seed beaters and burden baskets. In fact, in Nevada "twining goes back to at least eleven thousand years." In terms of coiling, this is a technique "in which the warp foundation is wound in a circular pattern and the weft (usually one strand instead of two or more) is sewn over the foundation to link each successive row. Coiling is less flexible than twining in the shapes it can produce. It works well for any shape based on the pattern of a circle or oval."

understanding of Northern Paiute basket weaving and the methods employed in the making of these objects.

The second publication I read differed from the first in the sense that Moser wrote a lot more about the evolution Native American basket weaving endured in the Southwest during the early nineteenth century. Published in 1981, *Rods, Bundles, and Stitches: A Century of Southern California Indian Basketry* heavily discusses the use of Native basketry before the arrival of Europeans and how the eventual development of the railroad in the 1850's facilitated a desire for middle-class Americans to travel to the West and start collecting Native goods, such as basketry and jewelry.[12] After this analysis, a great deal of this text is dedicated to addressing the curio-shops that became established in Southern California, which showcased Native art pieces for the purposes of drawing audience's attention to what traders and shopkeepers considered primitive artwork.[13] The conclusion of Moser's book focuses on how basketry has been preserved by museums, like the Metropolitan, and how these spaces have been able to convey to non-Native audiences an appreciation for traditional Native basketry and weavers. The book contains an appendix of the different types of materials that indigenous people use to construct their basketry, as well as how these materials were collected.

After completing these readings and gaining new understandings on the importance of basket weaving from a public historian perspective, Focht instructed me in the procedures that I had to follow when caring for the baskets I would inventory. I was

[12] Christopher L. Moser, *Rods, Bundles, and Stitches: A Century of Southern California Indian Basketry* (Riverside, CA: Riverside Museum Press, 1981), 166.
[13] Ibid.

told that I did not need to wear gloves, but that when picking up baskets from their storage containers, I had to take hold of the bottom of the basket first and not squeeze on their rims. Rather, when locating the accession number for a basket, which is typically located on the basket's base, I had to lightly hold its rim in order to avoid damaging it. It was my responsibility to remember that some of these baskets were impaired and the slightest mistake handling them could result in breaking it's coiling or twining. Focht also informed me that when writing down the condition of the basket that I should always set it down in order to avoid accidently marking it with my pencil. Finally, I was told that certain boxes contained more than one basket, and that when looking through the contents of a box, I should have a safe location to place the ones I had previously inspected. After receiving these instructions, Focht drove us to an offsite storage facility that houses many of the Metropolitan's various collections. It was here that I spent the next few weeks, locating and describing the baskets that I was to examine.

Beginning on February 20, 2015 and concluding on March 23, 2015, Focht took me to the offsite collections location for at least an hour. While she worked on other projects, I found the baskets that I needed to inventory. I found the baskets by looking for accession numbers, which were written on the outside of the boxes, and cross-matching them with object reports I had previously printed. I then located that same accession number in my notebook that contained the object reports that I had previously organized. If a box had more than one basket, I would locate all of the object reports before inspecting its contents. Once I began to inspect the baskets, I not only documented their condition and the date that I handled them, but also felt a great amount of emotion and

pride. I realized how significantly baskets reflect the work of weavers and their unique communities. These feelings grew as I gently picked up a series of burden baskets that were beautifully twined and designed with chevron/diamond shapes. As a whole these baskets were not heavy, but obviously they could carry a significant amount of weight when needed. Numerous times, I reflected on how important these baskets had been for Northern Paiute families as they traveled from one destination to the next, all while women carried their family's possessions, including foods, medicines, and basketry materials, on their backs.

Another type of basketwork that caught my attention included the basket hat that Mr. Rumsey wore in a 1904 photo in Lake Tahoe, California. Having looked at this image a number of times in Moser's publications, it was enthralling to be able to touch the object that helped capture a moment when a collector of Native goods actually made a purchase from a basket weaver. Also, this photo and hat perfectly represents how Native basketry transformed in the early twentieth century. For example, the original purpose of a basket hat was to protect Northern Paiutes from the sun as they traveled or collected food. Although basket hats were still used in this manner by Natives after American encroachment in the Great Basin, these same pieces began to be sold in great numbers to tourists and collectors as a way of promoting the artwork of the American West. Hence, this artifact in the Metropolitan's collection demonstrates the shift that Native American basketry endured in order to survive in America's market economy. The collection also illustrates the interest of non-Natives in acquiring Native handmade goods.

The basket in the museum's collection that perfectly demonstrates the way Natives appealed to their consumer's interests is a basket bowl that has four American flags as its design. Made in the early 1900's with willow, devil's claw, and juncus the weaver created a bowl using traditional coiling methods, but the design is calculated to appeal to Americans who lived in the region or toured the Great Basin. When first encountering this work, I was impressed with how strong and tight the stitches still felt. I could tell that the basket had been made with a great amount of effort and care, probably because the weaver knew that a customer would pay a fair price for it. Altogether, this bowl illustrates the way that Natives began to apply traditional basket weaving skills in creating baskets that attracted American attention. In fact, from this point forward Native baskets from the Great Basin started to be seen as some of the greatest pieces of indigenous art in the United States. This meant that the weaving of baskets transformed from a utilitarian purpose to the market economy. As a whole, traditional use of baskets and their sale to non-Natives had a tie to Native American survival, originally as containers for food and later for money which provided Native American families with clothing, food, medicine, and other means of continued existence.

The one basket that affected my experience during my time with the Metropolitan the most was a twined basket hat that had been woven by the wife of Paiute Chief Natchez Winnemucca. In the Great Basin, Chief Natchez Winnemucca is mostly discussed in relation to his sister, Sarah Winnemucca who was a staunch advocate of Native American rights in Nevada in the 1890's. The work of Sarah Winnemucca has greatly affected my research because of her opinion regarding the Creation Dance of

1890 and the Prophet Wovoka. Winnemucca believed that the Prophet's prophecies were nonsensical because the only way to survive in the white man's world was to learn their practical skills and not rely on dreams.[14] Her beliefs are reflective of the struggle that a majority of Natives found themselves in during the late nineteenth century, to assimilate to American ideals or reinstate the old ways. As such being able to touch and be in the presence of a basket that had been created by Sarah Winnemucca's relative, created a connection to the Prophet Wovoka that I had not anticipated while working with the basketry collection at the Metropolitan. Since this basket was created around the same time that the Creation Dance gained popularity, it is a perfect reflection of the way that some Natives thought it was best to exist in the dominate society that had been forcibly pushed on them.

After completing my tasks at the offsite location at end of March 2015, I worked at the Metropolitan in order to update their online catalog with my findings. This process took place one day in June 2015, and I concluded my time with Focht by discussing what I had learned about museum preservation and the museum's collections. I also thanked Focht for granting me the opportunity to connect to baskets that carry the history and culture of Northern Paiutes. While I am still learning to recognize the difference between twining and coiling, this internship helped me realize that basket weaving is not merely an art form but is rather a container for the Paiute past, present, and future. Although I believe that are some Native artifacts housed in museums should be given back to their respective tribes, museums are sites of knowledge and are places of preservation of

[14] Sally S. Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 17.

Native American history. Museums teach people from all walks of life, including Native American communities. However, in order for museums to continue to be effective in their teaching, museum officials must be willing to incorporate more about the meaning, spiritual and ancestral, that tribes place on their sacred artifacts, including basketry. Cooperation and consultations between museum officials and Native basket weavers will enable women to reassert elements of their identity and tribal sovereignty in the public sphere, which in turn offers Native voices within the American narrative.

Upon finishing my internship at the Metropolitan, and writing my master's thesis, I decided to write the following dissertation. The lives of Dat So La Lee, Elsie Allen, Lorene Sisquoc, and Donna Largo, all emphasize the beauty of their tribal histories, as well as all of their hardships. All of the women's ability to overcome great adversity provided them with the tools necessary to ensure that basket weaving survives and continues to be taught to their communities. These women are the epitome of strength, resiliency, and determination. They deserve to be recognized and applauded.

The golden era of collecting and assessing Native American basketry by American settlers began in the late nineteenth century and continued into the early twentieth century. During this time, Americans collected basketry "for the purposes of saving the last remnants of a dying culture and as another mechanism for displaying the 'otherness' of Native Americans" in their homes or stores.[15] Non-Indians offered many types of displays to tourists, as new comers traveled by train through the American West.

[15] Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press,1996), 7.

The popularity of the West emerged largely from the efforts put forth by the Fred Harvey Company and the advertising he created to entice tourists to view Natives as they "actually" lived, which spurred interests in collecting basketry for curio-shops and gifts.[16] Therefore how Natives practiced basket weaving transformed as tourists and collectors sought and promoted pieces they believed represented Native authenticity.

George Wharton James became one of the most famous, and prolific, collectors of Native basketry. His book, *Indian Basketry* (1909), contained discussions about tribal basketwork in the Southwest and the keen interests of Americans and Europeans in Native American basketry as art. James' work is remembered for the respect he showed the women who had made the baskets he had collected. James also recognized basket weaving as a central part of a native woman's spirituality. However, his writing painted a picture of Native American women weavers as docile and content the destructiveness of settler colonialism. His conclusions created a void in the historiography that failed to account for the level of influence each Native weaver had creating their art.[17]

Failure to understand Native woman's agency was also the result of the "tourist spectacle" used by the Fred Harvey Company.[18] The company owned several restaurants, curio-shops, and hotels along railroad stops. The company exhibited Native American art at these locations. Also, at the establishments of the Fred Harvey Company audiences could watch Native American artisans create their pieces. These attractions played a key

[16] Margaret Weigle and Barbara Babcock, *The Great Southwest of the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway* (Phoenix, AZ: Heard Museum, 1996), 68.
[17] George Wharton James wrote another book in 1913 called *Poetry and Symbolism of Indian Basketry*, which reflects many of the same ideas and arguments found in *Indian Basketry*.
[18] Dilworth, *Imagining Indians*, 83.

role in encouraging more tourists to use the railroad to explore the Southwest and to see Indians in their "natural setting."[19] The display of Native crafts helped solidify Harvey Company buyers and sellers as expert providers of Native goods.[20] This promotion led tourists to trust the company's opinion on what an authentic Native basket should look like and how someone should display them in a home.

The Fred Harvey Company and George Wharton James promoted a romanticized version of the Southwest, and as a result, many Victorian Americans labeled Native goods as a "poetic and historic" art that could hold a place in their homes.[21] In these commercial circumstances, the real meaning placed in baskets by their Native weavers became lost and unacknowledged. Although George Wharton James interviewed a lot of the Native American women basket makers, collectors and tourists did not care about the women weavers and their stories. Instead, these consumers were only interested in what the Native baskets/goods represented, not the artists that made the basket. As a result, information about a basket maker, including her identity, personality, and spirituality became marginalized or lost. Authors silenced Native American basket makers since they were females and believed to be vanishing. This lack of acknowledging a basket weaver's agency has continued into the twentieth first century, with many books and articles about Native American basketry only focusing on the aesthetic innovations that weavers made to make their objects desirable. These writings have not taken into account a women's ancestral knowledge/teachings and the connection of their artwork to tribal and individual

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

sovereignty. This lack of attention to their heritage has meant that readers could not appreciate how basket weaving expressed each woman's identity and agency. In place of these insights authors have provided step-by-step descriptions of how weavers created her pieces and the coiling/twining techniques she might have used.

Examples of these how-to books include *Indian Basket Makers of California and the Great Basin: the Living Art and Fine Tradition, Weavers of Tradition and Beauty: Basket Makers of the Great Basin,* and *Tradition and Innovation: A Basket History of the Indians of Yosemite-Mono Lake Area*.[22] These books instruct readers in the creation of their own basket pieces inspired by Great Basin, Owens Valley, or Yosemite Valley women basket makers. While these books offer perspectives of the weavers, most discussions focused on the way past generations of indigenous people used baskets prior to American contact. As such, they are once again situated in the past. Also, when authors have given Native weavers the opportunity to express how traditional basketry survived the changes caused by settlement these dialogues do not emphasize how weavers incorporated ancestral knowledge into their pieces or any of the challenges weavers faced when trying to keep this art form alive.

[22] For texts specifically related to California basket weaving see, Charles Rozaire, *Indian Basketry of Western North America* (Liverpool: Brooke House, 1977), Christopher L. Moser, *Rods, Bundles & Stitches: A Century of Southern California Indian Basketry* (Riverside: Museum Press, 1981), Christopher L. Moser, *American Indian Basketry of Central California* (Riverside, CA: Riverside Museum Press, 1986), Larry Dalrymple, *Indian Basket Makers of California and the Great Basin* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2000), and Ralph Shanks, *California Indian Baskets, San Diego to Santa Barbara and Beyond to the San Joaquin Valley, Mountains and Deserts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

For example, in *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty: Basket Makers of the Great Basin,* author Mary Lee Fulkerson provided short biographies about famous basket weavers of the Great Basin to frame an entire chapter. Written from the author's perspective, Fulkerson offers each weaver's story and highlighted the role basketry had in shaping a weaver's life. In the biography of Western Shoshone basket weaver, Minnie Dick, the author explained Dick learned to weave as a child but could not work on her pieces full time until after she retired from her job. Fulkerson included Dick's belief that "young girls must learn [to basket weave] from the old people." [23] However, Fulkerson did not address what kept Dick from weaving for so long, her influences, or if Dick's spirituality influenced her basket pieces. Instead, Fulkerson focused on the awards that Dick won and the techniques she used to create the perfect winnowing tray.[24]

Many authors have not acknowledged the strength of every Native woman weaver. In the late 1880's, many women-maintained traditions while entering the market economy. In fact, indigenous weavers have never stopped being connected to the old ways, but authors of Indian basketry have continued to disparage Native culture and values. Scholars like Sharon E. Dean, author of *Weaving a Legacy: Indian Baskets and the People of Owens Valley, California,* and Marvin Cohodas, who wrote *Basket Weavers for the Curio Trade: Elizabeth and Louise Hickox,* have recognized these problems and

[23] Mary Lee Fulkerson, *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty: Basket Makers of the Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada, Reno, 1995), 44.
[24] *Ibid,* 46.

have tried to rectify them in their own publications. However, these attempts have also failed to acknowledge a weaver's agency. [25]

Weaving a Legacy: *Indian Baskets and the People of Owens Valley, California* by Sharon Dean, differs from other texts. The author provided an extensive history of the Owens Valley before white settlement and the dramatic ways basketry changed because of the curio-trade. Dean also offered biographies of each weaver identified in the book. Dean acknowledged that basket weavers used ancestral customs in daily activities, but the author never connected how those traditions also applied to basket weaving. At the end of the biography Paiute weaver Jessie Durant, Dean wrote, "Jessie prepares traditional meals, using her ancestors' grinding stones and baskets to cook pine nut mush. Jessie no longer actively makes baskets but she treasures the legacy of her family baskets still in use or on display in nearby museums such as the Yosemite Museum."[26] However, Dean never mentioned the ancestral techniques used by Durant and had learned from her grandmother about basket weaving. Dean does not address whether or not, Durant taught those lessons to her descendants and if her children, grandchildren or other relatives used the ancestry basketry during their lives. In fact, none of the biographies in Dean's book

[25] Books and articles that mirror the sentiments expressed in these two texts include: For texts specifically related to California basket weaving see, Charles Rozaire, *Indian Basketry of Western North America* (Liverpool: Brooke House, 1977), Christopher L. Moser, *Rods, Bundles & Stitches: A Century of Southern California Indian Basketry* (Riverside: Museum Press, 1981), Christopher L. Moser, *American Indian Basketry of Central California* (Riverside, CA: Riverside Museum Press, 1986), Larry Dalrymple, *Indian Basket Makers of California and the Great Basin* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2000), and Ralph Shanks, *California Indian Baskets, San Diego to Santa Barbara and Beyond to the San Joaquin Valley, Mountains and Deserts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010). I only included the two texts listed in the literature review because they both perfectly detail how authors and collectors have discussed basketry and Native women weavers. I also did not want to be repetitive with my analysis.
[26] Sharon E. Dean, *Weaving a Legacy: Indian Baskets and the People of Owens Valley, California* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004), 122.

included information about how traditions influenced a weaver's pieces or what obstacles weavers faced to keep basket weaving alive.

Instead, Dean focused the weaver's recollections about how Native American life changed because of American settlement and how settlers created opportunities for Great Basin basket weavers to weave according to their ancestral traditions.[27] For example, Dean provided a history of the coalition "Wa-Pai-Shone," which the Committee on Arts and Crafts of the Carson City Indian Agency created in 1935. Dean suggests this organization "offered Indian people of the Great Basin the chance to cooperate in selling their goods through trading posts."[28] Dean's attention on "Wa-Pai-Shone," relayed the common belief that since non-Natives gave basket weavers opportunities to sell their basketwork to earn an income, they deserved credit for any innovations a weaver made during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. These groups believed without their help, the art of Native American basketry would have disappeared along with other pre-contact ways of Native life. An example of non-Natives taking credit for maintaining and transforming Native American basketry, emerges from the writing of the Cohn's regarding the life and work of Washoe basket weaver Dat So La Lee.

[27] Ibid, 57.
[28] Ibid, 58. "The cooperative had six objectives: (1) to revive and perpetuate an interest in the distinctive crafts of the Washoe, Paiute, and Shoshone people; (2) to increase the production of saleable articles that evidenced good workmanship, first-class materials, and "true…Indian feeling in color and design;" (3) to set standards; (4) to purchase materials cooperatively so that uniformly high grade materials would be used; (5): to establish cooperative marketing centers and stabilize prices at a reasonable level; and (6) to enable "any Indian with a genuine aptitude for craft work" to supplement "the very low family income derived from other economic resources." For example a part of the text is dedicated to the history of a coalition called "Wa-Pai-Shone," which was created in 1935 by the Committee on Arts and Crafts of the Carson City Indian Agency.

In 1895 Dat So La Lee traveled to Carson City, Nevada, to sell miniature baskets to Abe Cohn, who owned a local curio store. Cohn became so impressed with Dat So La Lee's pieces he asked her to weave only for his store. To make sure she could concentrate on basket weaving full time, Cohn bought her and her husband Charley a small house in Carson City and paid for all of their necessities.[29] This arrangement lasted for the next thirty years and resulted in Dat So La Lee becoming known as the "Queen of the Washoe Basket Makers."[30] Dat So La Lee's popularity grew because of a marketing campaign that Amy Cohn, Abe Cohn's wife, facilitated. Amy invented several stories about Dat So La Lee's background, and the designs she incorporated formatting her baskets, to appeal to customer's tastes for authentic Indian curios.[31] The pressure that the Cohn's kept putting on Dat So La Lee to make "authentic" pieces, eventually led her to invent a unique version of the *degikup,* also known as Washoe fancy baskets.[32]

Degikups are nearly spherical baskets that are sometimes miniature in stature. Washoe weavers used these baskets prior to American settlement in burial ceremonies, but they did not initially appeal to American buyers during the "Indian Craze" because of their lack of aesthetically pleasing designs.[33] To change this perception of the *degikup,* Dat So La Lee adopted popular Pomo designs, and a unique "color scheme based on the contrasting colors of black and red" when creating the pieces she made the Cohn's.[34] This

[29] Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Basketry" *American Indian Basketry Magazine*, 9 (July 1983), 29.
[30] Gayle Ross, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Artisan* (Morristown, New Jersey: Modern Curriculum Press, 1995), 25.
[31] Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," in *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution*, ed. Edwin Wade (New York, NY: Hudson Hills Press, Inc., 1986), 208.
[32] *Ibid,* 207.
[33] Marvin Cohodas, *Degikup: Washoe Fancy Baskets* (Vancouver, British Columbia: The Fine Arts Gallery of the University of British Columbia, 1979), 11.
[34] Cohodas, "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," 207.

manufacturing of a new form of *degikup* led the Cohn's in becoming wealthy individuals and as being praised by their buyers/admirers for providing Dat So La Lee with the incentive to create "a high quality and economically viable ware by 1910."[35]

This admiration for the Cohn's has resulted with Dat So La Lee not being acknowledged for how she participated in decisions that advanced her career. In his article, "Louisa Keyser and the Cohns," anthropologist Marvin Cohodas acknowledged how Dat So La Lee deserved "credit for originating the popular curio style of Washoe fancy basket weaving, both because she introduced the finely stitched, two color *degikup* and because she inaugurated individuality and innovation for others to follow." However, Cohodas failed to detail how Dat So La Lee's learned the preferences of her customers and adapted new ideas with the lessons she had learned from her elders as a child.[36] For example, before American settlement, Dat So La Lee's elders had taught her about paying attention to the changing of the seasons and the value of learning from other tribal communities. With *degikups,* Dat So La Lee had assessed, and then used the designs of Pomo weavers that appealed to tourists/buyers as they traveled to Carson City by way of the Virginia/Truckee railroad. These observations led her to decide to change and transform *degikups* with new designs that made these baskets profitable items. Hence, to only credit the Cohn's for *degikups* is incorrect and silences the agency of Dat So La Lee who created these baskets. The success and popularity of *degikups* resulted from the personal agency and intelligence of Dat So La Lee, not the Cohns.

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Louisa Keyser is the name that Dat So La Lee went by before her patronage with the Cohns. Marvin Cohodas, "Louisa Keyser and the Cohns" in *The Early Years of American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting* ed. Janet Berlo (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 105.

Another concern about *degikup*s that requires attention includes the names given to them before being sold. Researchers of the Cohns, like anthropologist Marvin Cohodas, have wrongly credited Amy Cohn for creating the names given to Dat So La Lee's creations. Authors also argue that the new designs used by Dat So La Lee held no significance to her Washoe heritage. However, Dat So La Lee used designs from California Indians to make her baskets more likeable and to represent motifs significant to Washoe people, including arrows, triangles, diagonal lines, and animal prints; all historically significant to Washoe ancestral culture. Many of Dat So La Lee's pieces have these traditional symbols incorporated into them and she could likely have communicated to Amy Cohn what names she wanted to her basket pieces to have. However, in writings about her life, Dat So La Lee's intellect has been often limited to her weaving abilities and not her aptitude in making conscious decisions that honored her heritage. By silencing the traditional precedents of Dat So La Lee, Cohodas and other scholars have relegated the basketry of Dat So La Lee as a mere art form. They argue she owed her success to the Cohn's and their generosity. Interested audiences deserve to know Dat So La Lee was a strong Native American woman. She was proud of her culture and used her talents and imagination to adapt to an American economic market.

Using community-based research, including consultations with Native American basket makers, I will offer interpretations that demonstrate how weavers remained in charge of their craft and indigenous women wielded more power than scholars like Cohodas have acknowledged. More so, I will discuss the great adversity and tragedy Native women overcame to ensure that ancestral basket weaving survived. Some books

have recognized the agency of women weavers include Elsie Allen's *Pomo Basketmaking: A Supreme Art for the Weaver* and Suzanne Abel-Vidor's *Remember Your Relations: The Elsie Allen Baskets, Family and Friends.*

Elsie Allen's book, *Pomo Basketmaking: A Supreme Art for the Weaver,* is not an autobiography. However, it has first-hand information about how Allen learned to weave and why she felt the need to write a book that detailed the methods and techniques to sustain Pomo basketry. Allen credited her passion for basket weaving to her mother. Before her mother passed, Allen's mother asked Elsie not to bury her baskets with her when she died. Burial of a basket weaver's materials and baskets with their creator was an ancestral Pomo tradition. When Allen obeyed her mother's wishes, some members of her community criticized her. She wrote, "unfortunately some of my Pomo people were not pleased with me for doing this and even some of my own family came to me and told me I should stop doing it [basket weaving]. They felt these old ways should die and we should forget the past heritage…since I felt that the Pomos were one of the greatest basket weavers in the world I resolved in my heart that this wonderful art should not be lost and that I would learn it well and teach others."[37] This text included photographs that show how Allen manipulated her plant materials to create varying baskets and what each basket style represented. For example, when detailing twine baskets Allen stated, "twine baskets are generally more utility type baskets, such as carrying baskets, storage baskets, winnowing baskets, and so forth."[38] However, this book did not include a full look at how

[37] Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basketmaking: A Supreme Art for the Weaver* (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, 1972), 14.
[38] *Ibid,* 39.

basketry contributed to Allen's sense of identity, agency, and connections to her ancestors. Nevertheless, Allen's lessons have been so influential that they resulted in the exhibition and catalog *Remember Your Relations: The Elsie Allen Baskets, Family and Friends.*

In 1993, Elsie Allen's family consulted on the exhibition and accompanying catalog *Remember Your Relations* hosted by the Grace Hudson Museum in Ukiah, California. The family made sure that the catalog reflected the beauty of Allen's baskets and those made by her relatives. Rather, the book "is about process: teaching, learning, demonstrating, weaving, creating. It is about choices, too: the choices that Indian have made for generations and still make today to affirm their identities."[39] To prove these points the catalog contained Pomo history before contact, traditional uses of basketry, and the lessons that Elsie Allen passed on to her descendants. Her family still uses her teachings to keep traditional basket weaving alive. This work is visually beautiful because of the numerous photographs of basket weavers creating their pieces, teaching others, and the objects featured at the Grace Hudson Museum.

Brian Bibby's *Essential Art: Native Basketry from the California Indian Heritage Center* details the history of the baskets in possession of the California Indian Heritage Center, "once included in the collections of the California State Indian Museum and still under the umbrella of California State Parks."[40] The publication offered a window into the collection and showcased varying basket styles. Throughout the text, Bibby included

[39] Suzanne Abel-Vidor and Susan Billy, *Remember Your Relations: The Elsie Allen Baskets, Family and Friends* (Berkeley: Heyday, 1996), 8.
[40] Brian Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2013), xvi.

information about the basket weavers and collectors. This material helped readers understand what characteristics of a basket appealed to buyers during the California curio-trade and the cultural relationship weavers had for their craft. The most prolific part of Bibby's text is the pictures he included of baskets analyzed in the text. The photographs reflect the beauty and purpose of each basket.

When discussing Elsie Allen's legacy, I will use *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver, Remember Your Relations: The Elsie Allen Baskets, Family and Friends,* and oral interviews with Allen's descendants who are, themselves basket makers. I will also interview Pomo community members to highlight how one woman's drive created a long-lasting framework for how Pomo basket weavers can keep their craft from disappearing. These interviews, and archival material from the Grace Hudson Museum, the Phoebe Hearst Museum, and Sonoma State University, will prove how Allen's legacy remains significant among her people. Therefore, I will explore how her community uses her power to maintain theirs.

Bibby's book has provided a framework I have followed for this dissertation. For instance, when discussing a weaver or collector, Bibby included a photograph of them and their basket pieces. These visual representations make Bibby's writing pleasurable and articulate. He created a way for readers to view basket pieces they may never see in person. I have included photos of the baskets and basket makers. Furthermore, research from museum collections, using their photographs I will also take photographs during consultations with weavers. Photographs of weavers working on their pieces and/or discussing their work are also included. In addition, I will photograph material culture,

tools, techniques, and methods of each weaver. These images will communicate the emotion weavers possess when working on their baskets and show the beauty and spirit that each basket holds.

I rely on Bibby's book when conceptualizing chapters about Lorene Sisquoc and Donna Largo. While both women's work with basketry has been briefly mentioned in journal articles and books, their impact on the Cahuilla community has never been fully acknowledged. To demonstrate Sisquoc's and Largo's profound influence on keeping Cahuilla basketry from disappearing, I heavily rely on oral interviews from the women's students and family. I was fortunate enough to meet with Sisquoc several times. From our time together, I learned of her undying love for her family, friends, and students. She also provided me with numerous photographs of her basketry and family history. Unfortunately, Donna Largo passed away in 2009 and I did not have the opportunity to meet with her. However, from numerous interviews with her students I learned about Largo's efforts in preserving Cahuilla basketry for future generations. I also uncovered her efforts in working with museums to repatriate Native objects, including baskets, to their respective communities. I will be able to use photographs from newspaper articles and from friends to display the love Largo had for her community.

Clearly, most of the literature discussed so far about basket weavers has only focused on the aesthetic value of baskets or how non-Native buyers influenced weavers to continue their art after white settlement. The proposed dissertation will reveal the cultural significance of basket weaving. My work will speak to the endurance of Native women basket weavers and the continuance of their art. I will also show the ways

basketry conveys ancestral traditions and tribal sovereignty. By having each chapter focus on the life of one weaver and their community, this dissertation will show that non-Natives are not responsible for the continuance of basket weaving in contemporary society. As a whole, this dissertation will reveal the significance of Native women basket weavers to their art, cultures, and communities. All of the women in my dissertation have been inspiring, strong, intelligent, and kind. They deserve acknowledgement not only for their ability to create beautiful baskets but also for showing an incredible amount of fortitude throughout their lives.

Chapter One
The Life and Work of Washoe Basket Weaver Dat So La Lee

Native American women from Nevada's Great Basin have always used basket weaving as a way to maintain a relationship with nature, their spirituality, basket weavers from other states, and their ancestors. However, anthropologists, such as Nelson Graburn and Marvin Cohodas, åhave proclaimed through their writings that contemporary Native American craftwork, like basketry, lacks any connection to tribal practices or ancestral teachings due to the changes that Native Americans had to make to their crafts to make them more appealing to American buyers.[1] These arguments encouraged a false view that Native basket weaving is merely a commodity available for purchase and not an extension of labor used by Native woman to economically provide for their families or an expression of their connection to their spiritual relationship with their people and environment. As a result of these conclusions, the indigenous identity of weavers and their works have become misconceived and their relationships suppressed by non-Indians who claim to be experts.[2]

To move away from these judgments, I have dedicated my scholarly work to demonstrate that a complete commodification of Native basketry from the Great Basin has never fully occurred. This is because Native American women from this region have continually used their tribal traditions to create their pieces despite the many challenges

[1] Nelson Graburn, "Art and Accultrative Processes," *International Social Science Journal: Social Science in the Third World* 21(1969): 457-471, 457.

[2] It should be noted that Marvin Cohodas' work about Dat So La Lee has at times stated that she used her intelligence to transform her basketry so that she could earn a living. However, a majority of his work discusses the Cohn's and their treatment of Dat So La Lee. My work builds off of Cohodas' to demonstrate how she ensured the survival of Washoe culture and tradition.

they have faced as a result of American colonization. For example, despite basket weaving traditions becoming endangered in the nineteenth century as a result of attempted forced assimilation, Native women consistently used ancestral practices to create baskets that they eventually sold to tourists/patrons to ensure economic survival for themselves and their families.

To demonstrate the relationship between basketry, survival, and identity the presented work will examine the life of Washoe basket weaver Dat-So-La-Lee, who experienced life before white encroachment and settlement of her region, as well as the hardships that her people endured as a result of this infringement. To prove these themes, this chapter examines Washoe livelihood before the arrival of Americans and the lessons that Dat-So-La-Lee learned while living with her people as a young woman. A discussion of how Dat-So-La-Lee's life changed with the arrival of American settlers will provide a way to understand how/why she eventually decided to find work at a curio store owned by Jewish patrons, Abe and Amy Cohen, in Carson City, Nevada, in 1895. While working for the Cohens, Dat So La Lee's life exemplified how she never honestly let go of her heritage but used it as she chose to develop different forms of basket weaving techniques. The wages the Cohns paid Dat So La Lee helped her conserve her tribal traditions and not abandon them. This is because rather than discarding her traditions in light of a capitalist economy, Dat So La Lee turned basket weaving, a once subsistence activity, into a commercial endeavor that allowed her to continue to exercise her

sovereignty in the midst of state colonialism.[3] For example, by creating baskets for Nevada's tourist industry, Dat So La Lee economically provided for her family and continued the tradition of teaching other Washoe community members about how making baskets is tied to important tribal traditions such as honoring the ancestors, respecting Mother Earth, and use of prayers.

As a whole, Dat-So-La-Lee's story illustrates how one Native woman used her intelligence to provide a way for her family to survive in a new American economy during the nineteenth century and offers a glimpse into the way Native women have persistently asserted their agency/identities through the art of basket weaving.

Traditional Washoe lands are located on the western edge of the Great Basin, near *Da ow aga* (Lake Tahoe).[4] Washoe people typically lived in the series of valleys found near the eastern foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, where the people hunted, gathered, and fished.[5] By carefully planning their movements in conjunction to the changing of the seasons, they avoided conflict with neighboring tribes and obtained the plants and/or

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[3] Chantal Norrgard, *Seasons of Change: Labor, Treaty Rights, and Ojibwe Nationhood* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 14. Conclusions about Native Americans embracing wage labor are based off of scholarly work conducted by Chantal Marie Norrgard, Paige Raibmon, Colleen O'Neil, and Brian Hosmer. All authors have discussed how the integration into a capitalist economy did not result in Native American traditions becoming lost or unused. Instead, "wage labor facilitated cultural production and community among Native peoples rather than a loss of identity. Rather than discarding their traditions, American Indians integrated new forms of labor into the social, political, and economic structures in place in their communities in ways that enabled their survival." Such arguments have never been applied to Native American basket weavers because their work is seen as more of a craft than as a type of labor. For more please see: Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), Brian Hosmer and Colleen O'Neil, *Native Pathways: American Indian Culture and Economic Development in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2004).

[4] Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, *Wa She Shu: "The Washoe People" Past and Present* (Hot Springs, Arkansas: Manataka Publications, 2009), 5.

[5] James Downs, *The Two Worlds of the Washo: An Indian Tribe of California and Nevada* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 4.

animals they needed to survive. For example, in *Am suk* (Spring) the Washoe collected bulb plants (nutritional roots), and traveled to Lake Tahoe to fish.[6] *O'osh* (Fall) meant the tribe focused on harvesting plants that supplied them with food throughout the winter, the most important of this harvest being pine-nuts and acorns stored in "caves, rock structures, and pits lined with stones or grass."[7] *Galais* (Winter) warranted distinct attention because of the harshness of the Great Basin winters. During this time, they gathered little food and as a result, families relied on what they had stored earlier in the year.[8] Basketry and weaving proved to be a much-needed resource during the winter because of the way Washoe women tightly wove baskets for cooking and holding water. Also, women loosely coiled basket pieces to sift seeds and nuts.[9] Women collected weaving materials, such as *Himu* (willow) and fern roots, throughout the year and "each basket maker created unique designs into their baskets."[10] "Some designs were passed from generation to generation and held symbols of traditional stories. Others were unique to each basket maker and could not be copied."[11]

No matter the season, the welcoming of a newborn baby required a huge celebration, with women creating unique cradleboards and other basket pieces in which to carry children. For example upon their child's arrival, parents placed their baby in an oval-shaped basket so that the tribe could sing and dance around him/her to ensure future

[6] Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California: *Wa She Shu: "The Washoe People" Past and Present*, 14. Washoe words are italicized when they first appear in the paper because they are not commonly known in English.
[7] Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California: *Wa She Shu: "The Washoe People" Past and Present,* 19.
[8] Ibid., 21.
[9] Ibid., 22.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 22-23.

blessing.[12] In 1835, this ritual welcomed Dat-So-La-Lee to the world.[13] Not much about her early life is known, but young Washoe girls like Dat-So-La-Lee learned to help their mothers, as well as other women of the tribe, gather berries, roots, seeds, and pine nuts.[14] When winter approached, girls gathered plant materials with these same women and sat with them as they wove the baskets that helped their families store and cook food during the cold weather.[15] Taking these lessons to heart, sources indicate that Dat-So-La-Lee "quickly learned how to make baskets. She split stalks from branches of the willow tree and formed them into a circle. She then sewed the coils together with thread. The thread came from the inner bark of willow stalks. Her mother and other women taught her how to make designs on baskets. She learned so quickly and wove so well that people said she had magic in her fingers."[16] While weaving her elders taught her how she must "be in the right mood when weaving because a basket is considered an extension of the spirit. A basket woven with happy thoughts might bring good luck, while a basket woven while angry might bring bad luck."[17] Dat So La Lee also learned to embrace the visions her ancestors communicated to her. These visions would guide her in life and help her decide what baskets she should create next.[18]

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Gayle Ross, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Artisan* (Morristown, New Jersey: Modern Curriculum Press, 1995), 2. Dat So La Lee's birth name was Dabuda. However the Cohn's gave her the name Dat So La Lee when she began to work for them. All of my research identifies her by this name and as such this is how I will identify her in this chapter.
[14] Dixie Westergard, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Washo Indian Basketmaker* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999), 7.
[15] Ross, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Artisan,* 6.
[16] *Ibid.*, 8.
[17] Westergard, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Washo Indian Basketmaker,* 15.
[18] Ibid, 19.

As she entered adolescence, all young Washoe women participated in a puberty ceremony that welcomed her into womanhood. No doubt, Dat So La Lee experienced this coming of age ceremony. During this four-day observance, she fasted and "if she broke the fast, the ancestors would make her go hungry later in life. But, if she fasted well, she would have the strength to gather food and enjoy a long life."[19] On the last night of this ritual, Dat-So-La-Lee and a relative climbed to the top of Job's Peak, located in Nevada's Carson Valley, and built four fires that they danced around for one night. In the morning, her grandmother blessed her and gave her a ritual bath with a water basket, which symbolized that from that moment on, Dat-So-La-Lee was a carrier of life for her family and people.[20] Thrown into a crowd of waiting Washoe community members, the water basket welcomed her home as a woman.[21]

Dat-So-La-Lee never stopped learning from her elders and as such became an expert at identifying vegetation that could be used to make baskets or that could help sustain her family's diet. Dat-So-La-Lee also learned that her society did not solely rely on either men or women to provide for their family's necessities. Both women and men gathered materials that kept their families alive since no single resource within the Great Basin could provide enough resources to survive for an entire year.[22] Hence if a drought meant that fishing proved to be hard for men, women focused on gathering as many nuts or roots as possible. If berries or nuts became scarce due to a lack of rain, women learned

[19] Ibid, 14.
[20] Marvin Cohodas, *Degikup: Washoe Fancy Baskets* (Vancouver, British Columbia: The Fine Arts Gallery of the University of British Columbia, 1979), 11.
[21] Ibid.
[22] James Downs, *The Two Worlds of the Washo: An Indian Tribe of California and Nevada* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 37.

how to hunt alongside men. No matter the unpredictability of the environment, women always paid attention to their surroundings to look for plant material that could be used for weaving baskets since these pieces helped families carry all of their belongings and the food they needed survive. Although "few rules of Washoe life were so rigid as to resist the demands of subsistence," basket weaving proved to be one of the primary resources that the Washoe relied on to help maintain their livelihood, which often meant that women like Dat-So-La-Lee had to be observant and adaptive in securing basket resources at a moments' notice.[23] This adaptability did not change once white people began to infiltrate her people's land in the Great Basin.

In 1849 Americans passed through the Sierra Nevada Mountains to reach the unearthed California gold mines in the Sacramento Valley.[24] With little regard for the rights that the Washoe had over their ancestral territory, white miners, settlers, and immigrants began to infiltrate the Great Basin and build homes around significant Washoe resources, especially water. In fact, as these groups began to settle around Lake Tahoe, they denied Washoes' access to the spawning streams that had provided their people with fish for generations.[25] At the same time, the introduction of ranching and farming activity in the valleys depleted plant materials, as well as drove away many of the animals that the Washoe relied on for food, fur, and other supplies.[26]

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Basketry" *American Indian Basketry Magazine,* July 1983, 30.
[25] Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," in *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution,* ed. Edwin Wade (New York, NY: Hudson Hills Press, Inc., 1986), 206.
[26] Ibid.

By 1851 white settlers created year-round trading posts in the heart of Washoe territory due to the discovery of silver known as the Comstock Lode.[27] "In 1859, Indian agent Frederick Dodge suggested removing the Washoe to two reservations, one at Pyramid Lake, and another at Walker Lake."[28] However, since the Washoe had to share these reservations with Paiute tribes, who they often fought with, the Washoe rigorously resisted forced relocation. In fact, the tribe frequently requested through Indian agents to have a separate reservation created on portions of their traditional lands, but the United States government refused all of their appeals.[29] Eventually, hope for a Washoe reservation faded when the Virginia and Truckee Railroad began construction in 1868 to serve the workers at the silver mines.[30] This railroad initially covered twenty-one miles from Virginia City to Carson City but expanded in 1872 to include a connection to Reno and the Central Pacific Railroad.[31]

During this tumultuous time, Dat-So-La-Lee had been forced to find work with her husband Assu as a ranch hand in Carson City, Nevada.[32] However, after a few years in Carson City Assu, as well as their two children, died within a few years of each other as a result of the diseases introduced to the Washoe by white settlers.[33] Subsequently, Dat-So-La-Lee left Carson City for Monitor, California, and found work at a general

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[27] Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California Washoe History, *Wa She Shu: "The Washoe People" Past and Present,* 26.
[28] Ibid.,27.
[29] Jerome Edwards, "Virginia and Truckee Railroad," *Online Nevada Encyclopedia: A Publication of Nevada Humanities,* last modified March 18, 2009, http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/virginia-and-truckee-railroad.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ross, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Artisan,*13.
[33] Westergard, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Washo Indian Basketmaker*, 20.

store owned by Harris Cohn, the father of her future employer Abe Cohen.[34] After a few years, she left this job and eventually married a mixed blood ranch worker named Charley Keyser.[35] In her sixties in 1895, Dat-So-La-Lee traveled back to Carson City to sell a series of miniature baskets to Abe Cohen. The trader and his wife, Amy, had reconfigured his father's shop into a curio store.[36]

Not much about Dat So La Lee's basket weaving is known as she worked as a ranch hand or servant. The creation of the Virginia/Truckee railroad significantly altered the way white immigrants regarded Native crafts. In fact, as travelers frequented this route, aspects of Washoe culture such as weapons, utensils, and baskets began to be considered a distinctive art form that provided settlers/immigrants with a "new understanding of the value of well-crafted, useful handicrafts, [constructed by] indigenous traditions."[37] This trend became known as the "Indian Craze," where "audiences assessed Native handicrafts alongside modern commodities and modernists' works of art, enhancing the modernity of these supposedly primitive objects."[38] Tourist demand for Native crafts, especially basketry, resulted in artisans creating pieces that appealed to their customer's tastes. However, requests for an "authentic" Native basket

[34] Scholars question if Dat So La Lee knew Abe as a boy or if the story was fabricated by Amy Cohn to show buyers the "loving" relationship the Cohn's had with Dat So La Lee. I was not able to find any information that verified or discredited the story of Dat So La Lee knowing Abe Cohn as a boy. However, I did learn that that during white settlement in her ancestral territory, Dat So La Lee did travel to Northern California and Eastern Nevada to find work. She continued to travel for work until she 1895 when she sold a basket piece to Abe Cohn.
[35] Charley Keyser gave Dat-So-La-Lee the name Louisa Keyser. However, she never used this name pubic or when she sold her baskets.
[36] Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Basketry" *American Indian Basketry Magazine*, 31.
[37] Elizabeth Hutchinson, *Indian Craze*: *Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 4.
[38] Ibid.

did not mean that weavers ceased creating baskets in accordance with the old ways.[39] Instead, tourism provided an opportunity for weavers to invigorate their identity and culture.[40] For example, tourism provided economic stability to many basket weavers, which allowed them to travel off of reservations to reconnect with family, their homelands, and other Native people.[41] Dat-So-La-Lee must have recognized the importance Americans began to place on owning unique basket pieces and the income she could garner when she attempted to sell her baskets to Abe Cohen in 1895. This sense of awareness demonstrates how Dat-So-La-Lee used the lessons she learned as a child, such as always paying attention to her environment and making adaptations, if necessary, to ensure the survival of her family. Dat-So-La-Lee's profoundly entrenched heritage also sheds light on how she was able to assert her sovereignty as she began to work as a commissioned basket weaver for Abe and Amy Cohen's store.

Upon Dat-So-La-Lee's acceptance to exclusively produce basket pieces for his store, Abe Cohen bought her and Charley a small home in Carson City and paid for all of their necessities.[42] This arrangement lasted for the next thirty years and resulted in Dat-So-La-Lee becoming known as the "Queen of the Washoe Basketmakers."[43] Dat-So-La-

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[39] Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 120. As Leah Dilworth argues, it is important that exchange between tourists and Native Americans did not produce mutual communication. "As Indian made objects, or representations of Indians, traveled out from the region, they became benign sources of knowledge, valuable but not destructive or threatening. Removed from the site of the touristic encounter and taken home, souvenirs became objects loaded with meaning, and sources for narratives of the region." Overall the buying, collecting and displaying of Native goods in American homes or stores created a standard of what "authentic" Native crafts should look like.
[40] Chantal Norrgard, *Seasons of Change*, 112.
[41] Ibid., 125.
[42] Ibid., 29.
[43] Ross, *Dat-So-La-Lee: Artisan*, 25.

Lee's popularity grew as a result of a marketing campaign facilitated by Amy Cohen, who invented many stories about Dat-So-La-Lee's background, and the designs she incorporated in the formation of her baskets, to appeal to customer's taste for authentic Indian curios.[44] The pressure that the Cohen's kept putting on Dat-So-La-Lee to make "authentic" pieces, eventually led her to invent a unique version of the *degikup*, also known as Washoe fancy baskets.[45]

Degikups are nearly spherical baskets that are sometimes miniature in stature. These baskets had been used by the Washoe before American settlement in burial ceremonies but did not initially appeal to American buyers during the "Indian Craze" because of their lack of aesthetically pleasing designs.[46] To change this perception of the *degikup*, Dat-So-La-Lee adopted popular Pomo, a Native society from California, designs, as well as a unique "color scheme based on the contrasting colors of black (mud-dyed bracken fern root) and red (redbud branch)" when creating the pieces she made for the Cohen's.[47] She constructed each of these pieces by using her teeth and fingernails, as well as "broken glass fragments and an old knife to weave perfect stitches with hands which measured only five inches to the tip of her middle finger."[48]

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[44] Cohodas, "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," 208. When *degikups* grew in popularity amongst American tourist, Amy expanded Dat So La Lee's reputation and clientele by taking her to display "her weaving skills at Tahoe City than at the California State Fair in Sacramento, and finally the Nevada State Fair in Reno."[44] In 1903, Amy took advantage of the summer tourist industry at Lake Tahoe and created a curio shop, the *Bicose* in Tahoe City.[44] Dat So La Lee spent every summer at the *Bicose* with Amy and would weave outdoors to attract customers.[44] Unfortunately Amy died in 1919, which resulted in Abe closing the *Bicose*. However, he continued to commission basket pieces from Dat So La Lee for the emporium in Carson City until her death in 1925.

[45] Ibid, 207.

[46] Cohodas, *Degikup: Washoe Fancy Basketry 1895-1935,* 11.

[47] Cohodas, "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," 207.

[48] Pamela Galloway, "Stewart Monument to Commemorate Indian Basketweaver," Reno Gazette-Journal (Reno, NV), October 26, 1974.

Figure 1.1. Degikup Basket, Dat-So-La-Lee. Carson City, Nevada, 1912-1913. Willow, western redbud, and bracken fern root. Collection of Jane and Gerald Katcher, photo by Gavin Ashworth.

Overall, the manufacturing of a new form of *degikup* led the Cohen's in becoming wealthy individuals and as being praised by their buyers/admirers for providing Dat-So-La-Lee with the incentive to create a "high quality and economically viable ware by 1910."[49] This admiration for the Cohen's has resulted in Dat-So-La-Lee not being acknowledged for how she actively participated in decisions that advanced her career. Case in point is how Dat-So-La-Lee had adopted California tribal basket weaving methods and designs to make *degikups* more appealing to American buyers.[50] While anthropologist Marvin Cohodas has acknowledged "the transformation of Washoe basketry into a celebrated curio style is due largely to Dat So La Lee's innovations in designs," he credits these changes as only being possible because of Dat So La Lee's exposure to Pomo baskets that the Cohn's owned.[51] However, Dat So La Lee's ability to familiarize herself with buyer's demands could have also stemmed from the lessons she learned as a child, such as paying attention to the changing of the environment/vegetation and learning from other tribal members. In the case of *degikups,* Dat So La Lee probably noticed the types of designs that appealed to tourists/buyers as they traveled along the

[49] Ibid.
[50] Cohodas, *Degikup: Washoe Fancy Basketry 1895-1935,* 15.
[51] Marvin Cohodas, "History and Art in Washoe Fancy Basket Weaving," in *Tahoe: A Visual History,* ed. Anne Wolfe and Kevin Starr (New York, NY: Skira Rizzoli, 2015), 95.

Virginia/Truckee Railroad and visited the trading stations/shops that sold Native goods. These observations then led her to decide how to transform a traditional *degikup* and what techniques could be utilized to make it a profitable item. Hence to suggest that the Cohen's had been purely responsible for Dat So La Lee inventing the new form of *degikup*, is to deny her agency and intelligence.

The names given to *degikups* before they were sold also require attention.[52] Cohen researchers, like Marvin Cohodas, have claimed that Amy invented many of the names and stories associated with these pieces. These stories not only made Dat So La Lee's pieces appear "authentic" but also solidified the belief that Dat So La Lee's *degikups* did not hold any significance to her heritage, especially when considering how she used California tribal designs to make her baskets more likable.[53] This argument is cumbersome considering how various designs/motifs, like arrows, triangles, diagonal lines, or animal prints, reiterate important stories about Washoe ancestral culture. Many of Dat-So-La-Lee's pieces have these traditional symbols incorporated into them, and therefore she could have communicated to Amy Cohen about what name she wanted her

[52] Cohodas, "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," 208.
[53] Research about Amy Cohn's marketing abilities and fabricated stories has already been heavily researched and analyzed. I did not feel compelled to repeat this research in my report. For more information please see: Marvin Cohodas, *Degikup: Washoe Fancy Baskets* (Vancouver, British Columbia: The Fine Arts Gallery of the University of British Columbia, 1979), Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Basketry" *American Indian Basketry Magazine,* July 1983, Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," in *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution,* ed. Edwin Wade (New York, NY: Hudson Hills Press, Inc., 1986), Marvin Cohodas, "History and Art in Washoe Fancy Basket Weaving," in *Tahoe: A Visual History,* ed. Anne Wolfe and Kevin Starr (New York, NY: Skira Rizzoli, 2015), Marvin Cohodas, "Louisa Keyser and the Cohns: Making and Basket Making in the American West," in *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting,* ed. Janet Catherine Berlo (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Basketweaving: A Historical Outline," in *The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Legacy,* ed. Frank W. Porter (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1990).

baskets pieces to have. However, in writings about her life, Dat-So-La-Lee's intellect has often been limited to her weaving abilities and not in her aptitude in making conscious decisions that allowed her heritage to prosper. By denouncing any of her traditional precedents, anthropologists and other scholars have made it so that Dat-So-La-Lee's basketry is seen only as an art form and that she owes her success to the Cohen's generosity. Interested audiences deserve to know that Dat-So-La-Lee had been a strong Native woman who had been proud of her culture and smart enough to use her talents to adapt to an American economic market. Dat So La Lee demonstrated her strength, intelligence, and pride by teaching other Native weavers how to mimic her weaving style and by not always listening to the Cohn's demands.

As the *degikup* grew in popularity in Carson City, Amy Cohn "wished to expand upon Dat So La Lee's reputation and clientele by taking her to display her weaving skills at Tahoe City, then at the California State Fair in Sacramento, and finally the Nevada State Fair in Reno."[54] In the summer of 1903, Amy decided to take advantage of the growing tourist industry in Lake Tahoe and set up "a specialized curio shop, called the *Bicose*, in Tahoe City."[55] To attract the attention of tourists, Dat So La Lee often wove outside of the *Bicose.* Often her friends stopped by the store, or her home, to watch and learn. These friends included her sister in law Ceese, Minnie Dick, and Tootsie Dick. Through Dat So La Lee's guidance, Minnie Dick eventually became of the most talented and influential basket weavers in eastern Nevada. Dat So La Lee, along with Minnie, also

[54] Marvin Cohodas, "History and Art in Washoe Fancy Basket Weaving," 84.
[55] Ibid. *Bicose* is the Washoe word for baby carrier.

taught Tootsie Dick how to create desirable basket pieces. Being Tootsie's great aunt, Dat So La Lee appears to have "helped market Tootsie's work at an early stage in her career, around 1910, and works of the two artists are generally found together in collections of not sold through the Cohn's Emporium."[56] The Cohn's eventually admired Tootsie's baskets and started to consider her to be the most exceptional basket weaver after Dat So La Lee.[57]

By teaching her friends how to create profitable *degikups*, Dat So La Lee preserved the Washoe ancestral tradition of an elder passing on knowledge about basket weaving from one generation to the next. Dat So La Lee did not let the work she had to do for the Cohn's interfere with these lessons. Instead, she utilized some of this time to teach her friends about the techniques she used that made her successful. By passing on these teachings and marketing particular basket pieces, Dat So La Lee ensured that her family and friends would be able to survive in American society. As such, she continued to demonstrate how basketry continued to be an integral part of Washoe livelihood and endurance. Furthermore, by taking time out of her work schedule to guide her friends in creating their masterpieces, Dat So La Lee proved she did not abandon her cultural teachings in the face of a capitalist economy. Instead, she adapted to her surroundings and used her intelligence to lay a path for her culture and people's survival. Her persistence to educate others and acclimatize proves that Washoe basket weaving has always been much more than an art form. It is also a means of hope and continuity. Dat

[56] Marvin Cohodas, "Washoe Basketweaving: A Historical Outline," in *The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Legacy*, ed. Frank Porter (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1990), 167.
[57] Ibid., 168.

So La Lee also expressed her sovereignty by outwardly showing her frustration with the Cohns' and by refusing to finish basket pieces according to their deadlines.

Local newspapers often reported on Dat So La Lee's clashes with the Abe Cohn. In a 1911 article from the Carson City News, Dat So La Lee was said to have given Abe Cohn "a tongue lashing." She seemingly lectured Abe "on the ways of the white people and the way she was abused. Cohn saved himself from the tirade by handing the buxom lady a half dollar and vanishing out the back door of his store."[58] On another occasion, while traveling back home from St. Louis with Abe, Dat So La Lee reportedly grew tired of the train ride and decided to walk home from Kansas.[59] While it is unknown if Dat So La Lee walked back to Nevada, this story solidified the belief, among tourists and buyers, that Dat So La Lee had a childish personality. The Cohns took advantage of the publicity surrounding Dat So La Lee's outburst to garner more attention for their emporium by putting her on display and by poking fun at the marriage-like relationship she had with Abe Cohn.[60]

Although these records reveal how the Cohns further took advantage of their patron, they also disclose that Dat So La Lee did not willingly forfeit her freedom as a Washoe woman. Instead, she made her frustrations known and spoke her mind when necessary. She was intelligent enough to know that the Cohn's saw her as an investment and knew that they depended on her baskets to sustain their livelihood. Accordingly, she

[58] Marvin Cohodas, "Louisa Keyser and the Cohns: Myth Making and Basket Making in the American West," in *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting,* ed. Janet Catherine Berlo (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 118.
[59] Ibid., 119.
[60] Ibid., 121.

outwardly displayed her emotions knowing she would face little to no ramifications. Instead, Abe Cohn "may well have encouraged her to be childish and manipulative if that was the only way he would deal with her needs."[61] What would make the Cohn's frustrated was when Dat So La Lee stopped weaving the large basket pieces that made her famous, to make miniature pieces.[62] While Abe could sell these small baskets more quickly than her larger ones, he believed that Dat So La Lee performed this practice because of a lack of motivation and encouragement. Also, Abe more than likely believed that she did not recognize the importance of finishing her bigger pieces for the emporium.

The more logical reason for her not completing her pieces is because of the lessons she learned as a child about not weaving if you are not feeling well or if your emotions are getting the best of you. The larger baskets took a lot of time and emotion for Dat So La Lee to finish. Accordingly, Dat So La Lee did not let the Cohn's push her to do what she did not want to do. She stood her ground and remained firm in her methods. It is possible she knew that not promptly finishing a large basket would frustrate the Cohn's and she used this action as a way to maintain her independence. No matter the reason, Dat So La Lee remained steadfast in her Washoe beliefs and maintained that strength in the face different circumstances. In fact, she remained so faithful to her heritage that when she passed away in 1925, she was buried with an unfinished basket. According to Washoe traditions, after a person dies all of their belongings should either be buried with them or burned.[63] After the burial "a rainstorm would come and wipe

[61] Ibid., 120.
[62] Ibid., 104
[63] Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California History, *Wa She Shu: "The Washoe People" Past and Present,* 12.

away all of the tracks [of that person] to return everything to the way the Maker intended it to be."[64] If a rainstorm did transpire after Dat-So-La Lee left the physical world, obviously not everything about her life has been erased. Her spirit, strength, and resiliency have continued to live on in a myriad of ways.

Since her death, admirers of Dat So La Lee's work have called upon her legacy to teach about the history of the Great Basin. One such example occurred in fall 1953, when the committee for Nevada's ninetieth celebration of statehood, asked actress Veronika Pataky to direct a play called "Dat-So-La-Lee." The production consisted of twenty different roles, filled by Washoe women/women, and was about Dat So La Lee's life. According to the play's writer, "It was my thought that by telling the story of the great basket weaver we would also be telling the story of the Nevada Indians and of the great change which came over the Indian's existence following the discovery of the Comstock Lode."[65] According to the *Nevada State Journal,* more than 3,000 people attended the play and was a success.

Unfortunately, no pictures or videos of the performance are readily available. Nevertheless, newspaper coverage of the performance proves Dat So La Lee had been a beloved fixture within Nevada and that non-Natives found her life to be inspirational. They also believed that since Dat So La Lee's basketwork made Eastern Nevada a famous place for tourists, that the play was to show their appreciation for her. There is no information about if the production paid the any participating Washoe men and women.

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Basil Woon, "Dat-So-La-Lee Will be Major Production," *Nevada State Journal* (Reno, NV), September 23, 1953.

However, since it is Washoe tradition to not represent or speak of anyone who has passed on, some incentive must have existed for participation. If this is the case, then even the memory of Dat So La Lee's provided a way for her community to survive.

Another way Dat So La Lee's legacy has lived on is through the dedication of a monument in her name at the Stewart Indian School in Carson City. There have also been many museum exhibitions devoted to her basketwork. One of the most famous displays is at the Nevada Historical Society in Reno, Nevada. Three baskets shown were stolen from this facility in 1979 and not recovered until 1999. According to the Reno Gazette-Journal, an "FBI agent took possession of the stolen baskets from an owner who bought them without realizing they were stolen." At the time, these three pieces were valued worth $900,000. Thieves have often stolen Native American baskets because of how much they can earn by selling them at half of their actual value. However, these same "sellers" also know that buyers are willing to buy Dat So La Lee's pieces at almost any price because her work reflects prodigious talent. Given this understanding, the perseverance that Dat So La Lee exemplified during her life once again becomes erased. She is once again only remembered for her monetary value and not for all of the beautiful things that she accomplished for her community. When visiting the Nevada Historical Society today, a panel does acknowledge her adaptation of the *degikup* and how basket weaving proved to be a survival skill for many Washoe women. However, how these baskets ensured the survival of Washoe culture is hardly mentioned. Visitors therefore only stare at her pieces and do not recognize the value of Dat So La Lee's personal beauty and strength.

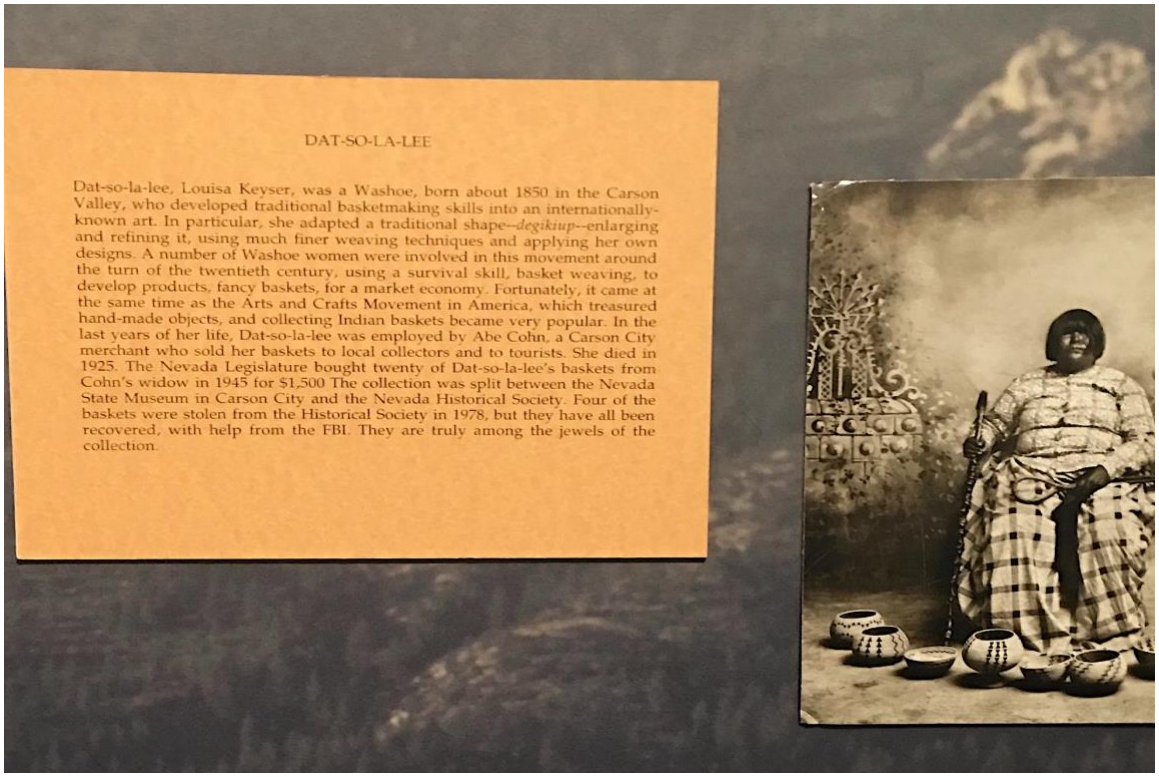

Figure 1.2: Panel for Dat So La Lee basket Exhibition at Nevada Historical Society. March 23, 2016. Author's photo.

Figure 1.3. Display of Dat So La Lee's basket pieces. Nevada Historical Society. Reno, Nevada. March 23, 2016. Author's photo.

Unfortunately, the public has not been able to appreciate Dat So La Lee's attractiveness because of how her admirers have her degraded physical appearance since the 1900's. During this time, she was often described as a "fat and course-feathered, and with long and straight hair hanging to her waist and banged across her forehead, nearly covering her beady black eyes, she certainly has few marks of beauty."[66] A sculpture of

[66] Marvin Cohodas, "Louisa Keyser and the Cohns: Myth Making and Basket Making in the American West," 116.

Dat So La Lee at the Legends Outlet Mall in Sparks, Nevada proves that the characterizations of her appearance have survived into present today society.

As shoppers peruse the outlet mall, several images of famous men and women who have contributed to Nevada's history confront them. Small fountains where children can play on hot days surround the statue of Mark Twain, who was a reporter for Virginia City's newspaper called the *Territorial Enterprise* and wrote the story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" based on his time in the American West. There are also separate art installations dedicated to Nevada's natural landscape and gold and silver miners. Mixed in with these monuments is the statue of Dat So La Lee with a plaque that reads:

> Washoe Indian artist Dat So La Lee made her living as a laundress and cook for miners and their families. Her birth name, Dabuda, means Young Willow. At age 45, Dat So La Lee began weaving baskets out of willow, a several thousand-year-old tradition she learned as a girl. Merchandisers Abe and Amy Cohn recognized the artistry of Dat So La Lee's work. In exchange for her baskets, they provided a comfortable life for the artist and her husband.

As one looks from the plaque to the statue, they look upon a woman whose body is made up of two large *degikup* baskets, wide arms, prominent hands, and a stern face. Looking at this figurine for any amount of time proves that Dat So La Lee's legacy has become reduced to just her artistic ability. Although the inscription suggests that the Cohn's gave Dat So La Lee economic stability, nothing highlights how she woven baskets for years before white contact or how she transformed her skills to create a new form of basketry that enabled her to keep her family and Washoe traditions alive. By ignoring these critical traits of Dat So La Lee's life, no one realizes the significant contributions she made to today's basket weaving community and how she never stopped honoring the life that had

existed before settlers infiltrated Washoe territory. Dat So La Lee was a survivor, but instead of being honored as one, she has been consistently ridiculed for her appearance and attitude. Hopefully, this article will make people look beyond Dat So La Lee's physicality and focus on her life, diligence, and fortitude.

Figure 1.4. Figurine of Dat So La Lee at the Legends Outlet Mall. Sparks, Nevada. August 28, 2017. Author's photo.

Figure 1.5. Bust of Dat So La Lee at Legends Outlet Mall. Sparks, Nevada. Legends Outlet Mall. Sparks, Nevada. August 28, 2017. Author's photo.

Figure 1.6. Plaque honoring Dat So La Lee. Legends Outlet Mall. Sparks, Nevada. August 28, 2017. Author's photo.

By the time Dat So La Lee died in 1925, she had woven over three hundred baskets for the Cohn's while simultaneously maintaining her people's ancestral values. She used the lessons she learned as a young girl and from her travels to Northern California as an adult to create popular *degikups.* She also honored her ancestral traditions by not weaving when not emotionally ready, by passing on her knowledge to other Washoe people, and acting out in ways that made sure the Cohn's respected her. Dat So La Lee has been memorialized in many ways, but very few of these remembrances discuss the strength and perseverance she exerted as a Native woman. She used her individual agency to maintain her identity and to express her sovereignty. Of course, she embraced parts of American culture, but she only did so to provide for her family. She recognized the importance that tourist placed on basket pieces and

transformed her weaving to reflect those desires. She knew how to be successful and her value. Overall her lessons and teachings still exist today.

Many Native basket weavers look at her pieces to learn how to make their own and how to pass on their knowledge to future generations. Annually, the Washoe people have an annual gathering called *Wa She It' Deh* at Lake Tahoe where the tribe not only meets to sing, dance, and tell stories but where they also show an appreciation for their past by honoring contemporary artisans, including basket weavers. Whether through the artisan market or a basket weaving competition, the Washoe people continue to honor their past and use their traditions to make money for their people. They continue to adapt to maintain their rights in America. In many ways, Data So La Lee was one of the first Washoe women to lay the groundwork for this ceremony. She deserves to be credited with these accomplishments and should be talked about in ways that not only reflect her basketry, but the role her has had in sustaining Washoe cultural traditions and agency.

Chapter Two: Pomo Sage, Elsie Allen

Before passing away in 1962, acclaimed Pomo basket weaver Annie Comanche (Burke) made her daughter Elsie Allen promise not to bury any of her baskets with her. Comanche contended that doing so would mean that Allen would not have anything to refer to when teaching future Pomo children, and family members, about the beauty and history of this craft. However, according to Pomo tradition, when a tribal member passes away they are to be cremated with all of their possessions.[1] "The dead could only find their new lives by being freed from their earthly existence. Materials associated with the deceased were destroyed so the dead would not long for them and return to seek them out."[2] No one followed this edict more strictly than basket weavers. Allen understood the consequences in fulfilling her mother's request, yet she also realized the threat to ancestral Pomo basket weaving if she buried her mother's pieces/materials. Therefore, Allen fulfilled her mother's wish.

Although faced with a considerable amount of criticism from her community, many of whom believed that Allen should just let the old ways die, she refused to back down. Instead, Allen taught courses to Native and non-Native women interested in basket weaving and guided them in understanding their role as environmentalist and cultural carriers. She also traveled throughout the United States as a consultant to museums to

[1] Vera-Mae Fredrickson, *Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: the People of Lake Sonoma* (Sacramento, CA: United States Army Corps of Engineers, 1985), 26.
[2] Ibid.

understand the Native American basketry in their collections better. Most importantly, Allen taught about the power and agency Pomo women always have expressed.

Elsie Allen's life and work also exemplifies how Pomo basket weaving has always been an essential part of Pomo survival and as a way for Pomo women to express their sovereignty. A description of Pomo society before the arrival of European and American settlers proves these claims by detailing how basket weaving has always been synonymous with Pomo creation stories, religious ceremonies, and persistence. Unfortunately, when settlers began to infiltrate their homelands in the 17th century, Pomo livelihood changed. The hardships the Pomo community faced as a result of settler colonialism have to be acknowledged because they provide context for the generational trauma of Allen's elders. Their experiences attest to the strength of Pomo people. Finally, a detailed exploration of Allen's triumphs and tribulations reveals the love she had for her family, ancestors, and the environment.

Despite her death in 1990, Elsie Allen’s legacy continues. Many of her former students, including several family members, have taken it upon themselves to teach the next generation of Pomo weavers. Her students teach about how basketry is more than just an art form. It is a vital piece of Pomo culture, history, spirituality. None of this would have been possible if Allen did not follow through with her mother’s request. Allen’s decision has provided a way for her family to connect to their history and be proud of who they are. Accordingly, her determination was an extension of the lessons she learned as a young girl about putting family above all else and passing on tradition no matter the circumstances. Her resiliency warrants praise and honor.

Figure 2.1. Elsie Allen (left) and Annie Burke (right) at the Clubhouse Todd Grove Park, Ukiah, California, July 13, 1949. Courtesy, the Sonoma County Library.

Before settlement, the Pomo people belonged to over seventy politically independent groups, and village states; including the Yuki, the Wailaki, Concow, and Nomlaki.[3] "An estimated 11,500 to 21,000 people, now generally grouped under the name "Pomo," lived in what would become Mendocino, Sonoma, and Lake Counties."[4] Elsie Allen's family descended from the Makahmo community; later identified as the Cloverdale Pomo. "The hundred and fifty square miles of Makahmo territory was at the northern end of the Alexander Valley; today known for its many grape vineyards and

[3] Suzanne Abel-Vidor, *Remember Your Relations: the Elsie Allen Baskets, Family and Friends* (Ukiah, CA: Grace Hudson Museum, 1996), 13.
[4] Ibid.,13. "The name "Pomo" was first used by anthropologist Stephan Powers, whose studies of the California Indians from 1873-1876 were embodied in a most interesting volume of the United States Government Reports in 1876. Use of the word in designating a linguistic group rather than a tribe proper, and in that sense, it is now accepted by the best authorities."

wineries.[5] "Terrain varied from the gently sloping valley of the Russian River to the rugged Mayacamas Mountains in the region of the geysers."[6]

The family was and has remained, the heart of Makahmo society. The birth of a child was a special occasion. Afterward, mothers placed the baby into a traditional cradleboard. As children grew, they spent a majority of their time listening to coyote stories, tales of when animal people roamed the world.[7] Such stories also taught children about how to properly respect their elders and how to be responsible individuals.[8] As they reached puberty, children began to collect wood, food, and other supplies. Boys learned how to fish, hunt, and make the traditional homes their people lived in throughout the winter. Girls, on the other hand, studied how to coil or twine deer grass, bear grass, redbud, and sage to make sturdy burden baskets that held acorns, oats, and other items. They also wove water baskets as well as feathered baskets worn during sacred dances. Lastly, mothers taught their children the proper way to pray over their basket materials and to never take more than what they needed from Mother Earth. At young ages, girls learned how basketry encapsulated all aspects of Pomo livelihood, subsistence, and perseverance.

Basketry's role in Pomo creation stories is another reason why it is considered a sacred craft. According to a Yuki oral tradition:

Long ago, water covered the world. There was no land, no plants, and no people-only coyote. He watched as a down feather drifted from the sky and entered the water. The feather became sea foam and floated on the top of waves lapping around Coyote. Then the seam sprouted hands, teeth, eyes, a head, arms, legs, and eventually a whole person-

[5] Vera-Mae Fredrickson, *Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: the People of Lake Sonoma*, 11.
[6] Ibid., 11.
[7] Ibid.,16.
[8] Ibid., 14.

Taikômol', he who goes alone. Taikômol' taught his song to Coyote and then went about forming the world. Taikômol' took from out himself all that with which he would sew the earth, having already all the body of a person. And he made Coyote work for him as he was about to sew the earth. He tried (to make it) as it seemed of rushes, and raised himself on it with his elbow, but it was not strong. So, he sewed a coiled foundation. An awl to sew it with he took out of his own body and sang. So, he sewed floating on water. And then, Taikômol' trying to raise himself on it, it was a little loose. So now he told Coyote to go to bring the pitch which T'uina'ākin (a small bird) had where he lived. Ten Coyote going to where T'uina'ākin lived, and arriving there, asked him, "For that which he will sew the earth, Taikômol' asks you for pitch," said Coyote. And T'uina'ākin, "Yes, our earth it is, ours it shall be," T'uina'ākin said and handed the pitch to Coyote. So, carrying it he came back, and gave it to Taikômol'. Then he now made the earth fast at its root. Thereupon he tried there to raise himself on the coiling. Now it was a little solid. Then he said, "Weiyei," and the earth spread out in all directions Coyote looking around at the high mountains surrounding the lush valley like the sides of an expertly made basket, and remarked, "Coyote is glad about the earth."[9]

One of the reasons this story is remarkable is because of its description of a basket forming the world. Its portrayal of the natural environment is also remarkable because of the way Makahmo firmly believed that nature, and its many resources, was a gift from their ancestors. They often showed gratitude for these offering by observing the changing seasons through religious ceremonies.

For example, spring ushered in warm weather and welcomed the growth of different plants, including "Indian potatoes." Before these plants could be eaten or collected, everyone in the community had to participate in a first fruits ceremony. During this ritual, a religious leader blessed the plants. Dancing and feasting followed the ceremony. Also, of significance was the way women became responsible for digging

[9] William J. Bauer Jr., *We were all like Migrant Workers Here*: *Work, Community, and Memory on California's Round Valley Reservation, 1850-1941* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of Carolina Press, 2009), 13. Account taken from two Yuki oral traditions from Ralph Moore and Diddle. Passed on to anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, in "Yuki Myths." *Anthropos* 27: 906-112.

plants and for maintaining the land that surrounded these resources. To aerate the soil, women dug out mature bulbs so that smaller bulbs could grow. This maintenance helped ensure that the plants would yield a successful crop the following year. Furthermore, spring was the time where willow roots became harvested and used in creating new basket pieces.

Summer was also a time for ceremony. Women prayed as they gathered wild grapes, blackberries, elderberries, manzanita berries, and tobacco. Lastly, summer proved to be the best time to hunt black-tailed deer and elk. Before going out on a hunt, men held "a prayer in which they used smoke to purify hunting utensils and to induce sweating, while an elder wiped off the sweat with bay leaves."[10] Sweating helped to remove men's scents and prevented animals from detecting him. "Scared songs and prayers were also part of the pre-hunt activities. Such songs and prayers were designed to make the hunter lucky and to remind the hunted of one of their purposes as set forth by the Creator: to provide sustenance for His human creations."[11]

During the fall, the essential harvest became acorns. Before being collected, the harvest was blessed and prayed over. Afterward, acorns were collected and placed in large granaries. Women also made mush out of the acorns, which could be stored in baskets and eaten during the long winter months. For the Makahmo, winter became known for a time of emotional, ceremonial, and spiritual renewal. Men and younger

[10] Ibid., 22.
[11] Vera-Mae Fredrickson, *Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: the People of Lake Sonoma*, 36.

males gathered in sweat houses, while older and younger women gathered in their homes to reiterate ancestral stories and traditions.[12]

Regrettably, all of these beautiful aspects of Pomo society started to unravel with the arrival of European settlers, traders, and merchants. The interaction the Pomo had with these altered their communities for generations. However, Pomo people continued to use the skills taught to them by their ancestors to ensure their people's survival. They also continued to repeat the stories associated with their creation, ceremonies, and environment for their children. Women never stopped teaching young girls how to weave basket pieces and as a result Pomo basketry continued to be a vital part of their culture.

"The first mercantile colony in California was founded by the Russian American Company, a commercial monopoly representing Russia's interests in the lucrative North Pacific fur trade."[13] In 1812, the company built Fort Ross at Bodega Bay to harvest sea otters and fur seal pelts, as well to raise crops and livestock for their Alaskan colonies.[14] The Russians recruited local Pomo and Miwok Indians to harvest sea otters, fur seals, and to work in the colonies' fields. In the beginning, Russians treated their new laborers amicably. However, by the late 1820's, the Russian commercial agenda changed as a result of the overhunting of sea otters. They steadily became more reliant on Native labor for agricultural production, and as a result, Russian merchants began to attack local Pomo villages to kidnap men, women, and children.[15] While at Fort Ross, kidnapped women

[12] Vera-Mae Fredrickson, *Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: the People of Lake Sonoma*, 47.
[13] Kent G. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 5.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 138-139.

were forced to work as sex workers, while children and older women worked in the fields. Men worked long tiresome hours and received little compensation. If one refused to comply with the wishes of their captures, they would be tortured and/or killed. Native communities did their best to resist their oppressors, yet by the time the Russians abandoned Fort Ross in 1842, their populations were severely devastated. Another reason for the decimation of their people included the establishment of the Spanish mission system throughout California.

"Missions had played a pivotal role in Spanish settlements in the Americas for more than two centuries with the Franciscans, a religious order within the Catholic Church, establishing missions in New Spain (including Mexico) in 1524."[16] In 1769, Spain began to establish missions to colonize territory north of Baja California to keep the region out of the hands of foreign competitors.[17] Under the direction of the first Father President, Junipero Serra, the Franciscans began to create missions in Alta California. The locations which directly affected Pomo communities, as well as other Northern California Native societies, included Mission San Rafael (1817) and Mission San Francisco Solano (1823).

The goal of each mission was to transform "the population of pagan Native Californians into a peasant class of Hispanicized laborers."[18] To accomplish this task, Franciscans indoctrinated Native people to the Catholic faith and did their best to make

[16] Ibid., 52. New Spain was a colonial territory of Spain and was established in 1521. Countries included in this territory include modern day Mexico, Central America, Florida, Central United States and the Philippines.
[17] Ibid., 51.
[18] Ibid., 59.

them abandon all aspects of their traditional ways of life. Accordingly, Native people were forced to learn how to grow agriculture, prepare food, and dress according to European standards. "the Padres employed a variety of coercive measure measures, including confinement, whippings, stocks, and leg chains, to punish neophytes for infractions against the work schedule and moral code."[19] In many ways, the missions resembled modern-day penal institutions in which every movement Native people made became monitored and corrected.[20] Due to these circumstances, as well as their exposure to European diseases such as smallpox and measles, Native life expectancy at each mission was low.

Despite these horrific realities, Native people continued to practice their ceremonies and traditions. Archeological excavations of various missions have unearthed artifacts, such as bone assemblages of beads, whistles, awls, bird bone tubes, as well as basketry impressions of water bottles and storage baskets.[21] At Mission San Luis Rey, excavators found an assortment of bone gambling sticks, pottery gaming disks, hundreds of shell and glass beads, tobacco pipes, and stone tools.[22] Obviously, Native people in missions did not only embrace the imposed system of the Franciscans but continued to use the same customs and practices that ensured their survival for centuries. Although they did not hesitate to embrace certain European foods, like wheat, or materials, such as ceramic, Native communities simply adapted these objects into their carefully woven world. Although individuals knew that they would be punished priests caught them

[19] Ibid., 60.
[20] Ibid., 62.
[21] Ibid., 96.
[22] Ibid., 99.

engaging in any "primitive" conventions, Native people did not stop following their ancestral lessons. In fact, it seems that they were able to solidify the bond they had with their ancestors by relying on their messages to guide them through the confusing, brutal, and shocking world of the mission system.

In 1821, Mexico declared independence from Spain and missions became jeopardized. In 1833 the Mexican government passed a secularization act in which "Franciscan missionaries would relinquish control to secular priests, who would establish a parish at each mission."[23] Under this new law, Native families residing at the mission, as well as all males over twenty-one years old, were supposed to receive a plot of land for a home and another plot for agricultural cultivation. However, very few Native families received these land grants. Instead, prominent Californian families consolidated mission land into ranchos. In exchange for labor, Native families were allowed to live on these privately-owned lands; known as Rancherias.

Members of the Makahmo community, who lived at Mission San Francisco Solano, started to work on one of the five ranchos established by Mexican settlers in the 1840s.[24] However, most families resided at Rancho Tzabaco, owned by Josè Piña, in the Dry Creek Valley. The Makahmo enjoyed an amicable relationship with Piña. "Contemporary Dry Creek Pomo recall that Piña helped some Indians escape a general roundup of local Indians for removal to the Round Valley Reservation during the

[23] Ibid., 211.
[24] Also known as Mission Sonoma.

1850s."[25] Unfortunately, Makahmo society once again became disrupted in 1846, when the United States Congress issued a declaration of war against Mexico.

This conflict, fueled by America's belief in Manifest Destiny, eventually ended when the United States successfully occupied most of Mexico's major cities. On February 2, 1848, Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. As a part of this settlement, Mexico had to give Alta California and New Mexico to the United States.[26] The treaty also ensured the safety of existing property rights for Mexican citizens living in transferred territories. However, as American citizens started to enter the region, they threatened the existence of ranchos, as well as Rancherias. These newcomers saw ranchos as a barrier to the land they believed to be rightfully theirs. "They also viewed the Indian population with mixed feelings. One the one hand, American settlers constantly complained about Indians stealing their livestock; and on the other hand, they looked forward to using Indians as a source of cheap labor."[27] The interest for cheap labor became exasperated when in 1848, James Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada's.[28]

To gain the upper hand on other ranchers, gold seekers began to demand access to Indian workers.[29] Accordingly, in 1850 the California State Legislature passed the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians. "The law established vagrancy clauses for

[25] Vera-Mae Fredrickson, *Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: the People of Lake Sonoma*, 54.
[26] At this time, parts of New Mexico included present-day Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Utah, Nevada, and Colorado.
[27] Vera-Mae Fredrickson, *Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: the People of Lake Sonoma*, 55.
[28] Mark A. Eifler, *The California Gold Rush: The Stampede that Changed the World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), I.
[29] William J. Bauer Jr., *We were all like Migrant Workers Here*, 32.

Indians, whereby justices of the peace or judges could hire out loitering Indians to ranchers and farmers. The law also allowed whites to post bail for Indians accused of misdemeanor crimes and then put these Indians to work to pay off the bond. Finally, the law permitted whites to indenture Indian children with parental consent. Indian boys could be indentured until the age of eighteen and girls until the age of fifteen."[30] This vagrancy clause became a justification for white men to attack Indian villages and steal Indian children for labor. This government directive stimulated a system of Indian slavery throughout California, which instigated a long series of consequences for Native people and their descendants.

The government also sponsored state militias in the killing of thousands of California Native people. Between 1850 and 1861, at least 24 state militia expeditions killed 1,340 California Indians.[31] The government justified this practice because of the belief that the Indian race would become extinct. "Euro-American culture shaped the views and opinions of white citizens about Native Americans as savage animals. The core belief created within many Euro-Americans that this was the essential nature of Indians was the foundation step to genocide in California."[32] Overall, the surety of the savagery of Indians was the nucleus for these "guilt-free massacres."[33] These atrocities resulted in many Native families being broken up and relocated. White men firmly believed their

[30] William J. Bauer Jr., *We were all like Migrant Workers Here*, 32-33.
[31] Benjamin Madley, "It's Time to Acknowledge the Genocide of California's Indians," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 2016, http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-madley-california-genocide-20160522-snap-story.html.
[32] Brendan C. Lindsay, *Murder State: California's Native American Genocide, 1846-1873* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 40.
[33] Ibid.

actions successfully made Native communities fearful of practicing their traditions or acknowledging their heritage to others. Little did these men know that while many of the families who lived through these horrific circumstances did stop following the ways of their ancestors to survive the white man's world, that the resiliency of their descendants would eventually re-establish once neglected practices/traditions. As will be highlighted throughout the next section of the chapter, Elsie Allen accomplished this task for the Makahmo people. Despite having to attend boarding school and face racism throughout most of the Northern Californian communities she traveled to, she remained steadfast in her efforts to teach about Pomo basketry, its traditions, connections to the environment, and history.

Before this examination takes place, however, it is important to note another setback Allen's community faced in 1851. During this time, Colonel Redick McKee negotiated eighteen treaties with various Native communities, including the Makahmo, which dictated that they "surrender the majority of their lands in exchange for supplies of food, blankets, and some 7,000,000 acres of unoccupied and un-farmable land scattered throughout the state."[34] Congress decided not to ratify any of these treaties because of the backlash they faced from American settlers who believed the acreage promised Natives had valuable resources. However, none of the Native communities knew of this decision until fifty years after the fact. By that time the Makahmo, in addition to many Northern California tribes, were left landless and without legal recourse.

[34] Vera-Mae Fredrickson, *Mihilakawna and Makahmo Pomo: the People of Lake Sonoma*, 56.

Nevertheless, in 1856 the government decided to settle Indians on two newly created reservations; named Mendocino and Round Valley. "Between 1857 and 1860, a concerted effort was made to relocate Indians to these areas. Pomoan speaking from the Russian River Valley and the Clear Lake area were "rounded up" and taken north, suffering great hardships."[35] Known as the "Death March," Pomo men, women, and children, were herded like cattle and beaten to keep moving.[36] According to an elder woman, "many people died along the way…It was slow walking lots of old people, young children, they were scared, tired, very hungry."[37] Circumstances did not change once they reached the new, inadequately supplied, reservations. [38]

Despite all of these horrendous events and outcomes, Pomo communities, including the Makahmo, did the best they could to maintain their traditions. One way they accomplished this task was by working in local hop fields during the spring and establishing Rancherias. While living and working with other Native families, Pomo men and women talked in their indigenous languages to one another and learned other Pomoan dialects. When not in the field, they hunted and made food as they would in the old days. They would tell their children about the ancestors, how to make specific items, like basketry and hunting tools, and the power of the natural environment. This type of collaboration allowed Pomo people to take charge and create a world for themselves that still honored all of the beautiful aspects of their cultures. In fact, it is in the hop fields where Elsie Allen learned to speak several Pomoan dialects and learned about how to

[35] Ibid., 57.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

harvest the land as her ancestors once did. Her mother and grandmother also had the time and opportunity to teach Elsie about the sacredness of basket weaving. She also accompanied her mother as she traveled California selling her baskets as a way to earn an extra income. Most importantly, she observed the strength each woman displayed while dealing with the horrors of their past and confronting the fate of their people's future. Elsie carried all of these lessons from her childhood into later life.

As mentioned, one of the ways that Elsie's mother provided for her family was to sell her basket pieces. From the 1890s to the 1930's, "middle-class white America was swept up in a veritable Indian basket craze."[39] Pomo baskets, "with their multiple techniques, handsome shapes, fine stitching, dramatic designs, and ornamentations with brilliant feathers, iridescent shell pendants, and colored glass beads, were especially popular among collectors."[40] Often collectors wanted to own "authentic" pieces of Native American culture so that they could decorate their homes "for the purposes of saving the last remnants of a dying culture and as another mechanism for displaying the 'otherness' of Native Americans."[41] When buyers did not keep their pieces, they sold them to museums at steep prices and neglected to inform institutions about the woman who sold to them. Although most collectors purchased basket pieces directly from a weaver, they rarely recorded her name or proper tribal affiliation. Instead, collectors attached their own meanings onto baskets pieces, in their eyes made them experts on the value of Native

[39] Sherrie Smith-Ferri, "Introduction: The Human Faces of Pomo Indian Basketry," in *Pomo Indian Basketry* by Samuel Alfred Barrett (Berkeley, CA: Phoebe Hearts Museum of Anthropology, 1996): 1-2.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press,1996), 7

American baskets and culture. Due to this lack of concern or appreciation for a Native women weaver's story or origins, many baskets lack proper identification and appreciation.

Figure 2.2. Basket collectors often mailed out catalogs of their collections to interested buyers. Individuals could then buy baskets from locations that they could not visit for themselves. *Pomo Indian Baskets: catalogue of F.M. Gilham*. [S.l.]: F.M. Gilham; Reedly, CA.: Reprinted by Leo K. Brown, [19--]

John Hudson, a doctor, in Ukiah, California, helped facilitate the demand for Pomo baskets.[42] Known in the community as an avid collector and self-trained ethnographer, Hudson first introduced Pomo baskets to the public in 1892 through a journal article titled "Pomo Basket Makers."[43] In 1889, the arrival of the railroad provided Hudson's readers with the opportunity to travel into Ukiah and buy from the same weavers discussed in his article. However, Hudson's dedication to basket collecting made his medical practice suffer. As a result, he decided, along with his wife Grace, to

[42] In the 1890's, the hub of the early Pomo basket market because of several local Rancherias.
[43] Sherrie Smith-Ferri, "The Development of the Commercial Market for Pomo Indian Baskets," *Expedition* 41, no. 1 (1998): 15-22, https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/the-development-of-the-commercial-market-for-pomo-indian-baskets/.

sell their pieces to try and profit from their investment.[44] In 1899, "their collection of some 3,255 baskets was purchased by the Smithsonian Institution for $3,260."[45] The Smithsonian required John Hudson to write a catalog detailing the collection and its value. "The publicity surrounding the Smithsonian's purchase of the Hudson' collection ignited a competition among other major American museums, such as the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Field Columbian Museum, and the Milwaukee Public Museum, to acquire similar collections of Pomo basketry."[46]

At the time, Pomo women did not mind selling their baskets or having them displayed in museum spaces. The baskets that they created did not always possess ancestral lessons or representations in their formation. For the most part, women wove pieces that they felt aesthetically appealed to their buyers. As a result, buyers often only looked at basket pieces as having artistic value. They did not stop to consider how weavers still prayed and observed tradition when collecting materials. These collectors also failed to recognize that many Native women continued with the tradition of teaching young girls about the sacredness of this craft.

Although the 1930's saw a decline in the collecting of Native basket pieces, weavers like Annie Comanche, continually encouraged her children never to forget this practice. As will be highlighted, Elsie Allen's dedication to her mother's aspirations guaranteed that the beauty of Pomo baskets would remain for future generations. This perseverance also ensured that the history of the Makahmo people would never be

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

forgotten. Although Allen struggled with her identity as Native women for many years as a result of racism, she overcame this hurt to become one of the most influential Pomo basket weaver and teacher of all time. Throughout Northern California, Allen's presence is still felt and evoked when fighting for Native knowledge to be seen as legitimate.

Elsie Comanche Allen was born on September 22, 1899, to George and Annie Comanche (Burke) near Santa Rosa, California.[47] As a child, Elsie lived with her maternal grandmother, Mary Arnold, in Cloverdale, California. Because her family lived relatively isolated from other Native people, Allen made dolls out of wormwood. When not playing with her toys, she ran through Chamisa brushes with her mother's dog. As Allen recalled in her book, *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver,* she and the dog "would run and run for simply hours. Before we would start running the dog would jump around and run ahead of me and turn around as if to say, "Come on, hurry up!"[48] Playing in nature taught Allen to respect her environment and all that inhabited it.

When she turned five years old, Allen contracted measles.[49] Her family attempted to treat her with healing herbs. When that method proved unsuccessful, her grandfather, an Indian singing doctor, performed a special ceremony. "He built a very hot fire and threw a live turtle into it which was killed instantly by the heat. It was then pulled out by some long stick tongs, and I was given its hot blood to drink. I kept chocking on it but

[47] Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver* (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, Inc., 1972), 7.
[48] Ibid., 8.
[49] Ibid.

finally got the stuff down. It was possible this may have saved me from tuberculosis later when I was at the Indian school in Covelo at the age of eleven."[50]

However, before attending boarding school, Allen's father passed away. In time, Annie Comanche married Richard Burke, and they moved the family to a Rancheria near Hopfield, California. At the Rancheria, Allen lived with several other family members who taught her how to build homes as their people did in the old days.[51] They also taught Elsie how to hunt, fish, and prepare wild plants for food. While in the fields, elders taught Elsie how to speak Central Pomo, in addition to her native Southern Pomo.[52] She found she preferred the "old way" of living and learning.[53] Accordingly, when a government agent convinced her mother to enroll Elsie at the Covelo Indian School, about eighty miles from Cloverdale, Allen began to worry about her future.

The Covelo boarding school opened in 1881 under the supervision of Indian agent, Henry Sheldon.[54] The school was meant to teach Indian children how to be civilized members of American society. Upon her arrival, Elsie moved into the girl's dormitory. Since she knew very little English, Elsie had a hard time following directions and the school's curriculum. When she tried asking for help in Southern Pomo, teachers used violence against her. This behavior resulted in Elsie feeling a sense of shame about her heritage.[55] This behavior resulted in Elsie feeling a sense of shame about her heritage.

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[50] Ibid., 9.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Suzanne Abel-Vidor, *Remember Your Relations*, 23.
[53] Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver*, 9.
[54] Todd Benson, "The Consequences of Reservation Life: Native Californians on the Round Valley Reservation, 1871-1884," *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (1991): 239. http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3640492.pdf.
[55] Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver*, 11.

Elsie faced another set of challenges when she lost all of her possessions in a fire started by girls who hated the school. From that moment forward, Elsie was forced to wear boy's clothes. All of these events caused Elsie to feel homesick and ashamed of who she was. As a result of her experience at Covelo, Elsie often reframed from publicly acknowledging herself as a Native woman until the 1960's.

At thirteen years old, Elsie began to attend the Hopland Indian School; conveniently located near the ranch where her family worked. At the school, Elsie became proficient in reading, writing, and speaking English. Being so close to home meant Elsie had the opportunity to continue to work alongside her family and learn from her elders about vital Pomo practices. During this time, Annie Comanche and Mary Arnold focused on teaching Allen how to basket weave. Under their guidance, Allen started to coil and twine burden, canoe, and feathered baskets. More importantly, her mother and grandmother educated her on how to collect, store, and manage the materials she used to create her pieces.[56] According to their lessons:

[56] Suzanne Abel-Vidor, *Remember Your Relations*, 24.

> In the old days, the time of going out to gather basket materials was undertaken by Pomo Indian women and girls with much the same happiness and anticipation as going on a picnic. Usually they chose nice, sunny days so that the trips down along the creeks and rivers looking for sedge roots, willow withes and bulrushes, or up into the eastern hills to find redbud twigs, were times of adventure, much laugher, and bantering, as well as hard work when the right materials were found. The work, however, which involved the handling and cutting of plant materials and the digging for roots in the warm earth in springtime, gave a feeling of being a part of the beautiful natural world. It was healthful and invigorating, a good muscle-and nerve building tonic, while the warm delightful hours passed until the time came to pause and have a good belly filling picnic lunch of acorn meal mush, roots, tubers, and maybe a cooked rabbit or rat. And all about, the birds were singing, and many interesting animals or insects could be watched-especially by the children, who helped their mothers only until they got tired.[57]

These teachings helped Elsie understand her place in the world, the beauty of her ancestral world, and the bond her people had with the natural environment. Despite gaining this ancestral insight, Allen knew she did not want to work as a rancher for the rest of her left. Therefore, upon turning eighteen years old, she left Hopland and acquired a nursing job at the St. Joseph's Hospital in San Francisco.[58] After only working nine months at the hospital, Elsie contracted the flu and had to return to Hopland. Upon making a full recovery in 1919, she married Arthur Allen, a northern Pomo man.[59] Together, they moved to a ranch north of Ukiah, California, and proceeded to have four children; Genevieve, Leonard, Dorothy, and George.[60] Due to the hardship that Elsie endured at the Covelo boarding school, she decided not to teach her children how to speak their Pomo language a decision she later regretted.[61]

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[57] Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver*, 17.
[58] Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver*, 12.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 13.
[61] Ibid.

At the beginning of her marriage, Elsie attempted to basket weave as much as possible. One of Elsie's baskets kept being passed around between relatives upon the owner's death and returned to her. After burying her brother in law with that basket piece, Elsie did not have a good feeling about making baskets."[62] Elsie eventually had a change of heart when her mother made her promise not to bury any of her baskets with her. Annie Comanche recognized the value that her baskets would have for future generations trying to learn to weave; such as what techniques she had used and how she had incorporated certain designs into a basket. Comanche also wanted Elsie to display the family's baskets in the local white community so that they could realize the Pomo were never an uncivilized people.[63] Some Pomo community members did not agree with Elsie's decision to not bury her mother's items with her because they felt the old ways should just be forgotten.[64] Elsie fought back against this mindset by explaining how basket weaving would help the heal the community from the trauma they experienced by settlers and revive their connection to their ancestors. By learning to basket weave, Elsie believed her community would have a deeper understanding of their background and "the beautiful things our people did."[65]

As such, Elsie began to use her mother's baskets pieces to teach Pomo basket weaving at the California Mendocino Art Center. Throughout the 1970' and 1980's, Elsie also started to teach non-Native women about how to make commercial basket pieces, in addition to educating them on how the Northern Californian environment changed over

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 14.
[65] Ibid.

the years. For example, in 1978, Elsie was a guest speaker at a meeting for the Pomo chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution; whose headquarters was in Ukiah, California. During her talk, she informed the women of the difficulties Pomo basket weavers had in creating ancestral forms of basketry, as well as how hard it had become to acquire certain grasses from locations that at one time belonged to their forbearers.[66] These interactions helped Elsie fulfill her mom's request by proving to the white community that Pomo people have a culture worthy of respect and appreciation. These lessons also formed long-lasting relationships with affluent non-Natives, which helped other Pomo basket weavers gain recognition for their talent and knowledge.

Another way Elsie fulfilled her mother's wish was by exhibiting her family's basket pieces in museums around the United States, including the Smithsonian, and by teaching summer courses to Pomoan children at the Mendocino County Indian Education Center.[67] When traveling to museums, she helped to correctly identify and label Native baskets held in museum collections. This work allowed institutions to correctly label their pieces, provide their visitors with accurate information, and appropriately honor the history of the Native American community. While teaching at the education center, Elsie had the opportunity to accompany children on field trips "to areas where special roots and grasses were secured from nature to make the traditional Indian baskets, brush huts, and other Native crafts."[68] Elsie taught these children how plants and the environment have

[66] "Pomo Chapter, DAR, Holds its 16th Birthday Celebration," *Ukiah Daily Journal*, March 14, 1978, https://universityofcaliforniariverside.newspapers.com/image/598144/.
[67] Suzanne Abel-Vidor, *Remember Your Relations*, 26.
[68] Fae Woodward, "Summer Studies in Pomo Culture Offered Students at Indian Center," *Ukiah Daily Journal*, August 26, 1981, http://universityofcaliforniariverside.newspapers.com/image/3071846/.

always been an essential part of the Pomo culture.[69] She also emphasized the importance of giving thanks to Mother Earth, never taking more from nature than what is needed, and what has to be done to protect their sacred landscapes from destruction and/or extinction.

No matter how busy her schedule was, Elsie's main goal always consisted of preserving the natural resources of her traditional homelands. Between 1979 and 1981, Elsie fulfilled this purpose by acting as a consultant for Sonoma State University's Warm Springs Cultural Resources Study. The goal of this examination was to record the history and culture of Makahmo and Mahilakawna Pomo, whose ancestral lands were being threatened by the construction of a dam across Dry Creek, a tributary of the Russian River. The development of this dam would flood the valley where indigenous plants "that Native people valued for medicinal, economic, ceremonial, and artistic uses" resided.[70] The most significant of these plant resources were sedge roots, as well as willow shoots; both of which were used "by countless generations of Pomoans for the making of baskets."[71]

To understand how losing these materials would impact the natural environment and the livelihood of local tribes the Army Corps of Engineers, the builders of the dam, requested the National Park Service (NPS) to survey the project's area and identify any sites that might require attention.[72] As the NPS conducted an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S), Pomo people began to fear that the agency would not accurately

[69] Ibid.
[70] The flooding of this area created Lake Sonoma.
[71] David Peri, *Ethnobotanical Mitigation, Warm Springs Dam-Lake Sonoma, California* (San Francisco, CA: United States Army Corps of Engineers, 1982), 6.
[72] Ibid., 5.

identify cultural resources threatened by the dam's construction. Upon further consultation with tribal members, the Army Corps of Engineers agreed for sedge beds and willow plants in the project's vicinity to be transplanted and replanted along the south bank of Dry Creek, downstream from the dam. It was determined that "since uses of the plants were closely connected with many traditional aspects of Pomoan culture, and in the case of basketry with the most complex set of traditional technological practices, it was essential there was the participation of Native American specialists in every aspect of program planning and execution."[73] Identified as the Native American Plant Relocation Advisory Council, all members consisted of Pomo women basket weavers throughout Northern California; including Elsie, Lucy Smith (Mahilakawna Pomo), Myrtle Hurtado (Mahilakawna Pomo and Hayford Wintun), Laura Somersal (Geyserville Wappo and Mahilakawna Pomo), Joann Dempsey (Kashaya Pomo), and Mabel McKay (Cache Creek Pomo).

The life and work of Mabel McKay warrants special recognition. As the last speaker and member of the Long Valley Cache Creek Pomo, McKay has become known as one of the most influential Pomo basket weavers of all time. However, those close to her also knew McKay as a Dreamer Prophet and healer. As a child, spirits often came to her in her dreams. They guided her basketwork by telling her what kind of baskets to weave and the proper ways to doctor.[74] She created baskets that contained the sicknesses she sucked out her patients. Also, the spirit reiterated to McKay that not everyone would

[73] Ibid., 11.
[74] Greg Sarris, *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream* (Berkeley: University of California, 2013), 31.

realize that baskets have a specific purpose and are living beings with dreams.[75] McKay's work allowed her to have a longstanding relationship with the environment and to understand its needs and/or wants. She gave hope to the Pomo communities around her by encouraging them to practice their traditions and celebrate their way of life. No documentation exists about the relationship between Elsie and McKay, and requests for interviews with friends and family have been hard to acquire. Nevertheless, the goal of preserving plant materials that represented their ancestors must have established a bond between the women. The knowledge they passed on by way of the Native American Plant Relocation Advisory Council ensured the preservation of plants. They also provided non-Natives with an understanding of why Native people, particularly Native women, deserved respect. Furthermore, both women laid the foundation for their descendants to lead the fight for access to other natural resources that eventually became endangered. This story will be shared toward the end of the chapter but needs to be pointed out now so that readers recognize Elsie and McKay's legacies.

Figure 3.3. Mabel McKay. [sc30432], MSS 160 Dorothy M. Hill Collection, Meriam Library Special Collections, California State University, Chico.

[75] Ibid.

Between April 11, 1979, to June 1980, the Native American Plant Relocation Advisory Council responsibilities included inspecting and evaluating both parent and relocation sites. They also participated "in the development of the transplant strategies formation of the plant to salvage (harvest) sedge, willow and other plants from endangered areas; and the direction of ceremonial activities in connection with the transplant."[76] Weavers taught non-Native participants about plant management techniques and how basket weavers chose their plant materials. Most importantly, contributors learned about the spiritual elements that accompanied the care, management, and removal of the sedge and willow to new areas. Within the study Elsie reported:

> When you come to dig these basket roots, you don't rush in there and run all over, you don't do that. My mother always approached this grass very slowly. She'd come and stand and say a prayer. She also had a cane, and she'd touch this grass with it very slowly. She didn't go in there and just start digging. She'd come to a certain bed and try it; then she'd go on to another one and try there. Before she ever sat down, she'd do this, three or four times. Then she'd sit down. She always asked the Spirit to give her plenty of roots. Then she'd say, "Thank you, Father," before she dug. And after she'd finished and had got what she wanted, she said a prayer which is like saying "That's good, you gave me enough. Amen, father."[77]

Additionally, council members forbid all women from collecting or transplanting the plants during menstruation. Participants could potentially experience serious illness if they worked during this time. "In addition to causing personal harm, the presence of "unclean" (menstruating) women in the area is believed to result in the destruction (poisoning) of sedge beds. Several weavers attributed the loss of formerly excellent beds

[76] David Peri, *Ethnobotanical Mitigation, Warm Springs Dam-Lake Sonoma, California,* 48.
[77] Ibid., 30.

to the violation of this rule."[78] The council also held ceremonies to prevent the loss of plants while being transplanted. On May 18, 1979, the day before an experimental sedge transplant, the council held a ceremonial dinner for the plants. This type of dinner was considered to be a "sacrifice" on behalf of the participants to the Creator, "for the wellbeing of the parent plants who will give birth to the new plants, and to protect those who participated in the transplant from possible misfortune."[79] Mabel McKay told everyone in attendance about the importance of approaching the plants with good intentions and how to handle them correctly. She then blessed the food with prayer, in her Long Valley Cache Creek language, and sang a special song for the safety of everyone for the following day.[80]

Following the successful transplant of sedge roots in 1979, the council held another ceremonial dinner the day before a group of sedge roots was to be transplanted to their new permanent location. At this particular dinner, council members held a special exhibition of their baskets and reiterated to non-Natives about the importance of sedge plants to the making of their basket pieces. Mabel McKay then "collected a penny from each council member and the other weavers present. The pennies symbolically dedicated the land of the relocation. They also represented "the weavers' sacrifice for the welfare of the plants and the special status they accorded and symbolized a special act of giving thanks to the creator for providing the plants."[81] McKay placed the pennies in a cup of water and asked the ancestors to use the pennies to help nurture the plants. McKay also

[78] Ibid., 30.
[79] Ibid., 64.
[80] Ibid., 65.
[81] Ibid., 91.

blessed some of the exhibited baskets. The next day, McKay scattered the pennies in a prepared bed for transplant as an offering to the "Earth Spirit" and prayed in her Native language.[82] Afterward, she transplanted two clumps of sedge plants and asked others to follow her lead.

The transplanting of sedge roots proved to be a success. As a result of the knowledge passed on from the Native women basket weavers as a part of the Native American Plant Relocation Advisory Council, access to traditional basket weaving materials has remained available. Without the women's efforts or knowledge, these resources might have never grown back, and the public might not have been able to appreciate the role of sedge roots in Pomo culture. The Warm Springs Study was so influential that Lake Sonoma sponsored a major exhibition at its visitor center about the study and Pomo basketry. Most importantly, this examination exemplified to non-Native the agency of the six Pomo women basket weavers who worked together on the council. Their work and ancestral knowledge provided them with the opportunity to preserve the natural resources that have sustained their culture for generations. They also used their roles as botanists, environmentalists, and healers to educate non-Natives about the uses of plants in California's history. As a whole, Elsie's partnership with other members of the Native American Relocation Advisory Council presented the public with their strength, knowledge, and fortitude as Native women. They showed how they were more than their baskets and that they had a lot to offer regarding understanding nature, California Indian history and survival. Finally, these women paved a road for their descendants and their

[82] Ibid., 92.

communities to follow when fighting for their rights to the natural resources that sustain their culture.

Figure 2.4. Elsie Allen cutting willow at Warm Springs Dam site, Sonoma County, 1980. Scott M. Patterson, photographer. Courtesy of Victoria Patterson.

Figure 2.5. Lucy Smith (Mahilakawna Pomo), member of Native American Plant Relocation Advisory Council, digging sedge. Scott M. Patterson, photographer. Courtesy of Victoria Patterson.

Figure 2.6. "Pomo weavers gathered at Warm Springs Dam site, Sonoma County (1979), where they consulted with the Army Corps of Engineers on transplantation of sedge for weavers' continued use. (L-R): Laura Somersal, Myrtle McKay Chavez, Lynn Cannon, Elsie Allen, Lucy Smith, Josephine Wright, Mabel McKay, and Joan Dempsey with her son Damien Dempsey. Rob Botier, photographer." Courtesy of the Grace Hudson Museum.

Although Elsie experienced a great deal of success with the Warm Springs Study, she had a hard time recruiting young Native girls to learn basketry from her. For the most part, they did not want to dig in the mud for their materials and did not seem to want to dedicate any of their time to the basket weaving.[83] She began to attract some of the local youth by emphasizing that "basket weaving needs dedication and interest and increasing skill and knowledge. It needs feeling and love and honor for the great weavers of the past

[83] Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basket Making: A Supreme Art for the Weaver*, 15.

who showed us the way. If you can rouse in yourself this interest feeling and dedication, you can create matchless beauty and help renew something that should never be lost."[84]

One of Elsie's most accomplished students has been her grand-niece, Susan Billy. Susan's grandmother was Susie Santiago Billy of the Kashaya Pomo.[85] Susie married a man named Billy Cruz, whose half-brother was Richard Burke, Elsie's stepfather.[86] Susie was an excellent weaver and often worked alongside Elsie. Upon Susie's death, her son, Ignatius, Susan's father, saved his mother's baskets. This collection led Susan to want to learn the art of basket weaving. In 1974, Susan traveled to Elsie's home in Ukiah and proceeded to learn from her for the next five years. In addition to learning how to basket weave, Elsie also taught Susan could not separate her weaving from Pomo traditions, customs, or religion. In fact, Susan realized that all of these aspects of Pomo culture were connected when Elsie presented her with her grandmother's awl.[87] Susan recounted that from that exchange, her grandmother's "spirit was passed on to me. I realized it was actually a spiritual path for me, which was a complete surprise, because it had never occurred to me. Through basketry, I feel I have made connections with something very ancient within myself and from my people."[88]

Susan soon became a successful weaver in her own right, but still participated in educational programs alongside Elsie. Through 1978 and 1979, both women participated in the California Arts Council's Master Apprentice Program, which was funded by the

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Suzanne Abel-Vidor, *Remember Your Relations*, 47.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Paula Giese, "Elsie Allen (1899-1990) and Pomo Basket Family," Beaded Lizard Books and Photography, last modified July 7, 2011, http://www.kstrom.net/isk/art/basket/elsieall.html.
[88] Ibid.

National Endowment for the Arts.[89] Susan also joined Elise in 1983 to New York City, when Elsie consulted with the American Museum of Natural History and the Museum of the American Indian about their Pomo basket collections.[90] Working with Elsie on these trips, provided Susan with the knowledge she needed to teach Pomo basketry after Elsie passed away in 1990. Susan's desire to teach about Elsie and her life, is what motivated her, and other members of her family, to create an exhibition for the Grace Hudson Museum in Ukiah, California called *Remember Your Relations: The Elsie Allen Baskets, Family and Friends* (1992).

This show was the first of its kind to use basket weaving as a way to describe the complex ties of family and community.[91] The exhibit also highlighted the role of baskets in the Pomo community and the various challenges Pomo women endured to maintain this ancestral tradition. Curators worked with Elsie's family to promote two public programs to run alongside the exhibition. Titled "Native American Plant Collecting and Natural Resource Management" and "Native Weavers, Basket Plants, and Public Lands," both demonstrations focused on issues about the "diminishing habitats of basketry plants and the problems and the problems that weavers have getting access to them on both private and publically held lands."[92] The lessons taught in this exhibition continue to be taught today because of the willingness of Elsie's family to continue to display her pieces at various museums, including the Mendocino County Museum in Willits, California and the Jesse Peter Museum at Santa Rosa Junior College. Elsie dedication to her community

[89] Suzanne Abel-Vidor, *Remember Your Relations*, 50.
[90] Ibid., 51.
[91] Ibid., 106.
[92] Ibid.

and preservation of the Northern Californian environment is what led the Santa Rosa School Board to name a high school after her in 1992.

Elsie Allen life represents the survival of Pomo culture and tradition, which was profoundly threatened by settler colonialism and greed. Her work and legacy help to teach about the history of Pomo communities and all of the various obstacles that they overcame to maintain their relationships with their ancestors, environment, and spirituality. Most importantly, through her work and collaboration with other Pomo women basket weavers on the Native American Plant Relocation Advisory Council for the Warm Springs Dam project, Elsie revealed the power that Native women have. She showed that basket weaving is one-way Native women are responsible for the survival of Pomoan culture. Elsie provided her students with a purpose in life and paved the way for them to understand the role basketry has played in their culture.

In February 2018, threats to significant Pomo environmental resources has once again occurred. The Department of Fish and Wildlife canceled the 2018 abalone fishing season, as a result of overfishing and climate change. Abalone shells are a significant part of Pomo religious ceremonies, diet, basket weaving and jewelry making. These shells also represent the close connection that Pomo people have to the ocean and their environment. If the community can no longer access this piece of their culture, they run the risk of not being able to economically provide for their families, who rely on the sale of abalone shell adorned jewelry and baskets. Clint McKay, Mabel McKay's nephew and cultural consultant for the Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, has stated that the

greed of poachers has left him fearing for the future of his people's traditions.[93] McKay's motivation for preserving the environmental aspects of his culture is the same motivation exhibited by Mabel and Elsie during their work on the Warm Springs Project. No doubt both women's fortitude will be called upon when fighting this current battle.

Elsie Allen is the perfect exemplification of how strong Native women can be. She overcame horrendous experiences in Indian boarding schools and in agricultural fields, to become known as one of the most famous Pomo basket weavers of all time. However, she was more than just a weaver. She taught non-Natives the value of understanding Native traditions, how to respect the environment, and how Pomo people never vanished from existence. She also proved that her baskets were not only beautiful creations but that they reflected her people's resiliency, history, and understanding of the world. Elsie Allen was a force to be reckoned with, but more than anything she represented the strength and knowledge of the women from her community. She proved that women have remained an essential part of leading Pomo society and that while European and/or American settlers tried to rid them of their agency, they never let go of their values.

[93] Debra Utacia Krol, "California is Destroying its Cultural Heritage as Abalone Verges on Extinction," *Newsweek*, February 28, 2018, http://www.newsweek.com/california-losing-its-abalone-and-destroying-cultural-heritage-process-824510.

Figure 2.7. Elsie Allen making a basket. [sc30011], MSS 160 Dorothy M. Hill Collection, Meriam Library Special Collections, California State University, Chico.

Figure 2.8. Elsie Allen making a basket. [sc30010], MSS 160 Dorothy M. Hill Collection, Meriam Library Special Collections, California State

Figure 2.9. Elsie Allen displaying her baskets. [sc 30020], MSS 160 Dorothy M. Hill Collection, Meriam Library Special Collections, California State University, Chico.

Chapter Three
Lorene Sisquoc: Basket Weaver, Teacher, Friend

For many years, Lorene Sisquoc (Apache/Mountain Cahuilla) of Riverside, California, has dedicated her life to learning and teaching about the beauty of ancestral Cahuilla basketry. However, her path to becoming familiar with this form of art has not always been accessible. Due to trauma her ancestors faced as a result of forced assimilation, war, and reservation systems, Sisquoc did not have immediate access to her communities' traditions or customs. To keep from losing all aspects of her Native identity, Sisquoc sought out teachers who could help her understand ancestral basket weaving, as well as how to respect basket materials through prayer. Sisquoc's teachers made her promise to pass on their lessons to her future students and to do all that she can to give back to her community. Accordingly, Sisquoc cofounded two basket weaving foundations, as well as became a member of several basket weaving associations dedicated to teaching Cahuilla basketry to Native youth.

The origin of Sisquoc's dedication preserving Cahuilla basketry emerges from the lack of knowledge she has about Apache basketry; which was the result of her Apache family members, including her grandmother Ida Gooday Largo, being labeled as prisoners of war. This status prevented Sisquoc's family from being able to engage with their traditions. Forced enrollment into Indian boarding schools also caused members of Sisquoc's family to feel a sense of shame regarding their Native identity. This sense of indignity often meant that Native elders did not want to pass on ancestral knowledge to their children out of fear they would face similar feelings. While Ida Gooday Largo did

what she could to protect her children and grandchildren from the hurt she experienced, her choices are what ultimately led Sisquoc to become one of the most respected basket weavers in Southern California. Altogether, Sisquoc's family history and personal stories unlock the rich history of a Native American family that overcame tremendous odds and survived. The following stories and historical accounts pay homage to Sisquoc's ancestors, in addition to detailing how Sisquoc has used basketry as a way to teach Cahuilla culture, history, spirituality, and tradition for over thirty years.

Sisquoc's Apache lineage derives from her grandmother, Ida Gooday Largo. Born in 1903 to Annie White and Talbot Gooday, Ida descended from the Chiricahua and Warm Springs Apache, "who lived in southwestern New Mexico, southeastern Arizona, and northern Mexico until they were forcibly removed [by the United States Army] from their homelands and held as prisoners of war by the United States from 1886-1914."[1] Ida Gooday Largo's great-grandfathers were Mangas Coloradas, the last Chief of the Mimbreño Apaches, as well as Chief Loco of the Warm Spring Apaches.

From the 1830's to the 1860's, Coloradas led the Chiricahua Apache as their most prominent war leader. "He was a cerebral leader-an organizer, planner, and diplomat-who led by actions, reputation, intellect and impressive physical stature."[2] In 1846, Coloradas used his diplomatic skills to garner a peace treaty with the United States, which had declared war on Mexico, to protect American soldiers traveling through Apache land.[3]

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[1] "Fort Sill Apache History," *Fort Sill Apache-nsn.gov*, accessed January 10, 2018, https://fortsillapache-nsn.gov/history-traditional-culture/recent-history/.
[2] Edwin R. Sweeney, "Mangas Coloradas and Apache Diplomacy: Treaty-Making with Chihuahua and Sonora, 1842-43," *Journal of Arizona History* 39, no. 1 (1998): 3.
[3] Edwin R. Sweeny, *Mangas Coloradas, Chief of the Chiricahua Apaches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 137.

However, by the 1860's this act of generosity was all but forgotten by officials of the United States. American soldiers started to solely defend American settlers as they began to create their homes on Apache lands.[4] Through a series of violent battles, one of which severely injured him, Coloradas fought the United States Army to prevent Apache homelands from becoming colonized and desecrated.[5] In the summer of 1862, Coloradas traveled to Fort McLane in southwestern New Mexico to make one last appeal for peace and provisions with General Joseph Rodman West. Instead of talking peace, General West ordered his troops to capture, torture, and murder Coloradas. After killing him, soldiers scalped the Apache chief and severed his head, "which they boiled and prepared to send to a museum in New York."[6] Overall, Apache tribal members remember Coloradas as a formidable man who fought hard to have his people, their land, and way of life respected and respected.

Unlike his counterpart, Chief Loco did not participate in any battles. Instead, he focused most of his time on seeking peaceful resolutions to the problems Apaches faced resulting from American encroachment. "He was among a minority of Apache visionaries who recognized that the Apaches would have to change to accommodate Americans."[7] He believed that if no change occurred and warfare continued, American soldiers would annihilate the entire Warm Springs Band.[8] In 1869, Loco proposed a peace treaty to the American government that would have his people move onto a reservation in Ojo

[4] Ibid., 391.
[5] Ibid., 438.
[6] Ibid., 460.
[7] Bud Shaphard, *Chief Loco: Apache Peacemaker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 5.
[8] Ibid.

Caliente, located in southwestern New Mexico. However, American soldiers forcibly relocated the Warm Springs Apaches to the Tularosa Valley Reservation.[9] Upon their arrival, soldiers provided the Apaches minimal provisions and grew restless. As a result of poor reservation condition, social maladies such as high infant and childhood mortality rates, domestic violence cases, thefts, and murders emerged.[10] Loco tried desperately to petition the government for food, clothes, and protection. His efforts proved ineffective. Nevertheless, in 1873 the Interior Department of the United States decided to consolidate all Apache onto two or three large reservations, with Loco and his followers able to move back to Ojo Caliente.[11] However, local homesteaders complained about alleged Apache attacks, as Natives conducted raids to survive. Loco fought hard to prevent his people from moving, but violence and disarray on the reservation, caused the United States to relocate hundreds of Apaches to the San Carlos Reservation in eastern Arizona.[12] This move "effectively ended Loco's hope for an evenhanded peace with the American government."[13]

"Hard times hounded Loco's people after they settled in at San Carlos. They suffered through the terrible winter of 1878, short on blankets and clothing."[14] Apache people suffered from shortages of rations as well as diseases. Geronimo, a leader and medicine man from the *Bedonkohe* band of Chiricahua Apaches, grew frustrated with life on the

[9] Ibid., 45.
[10] Ibid., 72.
[11] Ibid., 83.
[12] Janne Lahti, *Wars for Empire: Apaches, the United States, and Southwest Borderlands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 185.
[13] Shephard, *Chief Loco: Apache Peacemaker,* 99.
[14] Ibid., 139

San Carlos Reservation and fled to Mexico in 1881with a group of followers. Eventually, Geronimo's followers wanted to reunite with their families and friends who remained in San Carlos.[15] In 1882, they orchestrated a raid on the reservation and kidnapped about 360 tribal members, including 150 Warm Springs Apaches and a reluctant Chief Loco. Mexican soldiers intercepted these Apaches near Alisos Creek, which ran southwest to Rio de Janos in Mexico, and massacred dozens of tribal members.[16] Talbot Gooday, Mangas Coloradas grandfather, and Ida Gooday's father witnessed the massacre. Reportedly, Gooday "held a strong resentment against Geronimo for the death of his Warm Spring relatives because of Loco's forced exodus."[17] According to Sisquoc, Gooday hated Geronimo because he made life more onerous than it had to be under the United States occupation.[18]

Those who managed to escape the brutality at Alisos Creek made their way to Mexico's Sierra Madre Mountains. Every time Geronimo fled from United States Army, he escaped to the mountain range. "There he could hide from Mexican or American soldiers and launch raids against ranchers, villagers, and travelers in both Chihuahua and Sonora."[19] In 1884, Geronimo and his followers agreed to return to the San Carlos Reservation to avoid further conflict. However, he did not stay at the San Carlos Reservation for long. On May 17, 1885, Geronimo, along with several of his followers,

[15] Ibid., 141.
[16] Ibid.,185.
[17] Angie Debo, *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 175.
[18] Oral Interview of Lorene Sisquoc with Meranda Roberts, April 24, 2018, Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, California. Hereby cited as Lorene Sisquoc Interview, 2018.
[19] Robert M. Utley, *Geronimo* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 2.

including Mangas the son of Mangas Coloradas, fled from the reservation for the last time.[20] The United States Army, under the direction of General George Crook, coordinated with the Mexican army, to form a manhunt that would lead to the recapturing of Geronimo. After failing to apprehend Geronimo promptly, General Crook asked to be relieved of command.[21] General Nelson A. Miles replaced him. In 1886 Miles selected First Lieutenant Charles B. Gatewood, who long served at Fort Apache and fallen out of favor with General Crook, to accompany two Apache scouts into Mexico to secure Geronimo's surrender.[22] Gatewood contacted Geronimo in August 1886 and urged him to stop fighting. Gatewood promised Geronimo he would be reunited with his family at Fort Marion in Florida if he surrendered peacefully.[23] After some discussion, Geronimo agreed "he and his people would meet with General Miles north of the border and talk the matter over with him. They would keep their arms and travel separately, but the American force would accompany them and protect them from any Mexican attack."[24] On September 2, 1886, the Apaches and their American escorts reached Skeleton Canyon on the west side of the Peloncillo Mountains in Arizona.[25] Geronimo and his associates surrendered to General Miles on September 4, 1886. The next week, trains carried all Chiricahuas to Fort Marion, Florida, as prisoners of war.

[20] Ibid., 159.
[21] Ibid., 189.
[22] Ibid., 201.
[23] Ibid., 222. President Grover Cleveland ordered the Chiricahuas' to be relocated to this location to prevent future Apache breakouts and raids.
[24] Ibid., 211.
[25] Ibid., 217.

Talbot Gooday was still only a child when relocated to St. Augustine, Florida; the location of Fort Marion. Gooday was told, upon his arrival at the fort, that "his way was a bad one. That my thoughts and life had been bad."[26] Almost immediately, American officials gathered most of the Apache children and shipped them off to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In 1879, the Carlisle school became the first federally funded off-reservation Indian boarding school. The school's founder, "Captain Richard Henry Pratt, was determined to remove Native children as far as possible from their families and communities, to strip them of all aspects of their traditional cultures, and to instruct them in the language, religion, behavior, and skills of mainstream white society."[27] To achieve these goals, instructors at Carlisle used carpal punishment. Other off-reservation Indian schools followed Carlisle's program and became sites of great pain for many Native children. Around 1890, Talbot Gooday left Carlisle to return to his family. In 1887, American soldiers moved the Apaches to another reservation in Alabama and when he arrived Talbot discovered many Chiricahuas had died as a result of yellow fever.[28]

In 1894, soldiers relocated the Apaches one last time to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where they remained prisoners of war until 1914. Chief Loco died at Fort Sill on February 2, 1905.[29] Talbot Gooday believed that Loco, as well as other Chiricahua members who

[26] Steven Trimble, *The People: Indians of the American Southwest* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 1993), 246.
[27] Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Susan D. Rose, *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 1.
[28] Mike Leach and Buddy Levy, *Geronimo: Leadership Strategies of an American Warrior*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2014), 204.
[29] Ibid., 303.

died as prisoners, provided their descendants with strength and perseverance. According to Gooday, those who died "gave us strong words, strong thoughts, and they stayed in our hearts and are here today."[30] Nevertheless, the hurt experienced by the Chiricahua as a result of forced imprisonment meant that Ida Gooday did not have the resources to pass on Apache culture or traditions, including basket weaving, to her descendants. Although Ida recalled that her grandmother, Beyihtsun, often made beautiful basket pieces at Fort Sill. However, she never could remember the techniques or materials Beyihtsun used. While Ida could not provide knowledge about Apache basket weaving to Sisquoc, she was able to pass on her, strength, virtue, and perseverance. Ida gained many of these characteristics while attending and working at various Indian boarding schools throughout her life. The first of these formative institutions was the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School.

Opening in 1884, Chilocco initially had 160-180 students from the Kiowa, Comanche, Wichita, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes.[31] In time, the school's population reflected most Native Americans then living in northeastern Oklahoma. Additionally, the Chiricahua and Warms Springs Apaches of southwestern Oklahoma also began to attend Chilocco.[32] Ida Gooday enrolled in Chilocco on September 20, 1913, and "while there was no organized agricultural curriculum at the school, agricultural education was an incidental byproduct of the work students did to keep the school self-sufficient."[33] For the

[30] Trimble, *The People: Indians of the American Southwest*, 246.
[31] K. Tsianina Lomawaima, "Oral Histories from Chilocco Indian Agricultural School 1920-1940," *American Indian Quarterly* 11, no.3 (1987): 242
[32] Ibid.
[33] K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *The Story of Chilocco Indian School: They Called It Prairie Light* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 17.

most part, however, education at Chilocco focused on vocational skills. Boys learned about agriculture or one of many trades, while girls learned "domestic sciences," like caring for families, babysitting, and nursing. Although Sisquoc cannot recall details of Gooday's experience, she did say that her time at the school stayed with her for the rest of her life.[34]

In 1916, Ida Gooday graduated from Chilocco.[35] She began to attend the Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas and in 1927 earned her teaching credential. Almost immediately Ida was requested to work at the Phoenix Indian School in Arizona.[36] After working at Phoenix for a short time, Ida transferred school several times. She taught at Salt River Reservation day school in Arizona, the Blackwater Community School on the Gila River Reservation, as well as the Shonto Indian School at the Shonto Navaho Reservation.[37] While teaching on the Salt River Reservation, Ida met her husband, Joseph Largo (Mountain Cahuilla and Tohono O'odham).[38] Together they had three children, Tonita, Gloriana, and Joel Largo.[39] However, before the family moved to Ida's next teaching assignment in Tuba City, Arizona, she and Joseph divorced. In 1941, Ida and her three children moved to Tuba City and lived there for the next ten years. Ida decided to move once Tonita, Sisquoc's mother, turned old enough to attend junior high school. At the time, the only available school in Tuba City was the local Indian boarding school.

[34] Oral Interview of Lorene Sisquoc with Meranda Roberts, July 6, 2017, Sherman Indian Museum in Riverside, California. Hereby cited as Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[35] Alicia Delgadillo and Miriam Perrett, *From Fort Marion to Fort Sill: A Documentary History of the Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War, 1886-1913* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 152.
[36] Lorene Sisquoc Interview, 2018.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Sisquoc recalls that since her grandmother had upsetting experiences while attending Chilocco, she did not want to send her child to a similar institution.[40] Accordingly, in 1951, Ida accepted a job as a teacher at the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. The move ensured that Tonita could continue to live with her mother and attend a local public school.

In 1892, the U.S. government established the Perris Indian School in the farming community of Perris, California, located 20 miles south of Riverside. In 1902, the federal government moved the Indian school to Riverside, California, and named the off-reservation American Indian boarding school Sherman Institute. Government officials named the school after James Schoolcraft Sherman, not General William Tecumseh Sherman. At the time, James Sherman was chair of the Committee on American Indian Affairs in the House of Representatives, and he had championed the bill creating the new Indian school.[41]

When Largo arrived, Sherman Institute was participating in the Navajo Program (1946-1970), "which the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) claimed would address the dire situation faced by uneducated reservation Navajos between twelve and eighteen years of age."[42] The five-year Navajo program sought only to teach Navajo students English and vocational skills for them to obtain jobs in urban areas.[43] When Ida Gooday Largo took the position at Sherman Institute, Ida and Tonita lived on campus. As a result, Tonita

[40] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[41] Clifford E. Trafzer to Meranda Roberts, July 24, 2018, Email Communication.
[42] Clifford Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, and Lorene Sisquoc, *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2012), 137.
[43] Ibid., 137-138.

became a member of a group of children known as BIA brats; a term first coined by "Sherman administrators during the 1940s as an affectionate reference to the children of the Bureau of Indian Affairs employees who worked at the institute."[44] Due to federal regulations, BIA brats could not attend Sherman, but most of them lived on the Sherman campus throughout their childhood. Although BIA brats frequently interacted with the students of the Navajo program, they each had dramatically different experiences at the school and what it had to offer each person. "While the Brats embraced the concept, 'Sherman is our reservation,' many indigenous students had been forcibly separated from their tribes, reservations, cultures, and families, perceived Sherman as a foreign environment and suffered acute homesickness."[45] As a whole, Sherman connected BIA brats to other indigenous children and provided them with a sense of community they did not always have access to outside of Sherman. This comradery created such a strong bond amongst the BIA brats that many of them continued to work at Sherman into their adulthood, including Tonita Largo.

[44] Diana Meyers Bahr, *The Students of Sherman Indian School: Education and Native Identity since 1892* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 60.
[45] Ibid., 61-62.

Figure 3.1. Ida Gooday Largo with baby Sisquoc at Sherman Indian High School. Photo provided by Lorene Sisquoc.

Figure 3.2. Tonita Largo with Lorene Sisquoc at Sherman. Photo provided by Lorene Sisquoc.

In 1960, Tonita gave birth to her daughter, Lorene Sisquoc at Park View Community Hospital, located right across the street from Sherman Institute. At the time Sisquoc's father, James Glover, was incarcerated. As such, Tonita and Sisquoc moved onto the Sherman campus with Ida.[46] They remained at Sherman until James' release in 1963-64. After gaining work as a construction worker, James moved the family to San Jacinto for work. In 1965, the Glovers moved to Phoenix to live with James' parents. Around 1967, the family moved to Seaside, California, located more than 300 miles away from Riverside, and Sisquoc attended school there until the second grade. In 1969, Tonita divorced James due to his abusive behavior.[47] Needing to make a living, Tonita began working at the "Sherman Institute in 1969 as a counselor's aide, as well as a teacher's aide, substitute teacher, education technician, and finally as a dorm supervisor."[48] Tonita's lifelong affiliation with Sherman Institute not only provided Sisquoc, with a place to call home but also with space where she could teach future Sherman students about the beauty of their tribal cultures and customs. Her journey to becoming a teacher and cultural leader was not easy. Nevertheless, Sisquoc persevered and has used her life's lessons to revitalize Cahuilla culture through basket weaving.

Growing up on the Sherman campus allowed Sisquoc to live among other Native children and learn from her grandmother about their family and history. One of the essential things Largo told her granddaughter was to always pray for guidance, hope, and

[46] Lorene Sisquoc Interview, 2018.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Bahr, *The Students of Sherman Indian School: Education and Native Identity since 1892,* 63.

safety.[49] However, as she turned into a teenager, Sisquoc became very rebellious.[50] She often took off and ran away with her friends for weeks at a time and stopped attending school. On one of her trips back to Sherman, one of her uncles told her of the Red Wind Commune in Topanga Canyon, seventy-nine miles west of Riverside.[51] Founded by Chumash elder Semu Huaute in 1972, Red Wind was a camp where Natives from every Nation could live together and support themselves.[52] Huaute was a Chumash elder, who traced his ancestry through California mission records to the 18th century.[53] "Called 'Grandfather' by his followers, Huaute said the prophecy he received as a young man promised he would one day find a place where the Indians of all nations could live together to support themselves in harmony with the non-Indians."[54] Huaute claimed the prophecy also said he would "wander like the Red Wind, the winds that came with the sunset until he found the place."[55] Upon Sisquoc's arrival to the commune, Sisquoc began to engage with other Native people from around the region and educated herself about the ways of her ancestors. When the organization had to move to San Luis Obispo because of a land dispute in Ventura County in 1974, Sisquoc accompanied her new friends to keep learning from them.

[49] Lorene Sisquoc Interview, 2018.
[50] Lorene Sisquoc Interview. Sisquoc began to use drugs and alcohol at ten years old.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "Indians Ask California County for Use of Park as Home: Prophecy Cited by Chumash Chief." *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, AZ), November 24, 1972.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

While at Red Wind, Sisquoc learned about local plants, such as sage and elderberry, and how to weave Navajo belts.[56] She also learned how to respect the land by praying to Mother Earth, holding ceremony, and not taking more from the earth than she needed. Sisquoc recalls learning little about basket weaving while at Red Wind but believes that her time at the camp prepared her to become a basket weaver later in life.[57] Grandfather Semu taught Sisquoc about the importance of never wearing her medicine bag, filled with blessings provided by Mother Earth, while doing something she was not supposed to, like drinking or doing drugs.[58] If she wore her medicine bag while engaging in this kind of behavior, something terrible would happen to her. Sisquoc paid little attention to this warning and continued to engage in questionable behavior. At seventeen, Sisquoc found out she was pregnant with her son, Peter James Maciel, and began to change her wild ways. Upon Peter's birth, Sisquoc became more motivated to learn as much as she could about her culture and heritage so that she could pass that knowledge onto her children; Peter, Tonita, and Blossom.[59] Part of this journey included learning about her Mountain Cahuilla heritage and ancestry.

[56] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Lorene Sisquoc Interview, 2018.
[59] Ibid. In 1989, Robert Levi, a former Sherman student, taught Sisquoc about Cahuilla Bird Songs. Bird songs teach the Cahuilla people about the land, how they came to be, language, and ancient traditions. Sisquoc has been quoted as saying that bird songs reconnect you to your ancestors and produce "good feelings and prayers. Those feelings stay with me and are significant to me about who we (Cahuilla people) are." For more, please see: *We Are Birds-A California Indian Story*, directed by Albert Chacon (2015; Rancho Belago, CA: Native Images Production Group), https://vimeo.com/153072118.

Figure 3.3. Sisquoc in 1978. Photo provided by Lorene Sisquoc.

According to the Cahuilla creation story:

> Many years before there was life on Earth, there was nothing but light. The light was made of energy forces that raced through the sky. These forces were red, blue, white, and brown. One day, the lights met in the sky. They united and formed two embryos. The two embryos used their minds to communicate. Eventually, they grew into power being *Temayawut* and *Mukat.* They both had the ability to create life. *Temayawut* was always in a hurry. In an attempt to make hands and feet, he made paws and webbed fingers. His creations had many legs and eyes. And he made things with horns, thorns, bumps, and fur. However, Mukat always took his time. He created human begins in many different sizes, shapes, and colors. Soon, the humans began to fight over where to live. Mukat called the most reasoned and strongest voiced people *Cahuilla.* He gave them a good place to live and told them how to survive.[60]

The Mountain Cahuilla's occupied a "large territory in the barren San Jacinto and Santa Rosa mountain range, extending from the slopes of Cahuilla and Thomas peaks in the north to the lands formerly occupied by Luiseño and Cupeño speaking peoples in the south."[61] Men, women, children, and elders all had specific responsibilities. Women prepared corn and ground acorns into meal for mush, which was kneeled to produce

[60] Barbara Gray Kanatiiosh, *Cahuilla* (Edina, Minn.: ABDO Pub. Co., 2006), 20.
[61] William Duncan Strong, *Aboriginal Society in southern California* (Banning, CA: Malki Museum Press, 1987), Strong), 144.

bread.[62] They also oversaw gardens of squash, melons, and beans.[63] Large granaries, as well as baskets, stored anything not immediately consumed. "Granaries were built near each household and each ceremonial house. A single acorn granary, for instance, might hold several bushels of acorns. Baskets, on the other hand, came in varying shapes and sizes. Shallow trays helped sift seeds, small wide-mouthed globular baskets held personal possessions, large baskets helped with gathering food or supplies, and basket caps not only protected women from the sun but used religious ceremonies.[64] Juncus and deer grass were the most used materials in a basket's creation. Cahuilla women mainly coiled their pieces. "Coiling can most appropriately be thought of as a sewing technique in which splints made from various plant fibers are literally stitched together over several kinds of foundation."[65] Before colonization, Cahuilla women only used an awl, made from the leg bone of a deer or long cactus needles set in a wooden handle.[66]

According to elder Francisco Patencio, a former ceremonial and clan leader of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, basketry was a gift to the people from the Moon Maiden, *Man el.* When the Cahuilla first came to Earth, they did not know how to survive in their new environment. *Man el* traveled to earth from the sky and was a "*el ka men el*, a very fine young woman growing youth woman, *el ka he wit* a very beautiful, intelligent young woman, such as all Indian girls have hoped to be, and she began teaching *no cot*

[62] Francisco Patencio, *Stories and Legends of the Palm Springs Indians* (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Desert Museum, 1943), 121.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Lowell Bean and Harry Lawton, *The Cahuilla Indians of Southern California* (Banning, CA: Malki Museum Press), 6.
[65] Larry Dalrymple, *Indian Basketmakers of the Southwest: the Living Art and Fine Tradition* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2000), 20.
[66] Ibid., 7

em (the people, but especially the girls)."[67] She taught the people they were "always expected to show deference to and respect for their elders because older have greater knowledge of history."[68] "Another valued behavior included reciprocity, giving in return as much as or more than has received."[69] *Man el* took "the young people to a place of water, and taught them to dance and run and jump and wrestle and play games; different for the boys, and different for the girls."[70] She taught girls how to juggle and make string finger games. "These games helped girls develop strong and nimble fingers for making baskets, collecting, tiny seeds, grinding acorns, and other daily tasks."[71] In time, *Man el* also taught the girls how to make beautiful baskets and informed them on how to use them. Unfortunately, when *Mukat* threatened to hurt the people if *Man el* did not marry him, she decided to leave so no one would suffer on her behalf. As such, she walked all the way up to the sky. After hearing *Mukat* howl upon discovering *Man el* in the sky, the people began to cry. *Man el* told them "that everything would be alright and reminded them of the things she had taught them. The moon Maiden told them to pass these lessons to their children. She also assured them that she would always be watching over them no matter where they would be on earth, and she has ever since."[72]

To pay homage to *Man el* and to teach their children the lessons she passed to them, Cahuilla women began to incorporate intricate designs into their baskets. Some of the most used symbols included stars, winds, and animals. Stars represent the transformation

[67] Patencio, *Stories and Legends of the Palm Springs Indians*, 7.
[68] Lowell John Bean and Lisa Bourgeault, *The Cahuilla* (New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers), 48.
[69] Ibid, 48.
[70] Patencio, *Stories and Legends of the Palm Springs Indians*, 7.
[71] Lowell John Bean and Lisa Bourgeault, *The Cahuilla*, 25.
[72] Ibid., 25-26.

of creator beings into prominent constellations. For example, one Cahuilla story says that the North Star was created a long time ago as the result of three sisters teasing an "Indian maiden because some of her teeth were missing in the front of her mouth. This caused her to be very much ashamed and sorry all the time so that she would never laugh. She became unhappy all the time, so that she left her mother and father and became a star in the sky."[73] Till this day, her necklace of "jewels still hang below the light, and she guides all the world at night, the people on the land as well as the ships on the sea. The Indians call her *to quoush herm ish.*"[74] Regarding animals, many weavers placed bats and birds in their works. Bats symbolize healing, while birds signify the time of creation where Cahuilla ancestors needed help finding their new homeland and looked to the sky to follow the birds that knew the way. Today, many Cahuilla people sing bird songs, which details this moment.

Finally, Cahuilla Indians used baskets as a part of funeral services. "Immediately after the death of a lineage member, a series of rituals began-cremation and funeral activities, followed by a period of mourning when men and women refrained from particular activities, women cut their hair, and burned the home and possessions of the dead."[75] The burning of one's possessions, including baskets, made it possible for the deceased to use them in the afterlife.[76] Baskets also held sacred tobacco, burned throughout a funeral service, to send prayers to the Creator.[77] Throughout the years, Sisquoc participated in

[73] Patencio, *Stories and Legends of the Palm Springs Indians*, 51.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Lowell John Bean, *Mukat's People: the Cahuilla Indians of Southern California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 136.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.

this specific tradition to pay her respects to her loved ones that had passed on.[78] Most notably in 2014 when her common-law husband William Paul Soza-War Soldier, passed away, Sisquoc burned a majority his basket collection; including some of the ones she made for him. She wanted to make sure he had them on his journey home and with him for eternity.

Cahuilla livelihood changed dramatically as European explorers entered their homelands. In 1775-1776, "Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza, marching from Sonora, Mexico, traveled through northern Borrego Desert and the Los Coyotes Canyon area and down Bautista Creek near what is now San Jacinto."[79] Anza and his men were looking for a land route between the state of Sonora and the Monterey Peninsula. However, since Cahuilla communities were so far inland, Cahuilla people had little contact with any other Spanish soldiers, civilians, or priests; unlike other Native communities throughout California who became subjugated to the Spanish mission system.[80] These churches not only marked California as Spanish territory, but Spanish Missions brought Christianity to Californian Indians in an attempt to convert them and 'civilized' the people. When Spanish priests established mission outposts near San Bernardino, Santa Ysabel, and Pala in 1819, Cahuilla people grew curious and ventured to see these locations.[81] As numerous Cahuilla became attracted to these sites, priests taught them how to farm and build European style ranches. [82]

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Lowell Bean and Harry Lawton, "The Cahuilla Indians of Southern California," 2.
[80] Ibid., 85.
[81] Lowell John Bean and Lisa Bourgeault, *The Cahuilla*, 84.
[82] Ibid., 83.

Spain maintained control of the California coast until 1821 when Mexico won independence from them.[83] Shortly after their victory, the Mexican government secularized the missions, as well as take land away from Spanish missions and Mission Indians. The government then awarded large plots of land to their citizens.[84] While Mexicans did not entirely settle in Cahuilla territory, some families created ranches in a few of the valleys on Cahuilla land. Gradually, Cahuilla men began to find work as skilled laborers at these sites.[85] Mexican ranchers also started to rely on their Native laborers to provide ranch management, labor, and protection. In 1846, when the United States government issued a declaration of war against Mexico, Mexican landholders expected Native ranch hands to prevent the stealing of cattle and from trespassing. One such landowner was Antonio Maria Lugo, former Los Angeles mayor.[86] "In 1846, five Cahuilla clans, who united under the leadership clan leader Juan Antonio moved close to the Lugo ranch, in the San Bernardino Valley, to assist Lugo in protecting his land from Ute Indians from the north, who stole his horses and cattle."[87] Juan Antonio's early years are a mystery; however, as a young man, he emerged as an influential leader among the Mountain Cahuilla.[88] Throughout the Mexican American War, Antonio proudly pledged his loyalty to Lugo.

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 85.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Cecilia Rasmussen, "Indian Chief was Tough Friend, Foe," *Los Angeles Times,* April 11, 1999, http://articles.latimes.com/1999/apr/11/local/me-26337.
[87] Strong, *Aboriginal Society in southern California*, 150.
[88] Rasmussen, "Indian Chief was Tough Friend, Foe."

In 1848, the United States successfully occupied most of Mexico's major cities and accepted Mexico's surrender. Both sides signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which dictated Mexico to give Alta California, as well as New Mexico, to the United States. The treaty also stated the safety of existing property rights for Mexican citizens living in transferred territories. However, as American citizens started to enter the region, they threatened the existence of Mexican ranches. In the early 1850's, Lugo sold his ranch to Mormon settlers, and Antonio's services were no longer needed.

That same year, the United States Senate authorized President Millard Fillmore to appoint three commissioners who would negotiate treaties with California Native American communities about land rights and access. On January 5, 1852, Commissioner O.M. Wozencraft conducted a treaty with the chiefs and captains of the Cahuilla, Luiseño, and Serrano, including Juan. The treaty, known as the Treaty of Temecula, "stated that the Indians must acknowledge the United States to be the sole and absolute sovereign of all the territory ceded to it by the treaty of peace with Mexico. The Indians agreed to accept the exclusive jurisdiction, authority, and protection of the U.S. government and to refrain from all acts of hostility and aggression against its citizens. Furthermore, the Indians were to live in peace among themselves and with all other Indian societies under the protection of the United States. They were to conform to and be governed by the laws and regulations of the Indian a Bureau."[89] The territory promised to the Cahuilla, Luiseño, and Serrano "was bounded on the north by the San Jacinto and

[89] George Harwood Phillips, *Chiefs and Challengers: Indian Resistance and Cooperation in Southern California* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 139.

San Gorgonio Mountains, on the east by the desert, on the south by San Jose del Valley, and on the west by a line running from Pauma to beyond Temecula."[90] This land was to be the for tribes' sole use and occupancy. However, "the government of the United States claimed all mineral rights, the right-of-way over any portion of the territory, and the right to establish and maintain military posts, public buildings, school houses, and houses for agents, teachers, and other individuals who may be needed."[91] The California state legislature debated the Treaty of Temecula, along with seventeen other treaties conducted by the United States Indian Commissioners.[92] In the end, the Senate Standing Committee on Indian Affairs issued a majority report that objected to any recognition of Indian rights to California land and never ratified the treaties.[93] As a result, California Natives became vulnerable to attacks by American settlers. Nevertheless, California Natives continued to fight against injustice. The Mountain Cahuilla's leader during this fight became Manuel Largo, who succeeded Juan Antonio after his death in 1863 from smallpox.

In April 1866, Largo, traveled to San Francisco with Charles Maltby, the superintendent of Indians Affairs in California, to present his case about the effects the intrusion of white settlers had in the Cahuilla Valley.[94] Largo complained, "about whites obtaining possession of their best lands and forcing them back into the mountains where subsistence was difficult and uncertain."[95] Although no solutions came from this meeting,

[90] Ibid., 140.
[91] Ibid., 139.
[92] Ibid., 141.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 223.
[95] Ibid., 224.

Largo continued to write letters to California lawmakers and the United States government. Through Largo's efforts, "the Mountain Cahuilla retained at least some of their homelands, lands that became reservations in 1875-1877."[96] Manuel Largo was Sisquoc's great-grandfather, and his life story has provided her with a sense of inspiration and leadership. Many of his family members continue to live on the land he helped secure and practice many of their ancestral teachings, including basketry. Without the advocacy of Manuel Largo, this type of interaction would have been harder to accomplish. Despite all of these transformations to their ancestral way of life, basketry remained a fundamental part of Cahuilla society. Women continued to weave using the same techniques they had used for generations. However, they began to weave different forms of baskets, with new types of designs, to appeal to American tourists and basket collectors. Tourists traveled through Cahuilla territory to observe landscape romanticized by Helen Hunt Jackson in her novel *Ramona.*

In 1882, Jackson initially wrote *A Century of Dishonor,* with the purpose of drawing the public's attention to the injustices Native American societies had suffered because of government policies.[97] Jackson sent a copy of this report to each member of Congress, but they failed to take action. In 1881 the Department of the Interior appointed her to "investigate the conditions and needs of the Mission Indians of California."[98] Jackson traveled to various Southern California reservations, including the Cahuilla Reservation,

[96] Ibid., 336.
[97] Errol Wayne Stevens, "Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona": Social Problem Novel as Tourist Guide," *California History* 77, no. 3 (1998): 158.
[98] Valerie Sherer Mathes, *Helen Hunt Jackson and Her Indian Reform Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 40

to observe the Indians in their daily life, to hear their stories, and to investigate their treatment by the whites.[99] Ultimately, Jackson wanted the results of her research to move people's hearts and motivate her readers to help Native American people.[100]

To make her writing more useful than *A Century of Dishonor,* Jackson wrote a fictional story titled *Ramona.* Supposedly based off of the true-life events of Ramona Lugo, a Cahuilla basket weaver, the story follows the life of an orphan girl named Ramona, who was born to a white father and Indian mother.[101] Raised by a Mexican foster mother, Señora Gonzaga Moreno, kept Ramona's true identity hidden because of her disdain toward Indian people. When Ramona fell in love with Alessandro, an Indian sheepherder, Moreno kept them apart. Eventually, the couple eloped, and Ramona lived with Alessandro's people. Unfortunately, a wagon driver killed Alessandro for allegedly stealing horses.[102]

Ramona became an immediate success. However, few readers paid attention to the plight of California Native American communities. Instead, audiences only focused on the love story between Ramona and Alessandro. "Rather than prompt its readers to search out social injustice, *Ramona's* success sent them looking for the places where the novel's characters had lived."[103] Jackson's determination to base her story on real places

[99] John R. Byers Jr., "The Indian Matter of Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona": From Fact to Fiction," *American Indian Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1975): 332
[100] Dydia DeLyser, *Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2005), 9.
[101] Byers Jr., "The Indian Matter of Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona": From Fact to Fiction," 162. Also, see Dydia DeLyser, *Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2005).
[102] DeLyser, *Ramona Memories: Tourism and the Shaping of Southern California,* 14.
[103] Errol Wayne Stevens, "Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona," 167

and real people and "her meticulous research created the likelihood that certain southern California locations would be identified as places mentioned in her book. Once such a place had been identified as part of the Ramona story, it underwent a transformation."[104] These sites, as well as the Native people who lived there, became tourist attractions. As they each became commercialized entities, tourists took advantage of to fulfill their desires of experiencing Ramona's world.[105]

As tourists infiltrated their homelands, Native people began to take advantage of the situation to for their families. For instance, basket weavers began to sell their interested buyers, who read about talented basket weavers in *Ramona.* "Here and there, between the houses, were huge baskets, larger than barrels, woven of twigs, as the eagle weaves its nest, only tighter and thicker. These were the outdoor granaries in these were kept acorns, barley, wheat, and corn. Ramona thought the, as well she might, the prettiest things she ever saw."[106] Native women continued to weave baskets the same way they had for generations but decidedly used their talents throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to provide buyers with authentic pieces of Native American art. At the time, one of the most popular baskets was reed baskets detailed at the beginning of this section. These baskets drew Sisquoc into the world of weaving and have motivated her to learn more ever since.

Sisquoc first began to learn how to basket weave at twenty years old. She left Sherman for a semester to obtain her GED and attend Riverside Community College

[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., 162.

(RCC).[107] During her first anthropology class, Sisquoc noticed a woman wearing beaded earrings and who looked Native.[108] She approached the woman, who confirmed her identity, and introduced herself as Cindi Alvitre. Sisquoc and Alvitre became fast friends, and in 1985 formed the Mother Earth Clan.[109] The basis of this organization was to teach Native youths, including Sisquoc's and Alvitre's children, lessons about their ancestors and the way they lived in the old days. Initially, they took the children camping and taught them what they knew of plant life and ancestral foods. Sisquoc and Alvitre began each program by teaching the "Mother Earth Clan Rules to Live By." These rules consisted of understanding that everything, including plants, water, earth, and food, are sacred and alive.[110] Furthermore, "that the earth is our mother, you do not harm her or take more than what you need from her. The most important tenet of the Mother Earth Clan was that all students had to respect their elders by listening to them and doing what they said."[111] By not following this specific guideline, students could not learn or teach others about their Native cultures. For Sisquoc and Alvitre, informing students of these lessons ensured that their ancestors continued to be respected and that their way of life would never be forgotten.

In 1986, Sisquoc and Alvitre decided to expand their summer programs to include how Native objects, like basketry, were used before settlement as well as teach students how to make their own pieces. Sisquoc approached acclaimed Cahuilla weaver Donna

[107] Ibid. Sisquoc would return to Sherman after a semester. Her return to the institution will be documented later in the chapter.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Sisquoc and Alvitre refer to themselves as sisters.
[110] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[111] Ibid.

Largo to conduct a session for them.[112] However, Largo, had prior commitments the week of the workshop and could not attend. Although disappointed, Sisquoc went forward with her plans for the desired program. She attended one of Donna Largo's classes while attending a campout and workshop on Indian health in the San Jacinto Mountains, approximately fifty-four miles from Riverside. Sisquoc quickly learned how to make a round reed, wicker style basket. Round reed baskets are indigenous to Cahuilla traditions and are referred to as openwork juncus twined baskets.[113] Customarily, they are uneven, rough looking, and sometimes called "throw away baskets."[114] According to Sisquoc, these pieces "have changed people's lives. They are the reasons why people have had an interest in our baskets. Although made from commercially bought materials, it has changed my life."[115] The simplicity of reed baskets has created a new generation of basket weavers who have a desire to learn more about ancestral weaving and their people's history. For Sisquoc, these pieces not only opened her eyes to the world of basket weaving but also gave her the tools to teach her first basket workshop for the Mother Earth Clan. However, Sisquoc did not want to limit her weaving abilities to just one kind of basket. In 1991, at the urging of her friend Barbara Drake (Gabrieliño), Sisquoc applied for a scholarship to attend a Cahuilla basketry class taught by Donna Largo at Idyllwild Arts Academy.

[112] More about Donna Largo's journey to learning about Cahuilla basketry will be highlighted in the chapter about Largo's life and work.
[113] Ralph Shanks, *California Indian Baskets: San Diego to Santa Barbara and Beyond to the San Joaquin Valley, Mountains, and Deserts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010) 72.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.

Figure 3.4. Example of a round reed basket. Photo courtesy of Lorene Sisquoc.

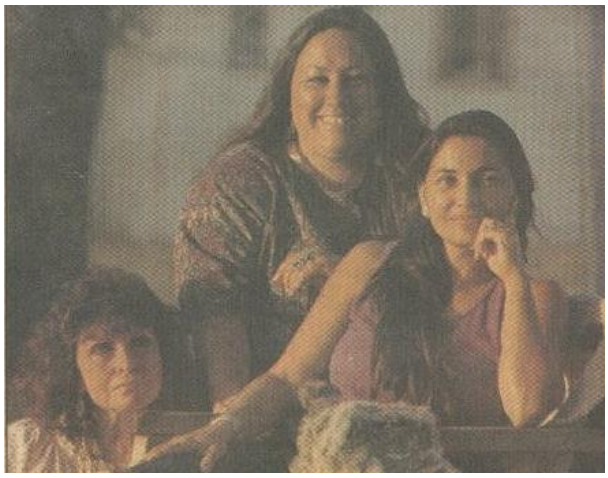

Figure 3.5. Sisquoc (middle) with Barbara Drake (left) and Cindi Alvitre (right). Photo courtesy of Lorene Sisquoc.

Figure 3.6. A Cahuilla woman works at an acorn granary at Warm Springs. Helen Hunt Jackson described these types of granaries in *Ramona.* "Seaver Center for Western History Research, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History."

Figure 3.7. Basket designed with bats (black) and a flower. A part of the Sherman Indian Museum collection. Weaver or tribe not noted. Photo courtesy of Lorene Sisquoc.

Sisquoc attended the workshop at Idyllwild Arts with her cousin Jackie Salgado Wise Spirit. While teaching side by side with her friend Rosalie Valencia, Sisquoc's grandfather's first cousin, Donna Largo reiterated the origins of basket weaving, including tales of *Man el.* She also helped her students learn how to coil other forms of baskets, how to incorporate designs into their pieces, and why future generations need to learn basket weaving. Overall, the experience at Idyllwild Arts proved to be a beautiful experience for Sisquoc. She made life-long friends and took the time to learn as much as she could from Rosalie Valencia about their family and the Cahuilla language. After the class, Jackie Salgado White Spirit wrote the following poem to remember their experience:

> So long we have waited, now they have come.
> Where have they been, what took them so long.
> From each direction, they come to be to make Cahuilla baskets under a tree.
> A once dying art, a lost tradition.
> No one to learn, no one to listen.
> There was only two left, to teach us how.
> They welcome four more, so there are six now.
> They are to learn their forgotten past.
> To show others the way, a tradition to last.
> Taken the art and tradition, which will forever *live* on![116]

As a way her gratitude to Donna Largo, Sisquoc engaged in the tradition of giving back as best she could to her teacher and their shared community. For example, Sisquoc began to conduct her own basketry courses and taught her students the same things Largo taught her. Largo often attended Sisquoc's workshops and never hesitated to remove stitches from Sisquoc's baskets. She often told Sisquoc, "if I did not care I would not be doing

[116] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.

this."[117] Largo wanted Sisquoc to teach others the right way to stitch so that her memory, and the generations of basket weavers before her, were honored. Sisquoc hoped her students would do the same when they taught their students about her.

After Idyllwild Arts, Sisquoc dedicated most of her time to teaching others how to weave and about indigenous plants. Although Sisquoc knew the value of juncus, deer grass, sage, and elderberry in traditional items, she wanted to expand her knowledge of how to prepare these materials before. She enlisted the help of her friend Barbara Drake (Gabrieliño-Tongva), the proclaimed "plant lady." Drake taught Sisquoc how to pray over plant materials, how not to take more than what she needed from the plants, and how to make sure plants continued to grow for future use.

Sisquoc became a board member of the California Basket Weavers Association (CIBA) in 1997. In 1992, California basket weavers created CIBA, "out of fear that traditional basketry knowledge was rapidly disappearing and that soon living 'master weavers' would cease to exist."[118] CIBA's dedicated itself to preserving, promoting, and perpetuating "California Indian basket weaving traditions while providing a healthy physical, social, spiritual, and economic environment for basket weavers."[119] At CIBA's annual gathering, basket weavers from all over the state "demonstrate and sell their work, share techniques and stories, buy materials, and support each other. With each gathering, the network of weavers and their supporters grows, enabling the continuation of the art

[117] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[118] "About Us," California Indian Basketweavers' Association, accessed May 7, 2018, https://ciba.org/about/.
[119] "California Indian Basket Weavers Association." *Dry Creek Rancheria*, accessed January 10, 2018, http://drycreekrancheria.com/california-indian-basketweavers-association/.

and its passage to the next generation."[120] Sisquoc and Donna Largo participated in many of the organization's gatherings and cultivated numerous friendships that helped expand their skills. Sisquoc also learned how to form a non-profit organization. In the fall of 2000 Largo, wanted to create an organization that specifically focused on and supported Southern California Native weavers. With Sisquoc's assistance, Largo formed *Nex'wetem:* The Southern California Basket Weavers Organization. "The purpose of *Nex'wetem* is to perpetuate the basket weaving heritage of Southern California indigenous peoples by engaging in activities and educational pursuits designed to achieve that end."[121] With monetary support from local tribes, such as the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians, the women began to hold weaving circles. At these sessions, women learned from one another and talked about everything. They built stronger bonds with one another and established a sense of community with one another.

Nex'wetem's first large gathering occurred at the Allendale Ranger Station, near Idyllwild. Throughout the years, Sisquoc has made it a point to have more than one gathering a year. She tries to schedule them in the fall when acorns and pine-nuts are ready to be harvested because individuals have the opportunity to learn how to prepare them. For Sisquoc, these gatherings are helping to heal Southern California tribal communities by taking responsibility for Mother Earth and providing a space where Native people can come together to eat, pray and, perform traditions with one another.

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[120] Ibid.
[121] "Inland: Groups Preserve Native American Basket Weaving Traditions," *Press-Enterprise*, accessed January 10, 2018, https://www.pe.com/2012/05/05/inland-groups-preserve-native-american-basket-weaving-traditions/.

More importantly, families can be with one another and escape negative energy and events found on many reservations. One of Sisquoc's biggest blessings to arise from these get-togethers has been being able to experience them with her mother, Tonita Largo. Together they have learned about their histories, but also how basket weaving has always kept Native women strong.

When asked what she thinks of her own basketry, Sisquoc denies being a master weaver.[122] She does not see her work as being as beautiful or creative as her teachers or friends. These claims cannot be further from the truth. Mostly because Sisquoc's basket work is not only beautiful but embodies the lessons she learned from her elders, surroundings, and travels. They also reflect the knowledge of her ancestors and her desire to respect their lessons and experiences. One of the most effective ways that Sisquoc has honored ancestral knowledge includes setting personal rules over what kind of basketry she teaches and what kind of stories she associates with those pieces. These regulations include setting boundaries the use of certain kind ceremonies or in front of non-Natives.[123]

She also will not tell specific ancestral stories or lessons if she thinks non-Natives might exploit her teachings for their personal use. Through the meetings she organizes for the Mother Earth Clan or *Nex'wetem*, Sisquoc's main priority is to ensure that Cahuilla people know the truth about their histories and that they know the correct way to use the materials provided to them by Mother Earth. Altogether, she wants California Natives to

[122] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[123] Oral Interview of Lorene Sisquoc with Meranda Roberts, June 25, 2015, Sherman Indian Museum in Riverside, California.

reclaim their heritage and to prove that Native people, their culture, or customs have never disappeared. Basketry has always been an integral part of Cahuilla livelihood and Sisquoc is determined to make people see these baskets as living beings who contain the prayers and hopes of their communities. Sisquoc's determination to teach these lessons has extended to her role as a cultural traditions leader at Sherman Indian High School.

Figure 3.8. Sisquoc collecting juncus in the 1990's. Photo courtesy of Lorene Sisquoc.

In 1985, Sisquoc attended Riverside Community College (RCC) but left after one semester because she did not feel college was for her. That same year, Sisquoc returned to Sherman Indian High School as a dormitory monitor. She became responsible for making sure students obeyed school rules, took their medication, and acted appropriately towards teachers and one another. However, while at RCC, an anthropology course made her curious about the functionality of museum spaces.[124] To gain additional insight, she began to volunteer at the Sherman Indian Museum, located in the original administration

[124] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.

building of Sherman Institute. In 1970, the same year Sherman Institute became Sherman Indian High School, by Noel D. Scott (former superintendent,) Ned D. Robitzer (plant engineer), Judson Bradley (a restored Sherman printing instructor), and Ramona Bradley (volunteer curator), created the Sherman Museum. This museum houses a vast collection of documents, painting, photographs, and basket pieces.[125] Sisquoc began to work with Ramona Bradley about how to properly care for the museum's collections, exhibits, and how to assist Sherman alumni with finding records that pertained to their experiences or those of their families at the Sherman.[126] Unfortunately, Bradley passed away in 1989 and the museum closed for the next two years. In 1991, school administration asked Sisquoc to become the volunteer curator.

It is important to note that before she acquired this position, Sisquoc consistently asked Sherman's principal, Don Sims, to let her teach California Indian basketry to students. In 1995, Sisquoc and Cindi Alvitre increased their efforts to implement basketry coursework by writing a proposal and sample syllabus to the Sherman administration.[127] In 2000, Sims finally agreed to let Sisquoc create a class after witnessing Sisquoc teach basket weaving at other schools. He also provided her with a small budget for materials.[128] Titled "Native Traditions," this course aims to teach freshman about boarding schools, traditional values, including respecting your elders and giving back to

[125] "Cultural Programs," *Sherman Indian School*, accessed January 10, 2018, http://www.shermanindian.org/cultural-programs-2017-2018/.
[126] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[127] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[128] Sisquoc believes that Mr. Simms agreed to give her a class because of the administration's implementation of a program called Freshman Focus. After the freshman lunch period, students attended a 'Discovery' class taught by someone who had expertise in a field of interest. Sisquoc does not remember the other offered courses, but her basket weaving class was folded into that program's curriculum.

your home communities, as well as guidance in making basket pieces. She also teaches her students Native plant uses, how to use plants when making food or for medicinal purposes, and the importance of holding ceremony for all materials. [129]

Sisquoc's determination to keep teaching this class is wrapped up in her personal history at Sherman High School. Her grandmother moved to the school to prevent her children from forcibly attending boarding schools and is also the place where Sisquoc returned after completing one of her many trips. From the school's many students, Sisquoc not only learned more about her traditions, but she also became educated about other indigenous cultures. As a teacher at Sherman, Sisquoc urges many of her students to learn from one another and stay connected after graduating. By fighting to hold her 'Native Traditions,' course Sisquoc has provided a space for students to maintain connections with their ancestral practices while also learning from others. Her class also allows students to build relationships with one another that can last a lifetime. By providing a place where students can be proud of their Native identities and cultivate bonds with one another, Sisquoc knows they are all working on making Native communities healthy again. Overall, she wants "to teach students to be proud of who they are" and to honor and respect their histories.[130] Doing so will keep them strong.

[129] "Cultural Programs," *Sherman Indian School*, http://www.shermanindian.org/cultural-programs-2017-2018/. Sisquoc was given the title Cultural Traditions Leader. She is also still the curator of the Sherman Indian Museum.
[130] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.

Figure 3.9. Sisquoc teaching basket weaving in girl dorms at Sherman Indian High School in 1990's. Photo courtesy of Lorene Sisquoc.

Outside of all of the "official" duties outlined in this chapter, Sisquoc has often collaborated with California colleges and museums to include Native American perspectives in their projects. In 1991, following the reopening of the Sherman Museum, Sisquoc permitted public history students from the University of California, Riverside (UCR), into the museum's archives. Almost immediately Jean Keller, a Ph.D. candidate from UCR began to volunteer at the museum. Keller's research resulted in a dissertation, and the first published book about the Sherman Institute, titled "Empty Beds: Indian Student Health at Sherman Institute, 1902-1922."[131] In 2001, Sisquoc also opened the museum's archives to a film crew, for the documentary *The Sherman Indian High School: 100 years of Education and Native Pride.* In the film, Sisquoc described Sherman's history and the various ways students have shown pride in their Native cultures while attending the school. Furthermore, Sisquoc has co-authored numerous books about the history of Sherman Indian High School; including *Boarding School*

[131] Bettye Miller, "New Book Recounts History of Sherman Institute," *UCR Today*, November 29, 2012, https://ucrtoday.ucr.edu/10497.

Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences (2006), *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute* (2012), and *Shadows of Sherman Institute: A Photographic History of the Indian School on Magnolia Avenue* (2017).

Sisquoc's dedication to preserving the Sherman Museum's collections led the Council on Library and Information (CLIR) to provide Sherman Indian Museum, as well as the UCR library, with a *Digitizing Hidden Collections* grant worth $376,191.[132] Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the grant will ensure the digitization of one of a kind documents "about the history, education, and culture of the Sherman Institute from 1901 to 1970, and Sherman Indian High School from 1970 to the present day."[133] One of the most beneficial aspects of the grant is that students from Sherman Indian High School will receive training in digitization, a skill they can use in their future endeavors. Overall, this project will provide documents to a broader audience and most importantly allow former students, as well as their families, to gather more information about their loved ones.

In 2015 Sisquoc became the first elder/scholar in residence at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, California. As a part of the school's Native American Pipeline Program, which "aims to introduce college to Native American students in junior high school and high school," Sisquoc encouraged students in the program to go

[132] Eric Milenkiewicz, "UCR Library and Sherman Indian Museum receive $376,191 Digitizing Hidden Collections Grant from CLIR," *UCR Library News*, January 20, 2017, https://library.ucr.edu/about/news/ucr-library-and-sherman-indian-museum-receive-376191-digitizing-hidden-collections-grant.
[133] Ibid.

forward with their education but never forget where they came from.[134] She has often stated, "you can live in both worlds. You can get your education, but you can also embrace your culture, traditions, and your language."[135]

Through a relationship with the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles, California, Sisquoc has continually worked with the educational department about how to properly exhibit Native American history and culture. She has also conducted numerous basket demonstrations, along with CIBA, *Nex'wetem,* and the Mother Earth Clan, so that Native weavers demonstrate how basketry has always been a time-honored tradition. Furthermore, Autry staff has repeatedly arranged tours of their basketry collection to Sisquoc and basket weaving groups. Such occasions allow weavers to interact with basket pieces collected from their Native communities in the late 1800's and early 1900's as people toured California. This contact with basket pieces made by their ancestors has allowed for contemporary weavers to become inspired and motivated in their basket work. More importantly, by being able to touch basket pieces that have been locked away in collections, women can pray and sing to them. Sisquoc adamantly fights for basket pieces in any museum collection to be held, by members of the Native community, so they know they are wanted and appreciated.[136] "These pieces were made

[134] Lorene Sisquoc Interview. Also called the Natives Aiming to Inspire Values in Education (NATIVE) Pipeline program, "it introduces students to college through a week-long program hosted at Cal Poly Pomona, focusing on three areas: culture, academia, and leadership. Mentor maintain contact with the students after the program and offer assistance on college applications. The summer program has an 80% success rate, in terms of participants applying and then going to college." For more information, please see: "Native Pipeline Program," *CPP.edu,* accessed November 29, 2017. https://www.cpp.edu/~ceis/native-pipeline/.

[135] Ibid. Sisquoc has also taught these lessons, as well as basket weaving courses, at the University of California, Riverside, the Pechanga Cultural Center in Temecula, California, as well as other California Indian reservation communities. These include Agua Caliente, San Manuel, and Soboba.

[136] Ibid.

for certain purposes and were meant to be used and then put back into the earth afterward so that they could be used again in other ways."[137]

The respect Autry curators and staff have for Sisquoc, as well as members of her affiliated basket weaving organizations, led museum curators to reach out to several Southern Californian Native American communities to co-curate the exhibition "California Continued." This exhibit "explores the ongoing and interdependent relationships between people and the California environment by drawing on a combination of Native cultural materials, first-hand perspectives, and contemporary artwork."[138] Sisquoc contributed to the exhibition's accompanying documentary series called "Tending the Wild" about her involvement in finding the Chia Café Collective (CCC). Founded over twenty years by Barbara Drake, the CCC is "a grassroots group of Southern California tribal members and their allies committed to the revitalization of Native foods, medicines, culture and, community."[139] The CCC is dedicated to:

> Communicating the importance of cultural identity by reconnecting back to Mother Earth and developing reciprocal relationships with the natural environment and the "indigenous" of Southern California.
>
> Protecting and restoring California Native plant communities and environments, while advocating for Native plant landscapes on public and private spaces.
>
> Reconnecting California Native plants as food, medicine, and utilitarian uses and the "gifts" they provide our human/non-human communities.
>
> Providing information/education on plant resources for community on plant resources for community harvesting and gathering of Native plants.

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[137] Ibid.
[138] "The Autry Presents California Continued," *TheAutry.org*, last modified October 9, 2016, https://theautry.org/press/autry-presents%C2%A0california-continued%C2%A0-2016-06-13.
[139] "Cooking with Kumeyaay: Preserving Native Foods," *Edible San Diego*, accessed January 19, 2018, http://ediblesandiego.ediblecommunities.com/eat/cooking-kumeyaay-preserving-native-foods.

> Ensuring opportunities for mentoring/apprenticing youth leadership and fostering relationships between youth and elders. Providing plant foods for elders and tribal community members who do not have access or the ability to harvest and gather.[140]

In the documentary, Sisquoc describes the importance of reintroducing traditional foods back into Native American diets. Many Native people suffer from diabetes and obesity on reservations because people are no longer able to fully engage with the plants and environment the way they had before the invasion of Americans and Europeans.[141] To Sisquoc, returning to traditional ways of eating is all about making Native people "healthy again and working at it, and correcting things because of boarding schools and reservation life, and all of the things that have impacted our people."[142] Ultimately, Sisquoc hopes that this change in diet will help Native children learn more about their cultures, and make children's bodies healthier by eliminating the dependency on processed food. If accomplished, these children will ensure the survival of Native people for generations to come.

No matter where her life has taken her, or the hardships she has faced, Sisquoc's dedication to her people has never faltered. She has dedicated her life to reclaiming the history stolen from her family as a result of forced imprisonment, boarding schools, reservation systems, destruction of foods and basket material. Her strength derives from a long line of fighters, such as Mangas Coloradas, Chief Loco, Manuel Largo, and Ida

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[140] "Mission Statement," *Facebook*, accessed January 19, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/pg/ChiaCafeCollective/about/?ref=page_internal.
[141] "Decolonize Your Diet: A Conversation with Native Food Educators," *KCET*, last modified November 16, 2016, https://www.kcet.org/shows/tending-the-wild/decolonize-your-diet-a-conversation-with-native-food-educators.
[142] Ibid.

Gooday Largo. These men and women fought for their families and communities. They fought for survival. With courage, Sisquoc has been able to build relationships with Natives from other communities, which has allowed her to accumulate a vast amount of knowledge regarding Native plants and their uses. Her appreciation for plants, as well as her desire to have a place for her children to learn about their histories, led to Sisquoc becoming interested in learning basket weaving. From several teachers, including Donna Largo, Sisquoc educated herself about the symbols placed on basket pieces, as well as the ancestral stories and practices associated with them. According to Donna Largo, basketry teaches American Indian people who they were and are. As such, Largo instructed to Sisquoc pass on her lessons to other Native people. Sisquoc helped co-found several baskets weaving organizations throughout California and continued to host basket weaving circles at Sherman Indian High School.

Sisquoc firmly believes her life has been predetermined for her by her ancestors.[143] "Everything has been laid out in front of her, and she has just done what needed to be done."[144] She often downplays her success because she thinks that others have done more and feels she has not done enough. While most of her work currently focuses on expanding and safeguarding Sherman Indian Museum, Sisquoc still attends many baskets weaving workshops and is considered by many to be a master weaver. She continues to teach, alongside her daughter Blossom Hathaway, who is a prosperous weaver in her own right. Sisquoc has influenced the lives of numerous Native students,

[143] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[144] Ibid.

whether at Sherman, UCR, Cal Poly Pomona or through one of her many workshops. She has not only helped prevent Cahuilla basketry from disappearing, but she has also helped heal the wounds of the men and women who came before her. Lorene Sisquoc is an inspiration and deserves recognition for her sovereignty, resiliency, fortitude, and integrity.

Figure 3.10. Weaving Circle. Hosted in Sisquoc's Native Tradition's Classroom at Sherman Indian High School. February 14, 2014. Photo Courtesy of Lorene Sisquoc.

Figure 3.11. Sisquoc and Virginia Carmelo (Tongva) looking at Cahuilla baskets held at the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, California. This museum is a part of the Autry National Center. Photo courtesy of *Nex'wetem.*

Chapter Four
Donna's Vision

As highlighted in Lorene Sisquoc's chapter, the Cahuilla community suffered as a result of American assimilationist policies. The traumatic experiences of these events left many feeling hopeless and fearful for their descendant's future. As such, those who remembered the lessons of their ancestors rarely passed on those teachings out of fear of having their children or grandchildren persecuted. As a result, many traditional Cahuilla practices, including ancestral basket weaving, became endangered. In fact, Cahuilla basket weaving did not begin to be widely taught again until the late 1980's and early 1990's, due to the revitalizing efforts of Donna Mae Largo.

Donna Largo was born on June 15, 1944, at the Indian hospital on the Soboba Reservation in San Jacinto, California. As a member of the Santa Rosa Cahuilla community, Largo's grandmother taught her about the plants that went into creating a basket. However, she learned nothing about how to create a basket piece. Largo's first exposure to weaving occurred while working as the coordinator for the Hemet School District's Indian Education Program. Largo's students desperately wanted to learn how to weave traditional Cahuilla baskets and repeatedly asked her to put on a workshop for them. Largo knew few women possessed this type of knowledge, but she eventually reached out to Elizabeth Mojada; who at the time was considered one of the last basket weavers from the Soboba Reservation. After Mojada passed away, Largo felt an obligation to continue her lessons and began to learn from Rosalie Valencia, the last known basket weaver from the Cahuilla Reservation.

Throughout the years, Donna worked tirelessly to ensure that Cahuilla basket weaving would never become threatened again. Through numerous workshops and classes, Donna taught a variety of students the beauty of basketry and made all of them promise to do what they could to educate others on the practice. As a whole, Largo created a world for Cahuilla women to come together as they once did in the old days. She also helped facilitate a way for Cahuilla women to reclaim the power they had exhibited in society before European and American contact. By being able to revitalize basket weaving, Donna Largo helped pave a path for her Native women students to follow so that they could become leaders for their communities. Despite passing away in 2009, many of Largo's students continue to look to her for guidance and feel as though she is still teaching them today. Her legacy lives on through them and their students.

"The Santa Rosa Cahuilla are the direct descendants of three Cahuilla clans that traditionally occupied the areas of Toro Peak, Coyote Canyon/Anza Borrego, Gamer Valley, Pinion, and present-day Santa Rosa Indian Reservation."[1] "During the winter months, the clans would occupy the lower desert canyons. During the harsh summer months, the clans would move to the cooler elevation of Toto Peak."[2] To survive, Cahuilla people gathered many solid foods, such as *qwiñil* (black acorn), *tevat* (piñion), *amul* (agave), *panu-ul* (yucca) and other plants.[3] Men hunted *Sukatem* (deer), *Pa'atem* (bighorn), rabbits, and other small animals. Cahuilla women and young girls tended plants needed for medicine, consumption, and basketry.

[1] "Santa Rosa Culture," accessed July 7, 2018, http://www.santarosacahuilla-nsn.gov/culture.html.
[2] Ibid. Cahuilla people are divided into three groups: Mountain Cahuilla, Pass Cahuilla, and Desert Cahuilla.
[3] Ibid.

Baskets had always been a critical part of Cahuilla society. Families used them to store food, possessions, and in religious ceremonies.

Mothers and grandmothers taught girls how to weaves at a young age. They taught their children how to respect Mother Earth, as well as the plants used in creating basket pieces.[4] "Among the Cahuilla, plants were not viewed simply as objects which might or might not be useful to man, but as living beings which one could communicate and interact."[5] The Cahuilla believed the Creator placed plants on Earth to serve man; however, they never believed that this should be an exclusive one-way relationship.[6] Instead, Cahuilla people understood that they were only one part of the Creators universe and to keep it alive they had to take care of its gifts. As a result, plants, as well as all other forms of life, were treated with the utmost respect. "A person gathering a plant would thank the plant for its use, apologizing in one sense for the arm inflicted on the plant, but also recognizing that it was natural that the plant submits to its predetermined use."[7] At the same time Cahuilla people, especially basket weavers, never collected more than what they needed. If they did, a plant could have become extinct. Often, as young weavers collected basket materials, elder women told stories about girls *Man el,* as well as how to incorporate designs into future pieces. Designs represented an essential aspect

[4] The story of *Man El*, as detailed in Lorene Sisquoc's chapter, is an essential part of Santa Rosa Cahuilla culture.
[5] Lowell John Bean, Katherine Siva Saubel, and Harry W Lawton, *Temalpakh (from the Earth): Cahuilla Indian Knowledge and Usage of Plants* (Banning, Calif.: Malki Museum Press, 1972), 23.
[6] Ibid., 15.
[7] Ibid.

of the weaver's life or reflected the communities core values. For example, baskets with whirlwinds and birds often reflected aspects of the Cahuilla creation story.[8]

Baskets pieces also played a unique role in ceremonial observances before American expansion, Cahuilla women "would have a basket, a winnowing basket. They would dance with them. They would circle the fire, way back when. They had a song to go with it. They would dance to it."[9] No documentation describes the purpose behind this particular ritual. However, it is clear that baskets were an important aspect of everyday life that Cahuilla people felt the need to incorporate them into their ceremonies. "Baskets were also used to carry ritual tobacco during ceremonies and were often burned as mortuary offerings at funerals. In addition to ceremonial functions, they were presented as gifts to guests who participated in Cahuilla ceremonies."[10]

As documented in Lorene Sisquoc's chapter, Cahuilla culture and society became profoundly impacted by the appearance of European explorers in 1775-76. By 1809, Cahuilla people from the San Gorgonio Pass, are mentioned in Spanish Mission records. "From that time on European culture spread rapidly among the Cahuilla, who of their own initiative seem to have left their home areas to learn components of European culture they wished to incorporate into their own culture."[11] By 1809, many Mountain Cahuilla people began to leave their homes to be closer to an *Asistencia* built near San Bernardino.

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[8] Ibid., 23.
[9] Katherine Siva Saubel and Eric Elliott, *'Isill Héqwas Wáxish =: A Dried Coyote's Tail* (Banning, Calif: Malki Museum Press, 2004), 1313.
[10] Ibid., 23
[11] Lowell John Bean, Sylvia Brakke Vane, and Jackson Young, *The Cahuilla Landscape: The Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains*, Ballena Press Anthropological Papers, no. 37 (Menlo Park, Calif: Ballena Press, 1991), 5.

The Cahuilla also became fluent in Spanish, as well as became familiar with the Spanish political system. To protect their communities from unfair laws or treatment, the Cahuilla began to "strengthen themselves politically by several confederating clans, or remnants of former clans, under one leader by the 1840's."[12] These new political strategies "ensured the Cahuilla of considerable political control over their homelands well into the American period."[13] Unfortunately, in 1863 these protections began to deteriorate as a result of a smallpox epidemic that killed hundreds of Cahuilla people, including Juan Antonio.[14] Conditions continued to worsen as American farmers infiltrated Cahuilla territory to use it as rangeland.[15] This influx of American settlers caused numerous conflicts with Native people throughout California. The United States Congress established a commission to try to relieve the tension between Natives and Americans.[16] On January 12, 1891, Congress passed the Act for the Relief of Mission Indians, which led to the formal establishment of reservations throughout Southern California.[17] Once all of the reservations became formally established, "Cahuilla communities were left with only two-thirds of the land they had control of before 1891."[18] However, reservations did little to resolve land disputes.

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[12] Ibid., 5-6. Juan Antonio was the considered to be the most influential leader of the Mountain Cahuilla. More information about Juan Antonio is detailed in Lorene Sisquoc's chapter.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid. Before contact, the Cahuilla population may have been as high as six to one hundred thousand people.
[15] Ibid. Consequences of American settlement on Native communities can be read in Lorene Sisqouc and Elsie Allen's chapters.
[16] Lowell John Bean, Lisa J. Bourgeault, and Frank W. Porter, *The Cahuilla*: *Indians of North America* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), 92.
[17] Ibid., 93. These reservations included Morongo, Agua Caliente, Augustine, Torres Martinez, Los Coyotes, Santa Rosa, Cahuilla, Ramona, and the now terminated Mission Creek.
[18] Ibid.

The opening of reservations on Cahuilla territory meant that the community could utilize the Dawes Act of 1887, which "empowered the president of the United States to divide Indian reservations into 160-acre allotments, assign one to each family, and remaining open lands to white settlers."[19] In the beginning, lands became placed in a twenty-five-year trust, "but after its passage, the law was amended to allow Indians to lease or sell their allotments to non-Indians after receiving the permission of the Office of Indian Affairs."[20] Those that accepted the terms of allotment also earned United States citizenship. Reformers of the 1880's believed that by allotting land to Indians that each family would farm their land and, "in so doing, acquire the habits of thrift, industry, and individualism needed for assimilation into white culture."[21] Overall, the policy helped to undermine tribal unity. "By granting citizenship to those who took the land, the hope was that those individuals would be less communicative and accepting of tribal governments- that exposing Natives to the "civilized" white culture would leave them more accepting of it and lead to better United States and tribal relations."[22] The Dawes Act also resulted in communities losing touch with their traditions and cultures. Families that participated in the allotment process became shunned by their home communities, as well as by their family members who never accepted allotments. In the end, many Native people never even became farmers. Instead, allotments made it possible for Indians to sell, or lease,

[19] Leonard A Carlson, "The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming." *The Journal of Economic History* 38, no. 1 (1978): 274–76.
[20] Ibid., 274.
[21] Ibid.
[22] "The True Impact of the Dawes Act of 1887," accessed June 21, 2018, http://blog.nativepartnership.org/the-true-impact-of-the-dawes-act-of-1887/.

land to non-Indians and work for a wage elsewhere.[23] The effects of the Dawes Act affected Cahuilla communities by limiting their agricultural capabilities and with entire families working as wage laborers in varying occupations.[24]

"For many years beginning in the late nineteenth century, Cahuilla women contributed significantly to the economy of their people by manufacturing baskets for commercial use. The industry was widespread throughout southern California, and baskets from the Cahuilla and other tribes of the area were sold throughout the country to museums and collectors as far away as New York and Philadelphia."[25] During this time, women began to alter the way they made basket pieces. This is not to suggest Cahuilla women completely stopped making ancestral forms of basketry. Instead, women began to make pieces, with designs, that aesthetically appealed to their buyers. These forms of pieces grabbed the attention of collectors, like George Wharton James. This level of exposure created an influx of tourist to southern California and Cahuilla women became known as being some of the most talented basket weavers in the United States.

Unfortunately, not every woman had the opportunity, or ability to weave baskets full time.[26] Many had to work off of "reservations as domestic servants or in the fruit industry, and there was no longer an opportunity to learn and perfect the art of basket weaving."[27] Also, young girls were continually sent to Indian boarding schools and were

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[23] Carlson, "The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming," 275.
[24] Barry Pritzker, *Native Americans: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Peoples* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1998), 158.
[25] Bean, Saubel, and Lawton, *Temalpakh (from the Earth)*. For more information about the effect of tourism in Southern California, please see Lorene Sisquoc chapter.
[26] Bean, Saubel, and Lawton, *Temalpakh (from the Earth), 25*.
[27] Ibid.

forced to give up their traditions in an attempt to make them "civilized" members of American society. This inability to engage with traditional cultural practices meant that very few Cahuilla women had the time to teach the art of basket weaving to their children or grandchildren. Furthermore, the Great Depression of 1929, meant that fewer Americans had the financial ability to tour southern California or collect Native basket pieces. As a result of all of these social upheavals, Cahuilla basket weaving nearly disappeared by the early 1970's. Only a handful of women knew how to weave as their mothers and grandmothers once did. Very few of these weavers had the desire to teach weaving to their community. Many lived with a significant amount of emotional pain as a result of the effects of American Indian policy and could not see how learning basket weaving could help their people survive impending attacks on their culture. Nevertheless, these women still wove pieces at home, and some of their descendants watched them as they worked. At times, the weavers would reiterate stories or information about gathering basket materials. Weavers would often only teach the most basic techniques needed to make a full basket. This was how Donna Largo became exposed to the beauty of basketry. Although she did not grow up basket weaving, the love and care expressed for her community eventually led to Largo being able to revitalize Cahuilla basketry in ways many did not think was possible.

Largo's first exposure to basket weaving was through her grandmother's lessons regarding how to identify basket weaving plants and materials, such as sumac and juncus. However, Largo did not have access to weaving until the early 1970's. As coordinator for the Hemet School's District's Indian Education Program., Largo had to put on workshops

that appealed to her students. Many of these children repeatedly asked her to have a class dedicated to basketry. Wanting to fulfill their requests, Largo initially approached Elizabeth Mojada, the last known basket weaver on the Soboba Reservation, to conduct a workshop on basketry. After this initial course, Donna continued to learn from Mojada until she passed away. After losing her teacher, Donna sought guidance from the last basket weaver from the Cahuilla Reservation in Anza, California, Rosalie Valencia. "Rosalie learned basket making as a girl from her aunt Mary Lugo Segundo, a well-known traditional basket maker who taught Rosie how to weave native grasses into works of art."[28]

After working together for a few months, Largo produced a flat whirlwind basket with white shading from sumac and juncus.[29] Eventually, word spread about the women's collaboration. Tom Fresh, the director of the Native American Arts Program at Idyllwild Arts, approached Lugo and Valencia about holding a Cahuilla basket weaving class during the school's summer program.

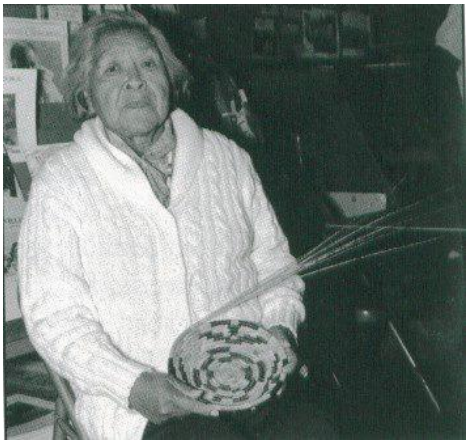

Figure 4.1. Rosalie Valencia. Photo courtesy of *Nex'wetem*.

[28] Gordon Johnson, *Fast Cars and Frybread: Reports from the Rez* (Berkeley, Calif: Heyday Books, 2007), 34-35.
[29] Oral Interview of Rose Ann Hamilton Interview with Meranda Roberts, May 14, 2018, Phone Interview. Hereby cited as Rose Ann Hamilton Interview.

Figure 4.2. Photo believed to be Rosalie Valencia's aunt, Mary Lugo Segundo. Description: "One hand-colored lantern slide of Maria Lugo gathering seeds with a seed beater and basket. Edward H. Davis (collector) purchased a burden net, seed beater, and two ollas from her. According to notes in the National Museum of the American Indian's files (for same image), Lugo is demonstrating the method of using a seed beater on ripe sage seeds in this photograph." Photo courtesy of San Diego History Center.

Founded in 1946 by Dr. Max and Mrs. Beatrice Krone, Idyllwild Arts was initially known as the Idyllwild Foundation. The foundation's concept focused on developing an art institution "for the purpose of promoting and advancing artistic and cultural development primarily for the advancement of instruction in music and the arts."[30] After building its first classrooms on sections of the three hundred acres of "pristine forest in the tranquil mountain village of Idyllwild, located in Southern California's San Jacinto Mountains," the school became known as the Idyllwild School of Music and Arts (ISOMATA).[31] Opening on June 25, 1950, ISOMATA "was conceived to be a beautiful summer destination for workshops and classes in the arts. The first summer workshops were designed for six weeks of intensive arts instruction and opened with forty adult students."[32] One of the most appealing aspects of ISOMATA included workshops in Native American art facilitated by Native artists; including classes in Hopi-Tewa pottery making, Navajo weaving, and flute making. The idea of these workshops was to provide students with "cross-cultural communication and understanding through the vehicle of art."[33] No one was ever expected to walk away from the program as a master in pottery or jewelry making. Instead, students were to leave with a better understanding of the history, culture, and materials that associated with the class they attended. Furthermore, Native teachers hoped their students would come to respect Native culture and the spiritual elements associated in their line of work.

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[30] "History," Idyllwild Arts, accessed June 26, 2018, https://www.idyllwildarts.org/who-we-are/history/.
[31] Ibid. Name changed to Idyllwild Arts in 1995.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Mark Muckenfuss, "Lessons from Mother Earth: Classes in Native American Art Draw Students as Far Away as Japan and Europe.," *The San Bernardino County Sun*, July 29, 1994.

Due to ISOMATA's history of collaboration with Native artists, Donna Largo and Rosalie Valencia did not hesitate to take Tom Fresh's offer. Beginning in the mid-1980's, Largo and Valencia began to teach Cahuilla styled basket weaving to non-Native and Native students. However, in 1991 Valencia suffered a stroke and could no longer participate in the summer programs.[34] Largo decided to continue with the course and developed a lesson plan that lasted for the next twenty years. In each of her workshops, Largo made it a point only to teach her students the basics about how to make a basket piece. She focused most of her lessons on teaching about the many stories associated with Cahuilla basketry, as well as the way Cahuilla people used basketry before European and American settlement. Most importantly, Largo discussed how basket weaving provided important lessons about how to tend to the environment. For example, Largo did not believe in providing her students with the materials they needed to complete a basket. She would have them go out into a collection site and learn how to properly prune, split, and gather the plants that they wished to incorporate into their work.[35] Largo had learned from Katherine Siva Saubel, an educator, and Cahuilla elder, that Cahuilla people had been placed on this Earth to take care of it. Saubel revealed that her mother once said, "you must take care of the Earth because it takes care of you, and if you destroy it, you are destroying yourself."[36] As such, Largo made sure that all of her students knew of their responsibility to the world and they should make sure to teach any of their future students about their role in caring for the world around them.

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[34] Rosalie Valencia passed away in the beginning of 1991.
[35] Rose Ann Hamilton Interview.
[36] "Dr. Katherine Siva Saubel," Malki Museum, accessed June 26, 2018, http://malkimuseum.org/team/dr-katherine-siva-saubel/.

Largo's lesson extended beyond the classroom. She frequently took her friends, family, and pupils to learn from baskets on display at different museums. By examining these pieces, Largo and her collaborators could learn about stitch patterns or unique signatures placed on a basket piece. They may also be able to help museum staff correctly identify a mislabeled basket. For many who accompanied Largo on these visits, they reported of feeling happy to finally have a way to properly connect to pieces in a museum setting and to have a teacher who was willing to use her time to teach them about how their culture lived on through those collections.[37] The relationships that Largo built with museums also provided her with an opportunity to exhibit her, and her student's, basket pieces. In 1993, the Grace Hudson Museum in Ukiah, California, presented "Cahuilla Voices: We Are Still Here," the first major exhibition of California desert culture to ever be staged in a museum setting.[38] The Grace Hudson Museum worked closely with the art gallery at the University of California, Riverside to put on a show that presented the public with "every major facet of Cahuilla life and culture, enabling audiences to learn about the fascinating history of these resilient people native to the Riverside area."[39] Cahuilla consultants, including Donna, wanted to help people understand that their community was still thriving and that they remained a vital part of the California landscape. Donna's work helped to complement the display of the museum's photographs of Pomo basket weavers and culture barriers, including Elsie Allen, whose community also used basket weaving, songs, and nature to ensure the survival of their culture. This

[37] Oral Interview of Tashina Ornelas with Meranda Roberts, May 10, 2018, Phone Interview. Hereby cited as Tashina Ornelas Interview.
[38] Maureen Connor-Rice, "Native American Exhibit Opens," *Ukiah Daily Journal*, January 3, 1993.
[39] Ibid.

sort of collaboration created a path for her students to follow late in their lives as they became expert weavers. Donna showed them that it was possible to be seen and respected as a Native woman and that basket weaving could help them achieve success, admiration, and honor.

Donna was also adamant about opening Cahuilla operated cultural centers and museums. In April 1991 Largo participated in the Agua Caliente Heritage Fiesta in Palm Springs, California. Proceeds from the Fiesta became dedicated to the construction of the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, "the first Cahuilla operated cultural center designed to record history and keep traditions alive."[40] For her part, Donna demonstrated basket weaving and discussed the many ways Cahuilla basketry was tied to their tradition and religion. The Fiesta proved to be a success and as a result, the cultural center opened by the end of 1991. Throughout her life, Largo would host basket weaving courses at the center.[41] She made it a point to teach Native and non-Native students to make sure that all those who wanted to know about traditional Cahuilla basket weaving, and wanted to keep it alive, had the opportunity to do so. Donna also worked on the center's exhibition, *Cahuilla Cowboys-Making our Marks.* The show displayed images and narratives "explaining how Cahuilla cattle ranching was an important source of livelihood for Indians in the area and predated traditional American cowboys."[42] Donna contributed by

[40] Pamela Little, "Fiesta Celebrates Heritage: Agua Caliente Festival Raises Museum Funds.," *The Desert Sun*, April 20, 1991.
[41] "Cahuilla Basketweaver Will Teach This Weekend," *The Desert Sun*, October 22, 1999. Donna also taught basket weaving courses at The Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles, California and the Museum of Man in San Diego, California.
[42] Victor Morales, "Exhibit Showcasing Indian Cowboys Wins Award," *Indian Country Media Network*, November 7, 2008, https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/news/exhibit-showcasing-indian-cowboys-

providing stories and photos of her grandfather, a Cahuilla cowboy and rancher.[43] Today, the cultural center is being remodeled and will feature designs integral to Cahuilla traditions, including basket weaving and pottery. It is without a doubt that the expansion of the new center would not have been possible if Donna, as well as other members of the Cahuilla community, did not continually dedicate their lives to protecting their culture. Without Donna's leadership, contemporary Cahuilla basket weaving might not have been able to be incorporated into the foundation of the new cultural center.

Another lesson Donna passed on to her students included learning how to advocate for the environment when it became threatened by construction and development. In 1994, the California Public Lands Highways (PLH) proposed paving 8.2 miles of Bautista Canyon Road, "a 21.7-mile route in Riverside County between State Highway (SH) 74, at the town of Valle Vista, and SH 371, about 1.5 miles west of the community of Anza."[44] The PLH argued the pavement of the dirt road would provide "the Anza area with specific measures to improve fire protection, law enforcement, and medical response times in the event of an emergency situation."[45] The agencies in charge of the project designated funding for the project for the 2005 fiscal year. "On January 12, 2001, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published a notice of intent in the *Federal Register* advising the public that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

wins-award/. The exhibition was awarded with the Western Museums Association Award for Exhibition Excellence.

[43] Ibid.

[44] *California Forest Highway 224, Bautista Canyon Road Project, Riverside County: Environmental Impact Statement.*, 2004, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ien.35556034773382., iii.

[45] Ibid., ii.

would be prepared for the proposed project."[46] Cahuilla community members, including Donna, attended public scoping meetings to voice their opposition to the construction of the roadway. Throughout the process of writing the EIS, Largo, her students, and friends identified endangered traditional Cahuilla plants and foodstuffs that laid in the path of the project. Largo and her colleagues argued that Cahuilla people continued to rely on the plants, such as deer grass and sumac, to create baskets and other cultural items. In the end, Largo's and the Cahuilla communities' efforts helped prove the project to be non-viable. Today, many of Donna's students fight for the land and their ability freely access its resources.

Perhaps Donna's greatest legacy is that of *Nex'wetem*: Southern California Basketweavers. Throughout her many years of teaching at Idyllwild Arts, Donna noticed an increase in Cahuilla and other southern California Native people taking her class. Many of these students could only attend her class because of a scholarship or grant their home communities awarded them. Donna strongly felt that every one of southern California Native heritage should have the right to access her basket weaving lessons. While the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA) held annual gatherings and provided workshops throughout the state, Donna wanted a stronger support network for southern California basket weavers. Accordingly, in the fall of 2000, she formed *Nex'wetem* with the assistance of Lorene Sisquoc, Daniel McCarthy, Daniel Largo,

[46] Ibid., 5.

Rosemary Murillo, Michael Rodarte, and Maree Cheatham.[47] The organization's first gathering occurred at a campsite near Idyllwild over Halloween weekend. Families from surrounding reservations, as well as from throughout Southern California, participated in the event, which was sponsored by local tribes including the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians. Over the course of the weekend, Donna and her students held weaving circles, which consisted of teaching those in attendance the basics of creating traditional basket pieces. Donna and Sisquoc also began to teach about how basket materials could also be used for food or medicine.[48] Furthermore, participants ate, socialized, listened to bird songs with one another.

To those in attendance, it felt like a return to the old days before the invasion of European and American people. Sisquoc recalled the gathering as the first step in healing the community and Mother Earth.[49] For so long, southern California Native people endured horrendous treatment on behalf of American laws and prejudices. They could rarely access their traditional homelands, and very few individuals could remember the old way of living. Even worse, many did not see the point of engaging with tradition when it had the possibility of being ripped away from them at any second. However, *Nex'wetem* provided people with the opportunity to practice tradition and connect with family, friends, and loved ones. Individuals once again had the opportunity to learn how to give back to the Earth properly and how to tend to its needs. This initial gathering helped Native people reconnect with their ancestors and have a way to ensure that basket

[47] Oral Interview of Lorene Sisquoc with Meranda Roberts, July 6, 2017, Sherman Indian Museum in Riverside, California. Hereby cited as Lorene Sisquoc Interview.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

weaving would never become endangered again. After this first event, *Nex'wetem* began to regularly sponsor individuals of southern California Native descent to take Donna's summer class at Idyllwild Arts. Since Donna required all of her students to promise that they would continue to weave and teach basketry to others, she was able to build a secure network of teachers who shard he passion and goals.

Just as meaningful as it was to pass on the knowledge of basket weaving to others, so was the way Donna's students incorporated her teaching style into their lessons. For example, a majority of her students have also had their classes collect their own plant materials so that they could learn about taking care of the world around them. Additionally, everyone should realize that basket weaving is not a fast process. Instead, weaving should be approached with respect and an understanding that a piece can only be made when the plant materials are ready for use. If one were to grow frustrated with the process or express a negative attitude, those feelings could become entrapped into the basket piece and affect those that come into contact with it. As such, one has to recognize the sacredness of weaving and that it is not something that should be done for the wrong reasons; including only weaving baskets for a monetary gain. Lastly, Donna wanted her students to determine who could attend their courses. While Donna had no problem teaching non-Native students, some of her students do because they have feared the appropriation of their culture. Donna realized that once students left her class, that they had to establish boundaries around their weaving and could not interfere with their process. To Donna, all that mattered was that people were going to learn about basket

weaving's many beautiful aspects. She worked hard on ensuring its survival and did what she could to instill that same sense of purpose onto her many students.

In 2006, Donna co-authored a book with Daniel McCarthy, the Tribal Relations Program Manager for the San Bernardino National Forest, and Marcia Roper titled *Medicinal Plants Used by Native American Tribes in Southern California.* The book is a resource guide for medical providers and traditional healthcare practitioners to better coordinate patient care with traditional practices. A secondary purpose is to make available information about traditional medicine to anyone interested in disease prevention through Native American knowledge and traditions."[50] This work helped local doctors who treated Native people how traditional plants could negatively interact with prescribed drugs. Donna worked hard to have doctors derive a better understanding of Native people's needs and medicinal practices.[51] By informing practitioners how to use traditional plants when treating Native communities, Donna ensured that her people could live long and prosperous lives.

Donna Mae Largo passed away on March 4, 2009, at the age of sixty- four. Besides being a culture bearer, Donna also worked as a community health representative and educator with the non-profit organization Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health Inc. for twenty years.[52] "She is survived by her husband, Anthony; three sons, John, David, and Joseph; her daughter-in-law, Candi and her two grandchildren, Destiny

[50] "Medicinal Plants Used by Native American Tribes in Southern California," *Malki Museum*, accessed July 10, 2018, http://malkimuseum.org/product/medicinal-plants-used-by-native-american-tribes-in-southern-california/.
[51] "In Memorium: Donna Mae Tortes Largo," *The Spirit: The Newsletter of the Agua Caliente Museum*, November 2009, http://www.accarchives.org/newsletters/FINAL.pdf.
[52] Ibid.

and Faith; her brother, Augustine and cousins, Marvin, Mayme, Celeste, Mercy, Steven, Betty, Charles, Dennis, Charlotte…and many nieces and nephews.[53] Her unexpected death came as a shock. At first, many did not see how they could move forward with basket weaving without the guidance or support of their teacher. *Nex'wetem* gatherings did not happen as often as they once had, and no one was sure about who would take over the summer course at Idyllwild Arts. Despite these setbacks, former students, like Tashina Miranda Ornelas, have begun to build from what Donna left behind and created their own basket weaving program. Friend, Rose Ann Hamilton, was asked by Donna's family to take over for the class at Idyllwild Arts and has begun to establish a legacy as a formidable basket weaver and culture bearer. Hamilton and Ornelas' stories of working and learning from Donna provide insight into how one woman was able to revitalize Cahuilla basket weaving and make it tradition that many will continue for years to come.

Rose Ann Hamilton grew up on the Cahuilla Reservation and is the granddaughter of Rosanda Apapas Hopkins Tortez Lugo and the great-granddaughter of Antonia Casero, both master Cahuilla basket weavers.[54] Regrettably, Rose Ann never learned how to make baskets from her grandmothers due to their deaths. Nevertheless, Rose Ann continued to learn what she could about Cahuilla culture and history. One of her earliest teachers was Donna, who was Rose Ann's mother's cousin.[55] Donna was around so often that Rose Ann considered her as a second mother.

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[53] "Donna Mae Largo's Obituary on The Press-Enterprise," The Press-Enterprise, March 12, 2009, https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/pe/obituary.aspx?n=donna-mae-largo&pid=125038728.
[54] "Faculty Bios," *Idyllwild Arts*, accessed July 4, 2018, https://www.idyllwildarts.org/summer/adultarts/adultfaculty/.
[55] Rose Ann Hamilton Interview.

As Donna began to work on revitalizing Cahuilla basketry, Rose Ann became extremely interested. However, she did not have the opportunity to take the class at Idyllwild Arts until 1993. During the workshop, Donna only taught her students the fundamental characteristics of creating a basket because she wanted them to develop a personal style and to learn first-hand about the best ways to take care of the environment while gathering basket materials.[56] Donna believed that if her students did not learn this way, they would never learn "how to manage the plants, how to prune them properly, how to gather them, how to dye them know when to pick them, how to split them. It all takes skill and close observation and manage of plants of materials."[57] After the class, Rose Ann continued to weave and seek Donna's advice about how to perfect her skills. In time, Donna recognized Rose Ann's immense talent and asked Rose Ann to fill in for classes that she could not make due to her hectic schedule. She also helped Donna facilitate the visitation of the University of California, Los Angeles' Dr. Ellen Pearlstein, professor of UCLA Information Studies and UCLA/ Getty Program in Conservation of Archaeological and Ethnographic Materials (Cultural Heritage Preservation), and her graduate students.[58] During this visit, Dr. Pearlstein and her students traveled to the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum to learn more about plants used in creating traditional basket pieces and how to preserve those plants for future use.[59] Rose Ann has continued with this collaboration since Donna's death.

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] "UCLA/Getty Looks Back on a Decade of Working with Agua Caliente Cultural Museum," *LA Social Science*, May 29, 2018, https://lasocialscience.ucla.edu/2018/05/29/ucla-getty-looks-back-on-a-decade-of-working-with-agua-caliente-cultural-museum/.
[59] Rose Ann Hamilton Interview.

Rose Ann always knew that Donna was looking for someone to step into her role at Idyllwild when she could no longer do it herself. However, no one expected Donna to pass away in 2009. At a memorial service for Donna at Idyllwild, a lot of Donna's students came to offer their condolences to the Largo family. At one point, Donna's family approached Rose Ann at the memorial to ask her to keep teaching Donna's basket weaving class at Idyllwild. Rose Ann hesitated to take on this responsibility because of the amount of pain she felt about losing her close friend and confidant. Nevertheless, Rose Ann set her grief aside and agreed to keep Donna's legacy alive at Idyllwild. Rose Ann soon started to teach at other locations, including the Riverside Metropolitan Museum, the Autry Museum, and numerous reservations throughout southern California.[60] She had to learn how to teach non-Native students, something that she never wanted to do before Donna's death. Rose Ann realized that to keep Donna's legacy alive and to ensure the survival of Cahuilla basket weaving that she had to open her mind to teaching everyone who wanted to learn.[61]

Rose Ann firmly believes that Donna is still helping her today. She knows that Donna helps her recall memories of their time together or to help formulate some of Donna's goals that she did not see come to full fruition. For example, one of Donna's biggest desires was to have more young people become involved in weaving. Usually, children and teenagers do not want to learn about the basket weaving process because they lack the patience to see it all the way through. To show children the respect and

[60] "Faculty Bios," *Idyllwild Arts*, accessed July 4, 2018, https://www.idyllwildarts.org/summer/adultarts/adultfaculty/.
[61] Rose Ann Hamilton Interview.

honor they could earn through basketry Donna consistently pushed her adult students to create pieces for museum exhibitions or public displays. Donna wanted young children to see that their culture mattered. Before she passed, Donna did notice an increase in younger people showing an interest in weaving and wanting to display their efforts. Rose Ann picked up this pursuit and has routinely involved her students, as well as many of Donna's former students, to include their baskets in exhibitions throughout California.[62]

In 2017, Rose Ann realized the impact her and Donna's work has had on the youth as she entered an exhibit at the Palos Verdes Art Center called *Glass/Cedar/Grass*.[63] The show featured contemporary beadwork, as well as a series of grass baskets made by Rose Ann and many of her students. As she drove to the opening, she looked up, and a saw a banner advertising the exhibition that featured some of the items that were to be on display. In the middle of the banner was a star coiled basket made by Victoria Chubb from Morongo. At that moment, Rose Ann knew she was fulfilling Donna's vision of having Cahuilla people learn ancestral basket weaving and having the ability to teach it to others so that it survived for future generations. Rose Ann also knew that other young Native children would see Chubb's work on that banner and become interested in learning how to weave for themselves.

Donna helped Rose Ann realize her purpose. She also provided Rose Ann with a way to grow close with her ancestors, especially with the grandmothers who had been considered master weavers but never had the opportunity to pass on their craft to their

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

descendants. Both Donna's and Rose Ann's efforts in sustaining basket weaving have helped to promote other parts of Cahuilla culture that have become revitalized, including language classes. By combining these courses, the Cahuilla community can heal from the trauma of their past. As a whole, Donna helped to teach Rose Ann patience and instilled her with a sense of confidence. Had it not been for Donna and her dedication to wanting to preserve Cahuilla culture, especially basketry, so many aspects of the community would not be currently in existence.[64] Rose Ann misses Donna very much, but she knows that she would proud and that she is continuously guiding her.[65]

Another one of Donna's students who continues to look at Donna for guidance is Tashina Miranda Ornelas, a cultural teacher at the Noli Indian School on the Soboba Reservation. Tashina is part of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians and grew up at Soboba. She grew up in a single mother household and was consistently exposed to culture by her grandmother. Together, they attended fiestas and rodeos where men sang bird songs and families exchanged stories. Tashina also viewed women weaving baskets. However, these events were few and far between, and as a result, Tashina never had the opportunity to ascertain knowledge about her communities' culture. She feels that this lack of engagement created a void in her heart and is what drove her to rebel as a teenager.[66]

In 1995, Pechanga opened its first gaming facility on tribal land and began to earn a steady flow of revenue. These funds provided tribal members the opportunity to access

[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Tashina Ornelas Interview.

resources they could not in the past, including higher education.[67] As a result, Tashina was able to attend Mt. San Jacinto College after graduating from high school. Upon leaving community college, Tashina knew she wanted to continue with her education and decided to apply to the University of California, Riverside (UCR) as a Native American Studies major.[68] Around this time, she also began to take basket weaving classes with Lorene Sisquoc. In 2002, Tashina graduated from UCR and was not sure her next move.[69] She knew she wanted to be involved in promoting her communities' culture in some capacity but did not know how to go about it. Six months after graduating, Carrie Garcia, the director of the Soboba Cultural Center, approached Tashina about a cultural teaching position at the Noli Indian School on the Soboba Reservation.[70] Although she initially hesitated to take the position because of her lack experience, the school heavily recruited her and Tashina eventually took the job.

Noli opened 1990 "when the Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians made a commitment to improve educational opportunities for Native Youth."[71] Noli is not a boarding school instead, students are bused in from nearly fifteen local reservations within an 80-mile radius of the school each day.[72] Many of the school's students are from Morongo, Pala, Pechanga, Torres Martinez, Pauma, Los Coyotes, Rincon, La Jolla, and Agua Caliente. In addition to having an academic based curriculum, Noli also offers

[67] "Pechanga Band of Luseno Indians - HISTORY," accessed July 5, 2018, http://www.pechanga-nsn.gov/index.php/history.
[68] Tashina Ornelas Interview .
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] "Noli Indian School," *SCTDV*, accessed July 5, 2018, https://sctdv.net/noli-indian-school/.
[72] Ibid.

students cultural classes that help students stay connected to their home communities traditions; including a two-week course on basket weaving. Tashina wanted students to spend more time on learning how to weave and as such lobbied the school to have a yearlong course dedicated basketry. She was also awarded a scholarship to take Donna's class at Idyllwild the summer before the new basketry course was set to begin.

During her time with Donna, Tashina learned to approach weaving and teaching with a great deal of patience. She watched as Donna approached each person in her class with compassion and respect.[73] Donna was never negative towards any of her students. Instead, she encouraged everyone in attendance to learn from one another and not be afraid to make a mistake. Donna also emphasized the importance of going out into the environment to collect plant materials and learn how to prepare the plants for use.[74] Tashina admired that Donna wanted her students to get their hands dirty and learn about weaving by first understanding that the abundance of the environment is what allows people to weave in the first place. Tashina's time in the summer course inspired her so much that she decided to incorporate Donna's teaching style in her own class at Noli. Tashina emphasized that each of her basket weaving class should only have a handful of students so that she could spend an adequate amount of time teaching them how to gather their materials. These small classes also provided Tashina with the ability to reiterate ancestral stories easily and facilitate field trips to museums so that students could pick up

[73] Tashina Ornelas Interview.
[74] Ibid.

on styles/stitches from their ancestors that they had never been familiar with; just as Donna had Donna with her.[75]

Eventually, Tashina began to participate in gatherings held by *Nex'wetem* and CIBA. These meetings provided Tashina with a space to connect with other Native women and to create closeness to her community that she never had before. Furthermore, Tashina met her husband at a gathering in Los Coyotes and in time they began to raise a family. The void Tashina once had was now being filled, and she wanted to ensure that her children, as well as Noli students, would never feel the type of displacement she once had. Therefore, she created a plan with the Noli Cultural Department to create an indigenous plant garden at the school.[76] With the help of her students, the department planted cactus, juncus, white sage, deer-grass, elderberry, and pinon trees.[77] The food grown in the garden is harvested and are a part of the school's nutritional program.[78] Overall, Tashina has envisioned the whole campus being a living garden that will help students connect with their ancestors and the environment.

None of these initiatives would be possible if Tashina never had the opportunity to learn and work with Donna. When Tashina first began working at Noli, she was timid and unsure of her abilities as a teacher. However, after seeing how Donna learned to basket weave without a lot of resources available to her, Tashina knew she could make her dreams of promoting Luiseño culture come true. The level of confidence she gained

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[75] Ibid.
[76] "Soboba Reservation: Garden Becomes Lesson in Culture," *Press Enterprise*, October 22, 2011, https://www.pe.com/2011/10/22/soboba-reservation-garden-becomes-lesson-in-culture/.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

while working for Donna has given Tashina the push to get as many Native children from her community as involved with gatherings or basket weaving as possible. She has seen how learning these things have given people hope and self-assurance. Like Donna had guided her, Tashina is now leading her own children and her many students down a path where they are more comfortable with who they are as Native people and can have a piece of their culture that has not always been available. "Telling kids that they are Indian is not good enough, you have to guide them and teach them what that means and who they are. This helps them feel more secure with who they are. Our youth lack confidence and self-esteem because of everything that has been taken from them. Our culture can fill them with security."[79] Tashina is giving her kids and students the same encouragement and sense fulfillment that Donna passed onto her.

On a warm spring day in April 2018, the Soboba Cultural Department held the 8th annual Basketweavers Gathering at the Oaks on the Soboba reservation. Open only to Native people, and their families, weavers from around southern California, including members of CIBA, taught day long basket weaving classes. Those in attendance included Lorene Sisquoc, Rose Ann Hamilton, and Tashina Miranda Ornelas. All three women sat at different tables, throughout the event one could feel their connection and appreciation for one another. Tashina later said that these types of gatherings produce a tremendous amount of energy because people are coming together like they once did in the old days.[80]

[79] Tashina Ornelas Interview.
[80] Lorene Sisquoc Interview.

Despite these positive feelings, many people throughout the event state how much they miss seeing and learning from their friend/teacher, Donna Largo. Looking around the gathering, one would find it hard to not talk to someone who had not taken Donna's class at Idyllwild or participated in one of her many workshops. Donna not only succeeded in revitalizing Cahuilla basket weaving, but she also helped heal her community from the pain and sense of loss so many experienced because of American assimilation. She took it upon herself to learn from the few remaining weavers in the 1970's and prevented weaving from disappearing by making each of her students promise never to stop practicing their craft and to teach others. She also asked that her students keep practicing their weaving by tending to the environment, which would help build a connection to Mother Earth. The work and success of Sisquoc, Hamilton, Ornelas, as well as the gathering at Soboba, prove the victory and beauty of Donna's vision. Although she might no longer be with her family, friends, and students in the physical world, she is still very much felt in their hearts and never far from their minds. In fact, many feel her as they weave the pieces she showed them to make.

As the gathering ends and all of the basket weaving has stopped for the day, those still present reflect. They recall the baskets made, the stories told, the songs sung, and the appreciation for being able to experience this type of event. They are all thinking the same thing, "none of this would have been possible without Donna."[81]

[81] Tashina Ornelas and Rose Ann Hamilton Interview.

Figure 4.3. Donna Largo (center) with Lorene Sisquoc (left) and son David Largo (right). Photo courtesy of Lorene Sisquoc.

Figure 4.4. Donna Largo weaving. Photo courtesy of *Nex'wetem*

Conclusion

The life and work of Dat So La Lee (Washoe), Elsie Allen (Makahmo Pomo), Lorene Sisquoc (Fort Sill Apache/Mountain Cahuilla), and Donna Largo (Santa Rosa Cahuilla) perfectly exemplify the power and sovereignty Native women possess. Settler colonialism deeply affected each woman and their communities. As a result, they all faced difficulty in garnering support for their basket weaving pursuits. Nevertheless, they persisted and established a path for their descendants to follow to ensure ancestral basket weaving would never become endangered again. Today, each woman's community uses basket weaving to assist in teaching tribal history, language, spirituality, culture, and pride.

Allen, Sisquoc, and Largo legacies consist of creating organizations that are used today as a way to help communities heal from generational trauma and tend to Mother Earth in the same ways that their ancestors did before European and American contact. These groups, such as *Nex'wetem,* have also provided a way for women to establish boundaries over whom they allow into their weaving circles and what kind of knowledge they will share to any non-Natives invited to a session. Accordingly, this type of interaction has given way for Native women to reclaim their sense of agency in the American public and be respected as culture bearers. Finally, these three women worked on building collaborative relationships with museums, including the Grace Hudson Museum in Ukiah, California and the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles, California. These connections have helped museum professionals understand the frustrations that Native people might have when working with their institutions, but

also how to reconceptualize the way they exhibit Native American basketry. Allen, Sisquoc, and Largo made sure that museums understand how baskets are living entities with specific purposes and not just masterful pieces of art available for sale.

Sadly, all of the accomplishments that Allen, Sisquoc, and Largo experienced could not be felt by Dat So La Lee, who lived at a time where Washoe society was at its most vulnerable. Upon having her life uprooted in the 1850s as a result of the arrival of white silver miners to Nevada, Dat So La Lee had to seek employment at white-owned businesses. Since she knew she could produce beautiful basket pieces, Dat So La Lee earned patronage at a curio shop owned by Abe and Amy Cohn in Carson City, Nevada. From that moment forward, the Cohns began to write romanticized stories about Dat So La Lee's life and baskets to make her work to seem more "authentic" to interested collectors. Contemporary scholars have insinuated that the Cohn's stories and efforts to distort Dat So La Lee's true history means there is no way to know who she was and if she engaged with ancestral basket weaving after beginning her work with the Cohns. As described in the chapter about her life, this type of discussion completely disregards Dat So La Lee's sense of knowledge or her life before American contact. Dat So La Lee did not idly sit back as the Cohns attempted to control her. Instead, she often voiced her frustrations, continued close relationships with other Washoe women weavers, and utilized ancestral knowledge to create beautiful baskets. She had a lot more power than people have previously allotted her and as such she has not been looked at as someone who deserves recognition. However, with the chapter about her life, Dat So La Lee will hopefully begin to be remembered for her fortitude and for laying some of the

groundwork for Washoe basket weaving to continue. While she did not start any of the contemporary organizations that are around today, her works still serves as inspiration for many.

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have not only grown as a scholar but also as a Native woman. Each of the women's stories has provided me with lessons that have me live a more righteous and focused life. Researching Dat So La Lee made me appreciate the sacrifices made by my ancestors to keep tradition alive. Also, Dat So La Lee's passion for her loved one mirrored my own feelings about my family, which drove me to want to make sure to tell her story as accurately as possible.

Not a day goes by that I do not think about Elsie Allen. Despite the many hardships she faced as a Pomo woman, she did everything she could to fulfill her mother's dying wish of not burying her baskets with her so that their ancestral basket weaving would never disappear. Despite having a timid personality, Allen pushed through her fears and taught basket weaving to students across northern California. Her work as a cultural advisor for Sonoma State University's Warm Springs Cultural Resources Study proved Allen's love for the environment; especially the plants that laid in the path of the Warm Springs Dam. Allen worked with the rest of the other members of the study, all Native women, to transplant the sedge roots to a new location so that future basket weavers could still produce baskets from the same materials that their ancestors had used. Today, Allen's legacy lives on through her niece's work, the high school named after her in Santa Rosa, California, and the numerous baskets she left behind so that people could continue to learn from them.

Lorene Sisquoc and Donna Largo are the epitome of strength, love, and resiliency. It is hard to walk around in the Native community in Riverside County, California, and not run into someone who has not been positively affected by both women's work. Sisquoc and Largo often walked along the same path. Sisquoc began as one of Donna's students and is now in charge of leading her own basket weaving workshops throughout Southern California. Together they helped form *Nex'wetem* and taught people about the benefits of incorporating Native plants and foods into their lifestyle. Although Donna, is no longer with us, her legacy lives on through all of Sisquoc's hard work and determination. Donna's vision has also been carried out by many of her former students. Together they continue to work on passing on traditional traditions to those willing to learn.

Overall, these chapters encapsulate a brief, but beautiful glimpse into a world very few have had the privilege to know. Each one of these stories proves that Native American basketry is much more than an art available for purchase and exhibition. Instead, each chapter details how four different Native women overcame great hardship to maintain ancestral basket weaving and all of the stories associated with its production. Dat So La Lee, Elsie Allen, Lorene Sisquoc, and Donna Largo represent the strength, creativity, and sovereignty of each of their tribal communities. They also highlight the agency of Native women throughout the country. Their works and lives exemplify how Native people, their histories, and culture are still here. These four women prove we are resilient.

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