

## Richard Ben Brooks

September 15, 2022



Richard Ben Brooks was born on October 2, 1969, to Mel and Margaret Brooks, he passed away on August 18, 2022. He will be missed by a host of family and friends.

Services will be held on September 17, 2022, at 1:00 pm at the Indian Shaker Church in Smith River, the interment will be at the Howonquet Cemetery and a potluck at Howonquet Hall next to the Indian Shaker Church.

Rich was an enigma, that is to say, he had many sides to his personality. Recently he taught Kelly's son to sing an Indian Shaker song, but he also taught him how to howl like a Tolowa Indian dancer. He would get the kid to howl in Walmart.

Rich lived his entire life in Del Norte, except for several work opportunities outside the county. His ideal job was he field trained under physical anthropologists, geologists, and other like professionals. This excited him about furthering his education, but after trying college a couple of times he would drop out.

His mother and other Elders of the Rancheria began teaching him Tolowa traditional customs and language at an early age. On one occasion when his dad was working in his shop, things didn't go right, and his dad cussed in Yurok. Young Rich asked, "What does those words mean?" His Dad said, "Coffee" as he picked up his cup. Days later Rich saw his dad with coffee cup in hand and said, "Can I get your coffee?" He went into the house and said, "Dad wants some (Indian cuss word)." His Dad looked up to see three visiting Yurok ladies standing before him, one said, "How do you say coffee in Yurok?" The boy had ratted him out, without knowing it, the secret was out.

Rich loved to gill net the Klamath until he became Tolowa, dilemma solved.

Rich had two important activities he cherished above any other. The first was the Howonquet Cemetery, easily solved. He loved working by cleaning his ancestral graves and talking to people still upright.

Young people couldn't understand why they were sent to clean the graves. After finding out the barest ancestral information he would show and tell them how their relationship was connected.

The Shaker Church was unsolvable for him, his second important activity. The Church by-laws state, to be a Shaker, in good standing, after joining, no Indian religion and no alcohol. He knew Shaker rituals by heart and could ring bells, dance, sing and assist new joiners with Church protocols.

While alcohol was his downfall, he managed to feed burnouts and others on the burnout trail periodically one meal a day.

He leaves behind immediate family members, father Mel and sisters Serena, Pamela and Gwyn. He was preceded in death by his mother Margaret and sister Melissa.

#### Pallbearers

Dennis Moffett, Darren Salcedo, Larry Steele, Larry Matthews, Horse Aubrey, Chester Bighead, Garrett Campbell, Walter Hoffman.

#### Honorary Pallbearers

Buffy Floyd, Dave Zuber, Isaac Moorehead, Landon Moorehead, Troy Travis, Floyd Richards III, Don James, Terry Bray, Fred Bartow, Ruben Matthews, Aaron Whipple, Randy Goose Mattz, Jonah Billie, Lawrence Zosel, John Martin, Dean & Mike Jones, Fred Bartow.