



Title: War Dance

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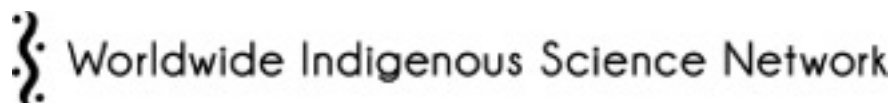
Published by: Excerpt of Master's Thesis Submitted in Partial Satisfaction of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Creation Spirituality (Indigenous Mind Program) in the Graduate Division of Naropa University - Oakland.

Publish date: May 2006

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Teresa Rae MacColl

(Excerpt from my master's thesis titled *"Remembering Our Future: The Search For The Salmon of Wisdom"*, Naropa University - May 2006)

WAR DANCE

"What gives the white people the right to come here and kill my people, take our homes away and treat us so badly? Our blood is the same as other human beings. We are people, too. Just because the color of my skin is brown that doesn't give them more rights than the Creator put down for all people. I'm trying to make the white man see that the sacred spring on Mt Shasta, the herbal medicines, and the spiritual doctoring we use to heal our people are all connected. It is not something that can be separated out. Don't they know that the Wintu have had religion to stay well all these years before they came to our land? Our children will need our religious ways, our language and sacred places to call themselves Wintu Indians in the future."

- Florence Jones (*Pui-lu-le-met*),
- Winnemem's spiritual and tribal leader⁶¹

When the Shasta Dam was built in 1945, the Shasta Reservoir drowned more than 90% of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe's ancestral land. The Winnemem (McCloud River) come from Mount Shasta. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is today proposing to raise the dam again by 19 feet, which would flood many of the remaining Winnemem Wintu Tribe's sacred sites. On September 8th, 2004, the Tribe performed a War Dance, "Hu'p Chonas", at Shasta Dam to declare the Tribe's opposition to the Shasta Dam raise. It was the first war dance performed in over 100 years.⁶²

We sing to water. The sacred places must be protected. We cannot survive the flooding of our people a second time.

- Caleen Sisk-Franco
Spiritual leader of the Winnemem Wintu

A mural was created in San Francisco to honor the struggle of the Winnemem Wintu tribe against the raising of Shasta Dam. The unveiling of the mural was in November of 2005. The wall mural depicts Winnemem members at the four-day "War Dance" ceremony that was held at Shasta Dam in September 2004. The mural is titled "We sing to Water". Members of the Winnemem Wintu tribe danced in full regalia at the event and talked about their opposition to expanding Lake Shasta. The ceremony was a dedication for the mural and a memorial to Florence Jones, the Winnemem's spiritual and tribal leader, who died just more than two years ago, Nov. 22, 2003. Her successor is her great-niece, spiritual and tribal leader Caleen Sisk-Franco.

We sing to water. We have to give the river a voice. We have to give the fish a voice."

- Caleen Sisk-Franco

I was blessed with the great fortune of being present for this ceremony, which took place in a narrow alley in the Mission in San Francisco. I almost did not make it because I was hurrying and scurrying to finish the last pieces of my thesis. After attending the dance, I saw that this was what

I needed to experience, this was part of the completion of my thesis writing. Tears came to my eyes immediately, even before the dancers danced, and before the singers sang. I knew that my experience was different than it would have been had I not spent the last two years working with Apela and all the Elders in ritual and ceremony. I was there at Shasta Dam, at Shasta Lake, and in the water with the salmon and the sturgeon. I could "feel" the water, as they sang for water. I was swimming with the salmon, when they sang for the salmon. And I too was a warrior when they danced their War Dance, one who has been called to fight for the waters of the world. My story, in its completion, is now just beginning.