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*How the Sierra is changing names to honor the more honorable
Farewell to two radicals with a common goal – changing the West
Ozette: The US' Lost 2,000-Year-Old Village
MAP Waters Act Introduced, Considered in House Natural Resources Committee
Faces of the Pack: Carson Allen
Learning about the importance of ribbon skirts in Native American culture
After Thanksgiving Craft Sale*



How the Sierra is changing names to honor the more honorable

More than a century before Mount Whitney began welcoming thousands of climbers every year, a group of Buffalo Soldiers reached the summit in 1903. These first African Americans to climb the mountain also built its first summit trail. Enthralled by the grand scenery, Captain Charles Young committed to “preserving these mountains just as they are.”

Under Young’s command, Buffalo Soldiers protected Sequoia National Park’s big trees, guarded against poachers and prevented illegal grazing. Sadly, the nation all but forgot these heroes for a century – yet the same park honored Confederate General Robert Lee, naming a giant sequoia for a traitor who fought to keep such men in slavery.

This is no isolated problem. A Sierra Nevada map reads like a badly-flawed history book, full of places named for 19th Century white men, to the exclusion of nearly everyone else. Lee isn't the only white supremacist to win a geographic honor. Women and people of color are rare, women of color especially so. Indigenous names are nearly forgotten.

But a revived national civil rights movement has promoted a welcome map makeover in recent years, which accelerated after the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd in 2020. Scores of geographic names have changed across the country, including some within the Sierra Nevada mountains.

- Jeff Davis Peak near Lake Tahoe, which honored the Confederates' president, officially became Da-ek Dow Go-et Mountain, as the Washoe Tribe proposed.
- China Peak Mountain Resort, which was called Sierra Summit for nearly 40 years, restored its original name which reflects its location, Chinese Peak. The mountain is named for Chinese-American cowboy and shepherd Yung Lee.
- Squaw Valley has changed its name to Palisades Tahoe after the ski resort acknowledged the racism and sexism of the word "Squaw."
- Some 660 geographic features on federal land containing the word "squaw" changed at the direction of U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, with 80 of the renamed locations in California and 34 are in Nevada. For example, Hungalelti Ridge in Mokelumne Wilderness changed at the Washoe Tribe's suggestion.
- Yosemite renamed Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center, removing the name of Joseph LeConte, an enslaver and Confederate.
- Just east of Yosemite, state officials dedicated a portion of Highway 120 as Chiura Obata Great Nature Memorial Highway, in honor of the Japanese-American artist who created breathtaking artwork of the region.
- California State Parks renamed Black Miners Bar in Folsom Lake State Recreation Area (formerly called Negro Bar), where African American miners prospected for gold in 1850.
- The name of Portuguese Joe Campground in Lone Pine changed after critics said the former name contained an anti-Portuguese slur.
- In addition, proponents suggested a new name for Alabama Hills National Recreation Area, named by Confederate sympathizers for a Rebel warship. The Bureau of Land Management is considering the suggestion.

Outdoors enthusiasts should welcome these changes. We who often enjoy public lands know that the outdoor-loving public is much less diverse than our overall population. People of color visit national parks in lower numbers than their white counterparts. African Americans tally [just 1% of Yosemite visitors](#), for example. Taking steps to make more people feel welcome hurts no one. It's simply the right thing to do.

However, the process raises some tricky questions. Traitors and enslavers get no defense from me, but what about John Muir? The Sierra Club recently renounced its founder for his racist writings disparaging Blacks and Native Americans. Yet the revered conservationist helped launch the environmental movement and the National Park Service itself. Should we retitle every trail, park, mountain and the many schools named for him?

Clearly the map needs more diversity, but what about the likes of James Beckwourth? A Sierra Nevada pass and mountain honor the biracial American from Virginia who survived slavery and moved west. Yet, he brags in his autobiography about killing Indians and striking his wife with an axe.

In a world of flawed people, where do we draw the line?

I can't answer that, but I'm certain we have far to go before going too far. So, I'm glad to see well-intentioned people trying to promote sensitivity, diversity and inclusion in the outdoors.

Palisades Tahoe ski area changed its name to remove a racist and sexist slur. Credit Matt Johanson

Charles Young would be happy too, I suspect. The first African American national park superintendent, Young wrote of a future in which “overworked and weary citizens of the country can find rest” in the outdoors. He and his Buffalo Soldiers helped make that vision a reality.

A century later, Sequoia National Park named one of its magnificent trees for him. Colonel



Friends of the Inyo want to change the Alabama Hills' name, which honors a Confederate battleship. Credit Matt Johanson

More than a century before Mount Whitney began welcoming thousands of climbers every year, a group of Buffalo Soldiers reached the summit in 1903. These first African Americans to climb the

Charles Young Memorial Highway followed. Later, the National Park Service removed references to slave-owning Robert Lee from trees in the mountains Young protected.

To that, this descendant of Civil War soldiers says, “Huzzah!”

<https://sierranevadaally.org/2023/11/15/how-the-sierra-nevada-is-changing-names-to-honor-the-more-honorable/>

Farewell to two radicals with a common goal – changing the West

How two wildly different men found commonalities around a shared vision

<https://sierranevadaally.org/2023/11/11/farewell-to-two-radicals-with-a-common-goal-changing-the-west/>

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*“Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is te key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.” - Albert Schweitzer*  
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Ozette: The US' Lost 2,000-Year-Old Village

BBC Travel Brendan Sainsbury

In 1970, a violent storm uncovered a Makah village that was buried by a mudslide more than 300 years earlier. A museum tells the fascinating story of the ancient site.



(Image credit: Paulacobleigh/Getty Images)

Coming to the end of a short, winding trail, I found myself standing in the extreme north-west corner of the contiguous US, a wild, forested realm where white-capped waves slam against the isolated Washington coast with a savage ferocity. Buttressed by vertiginous cliffs battling with the corrosive power of the Pacific, Cape Flattery has an elemental, edge-of-continent feel. No town adorns this stormy promontory. The nearest settlement, Neah Bay, sits eight miles away by road, a diminutive coast-hugging community that is home to the Makah, an indigenous tribe who have fished and thrived in this region for centuries.

The Makah are represented by the motif of a thunderbird perched atop a whale, and their story is closely linked to the sea.

“The Makah is the only tribe with explicit treaty rights to whale hunting in the US,” explained Rebekah Monette, a tribal member and historic preservation programme manager. “Our expertise in whaling distinguished us from other tribes. It was very important culturally. In the stratification of Makah society, whaling was at the top of the hierarchy. Hunting had the capacity to supply food for a vast number of people and raw material for tools.”

After reading news stories about the Makah’s [whaling rights](#) and the [impact of climate change](#) on their traditional waters, I had come to their 27,000-acre reservation on Washington’s Olympic Peninsula to learn more, by visiting a unique [tribal museum](#).



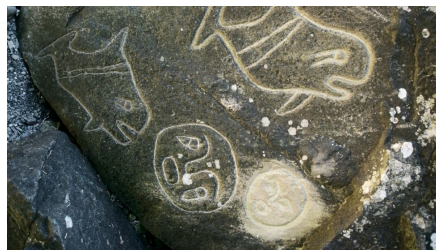
The imposing statues outside the Makah Museum wear distinctive cedar-bark rain hats (Credit: Brendan Sainsbury)

Due to a trick of fate, Makah history is exceptionally well-documented. In contrast to other North American civilisations, a snapshot of their past was captured and preserved by a single cataclysmic episode. In 1970, a brutal Pacific storm uncovered part of an abandoned coastal Makah village called Ozette located 15 miles south of Cape Flattery. Part of the village had been buried by a mudslide that was possibly triggered by a dramatic seismic event around 1700, almost a century before the first European contact. Indeed, [research](#) argues that ancestors of the Makah – or related Wakashan speaking people – have been present in the area for at least 4,000 years, which, if proven, would change our understanding of prehistory in the Olympic Peninsula and Vancouver Island.

Miraculously, the mud had protected embedded organic matter by sealing it off from the air. As a result, thousands of well-preserved artefacts that would normally have rotted – from intact woven cedar baskets to dog-hair blankets and wooden storage boxes – were able to be painstakingly unearthed during a pioneering archaeological dig.

Due to the suddenness of the event and the exceptional levels of preservation, scientists hailed the find a “Western Pompeii” and the [Washington Post](#) called it “the most comprehensive collection of artefacts of a pre-European-contact Indian culture ever discovered in the United States”.

Anxious the material might be engulfed by the sea and lost, the tribe called in Richard Daugherty, an influential archaeologist at Washington State University who’d been involved in fieldwork in the area since the 1940s. Having good connections with Congress, Daugherty helped secure federal funding for an exhaustive excavation.



Makah petroglyphs can still be seen at Wedding Rocks, just south of the Ozette archaeological site (Credit: Natalie Fobes/Getty Images)

“Dr Daugherty was instrumental in the excavation work,” recounted Monette. “He was very progressive and interested in working alongside the tribe in the process. He worked to gain financing for 11 years.”

The Ozette dig lasted from 1970 until 1981 and ultimately unearthed around 55,000 artefacts from six beachside cedar houses covered by the slide. The Makah, like many indigenous groups, have a strong oral tradition, with much of their history passed down through storytelling, song and dance. The evidence unearthed at Ozette affirmed these stories and added important details.

“It was a spectacular place to excavate; the preservation and richness was extraordinary,” recalled archaeologist Gary Wessen, a former field director at the site who later wrote a PhD dissertation on the topic. “Ozette is what we call a primary deposition. We have all these materials preserved in the places where they were actually used. It helps tell us more about the social and spatial relationship of the people who lived in the houses.”

It was a spectacular place to excavate; the preservation and richness was extraordinary.

While much of the material dated from around 1700, some of it was significantly older. Indeed, archaeologists ultimately determined that multiple mudslides had hit Ozette over a number of centuries. Beneath one of the houses, another layer of well-preserved material dated back 800 years. The oldest finds so far have been radiocarbon-dated to 2,000 years and there are middens in the area that are at least 4,000 years old, according to Wessen.

From the outset, the Ozette dig was different to other excavations. Tribal members worked alongside university students at the site, and, early on, it was decided that the unearthed material would stay on the reservation rather than be spirited off to distant universities or other non-indigenous institutions. In 1979, the tribe opened the [Makah Cultural and Research Center](#) in Neah Bay with a museum to house a "greatest hits" of the collection. The 500 pieces on display represent less than 1% of the overall find.

“The tribe was very assertive of their ownership and control of the collection,” said Monette. “A lab was developed in Neah Bay. For the museum, we hired Jean Andre, the same exhibit designer as the [Royal BC Museum](#) in Victoria. We decided to tell our story seasonally with sections on spring, summer, fall and winter.”



The museum includes a reconstruction of a wooden Makah house among hundreds of other artefacts (Credit: Brendan Sainsbury)

The result is a beautifully curated space. Outside on a verdant lawn, I was welcomed by a reconstruction of a traditional wooden Makah house and two large statues wearing distinctive cedar-bark rain hats. Inside, where I met Monette, the assembled exhibits left no doubt about the tribe's maritime prowess. I saw 13ft whaling harpoons, wooden paddles and seal skin buoys. A large central space was taken up with two red cedar canoes guarded by a giant whale skeleton. We proceeded through a mock-up of a dark wooden Makah house with an opening that looked out over a hyper-realistic diorama of the seashore at Ozette.

I was particularly enamoured by the artistry of many of the carved wooden objects. There was a dorsal fin of a whale studded with hundreds of sea otter teeth, and an unusual figurine of a woman lying prostrate in the act of childbirth. These artefacts, along with ornate seal clubs and delicate combs, testify to a remarkable level of craftsmanship.

“The Makah were skilled woodworkers,” said Wessen. “They exhibited levels of sophistication regarding technology that weren't appreciated before.”

There are several elements about the Ozette project that make it one of the most important archaeological finds in North America to date. The sheer size of the collection coupled with the scale of the effort to recoup it was unprecedented. Then, there's the calibre of the preservation, which, at times, was almost surreal. Wessen recalled excavators using fire hoses to blast the clay off vegetation entrenched in the mudslide. In the process, they exposed green leafy alder branches to sunlight for the first time in more than 300 years. As the oxygen hit, the leaves would quickly turn black, but for 15 to 20 seconds, workers were treated to a glimpse of a bright green leaf from 1700.

Tribal elders were integral in helping archaeologists understand the meaning of many of the artefacts and how they were used. In the 1970s, there were still a dozen or so native speakers alive in Neah Bay. The knowledge of these elders perfectly complemented the scientific expertise of the archaeologists. Wessen remembers this sharing of ideas as a powerful experience. “When archaeologists and elders work together, we get a more complete understanding of the past,” he said.



The Makah are represented by the motif of a thunderbird perched atop a whale (Credit: Brendan Sainsbury)

Neah Bay today has a population of just more than 1,000 people and an economy based mainly on fishing. After returning to the town from my blustery walk out to Cape Flattery, I sought shelter in a small waterfront joint called [Calvin's Crab House](#) and watched as the weather swung capriciously between sun and rain.

Just outside, a small monument marked the site of Fort Núñez Gaona, a colonial outpost established by a Spanish lieutenant called Salvador Fidalgo in 1792 as the first non-native settlement in the north-western US. Although the Spanish only stayed for four months, their presence marked an important historical watershed, the moment in which two cultures intersected and learned to live alongside each other in a new and different world. Uniquely, Ozette offers us a time capsule of Native life before the changes prompted by European contact.

With the weather closing in, I decided against visiting the archaeological site, which is isolated and difficult to reach without a car. Unlike Pompeii, there are no ruins to walk around – although the surrounding beaches are spectacular – as the site was backfilled in 1981. All that remains today is an abandoned ranger station, a small memorial shed and some indigenous petroglyphs carved on rocks.

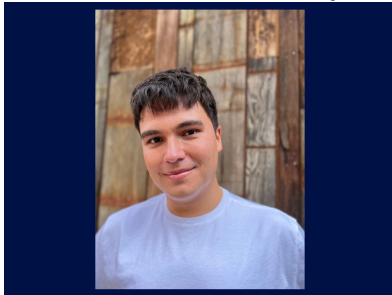
As to whether there's anything else down there, Wessen speculated there might be, but admitted that there's still more research to be done on the existing artefacts first: "The Ozette collection in its entirety has not come anywhere close to having its full research potential realised," he said.

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| <b>MAPWaters Act Introduced, Considered in House Natural Resources Committee</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| TRCP applauds the introduction of Modernizing Access to Our Public Waters Act (H.R. 6127) and the bill's consideration in the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries.                                                                           |
| The MAPWaters Act would improve recreation on federal waterways by investing in modern technology to provide anglers, hunters, boaters, and other water user the information they need to safely and legally access and utilize public waters administered by federal agencies. |

[Learn More →](#)

**Native business owner and full-time graduate student works to promote his brand and uplift Native voices in academia** by Maya Dampier



Carson Allen has lived in Fallon his entire life and is a member of the Paiute-Shoshone Tribe of the Fallon Reservation and Colony. He went to Churchill County High School where he excelled in English and performing arts. He decided to attend the University of Nevada, Reno for his



higher education journey as his dad and brother both went to Nevada as well. Allen is now a graduate student in the [Communication Studies program](#) and is excited to continue the family legacy of attending the University.

In high school, Allen loved theater and theater performers. He fell in love with the costumes the performers wore and wanted to be like them. But there was a lack of Native American representation in this field, and Allen found it hard to see himself in any of those outfits. He was inspired to take the theatrical costumes he saw on stage and make them into something that could be worn every day. While still maintaining elements of his theatrical background, Allen opened his shop, [HatXGame](#). His shop is now an online business where people all over the world can purchase his products.

“I started designing my own clothes in high school,” Allen said. “I started detailing and rhinestoning and perfecting my technique from the time I was 16-17 years old until now. I grew up watching these stage performers and I loved what they did, so I expanded my passion and developed it into an online store.”

Being a Native business owner, Allen has become more involved with the Native American community on campus. During his undergraduate years, he wasn't as active in the community since he was a full-time student and was working two jobs. While he wishes he had more flexibility in his schedule at that time, he is now excited to become more involved and use his voice to empower others.

“Now as I've gotten older, I'm starting to get more of that sense that I need to be active in my community and to be a representative of my community,” Allen said. “I make a conscious effort to try and always be the best representation that I can because, in a lot of situations, there are times I am the only Native person in the room. So, I think trying to be vocal and bring a voice to my people and our culture is the most important thing to me in my academic career.”

Allen believes that there is a notable lack of Native American voices and perspectives in academia, and he is determined to address that. Growing up both Native American and Italian was a struggle for Allen as he didn't know how to balance the two cultures. His goal is to be a voice for others going through similar struggles.

While Allen is in the early stages of writing his final research papers for his communication studies program, his chosen topic is multiple-race identity where he discusses his experiences as a mixed individual and how he navigates his two cultures.

“One of my articles is about how we perform mixed identity,” Allen said. “Mixed in terms of faith, ethnicity and other identities. My end goal is to get my papers published. My belief is that there is an underrepresentation of Native voices, especially in academia, and I want to use mine as an example for future generations.”

Growing up, Allen heard stories of the challenges his dad faced while pursuing his degree and how poorly his grandparents were treated. Allen is thrilled to see that times are changing, not only on campus, but worldwide, as people are becoming more interested in Native American culture and want to learn more.

“As time has gone on, it's been really wonderful for me to see, not only a stronger representation of Native people on campus, but a stronger interest in Native culture,” Allen said. “I feel so welcomed on campus, especially because I am a legacy student; my brother went here, my dad went here and family before that has gone here to the University. To be so welcomed and accepted on campus is incredible.”

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‘Ribbon skirts / shirts’ event held at UNR for Native American Heritage Month



Learning about the importance of ribbon skirts in Native American culture

By Taylor Burke

Published: Nov. 16, 2023 at 7:04 PM PST

RENO, Nev. (KOLO) - In honor of Native American Heritage Month, UNR hosted a class on ribbon shirts and skirts.

Creating ribbon shirts and skirts is a common practice between tribes across the country. In Indigenous culture, ribbon skirts are reserved for special ceremonies or events. Each color of the ribbons, which are typically sewn horizontally across the skirt, represents a special meaning or person to the wearer. They are meant to symbolize identity as each ribbon tells a story. Mackenzie Cady, the empowered leader at the multi cultural center says the event allows native American students be able to come together and represent who they are.

“As I was growing up, I was told, being native American, we would make the ribbons that go around after each significant thing in our lives. Significance could be birth, events that happen in your life, blue could be water or air, green can be earth,” Cady said.

This year’s workshop was held in collaboration with the University Libraries, which provided use of the library as well as sewing machines to create the articles of clothing.

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Eagle Wings' Fundraiser

AFTER
THANKSGIVING
CRAFT SALE
NOVEMBER 24TH & 25TH



Reno-Sparks Indian Colony Reno Gym

10am-6pm

34 Reservation Rd. Reno, NV

Over 40 Vendors
Native Tacos
Local Native Crafters & More

Raffle
U.N.I.T.Y. Concessions
Eagle Wings' Performance

\$35 a day for vendors

Make payments to Eagle Wings Pageant Dance Group

Send in Payments RSIC Finance 34 Reservation Rd. Reno, NV 89502

Or call (775) 329-2936 for payment over phone



Contact Stacey Burns
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