



Letter from the Wahhoga Committee Chairperson

The Wahhoga Committee had its earliest beginning in the 1970s when Jay Johnson, Les James, Bill Tucker, and other Yosemite Valley descendants worked with the National Park Service to create the concept of the Indian Cultural Center (ICC) to be located at Wahhoga Village. They worked diligently to get the ICC authorized in the 1980 Yosemite National Park General Management Plan, to be built on the land of the ancient village of Wahhoga and the 20th Century New Village where many had lived as children and adults. When the ICC became a reality with the June 2009 groundbreaking ceremony for the traditional Ceremonial Roundhouse, the group became more organized and in 2010 the Wahhoga Committee of the AICMC/SSMN was formed to administer the Wahhoga Village ICC.

It's been a long, sometimes rocky road, but we are moving full steam ahead now.

My name is Vernett "Sis" Calhoun. I have been a part of the group working toward getting a traditional Ceremonial Roundhouse built, from the mid-1970s when we worked to get the Indian Cultural Center included in the 1980 Yosemite National Park General Management Plan long before we became known as the Wahhoga Committee. I have shared the disappointments and victories with our Elders. In April of 2021, I found myself the Chairperson for Wahhoga Committee.



I have shared the heartbreak felt by our community, first with the passing of Elder Jay Johnson in 2019, then the passing of Elder Les James in 2020. Now I find myself walking with remaining Elder William “Bill” Tucker carrying on the dream of building a traditional Roundhouse in Yosemite Valley “for all the people” as Jay use to say.

Wahhoga Village is a special place, a place of healing not only for those that lived there but healing for those that have roots that connect us to the land now known as Yosemite National Park. It’s surprising to some, native and non-native, the feeling of peace and wellbeing they get when spending time at Wahhoga Village, we call this healing. It is our hope that by educating our life ways to the young, native and non-native, all peoples will one day connect with all living elements of Yosemite as our ancestors did and we still practice today.

The generosity of the Adam Dalton family (Jackson Rancheria Me-Wuk), whose mother believed in the Creation story that all people walked out of the Valley, donating money and an all-native crew with experience building a traditional Ceremonial Roundhouse, and the Wenaha Group, a native owned

engineering group based in Oregon have been instrumental in our success of this project so far.

Wahhoga Village will be a place where Indian people will conduct traditional ceremonies and cultural activities crucial to the survival of our culture, the healing of the land, and the people. Sanitary facilities will be the only modern structures.

Our next steps are to return the historic Wilson Cabin, the last remaining cabin, back to its original location. It's the only cabin of 15 that was not burned down by 1969. This will be dedicated to the 29 Veterans who lived in the New Village at Wahhoga, and with the ancient grinding stone represent the continuity of the cultural landscape of our ancestral homelands.

Our Ceremonial Roundhouse will be dedicated in the fall of 2022, excluding any setbacks. We are now preparing to provide sanitary facilities, potable water, and electricity to support cultural, spiritual, and educational activities while we work to build the community building and shade structures.

I invite you to be a part of this project.

Sis