

3.4. New Cultural Center

The earliest account of encounters with the Hoopa people was from ethnologist George Gibbs in 1851. The name "Hopah" (or "Hoopah") was provided to the first government agents by the Yurok people downriver on the Klamath as the Yurok name for the Hoopa Valley. Before contact with whites, the people called the Hoopa Valley "*na:tini-xw*"; and called themselves "*na:tinixwe*" meaning "those of Hoopa Valley" or "*de:di-me:q*" meaning "here in this Valley, in Hoopa." The connection between the names reflects the connection between the people and the land. Rather than use the people's own name for themselves and their home, the whites adopted the Yurok name for the place, and extended it to the people too. The valley came to be called "Hoopa," and the Tribe, the people, and their language became known as "Hupa" (*In Hoopa Territory: A guide to natural attractions and human history of the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation and Surrounding Areas*, Sabra L. Steinberg, Jeffrey R. Dunk, and TallChief A. Comet, Hoopa Valley Tribe, 2000).



Existing Conditions: Interest in Native Americans by non-native Americans is generally high in the state of California and around the world. However, for most people, knowledge about the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation and the culture it represents is largely limited to the view of the town from the windshield of vehicles traveling from Willow Creek to Weitchpec and points north on Highway 96. A beautiful sign near the Tish Tang campground announces the entry to the Hoopa Valley Reservation. The vista overlook further north offers dramatic views of historic Xhontas (homes) across the river. Upon crossing the Trinity River Bridge, the sign for the shopping center reflects traditional images and colors. The Archives building reflects traditional building style and materials but is within the Tribal Office complex and not visible from Highway 96 nor readily accessible by visitors.



The shopping center sign reflects traditional images and colors.



The Archives building reflects traditional building style and materials.



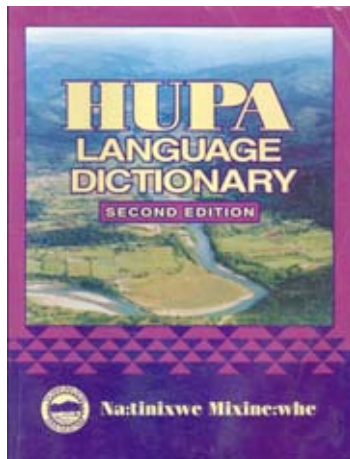
The Hoopa Tribal Museum is located in the same shopping center as the motel, casino, and Ray's Market. The museum provides beautiful displays of baskets, and basket caps, traditional clothing and dance regalia, willow fish weirs, jewelry and shell beads used for money, among many other items. While the museum is a fascinating and intriguing place, its location between the food store and casino limits its visibility and accessibility to visitors.

The main ceremonial grounds and other ceremonial and sacred sites exist within the Reservation. However, many of these are not open to the general public. Reservation lands are not the same as public lands. Land belongs to the Tribe and to tribal members (though some land is owned by non-tribal members). Recreationists and other visitors only have the legal right to be on state or county roads, beyond that, access is at the discretion of the Tribe. Exploring areas on the reservation or camping outside of the developed campground is not authorized without prior permission from the Tribe (Steinberg et.al, 2000).

Discussion: Issues and ideas related to pride of community, sense of place, and celebrating cultural heritage along Highway 96 and other areas within the Reservation, were a common theme among focus groups and project participants.

One of the goals of the Hoopa Valley Reservation Transportation Plan embraces this concept:

- Develop a welcome center for tourists visiting Hoopa to include information kiosk, restrooms, and a shaded picnic area.



The Hoopa Tribe is also one of the first Tribes to take over forestry, road maintenance and construction and wildland fire management from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Similarly, the Hoopa Tribe is a leader in natural resources management responsible for monitoring and reporting of the fishery for the entire Trinity River Basin and is continuing to fight for rights over the Trinity River. The Tribe is also steward to some of the last remaining acres of old growth Douglas Fir in northwest California which provides a refuge for rapidly disappearing old growth dependent species such as the spotted owl. The Hupa language program is being implemented in both the elementary school and high school (*The Hoopa People*, The Hoopa Valley Tribe).

A new cultural center can provide areas for Tribal members to celebrate and practice traditional cultural beliefs and skills, and revitalize the Hupa language as well as providing a showcase for visitors including the to-be-relocated cultural museum, local art and crafts displays, among others. For example, redwood was used to make canoes because of its softness and ease with which it could be worked and because it would not crack in the sun. Similarly, baskets were basic and necessary items in the everyday life of the Hupa people. The style of baskets made by the Hupa are called twined basketry and are considered some of the finest in the world for their "clean, esthetic decorative design." Larger baskets were made for carrying loads of firewood, winnowing baskets, cooking baskets, storage baskets, eating bowls, and women's hats. Traditionally, women did most of the gathering of material for baskets, and were the basket makers. Men were also skilled weavers making fishing nets, bird and fish traps (Steinberg et.al, 2000).

Recommendations: The Conceptual Plan recommends construction of a new cultural center on the site vacated by the realignment of Tish Tang Road with the intersection with Highway 96. While the cultural center could be located on other sites, this one is especially appropriate because of its proximity to the Trinity River and adjacency to the new "Village Center." The cultural center itself could reflect traditional building styles and materials much like the Kim Yerton Library with the building set within a raised earthen mound (Figure 7. New Cultural Center).

Outdoor areas could locate and interpret Xhonta architecture and gardens for ceremonial and medicinal plants.

The cultural center grounds could further the understanding and appreciation of the Hupa culture by offering displays and interpretive exhibits. Garden spaces within the cultural center grounds could include some of the following basket making materials (Steinberg et.al, 2000):

- Hazel ticks, and willow sticks were used for warp material;
- Conifer roots (ponderosa pine, sugar pine, yellow pine, as well as Sitka spruce) for weft material;
- Bear grass leaves (often dyed yellow by boiling with wolf moss or roots of Oregon grape) for overlay materials; and,
- Maidenhair fern and giant chain fern.



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Hupa youth enact a traditional ceremonial dance.



Historic photo of redwood canoe.



Figure 7. New Cultural Center