

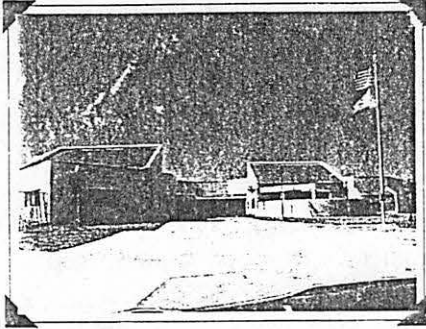
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MFCU!



SCHOOL SNAPSHOTS



Mt. Empire School Revisited

Despite headlines about Mountain Empire School District's "disenrollment" of students, education in "the real world" district is thriving. Two district educators recently received a \$9,000 grant to write curriculum about local Native Americans - the Kumeyaay Indians. Diana Caldeira, Campo Elementary School teacher and Mission Federal Credit Union member, and fellow teacher Roberta Labastida originally wrote the curriculum for Campo's kindergarten through third graders. However, the project blossomed to serve the entire district.

Caldeira explained that one of the most recent books about the Kumeyaay was written in 1926. It was hard to



Teacher & MFCU member Diana Caldeira (far right) discusses Kumeyaay crafts with teacher Roberta Labastida and Kumeyaay students of Campo Elementary.

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find information about the culture which local people, especially the children, are losing. "We had a strong interest in Kumeyaay history; it's just that history books don't mention the Kumeyaay," she said. Fortunately, these educators are

changing that with help from Campo School's Kumeyaay students. A recent project entailed acquiring Kumeyaay crafts for a permanent library display. Willow bark skirts, a cradleboard, and willow granary baskets are reminders to all students of the area's rich history and artisan work. Some students' parents are the few who know how to make the objects and are now teaching their children.

Labastida said the project has developed better self-esteem for the Kumeyaay students who make up one-seventh of the district's enrollment. "Kumeyaay kids are really becoming quite proud of their heritage," she said.

A sister band of the Kumeyaay, the Paipai, lives across the border near Ensenada and has taught their Kumeyaay relatives and Labastida how to make a unique pottery from local riverbed clay. They form the pottery using the anvil-method then fire it under tepee-shaped stacks of

Dr. Doug Giles, Mountain Empire School District's interim Superintendent. Regarding the district's much publicized disenrollment of non-resident students and the ballot measure which grew out of that, Giles said he's concerned that the state audited every Mountain Empire child's record unlike other San Diego school districts along the Mexican border. "Mountain Empire should be treated like other border school districts," said Giles.

But as the county's largest district, with an area of 660 square miles and only 1,800 students, the district remains unique. Giles said, grinning. "With an area this large, it's not a coincidence that we're called 'Mountain EMPIRE.' Our students have an excellent opportunity to assume responsibility to learn."

To learn more about the Kumeyaay curriculum or Mountain Empire School District, contact Pamela Dayhoff at 478-5224.



Mountain Empire School District's Acting Superintendent Dr. Douglas Giles.

the local yucca plant. Labastida said it's a way for the students and parents to hold on to their culture and hopefully, retain knowledge of the Kumeyaay language which many do not know.

This enthusiasm and teaching excite