

Native American philosophy provides insights

By Judy Winter Meier

We are all strands in the web of life, joined inextricably to each other and to the earth that nurtures us.

This idea, central to Native American philosophy, was expressed frequently at the Native American Educational Resources Symposium sponsored by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park on Feb. 7. Over 130 educators and other interested individuals attended the event, symposium coordinator Joanie Cahill said.

Officially entitled "Relationships with the Land," the seminar's three featured speakers expanded the topic to include the relationships of Native Americans to nonindigenous residents of this continent and the world.

"We need to learn from each other so we can live together in harmony," said Cahuilla tribal member Katherine Siva Saubel, one of the featured speakers. Co-founder of the Malki Museum in Banning, Saubel is an authority on Cahuillan traditions and language.

Saubel was preceded at the podium by Jane Dumas of the Kumeyaay tribe, who spoke on herbal healing, and by anthropology professor and author Lowell John Bean, who gave a brief history of this area's Indians. Saubel and Bean co-authored the book "Temelpakh" on Cahuilla knowledge and use of plants.

"It's up to all of us to save this Mother Earth, this area given to us by the Creator," Saubel said. "Everything around us is alive; everything is connected. If you destroy one, you destroy all of us."

"We are fighting to preserve our clean air and water," she said. "We

can't do it unless we all work together."

Saubel, who was born in the Cahuillan "upper village" of Pa-cha-wal above Coyote Canyon, lived in the tribe's villages in Collins Valley.

Her father, whom Saubel described as her mentor, was born in 1872 and went to school at the age of 20 to learn English. In three years he learned to read and write not only English, but Spanish and Latin. "What he could be today," she exclaimed.

And although Saubel thinks every American should know English, preserving the Cahuilla language has been one of her major goals for almost 50 years. She has been working with an ethnolinguist for four years to create a written record of it and the Cahuillan culture. She has traveled to Germany in this quest and lectured at the University of Cologne, where linguist Dr. Hansjakob continues a study of the Cahuilla language.

About five years ago, Saubel addressed the California Legislature which was considering making Spanish the state's first language. "I said the first language should be Indian. Everybody stood up and clapped," she recalled. "They keep forgetting us, that we're here."

Saubel had few good words for Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza, who took two expeditions through Coyote Canyon en route from Mexico to northern California.

"Anza may be your hero; he is not the Cahuillas'," she said. Anza's cattle and horses destroyed resources in the canyon in which the Cahuilla lived, and the Spanish took over the area, renaming everything with Spanish. See *Symposium*; page 17



CAHUILLA cultural authority Katherine Siva Saubel visits with seminar participants following her presentation at Native American Educational Resources Symposium Feb. 7.

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JUDY MEIER

SYMPOSIUM: de Anza is no hero to Cahuillas, Saubel notes

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names, from settlements to individual Cahuilla families. Saubel noted that both her maiden and married family names were shortened from their original version.

"The town of Anza used to be Cahuilla Valley," she added.

Jane Dumas, a community health representative for the San Diego Area Health Alliance, greeted the audience in Kumeyaay, saying that she had also asked the Creator for permission to discuss herbal medicine at the seminar, because she was not from this area.

The daughter of an herbal healer, Dumas said her parents told you to "share what I know, but don't share the details," because of the complexities and power of herbal healing.

As a child, her mother's medicine didn't mean much to her, Dumas said. Now she treasures the knowledge, and wants to preserve it as well as the Kumeyaay language and its intricacies.

Dumas introduced Celia Silva, a Kumeyaay elder from Baja, Mexico. She performed a Kumeyaay creation song about the bighorn sheep.

Dumas called for tribal elders to come forward so the language can be written down and preserved. "It's a dying language," she said. "Having it

written and saying it are different things."

Lowell John Bean, professor emeritus of anthropology at California State, Hayward, described Saubel as his mentor. He discussed the history of Native Americans from this area, touching on several myths regarding Indians.

"One myth was that Indian leaders and political systems were simple. They weren't simple before we got here, nor are they simple now," he said.

Native Americans lived as "small nations" each with a number of communities, owning property and designating areas for hunting and for individual families, Bean said. There were very strict boundaries which were respected. If they weren't respected, fighting resulted.

"Indians established international trade agreement with their neighbors," Bean said. "They had diplomatic relations — routinized ways of exchanging surplus with one another through religious exchange and ceremonies at which the exchange of materials was mandatory."

"Each nation had a person in charge who was both political and religious leader," Bean said. The nations were arranged so that they had resources available to them seasonally.

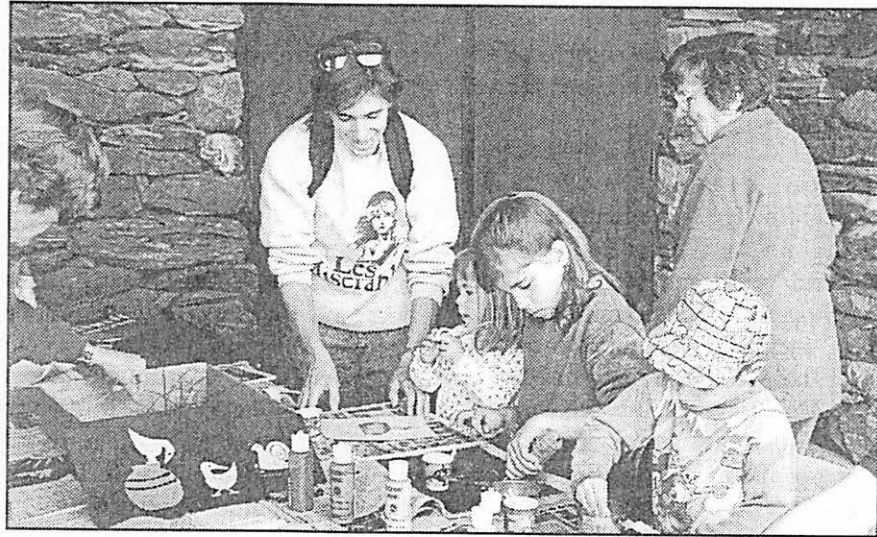


CELIA Silva (left) of Baja, Mexico performs a creation song about bighorn sheep during Jane Dumas' speech on traditional Kumeyaay plant uses and herbal healing, as seminar sponsored by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park opens.

The reservation system created by the federal government in the late 1800s caused "turmoil," routing Native Americans from their land, sacred areas and food sources, he noted.

The reservations provided Southern California Indians with a stable land base — and the non-native settlers with a needed labor force — but are still a source of great bitterness, Bean said.

Native American Days



SAND painting (above) is a popular activity during Native American Days held Feb. 8-9 at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Participants included (l-r) Carin Zimmer, her daughters Lauren and Kelly, and Joshua Hogue. Catherine Stone (in back) was one of Park Volunteers who manned the project. At right, Kumeyaay elder Celia Silva patiently works on tightly woven grass basket designed for food preparation, eating, drinking and storage. Cahuilla and Paipai tribal members also demonstrated their crafts. Bird Singers performed both days. Those attending could hear Native American stories, or learn to create stone tools, yucca cord or pottery.



SUN photos by BRENDA COLBY



KUMEYAAY CULTURE

Kumeyaay Indian Celia Silva, of San Jose De La Zorra, Mexico, uses junkas grass to demonstrate traditional Indian basket-making during the Native American Month commemoration held Nov. 12 at Cabrillo National Monument. Visitors can purchase authentic Kumeyaay baskets and pottery at the Cabrillo National Monument Visitors Center.

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