

ASSUMPTIONS IN HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CONTACT-ERA NATIVE AMERICAN MINING AT HIOUCHI FLAT

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In 2008, PAR Environmental Services, Inc., worked with Redwood National and State Parks to research and survey areas at Hiouchi Flat, Del Norte County, California, within Tolowa Dee-ni' ancestral territory. Two sites, a hydraulic mining cut and a ditch, were assessed as associated with Euro-American homesteading and ranching efforts. New archival evidence links the sites to Native American activities at Hiouchi Flat. The implementation of holistic approaches to archaeology, examination of works by other researchers, and discussions with Tolowa Dee-ni' members suggest cultural adaptation through mining events at Hiouchi Flat, an ethnographic village, and Native American miners.

NORTHWEST CALIFORNIA CONTACT-ERA ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeologists often find intriguing artifacts in out-of-context places that challenge our interpretation of past events. When historical artifacts occur in precontact sites (and vice versa), we are forced to consider alternatives to our preconceived expectations. Despite the definitions of precontact and historical archaeology, reality is frequently less black and white. This “gray” area is often at risk of obscuring one of the most tumultuous and violent, but integral parts of California’s past (Panich 2013).

The period when there was early contact between Native communities and European people is referred to as the “contact period” and receives relatively little attention in predominant Northwest archaeological literature compared to historic and precontact era periods (Hildebrandt 2007; Jones and Klar 2007). Where attention is given, the literature focuses on the well-documented genocide that set California’s colonization apart from the rest, instead of the resilience of Native American tribes to preserve and adapt their way of life (Heizer 1974; Norton 1979). More recent works have changed to encompass a narrative of survival and perseverance (Panich 2013; Schneider and Panich 2019).

Archaeologically, this period of history is short and has proven challenging to document, both in the archival and archaeological records. Native Americans were not considered United States citizens until 1924 and were actively suppressed in official archival records before that time. For example, census data rarely give correct names, tribal affiliations, or simply ignore the presence of native communities, making it difficult to track their actions during a period significant to their cultural survival. Those who did survive may have chosen not to document themselves for fear of violence. The material evidence from the contact period is typically scant, either in mixed contexts, simply not present, misinterpreted, or not recognized by field archaeologists. This is especially true on California’s northwest coast, where the destruction of Native California communities was swift and brutal, leaving behind little physical evidence (Bommelyn 2011; Norton 1979).

For these reasons, archaeologically focused research in northern California has made only a small volume of contributions to the topic in comparison to the well-discussed California mission period. The following exemplifies the difficulty of such research by describing a 10-year effort to correctly interpret contact-era archaeological resources.

FIELD AND ARCHIVAL RESULTS

In 2008, PAR Environmental Services, Inc. worked with Redwood National and State Parks to research and survey portions of Hiouchi Flat and Jedediah Smith Campground in Del Norte County, California (Figure 1). The scope of work included survey and evaluation of land that has seen a succession of users, from the Tolowa Dee-ni' to Redwoods National and State Parks. Hiouchi Flat is a favored location, offering level ground, sunlight, and easy access to the northern banks of the Smith River.

The Tolowa Dee-ni' have lived at Hiouchi Flat for at least 8,000 years (Tushingam 2013). Ethnographically, three villages are known in the Hiouchi area: *Chvn-su'lh-dvn* (Red Elder Berry Place) located near the historic Zopfi homestead within Jedediah Smith State Park; *Xaa-yuu-chit* (important or beautiful water) near the modern-day town of Hiouchi; and *Lhe'sr-me'* (plank or board in) at or near Hiouchi Bridge.

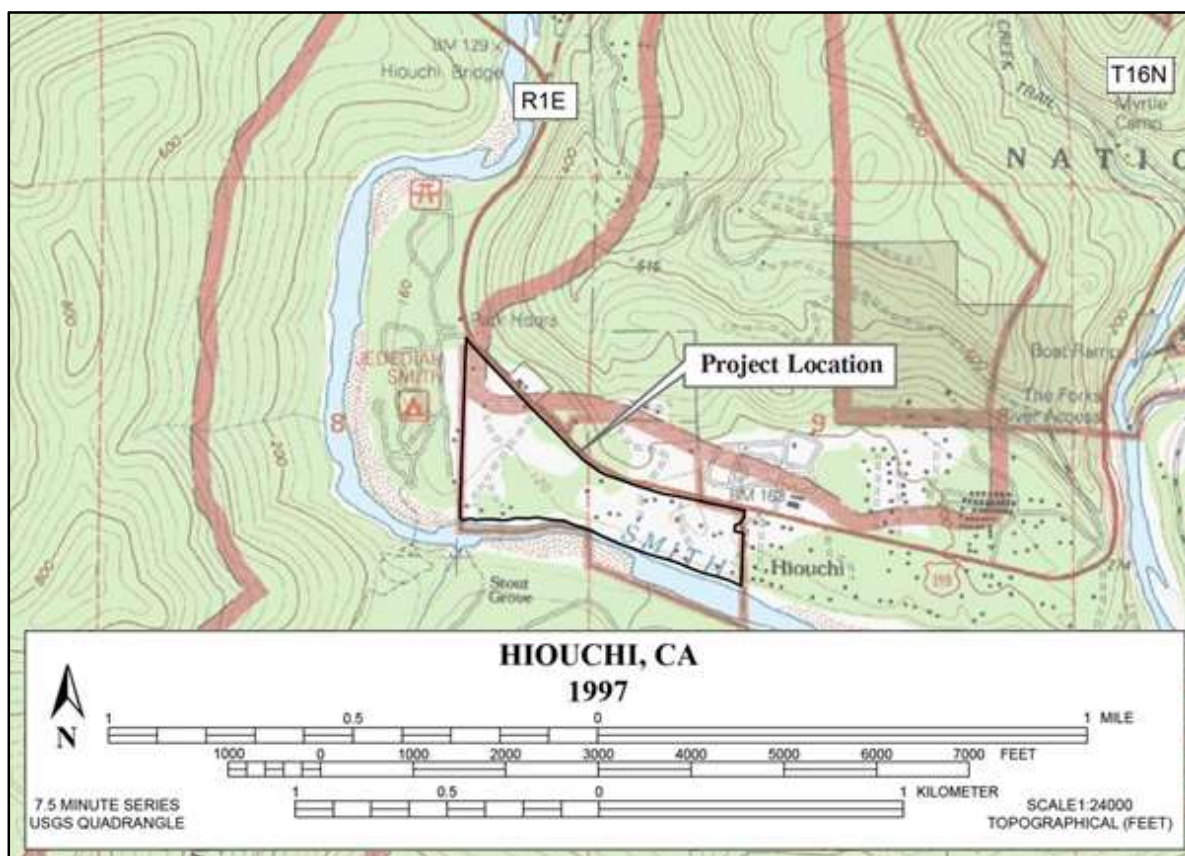


Figure 1. Project location map.

Euro-American Homesteaders

PAR's work identified a variety of historical resources associated primarily with the Zopfi and Catching families who were nineteenth and twentieth century homesteaders. Ephraim Catching and his wife, Mary, moved to Hiouchi Flat from Oregon in 1877. Mary was a Native American who had a Euro-American father (William Moore) and an Indian mother of Tolowa or related descent (Moore 1987). Mary was living in Waldo, Oregon, when she met Ephraim Catching. The Catching family operated 240 acres containing orchards, a store, vegetable gardens, melon patches, a peach orchard, and a potato field, and they opened the first school

in the area (Maniery and Millet 2008) (Figure 2). In 1910, Mary received an Indian allotment (listed as Tolowa), increasing the ranch size. Ephraim and Mary had 13 children between 1875 and 1894 and the family continued operating the ranch until 1930. In the 1970s, Tolowa elders attributed the village place-name of *Xaayuu-chit* to the old Catching ranch site. This name may have been associated with the village that existed at the ranch prior to the Catching homestead. Tushingham and Brooks (2016:124) noted that the Catching ranch undoubtedly was important to the survival of many Tolowa during the periods of prejudice and violence, providing a place of refuge inland, away from Crescent City.

David Zopfi, a Swiss immigrant, and his family bought the property adjacent to the Catching ranch in 1906 (Figure 3). The Zopfis, like many homesteaders of the time, were self-sufficient and lived frugally. They sold or bartered goods grown on their ranch for material to make clothing and other items. They were remembered for selling milk, eggs, vegetables, fruit, berries, wool, wood, and redwood posts and shakes to their neighbors and in Crescent City. They raised cows, sheep, and horses, hunted deer, and fished (Maniery and Millet 2008). The Zopfis worked in Hiouchi and Crescent City into the 1990s, with the sons working the land after David Zopfi died in 1964. During the 1940s, the Zopfi property was significantly reduced by California State Parks and eventually subject to legislative taking by the Department of Interior in 1968. The Zopfis were given a 25-year lease by the National Park Service and continued living on the land until 1993 (Maniery and Millett 2008).

During the initial fieldwork effort, PAR crews identified a single hydraulic mining feature with an associated ditch (Figure 4). While the ditch crossed land homesteaded by Ephraim Catching and his family, the mining claim bordered land used by David Zopfi. Due to the known land ownership, lack of formally filed mining claims, and the position of the ditch, the feature was assumed to be associated with early gold or copper mining by the Catching or Zopfi families, as both Ephraim and David were known to supplement their income by mining along the Smith River (Maniery and Millett 2008).

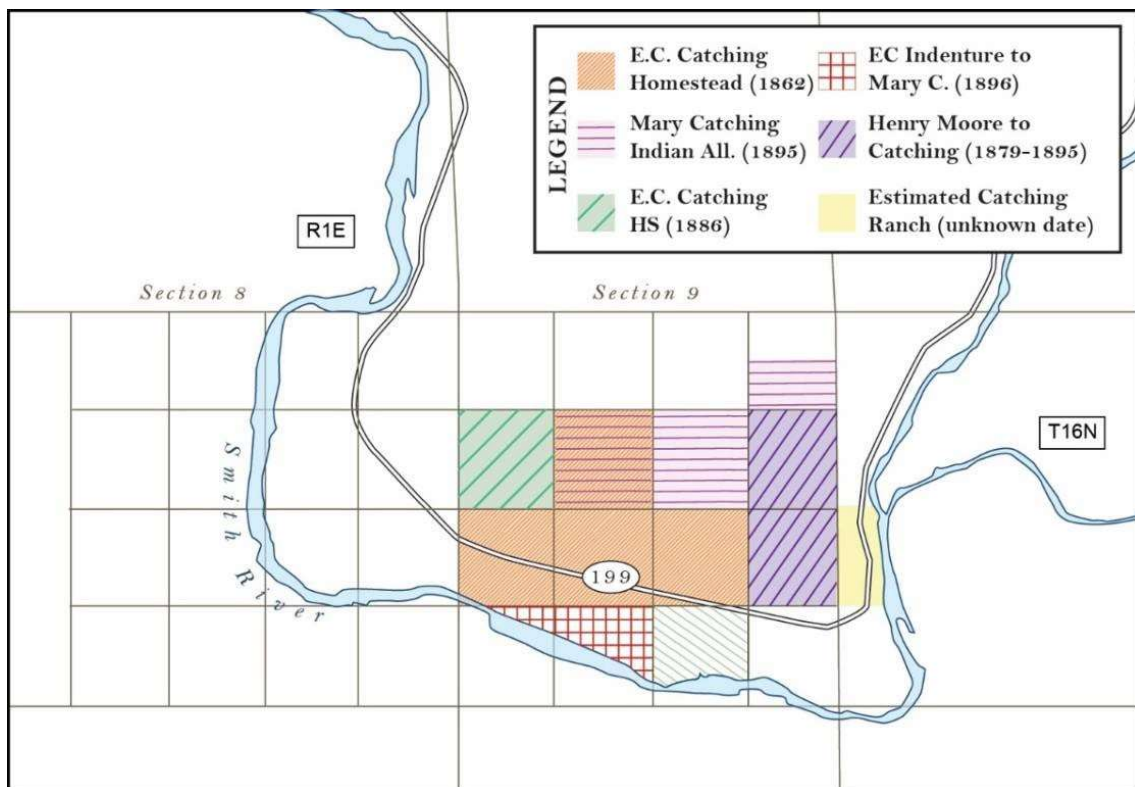


Figure 2. Map delineating the Catching ranch.

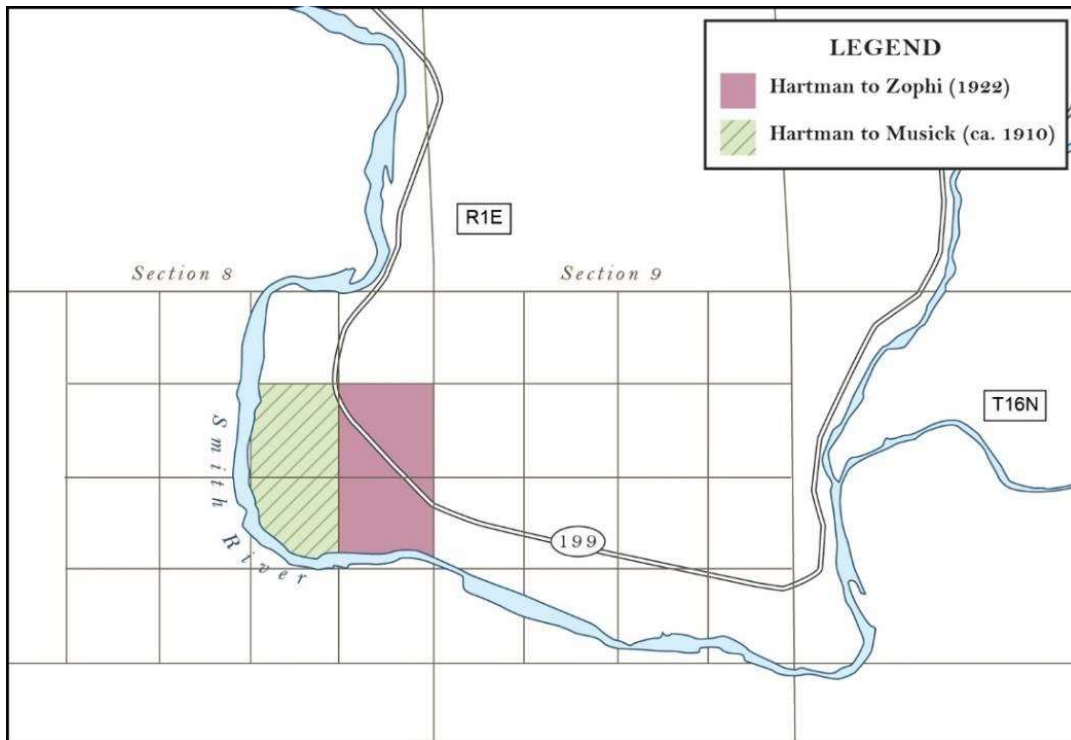


Figure 3. Map of the Zopfi property.

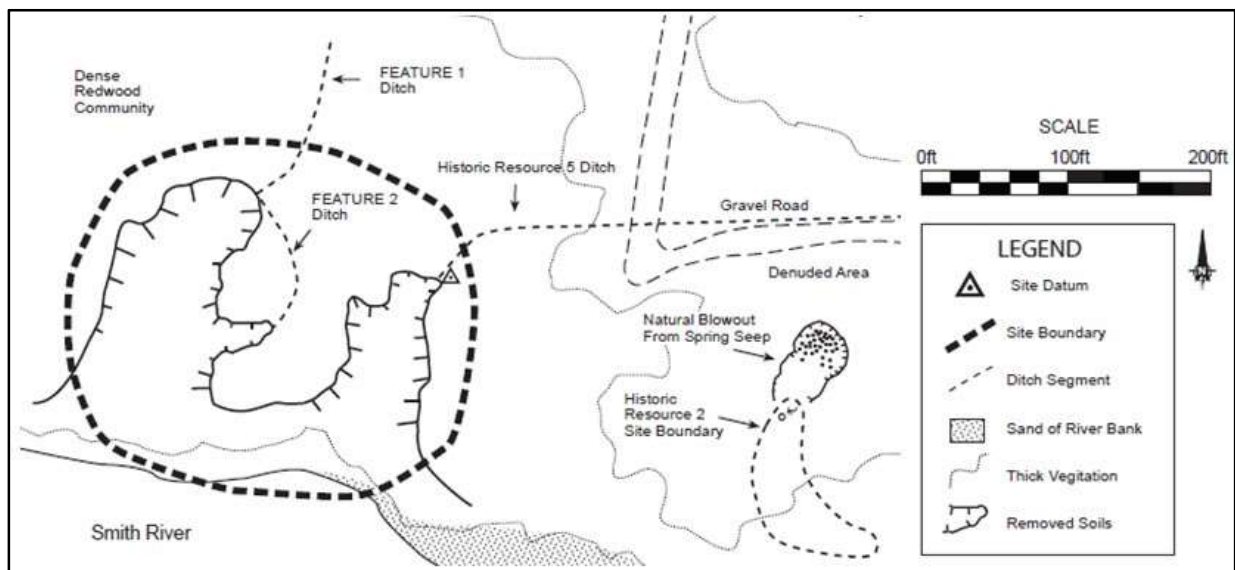


Figure 4. Mining resources around Hiouchi Flat (Maniery and Millet 2008).

In 2016, PAR returned to Hiouchi Flat, surveyed 900 additional acres, and conducted additional archival research, including title searches and detailed examination of land exchanges across the flat. The informal 2008 evaluations were reexamined, and still found the mine and ditch sites ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). PAR associated the ditch with Catching’s ranch efforts as he had extensive orchards and irrigation systems on the flat.

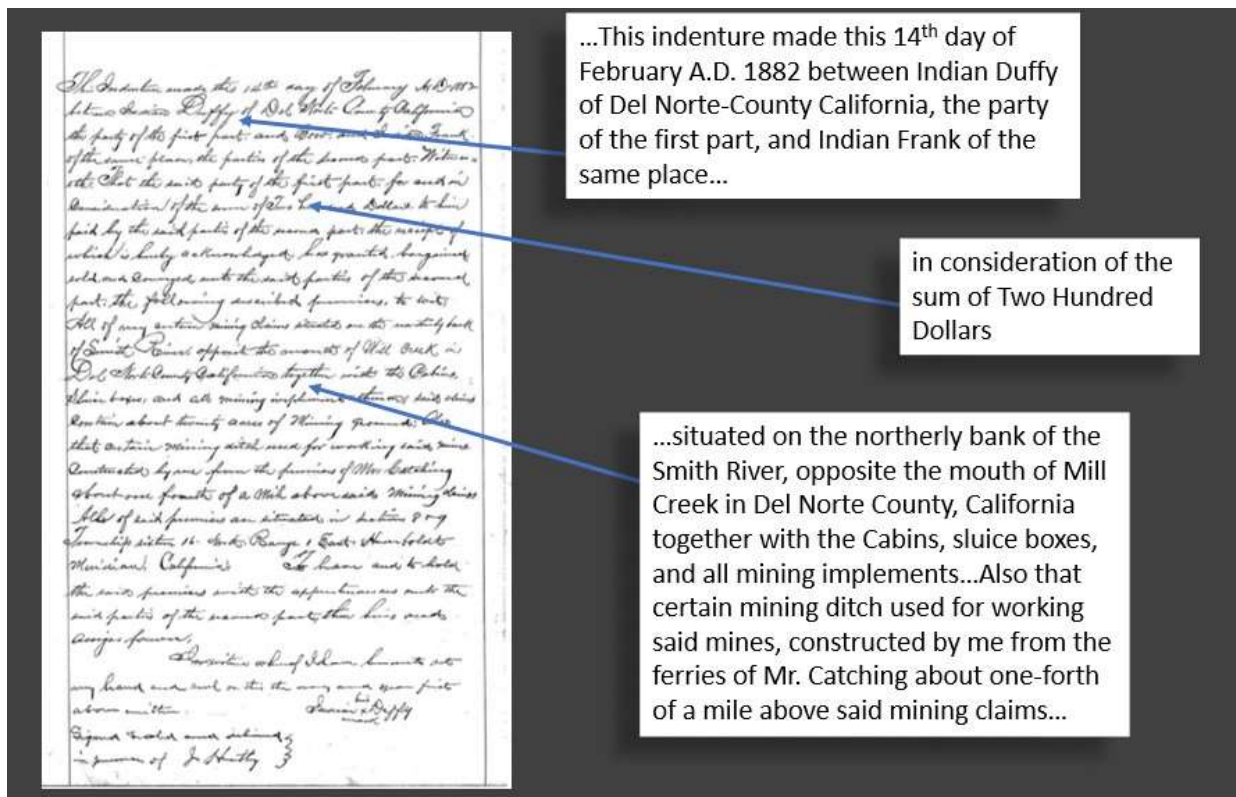


Figure 5. Mining deed dated 1882.

Since then, we continued work in the Del Norte County archives for other projects, always keeping an eye open for additional Hiouchi information. In 2018, while flipping through deed books, a previously unknown deed matching the locations of the recorded resources was found. This 1882 deed transferred a mine claim from “Indian Duffy” to “Indian Frank,” presumably local Tolowa miners. The deed discussed the transfer of the claim and a ditch easement across Catching ranch to the mine, along with mining equipment and a cabin (Figure 5). A search of the California Census Roll of Indians from 1928 to 1933 showed no Native Americans by the name of Frank or Duffy living in Del Norte County. The 1852 California State Census does not include Del Norte County. A search of the Indian Census Rolls from 1885 to 1940 list numerous Franks with the “Smith River Tribe,” but all were listed in the 1930s, making individual identification unlikely (Ancestry. com 2019). No one by the name of Duffy is recorded on the Indian Census Rolls in Del Norte County.

Around the same time that PAR conducted our initial survey of the flat, Shannon Tushingam, then with University of California, Davis, was working nearby at the location of the Tolowa Dee-ni' village of *Chvn-su'lh-dvn* (Tushingam 2005, 2009). Excavations and research by Tushingam (2009), in partnership with the Tolowa Dee-ni', documented an 8,500-year history of human use on the flat through work at five sites. She focused on shifts from acorn to salmon subsistence patterns in northwest California, documenting a middle to late 1800s men's plank house. Tushingam (2009) reported that the sweathouse contained clear evidence that traditional tools and foods were in use, but materials and food introduced by Euro-Americans were also employed. Contact-era artifacts including buttons, shotgun shells, stove fragments, and a suspender clasp were located (Tushingam 2005, 2009; Tushingam and Brooks 2016). One of the most intriguing artifacts was a mining pick found buried within the burned floor of a sweathouse feature at CA-DNO-26 (Figure 6). The pick was interpreted as representing scavenged tools reused by the Tolowa in the late nineteenth century (Tushingam 2009; Tushingam and Brooks 2016).



Figure 6. Pick located in floor of sweathouse at CA-DNO-26. Photo courtesy of Shannon Tushingam.

DISCUSSION

The discovery of historical era artifacts within the traditional sweathouse resulted in Tushingam readjusting the focus of her research to understanding how people using this house persisted through the years. Tushingam consulted Indian allotment records, dissertations, census records, newspaper articles, and published accounts by anthropologists and combined these data with the communities' firsthand knowledge and oral narratives of historic events (Tushingam 2009). Research uncovered relationships between the Tolowa and local households during this time of great change. The sweathouse assemblage was unique as it was a perfect replica of other late precontact Tolowa villages, if the historic glass, ceramics, and metal were removed (Tushingam 2013). Euro-American artifacts were used in traditional ways; for example, window and bottle glass was knapped into bifaces and scrapers. Adornment artifacts also represented a combined approach, with Euro-American buttons found in the same context as shell necklaces. Tushingam (2013:147) pointed out that inhabitants may have participated in local mining operations. The proof that Tolowa men were buying and purchasing mine claims between each other and interacting with the mixed Catching family suggests that Tushingam's hunch was very likely correct. The users of the sweathouse at CA-DNO-26, despite living a partially traditional lifestyle, may have needed to supplement their lifestyle through mining to support the use and purchase of Euro-American goods.

Concurrently with Tushingam's (2009) research, we were looking at Hiouchi Flat from a historian's viewpoint, focusing on the Catching and Zopfi homesteads. While we knew that Catching's wife was Native American, our scope focused on the ranching activities of the Catching and Zopfi families; how they survived in such a remote area, how children were educated, what interaction the residents of the flat had with local communities like Crescent City and Smith River, and other historically oriented questions.

The discovery of the mining deed opens up new avenues of contact-era archaeology. The transfer of the deed mentions improvements, such as a cabin, as well as the ditch. The sweathouse at Red Elder Berry Place is only about a quarter mile from the mine and the cabin, an easy walk along the bluff. It is easy to visualize a miner working hard all day and retreating to a sweathouse to ease muscles and cleanse the body

after a hard day's effort. Once the deed was found, we began exchanging information with Tushingam, and Redwood National Park began discussions with the Tolowa to gather more information on the two Native men (Duffy and Frank) with known associations to the mine.

Archaeologists are often challenged by intriguing out-of-context artifacts that force new interpretations of site use and historical events. In this case, it took 10 years, four separate projects, and a single 137-year-old deed to connect seemingly separate events. In light of new evidence tying the mining features to the local Tolowa, an association not often documented in archival or archaeological data, Redwood National and State Parks are reconsidering the original eligibility assessment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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