

Yurok Tribal Council dedicates building to longtime leader Aawok Green

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The Yurok Tribal Council voted to dedicate the South Operations Site to longtime tribal leader, Aawok Bonnie Green, one of the most prominent figures in the Tribe's modern history.

"Aawok Bonnie Green played a profound role in the development of our government. She was a fierce advocate for the Yurok people and relentless protector of the Klamath River. Dedicating this building to her will forever honor her many contributions to the Tribe," said Lana McCovey, the current South District Representative on the Yurok Tribal Council. "Our community will always remember her as an individual with immense integrity and character."

Green is responsible for moving the Yurok Tribe forward in several different arenas. As a participant in the Jesse Short case, her advocacy for the Yurok people began before the Tribe became formally organized in 1993. During this time period, she was also intimately involved in securing medical care for local Native Americans and preserving tribal fishing rights.

“Aawok Bonnie Green was a dynamic leader, who never compromised when it came to doing what is right for the Yurok people,” said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. “We dedicated this building to her because we want our future generations to appreciate her legacy and emulate her passion for service. Her numerous contributions to the Tribe will never be forgotten.”

The South Operations Site was previously occupied by the Worthington School in Eureka. The tribally owned campus houses staff from the Yurok Education and Health and Human Services Departments. Before her untimely passing in 2014, Green served as the Tribe’s vice chairperson from 2006-09 and held the Tribal Council’s South District Representative seat from 1995 to 2006. The highly accomplished tribal politician passed away on Jan. 18, 2014 at the age of 66.

Throughout Green’s tenure on the Tribal Council, her primary goal was to elevate Yurok citizens quality of life. To accomplish this objective, she improved access to healthcare, supported environmentally conscious economic development initiatives and endeavored to increase the Tribe’s capacity to restore the Klamath River watershed. She was also an ardent proponent for removing the Klamath dams.

Green was especially tough and tenacious when it came to fighting for Yurok interests. She was always very direct in her approach to championing important tribal initiatives. Her undeviating demeanor was on full display when she served as a negotiator in the 2012 Nez Perce Settlement discussions, which concluded with the Tribe receiving \$27.5 million for the federal government’s mismanagement of tribal forest lands.

In addition to supporting dam removal, she occupied a leadership role on the management side of the Tribe’s fishery. Every year, she engaged in the crafting of the Harvest Management Plan. The legally binding document is used to regulate subsistence and commercial salmon harvest as well as conserve fish stocks for future generations.

The inveterate public servant’s advocacy for the Tribe’s fishing rights spanned her entire adult life. She was an active participant in the “Fish Wars” on the Klamath River. In the late 1970s, the federal government sent National Guard soldiers to stop the Tribe from fishing for subsistence. However, through a sustained campaign of civil disobedience, which Green took part in, the Tribe prevailed in protecting a practice that has taken place on the Klamath since time immemorial.

Naming this building after Green will honor an individual who dedicated countless hours of her life to serving the Yurok people. It will recognize the many sacrifices she made to ensure the Tribe has a strong foundation from which to continue moving in a positive direction.

“From this day forward, the building will serve as permanent monument to one of our most dedicated and forceful leaders,” said McCovey.

In addition to being a Yurok Tribal Council Representative, Green also participated in many outside agencies and committees. The long list includes but is not limited to: NAGPRA Native American Graves Protection Repatriation Act liaison, California Association of Tribal Governments, National Indian Gaming Association, California Rural Indian Health Board, United Indian Health Services, Inter Tribal Monitoring Association,

Northern California Indian Development Council, Tribal Government Consultation Council and National Indian Education Association.