

TEN-S-8

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SEP 26 2008

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Subject RE: Public Scoping Period Extended for The Tenaya Lake Area Plan

RE: Public Scoping Period Extended for The Tenaya Lake Area Plan

The Yosemite-Mono Lake Paiute Indian Community would like to make sure that Yosemite National Park Service adds the correct history to any interpretive signs or pamphlets regarding Tenaya Lake.

If you ask the Southern Sierra Miwuks they will give you false information because they are going for federal recognition and do not know the history of Lake Tenaya.

First Tenaya was not a Miwok, but an Ahwahnee. The name Ahwahnee is an old Paiute place name that is documented in The Story of Inyo by historian W. A. Chalfant and in Ethnography of the Owens Valley Paiute, by Julian Steward.

Ahwahnee was destroyed in a catastrophe and the surviving Ahwahnees left and went different directions. Chief Tenaya's father took a handful of survivors to the other band of Paiutes at Mono Lake and they took him in. No Miwok or Yokut ever went to Mono Lake without being attacked and killed so the 'tale' of Miwoks going to live in peace with the Paiutes of Mono Lake before white men entered the area is not true and false. There are many accounts of Miwoks and Yokuts going into Mono Lake Paiute area and they were attacked and killed so it is not possible that the Ahwahnees were Miwoks. The Paiutes at Mono Lake took in Tenaya's father because they were of the same people. Tenaya's father married a Mono Lake Paiute woman and Tenaya was born at Mono Lake. Tenaya grew up at Mono Lake and when he was old enough he married a Mono Lake Paiute woman and had children. Later a medicine man advised Tenaya that it was safe to return to his father's old mountain home territory. Then Tenaya took 200 to 300 Natives and established, as Dr. Lafayette H. Bunnell wrote in his Discovery of the Yosemite, the bible of Yosemite Indian history, The Paiute Colony of Ahwahnee, not the Miwok Colony. In fact the Miwoks were afraid to enter Yosemite Valley and were the scouts for the Mariposa Battalion.

The whites encroached into the Yosemite area as they were looking for gold with their Miwok workers and they kept getting attacked and provisions stolen. So the whites decided to clear out the area and that is how Yosemite Valley was discovered. The expedition to clear out the 'troublesome' Indians in the high sierra was led by James Savage who was married to many Miwok and Yokut girls and had made alliances with several Miwok chiefs in the lower foothills. Many of them worked for Savage. Ponwachez and his brother Cowchitty were the Indian scouts that Major Savage used to locate Chief Tenaya and his band of Ahwahnees. Many of Cowchitty's own descendents are now Southern Sierra Miwuks claiming to be the original Yosemite Valley Ahwahnees, but that is not true. The Cowchitty's became the Mariposa County Lewis and Washington family.

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Here is the account of the naming of Lake Tenaya, named after Chief Tenaya. Tenaya or Tenieya in the Paiute language means "Our Father" and has no meaning in Miwok.

One Hundred Years in Yosemite (1947) by Carl P. Russell

CHAPTER IV - PIONEERS IN THE VALLEY

You are aware that I know this old fellow [Chief Tenaya] well enough to look out well for him, lest by some stratagem he makes his escape. I shall aim to use him to the best advantage in pursuing his people. I send down a few of my command with the pack animals for provisions; and I am satisfied if you will send me ten or twelve of old Ponwatches' best men I could catch the women and children and thereby force the men to come in. The Indians I have with me have acted in good faith and agree with me in this opinion.

On May 21, some members of the invading party discovered the fresh trail of a small party of Indians traveling in the direction of the Mono country. Immediate pursuit was made, and on May 22 the Yosemitees were discovered encamped on the shores of Tenaya Lake in a spot much of which was snow-covered. They were completely surprised and surrendered without a struggle. This was the first expedition made into the Yosemite high country from the west, and it was on this occasion that the name Lake Tenaya was applied by Bunnell. The old Indian chief, on being told of how his name was to be perpetuated, sullenly remonstrated that the lake already had a name, "Py-we-ack"—Lake of the Shining Rocks.

You can see by the account written by Carl P. Russell that Miwok Ponwatches and this band helped capture Paiute Chief Tenaya as Tenaya and his band tried to escape to Paiute Mono Lake. If Tenaya was a Miwok why did he keep escaping to Mono Lake and not to other Miwok areas?

Also "Pyweack" does not mean "Lake of the Shining Rock". There are two other possible meanings in Paiute, "Pah-weah" or "Pyweack". Pah-weah means "Acorn Lake" and "Pyweack" means "Water Fall".

If there are to be any interpretive signs or general information to the public regarding the Indian history of Lake Tenaya, please do not disrespect the memory of Chief Tenaya by misinforming the public by claiming that Tenaya was from the Miwok scouts for the white Mariposa Battalion who helped capture him and kill his own son.

The Yosemite-Mono Lake Paiute Indian Community requests that any signs or information regarding Lake Tenaya not be identified as Miwok, because not only would that be incorrect, but highly disrespectful.

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