



NEWS RELEASE

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Mourns Passing of Tribal Elder

For Immediate Release

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Brooks, CA – With deep sadness, the Tribal Council of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation announces the death of Marshall McKay following his battle with COVID-19.

Speaking as one, the Yocha Dehe Tribal Council issued the following statement:

“We know our pain is shared by so many families facing the devastating effects of this pandemic. We know also the pain of Marshall’s loss is shared by the many who loved him and learned from him. We will miss his strength and wisdom. He was a resolute protector of Native American heritage here, within our own homeland, but also throughout California and Indian Country.”

For 31 years, from 1984 to 2015, Marshall McKay served as a member of the Yocha Dehe Tribal Council, elected to lead the Tribe as its Chairman for nearly a decade of that time. He continued to serve on many of the Tribe’s governmental bodies, including the Board of Directors for Cache Creek Casino Resort.

Marshall’s leadership was marked by a stalwart dedication to the preservation and promotion of Native American arts and culture, the affirmation of sovereign tribal governance, and the international effort to protect the rights of all indigenous people. He was instrumental in helping Yocha Dehe achieve economic independence, he helped the Tribe grow and diversify its agricultural operations, and he helped to greatly expand the Tribe’s land holdings within Yocha Dehe’s ancestral territory.

The son of the renowned healer and basket weaver Mabel McKay, Marshall possessed a deep passion and appreciation for Native art as a means for Native people to tell their stories and preserve their histories.

Marshall was a founding member of the Native Arts & Cultures Foundation, and he was appointed to the Board for Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. He also was the first Native American to be appointed Chairman of the Board for the Autry National Center (which includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, the Museum of the American West, and the Institute for the Study of the American West).

Marshall was a fierce advocate for the environment and tribal land rights, and a champion for sustainable living and land-use practices. He was dedicated to protecting tribal sovereignty and the rights of Native tribes and peoples, serving on the Board of the Native American Rights Fund. He was a Founding Commissioner of the California Native American Heritage Commission, whose charge is to protect Native American cultural resources, including places of religious and social significance to Native peoples, such as tribal cemeteries on private and public lands.

Marshall was the first of his tribe to attend college - Sonoma State University. He spent 15 years repairing and maintaining nuclear submarines for the Department of Defense, ultimately supervising those work crews. Born in Colusa near his tribal home within Yolo County's Capay Valley, Marshall was deeply devoted to his family and tribal community.

The Tribe is profoundly grateful for the care Marshall received from frontline healthcare workers in Los Angeles where his illness developed, an area particularly hard-hit by the pandemic.

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation is an independent, self-governed nation that supports our people and the Capay Valley, CA community by strengthening our culture, stewarding our land and creating economic independence for future generations.

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