Judicial Council of California Podcast – Culture, Wellness & Active Efforts

Host
Lee Romney

Featured Speakers
SR: Shyanne Reed
AD: Alicia Davis
AA: Abby Abinanti
CD: Clayton Dumont
VG: Verna Garcia
VM: Virgil Moorehad Jr.
EA: Ernie Albers Jr.

SR: I come from a very traditional family who dance and make medicine, you know, and throughout the years I kinda lost that. And I felt too ashamed of myself to ask for help to reconnect to that. Because I was so broken without a sense of belonging that I didn't even know who I was – or what to do to get away from that feeling.

Trauma has been passed down for generations in Native American communities. That has led to mental health struggles and substance abuse. And, in turn, to disproportionate involvement with Western child dependency and juvenile justice systems. But lasting wellness is within reach. Through Native-led recovery programs that unpack that long arc of trauma – and connect participants to cultural values and practices. The young woman you just heard from knows this in her bones. She traveled to Friendship House in the Bay Area, for three months of residential culturally-rooted substance use recovery.

SR: In coming down here, you know, I began to feel that sense of pride and self love after so long, maybe even going my whole life without it. I didn't know that I would have to come six hours away from my home to feel that again.

I'm Lee Romney, the host of this Judicial Council of California podcast. You'll be hearing about Friendship House today. And we'll be visiting with Humboldt County-based Two Feathers Native American Family Services – an award-winning nonprofit that heals and empowers youth from tribes across the region. Through conventional mental health and substance use counseling, employment and, most critically, meaningful fun activities that center culture, agency and community connection.

AD: I was 17 when I first dressed in regalia. And it healed a child part of me because something happened to me when I was six years old so I was never allowed to have my own Flower Dance or anything like that.

This young woman will speak to how profound this layered approach can be.

AD: You set aside, like, your human feelings, you set aside your negative feelings and you just feel all the positive and the good medicine. And it makes me feel alive and part of something, like, big. It makes us feel all connected (sigh).

The Indian Child Welfare Act, or ICWA, was enacted by Congress in 1978 and codified in California law. The goal: to counter a legacy of forced removal, family separation and cultural erasure in Native communities. It requires "active efforts" by state courts and county child welfare workers to prevent those separations and prioritize reunification – by keeping families culturally connected.. Probation officials have more limited legal duties under ICWA. But the Judicial Council and the state Office of Youth Community Restoration have embraced culturally-rooted services for all justice-involved Native youth as a best practice.

Today, we're digging into *why* cultural connection matters, and how it can be so profoundly curative. Yurok Chief Tribal Judge Abby Abinanti:

AA: Culture really is about values, and values are the basis of practices. We need to have practices that are value based and if you do that then you're going to be in the culture. For instance, the larger culture is a very rights

based culture. We are not. We are a responsibility based culture. So therefore you're going to have different practices come out of that.

The history of disconnection from culture is deep and troubling. In Judge Abby's ancestral home,

AA: What were the three largest interventions here after the invasion. There was the boarding schools, there was the slave movement, and also California had more massacres than any other state.

Meanwhile, under the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, hundreds of thousands of Native people were pressured to leave their reservations for good and relocate to urban centers. Cultural amnesia, loss of identity and self medication with drugs and alcohol followed. The first step toward healing, Judge Abby stresses, is understanding this history.

AA: You can't just say, 'stop it.' That's not gonna work. Humans react a lot better if they know why they're doing something.

The next step: a return to elemental cultural values: Interconnectedness, responsibility to the collective, respect for elders, stewardship of the land.

AA: The whole idea of it is to bring them to a point where they can be in community and contributing what they should be and fulfilling their purpose.

It works, she says. But you don't have to take her word for it. The voices you'll be hearing today speak loudly.

We're starting with the Friendship House Association of American Indians. A young Helen Waukazoo founded it in 1963 alongside others, and by 1978 – the year ICWA was enacted, became its visionary leader.

CD: My name's Clayton Dumont. I'm a Klamath tribal member and I'm the chief operating officer at Friendship House today. I first came to Friendship

House September 13th of 2016 as a client. I'm a recovering drug addict. My drug of choice was fentanyl.

Helen Waukazoo, who died in 2021, knew that cultural genocide was at the core of skyrocketing addiction.

CD: And so Friendship House's goal is to help individuals connect or even reconnect with their culture. And it goes back to abstinence versus wellness, you know anybody can get sober and stop using but to stay sober, to stay well long term, they have to replace it with something healthy. Having culture, having that sense of community, is a big part of that.

Clayton speaks from experience.

CD: When I got to Friendship House there was instantly a feeling of being at home. I was around other people who treated me like a family member and that's something I try to bring today when I'm working with residents, still.

He stayed a year, graduated, became a substance abuse counselor, returned and in time moved into management. Friendship House is based in San Francisco's Mission District. There's a whole preventative youth program there, but residential recovery is the organization's core purpose. Forty beds for women and forty for men, who can stay six months for primary treatment and six more for extended care. Plus,

CD: We just opened a house in San Francisco as well. It's a 30 bed extended sober living for men specifically, they can stay for an additional two years.

Three fourths of those who come are referred by the courts. And half travel from outside the Bay Area.

CD: We serve predominantly Northern California but we get individuals from all over California as well as all over the country. We currently have clients in the program from South Dakota, Wyoming, Nevada, New Mexico.

All those court referrals indicate that plenty of participants have been separated from their kids. To address that, Helen Waukazoo also created a pioneering program on an unassuming street in the heart of East Oakland. The Women's Lodge at its fullest can house nine moms and eleven kids, from newborns up to age five. So they can stay together, bond and grow. That's where, on a gorgeous spring day, lodge director Verna Garcia shows me around.

AMBI VG: This is a beautiful area, it's really relaxing, a lot of land. I love it.

From the street, it's hard to tell how far back this verdant property stretches. But it's huge. Emily Abundis-Alcala, the lodge's child care coordinator, joins the tour

EAA: We have like big open fields and we uh recently were able to plant a big field of corn (dip) and it's coming that time again

V: We're surrounded by tons of trees and that breeze comes through and it's nice for them in the summer when they just sit out here and watch their children play.

Once a month, the women from the San Francisco program along with a traditional Native counselor gather here with the moms in a ceremonial sweat lodge.

V: This was newly built. We have a fire pit here and it's really nice because they get to come and sweat and have a feed, they eat really good and then they have group. (dip)

The residence for mothers and their kids has a large living room with a big screen TV for Zoom group meetings with the San Francisco women. And two Native-led parenting organizations come here to hold in-person groups. Next to the office, closer to the street, is our last stop. The child care center, where Emily takes care of the kids while the moms do their hard work.

EAA: We have building blocks for different age ranges, we have musical instruments, interactive puzzles

And a library of Native books that Emily curates.

EAA: Legend of the Indian Paintbrush, Dancing Drum, Jingle Dancer (fade).

VG: I am from Jemez and Laguna Pueblo and Navajo. My clan is Oak clan. Helen Waukazoo was my aunt.

Fourteen years ago, Friendship House asked Verna to come fill in for a week. One turned to three.

VG: And then history was made. Helen said, I want you to work with me permanently.

Verna became kitchen director before moving over to run the Oakland women's lodge. She got an inside glimpse at her aunt's vision — and her resilience.

VG: I drove her in, like every day for about I want to say ten years. The word no to her didn't exist. And she would do everything in her power, she'd go to the city, go to the mayor's office, whatever she needed to do to get things on the ground and she did.

Those government "interventions" aimed at annihilating Native culture impacted Helen. At age 13, she and her siblings were torn from their family on the Navajo reservation and forced to attend boarding school in northern Utah. Where, as in other government run boarding schools, children were punished for speaking their language or practicing their culture.

VG: She went through a lot of trauma there.

When Helen graduated at age 18, she boarded a bus to San Francisco under the auspices of the Indian Relocation Act. She had thirty five dollars in her pocket and a job as a housekeeper and a nanny.

VG: In that household there was a lot of drinking and it got to the point where she couldn't take it anymore and she just left. That's where everything started for her.

Helen worked a factory job, and started volunteering at a drop-in church program for Native Americans, which morphed into Friendship House in 1963. There, Verna tells me, her young aunt fixed her passion on the alcoholism she witnessed in the community of displaced and disconnected Indian people.

VG: There was more Indian bars in San Francisco and Oakland, than there were places for them to gather, so she saw that need and she wanted to open a place for healing.

Her deepest wish, Verna says,

VG: for families to be reunited and together, so the lodge was really special to her. The passion that she had just rubbed off on me.

Living as a teen in the Jemez and Laguna Pueblos, Verna says,

VG: We had to be respectful to our elders. They taught us a lot of cultural ways, and learning how to take care of ourselves. So being here I'm able to do that for the women, you know, because a lot of them come here and they don't know how to cook, they don't know how to clean, some of them didn't have mothers and fathers.

Most of the staff are Native, too, and all, Verna says, are trained to work with trauma.

VG: We see them come in broken and by the time they leave they learn to respect themselves, love themselves, love their children and reconnect with their family.

There are times when the lodge is packed, but when I visit, there's just one mom living here, with her six month old son. The powerful young woman you heard from at the very top of the story. She's a few days short of finishing three months of treatment.

SR: My name is Shyanne Reed

For this interview, Shyanne chose to use the last name of the side of her family that is steeped in cultural practice.

SR: I am 25 years old. I am from the Yurok Tribe in Humboldt County. I have three kids, and I came down to the Friendship House Women's Lodge so that I could have my son with me.

The six month old. Her other kids are eight and five. And she was barely an adult herself when she took custody of two of her younger siblings, who were just entering their teen years. At times, Shyanne took in two of her even younger siblings. Six kids in her care at once, when she'd never been parented herself.

SR: My mom was a major alcoholic. My dad was a drug addict. I told myself I never wanted to be like that. We didn't get much love. And we had a really really tough childhood me and my siblings did.

Child protective services was part of it.

SR: When we were younger we got all split up. So when I was 14 we were put into a foster home together and I ran away, and never went back to that foster home. Meanwhile they were stuck there. So all those years I was never able to see them or have contact with them.

By age 13 Shyanne was using opiates. But when she got pregnant with her first son, at age 17, she quit on her own. Three years later, she gave birth to her daughter. The relationships with those dads didn't last. Shyanne was on her own She worked to support her kids and siblings. Eventually, she found a small house. It was a tight squeeze but they all fit. She was doing her best. Still,

SR: I realized in being by myself that I didn't have anyone else to lean on besides my younger siblings. I hated being so codependent on them and and giving them all my problems as young as they were because that's something my mother did to me, you know… and it took my childhood away.

But she had no other option.

SR: So, they would help me with my children, and I would take care of us. But my problem was, I was there physically but not there mentally or emotionally. There was no nurturing side. I lacked that a lot because I never had been shown love myself.

To cope, she turned to drugs.

SR: Pills, you know, and things like that and I hung out with people who did, and I would be gone all night and then I'd come back, wake up my siblings for school, make breakfast and get them all ready. That got pretty lonely.

She stopped taking her medication for a hereditary seizure disorder. Crashed her car twice as a result. She knew she was all her kids and siblings had. So once again she stopped using. Abstinence, like Clayton said earlier. Not wellness. No community. No support. She thought she'd hidden her substance use from the kids. But they knew. And as her siblings got older,

SR: They slowly turned to drinking.

What came next is complicated. I'm gonna try to keep it simple. Shyanne says she was so intent on trying to keep her siblings safe that she got really controlling. Strict. But remember what Judge Abby said. "You can't just say 'Stop it.' That's not gonna work." And it didn't. One day in late 2025, Shyanne says, her brother came home with his car full of empty liquor bottles and drug paraphernalia. She told him to unload the trash and bring it inside. It was sitting near the doorway when her daughter's dad came over to pick the little girl up for a visit. The following day, social workers showed up. He had reported her.

SR: And they told me they were getting a warrant to take my children from me. I have never been without my kids. Ever.

Her baby boy was two months old.

SR: They split them all up, and I was alone. A freshly post-partum mom without my kids, without my siblings, all by myself in this house, in this life that I had built for us. And I just couldn't take it.

She had been clean, she insists, but now that changed. Some alcohol, cocaine and then fake percocet pills – with fentanyl in them.

SR: I felt all my problems drift away, and one turned into two turned into three, four a day.

County social workers told her to go to a 30-day residential recovery program – locally. But she resisted. She was getting weekly supervised visits with her kids and she didn't want to be away from them, especially the infant. Then, her tribal social worker told her about the Friendship House Women's Lodge. She could be with her baby boy, in a program that blended Western substance use recovery with Native approaches to healing. She was so angry – at all her social workers,

SR: I blamed them for everything, until I finally just stopped kicking and screaming and I told them, you know what, if you give me my child I will go there. I needed a whole new change of scenery, environment.

Friendship House clients stay a minimum of three months. At first Shyanne resisted, fiercely. She wanted 30 days max.

SR: And they told me, you'll come to understand why, and that this is all a part of your journey and then pretty soon, 15 came by, and then next thing you know I was on to 30 and I realized, wow, I'm just now hitting the tip of the iceberg. And there's so much more to go that I know I need to be here.

The urban Native community in the Bay Area is big. Every Wednesday, Shyanne and her son headed over to Oakland's Intertribal Friendship House – unrelated organization, similar name – for drum and dance gatherings and other cultural activities.

SR: That's where I met a lot of my Native community and my support is through them. Just Natives from everywhere, all different parts of the country, and we're coming together in this one place. It's so beautiful. I was so lost, and so away from my culture and my tradition and my ways, you know, my values and morals, that all of this felt so new.

Shyanne says it's been a roller coaster of a ride. But at the end,

SR: it's taught me love, compassion, routine, teamwork, companionship.

Shyanne's father died in 2024. Her mother is incarcerated. The counseling at Friendship House, she says, has also helped her better understand generational trauma.

SR: My mother was in CPS, and we had to endure, me and my siblings, all of this trauma. As well as my mother, when she was a child, and nobody was ever there for her, speaking up on how important that is to stay connected to your traditions, and how much healing it truly brings. It is so important to have Native based residential centers, Native based healing, to keep our culture alive, for my children, for my children's children.

Ambi: child yelling, Aidan, what group are you in?...dip

Next up, a program for kids, teens and young adults – to help them heal from traumas already experienced and interrupt that cycle of pain, addiction and involvement with child welfare and juvenile justice systems

If you are with Two Feathers group and you can hear my voice, clap once. (clap). Ok so welcome guys, this is our R. RRRRRRRRR, yes.

It's a drizzly Sunday in Arcata's Redwood Park, and about eighty young people from tribes across Humboldt County have been wrangled here in vans by Two Feathers Native American Family Services. It's one of a series of gatherings that make up the nonprofit's ACORN program. That's an acronym. A stands for 'appreciation of our whole selves,' C for 'connecting language, community, and culture,' O for 'opportunity and access.' R..yes RRRRRR for 'relationships with others.' The N stands for 'nurturing nature and spirit.'

Many of our projects involve relationship with the land (dip) …

The ACORN Youth Wellness Program was seeded a decade ago, with a multi-year grant from the California Department of Public Health 'Reducing Disparities Project.' It's grown in leaps and bounds and has been widely recognized for its approach: A blend of Western mental health and substance abuse counseling and fun meaningful activities that build confidence and agency through supportive adult mentorship and a connection to culture.

This workshop is called Redwood Tile Workshop. We're gonna be making tile necklaces. And we're gonna talk to you a little bit about why redwood trees are important to our local tribes.

This is just one of a whole bunch of workshops the youth are cycling through in groups.

Some of you, not all of you, will be going into the forest. So, be prepared. Try not to step in big puddles (dip)

Scattered throughout are older teens and young adults, participants who also serve as youth ambassadors. They're paid to help run the activities, model leadership and support the younger kids. They have a say, and that gives them a sense of agency.

Ambi: If you have a green X, go to Jad…

In addition to these big gatherings, Two Feathers also runs smaller groups that meet more regularly for all kinds of fun activities. They also drill down on two

deeply rooted cultural practices common to the region's tribes. The stick game for the boys' group, Young Bucks, and the flower dance for the girls group, Spotted Does. Two Feathers also brings programming into schools. And, mental hea lth and substance abuse counselors travel too – to meet youth wherever they can find a quiet place to talk. The man behind this layered strategy walks us through it.

VM: I'm Virgil Moorhead Jr., part of the Big Lagoon Rancheria, which is Yurok and Tolowa.

Virgil knows from experience that wellness is a long game. He grew up on the rancheria

VM: in a little mobile trailer

For a time, his father was the rancheria's chairman, but the pressing matters of the day were about basic survival, not cultural practice. Virgil's Native affinity, he says, was more about

VM: You know, wearing a Washington Redskins baseball hat and putting IP on, on our hands and stuff which means like Indian Pride.

He went to college at UC Davis, became a successful competitive wrestler. But he was hurting.

VM: You know I struggled deeply with drinking and eventually drugs.

Still, he says,

VM: Whenever I was in deep dark places, …the Native community always helped bring me back.

After college, he got sober. Not well, but sober, and turned to academic research, with what he describes as an addictive intensity. First criminal justice then psychology. He tracked down the top Native psychologists in the country. Got a doctorate in clinical psychology at The Wright Institute in Berkeley and did his

postdoctoral training at Stanford University He also poured himself into his own healing. Years of therapy.

VM: When I started being able to have and form an intimate relationship, being able to give and receive love, that's when it started dropping down from the head to the heart to come back to the community.

To help young people love and be loved. A colleague told him about the state grant that would fuel the ACORN program — and he went for it. At the time, Two Feathers was a small nonprofit, providing violence prevention and crisis services to the region's tribes. Virgil proposed a vision that would bring the grant in house and sought out culture bearers and elders from tribes across the region to be advisors.

VM: It was word of mouth, telling them what we were trying to do, which was, how are we rethinking, reimagining mental health, suicide prevention, substance abuse prevention, intervention in this community. Would you be willing to help us get to that?

The group ultimately chose to focus youth engagement in part on those two cultural practices.

VM: The stick game is an athletic competition that is played on sand.

It's usually three on three, boys or men. Some cultural leaders told Virgil it goes beyond athletics, and was traditionally used to settle disputes.

VM: You know, we would battle

Most agreed it was played after ceremonial dances, like the Brush Dance

VM: It was kinda like a community-wide event.

The Flower Dance, meanwhile, is a coming of age ceremony for girls that had virtually gone extinct. It wasn't being practiced. But a group of local Native women brought it back. It usually lasts three to ten days.

VM: It's a whole community, both men and women dance, but it's really to give the young girl the best community support, mentorship and ceremony so she lives in a good way.

The ACORN program teaches about both and participants have gathered materials to make the intricate ceremonial dresses,

VM: and then also, for the younger girls, we make dresses for dolls.

But mastering cultural practice is not the main goal of Two Feathers. Wellness is.

VM: Long term, what I call slow medicine

That starts with meaningful mentor mentee relationships.

VM: We try to provide as many positive childhood experiences as we can and the more we can provide positive childhood experiences, we believe the more it will reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences.

The other goal: what Virgil calls mattering experiences.

VM: Mattering is a combination of a sense of belonging, connection and agency, that what you do, what you say matters, that you can have an impact.

Paying youth to contribute fuels that agency. And cultural values play in too. As one Two Feathers cultural advisor often says,

VM: In our communities back in the day, everyone had a role. In all of our programming we're trying to show youth that they have a role in our community and they can impact our community.

Hopefully, Virgil says, when they move on from Two Feathers they have the self efficacy to be leaders.

VM: And, they've healed.

They've worked through the pain that's been passed down through so many generations

VM: Things that didn't happen that should have happened, such as, like, secure attachments and positive relationships with caregivers, and things that shouldn't have happened and happened: Abuse, neglect, trauma.

The Two Feathers team is learning and adapting the program as they go. They know now that safe welcoming spaces lay the groundwork for that slow medicine.

VM: Focusing on drug use, alcohol use or suicidal thoughts, deep levels of depression, violence in the home, that is often in our back pocket. We lead with fun, good energy, and really listening so that we can build the relationship that then will get to that. Once they feel comfortable and neurobiologically their social engagement system's turned on, which means they're at ease, then we can get to those things. That may take months, years.

Ernie Albers Jr. helped launch the Young Bucks group. He comes from a family steeped in ceremonial practice. It's at the center of his identity.

EA: When I first came into the organization I was thinking to myself, like, I'm gonna fix it with ceremony, I'm gonna fix it with culture. And I really had to adjust my expectation and my strategy to more sprinkling it in.

He lets participants pick the activities that they're drawn to. But he brings them together with older men who share cultural practices – and with younger boys.

EA: And that in itself is a very traditional style of community, and who you would be around, who you would live with, who you would learn from.

Ernie's got his phone out. He's showing me pictures of a recent gathering.

We were working on a sweat house that we're going to be building for upcoming ceremony so I brought some boys out to my grandpa's house and they learned how to take the pitch off the wood, off these logs.

His grandpa was a logger in his day, who mined the cultural knowledge of those who came before him.

He was able to interview elders that had experience before contact. So the wisdom and the knowledge and the lessons that he has is from a different time. So any time we can spend with him is good time.

Under a recent contract with the state Office of Youth Community Restoration and the Department of Rehabilitation, Two Feathers is also working with youth ages 16 to 22 who are justice involved or have a disability – providing employment, counseling and mentorship to ease their reentry. Two of them joined Ernie's crew of boys to help work on that sweat lodge, as did men in their 30s and 40s, and Ernie's own six year old son. It was healing for everyone – including Ernie's grandpa.

My aunt said that she heard him laughing in his sleep.

For all participants, though, Ernie says he makes it clear that embracing ceremonial practice is optional.

EA: Take your time. There's no reason to hold man responsibility if you're not ready and not wanting. But if you are wanting, we can take you to the next part of that, and part of that is demonstration.

Demonstration. Where young men don regalia – some of which they've crafted together – and perform the dances they will one day be ready for in sacred ceremony. Ernie's crew has danced at demonstrations across the state. Girls get a similar opportunity. Our last interview is with a young woman who has found healing in those dances. You heard from her at the top of the story.

AD: My name is Alicia Davis, I am 20 years old. And what got me to Two Feathers is I started counseling in 2019 with them.

After her grandmother died.

AD: And then I started a job with them in 2022 as a youth ambassador.

She's now paid as a senior youth ambassador. Alicia has lived on and off on the Hoopa reservation, but she grew up in Arcata

AD: I was treated different because of my skin color and because I was from the reservation and even on the reservation I struggled because I grew up in a Christian family. And then I became part of Two Feathers and I learned about my culture and it really helped me be comfortable being Native because I always felt, like, ashamed.

Her mom, now deceased, was her best friend. When Alicia was sexually assaulted at age six, her mother was there for her one hundred percent, she says. But her mom suffered from congestive heart failure, and she treated her pain with alcohol and pills. Alicia was eight when she first saw her mom overdose.

AD: And then my other family members were drinking, doing hard drugs. It really ruined family bonds. They were always at each other's throats because they were high.

When she started counseling, Alicia says, she was deeply depressed, and using drugs herself. Talking helps. She's had the same counselor for six years.

AD: I was way more withdrawn, I was way more antisocial than I am now.

Culture helps too. The childhood sexual assault meant that she couldn't have had a flower dance when she came of age. But at Two Feathers, she got to dress in regalia and dance in community with other young women.

AD: It made me cry because it was my very first time and I loved it so much, they were all so welcoming.

These days, she helps out as a fill-in on dance demonstrations.

AD: It heals a part of me. We've all been through so much with generational trauma, and being closed off from our dances. Being able to be part of that stuff, we should all be proud of it.

Working as a youth ambassador, meanwhile, has boosted her confidence and social skills. She carries herself with ease these days. And emanates joy. All those components of slow medicine that Virgil spoke about, they've worked their magic. And Alicia knows what role she wants to play as a community leader.

AD: I'm going into the medical field. My dream is to be a cardiologist.

She's already studying to be a medical assistant and has an externship – in a cardiology clinic.

AD: I remember being like six years old and traveling all the way to San Francisco with my mom, like, each month, every time so she could go see her cardiologist. I want to be able to give back to the place I live and I want to be able to offer that resource.

Bring up drumming ambi at Friendship House graduation then dip under

I make one last visit – to Friendship House in San Francisco's Mission District, for the graduation ceremony.

We're gonna move forward. We have twenty people today. That's the largest that's ever come back so give them a round of applause.

Testimonials, tears and gratitude pour out from the graduates, most of whom completed their treatment here in San Francisco.

A client of Deena's we were going to honor today was Shyanne (beep) who completed 90 days at our women's lodge in Oakland.

Shyanne. We've masked her legal last name for her privacy.

I don't think she was able to make the trip today.

Because, as soon as she graduated, she headed north with her baby to Humboldt County, to reunite with her other children and her siblings. Like Alicia, she told me she has big plans for a new role at home.

SR: I can't wait to bring back what I've learned to my own community and hopefully start something, taking that love and everything they gave me and applying it to my people back home. Yeah, AA meetings and NA meetings help, but it's not a community where you feel like you totally belong – people you can share anything with – your traditions, your language, your culture. And it's through that that we are reborn.

Friendship House is breaking ground in mid 2026 on a major expansion in San Francisco. A six story building. Called The Village, it will include a whole floor for mothers and children to stay in extended sober living for two years after completing treatment. Another floor will offer the same arrangement for women without children. Judge Abby Abinanti, a Friendship House board member emeritus and Village partner, contributed to that vision. Meanwhile, she will soon realize a vision of her own – a 24,000 square foot Yurok Health and Wellness Center, to be built on the reservation near the remote village of Weitchpec. Fifty-three beds for inpatient residential treatment are planned, as well as outpatient care. It will serve Natives and non-Natives alike from across the region with conventional and culturally based treatment options. The Yurok tribe has also received significant funding to build a Youth Center in Weitchpec, along with a separate peer respite center for those in behavioral health crisis – so they can avoid the trauma of ER visits or hospitalization hundreds of miles from home.

When all of that's built, state court judges, county social work and probation officials will have even more options when it comes to "active efforts."

That's it for today. A big thank you to Laura Woods, a Yurok tribal elder who serves as a research assistant on these podcasts, and to the Judicial Council's Vida Castaneda. Most of all, gratitude to everyone who honored us today with their stories. You can find links to additional resources in the script. I'm Lee Romney.

ADDITIONAL LINKS

Judicial Council Tribal/State Programs Unit:
https://courts.ca.gov/programs/tribalstate-programs

Judicial Council ICWA Page:
https://courts.ca.gov/programs-initiatives/tribalstate-programs/indian-child-welfare-act-icwa

California Tribal Families Coalition presentation on Active Efforts:
https://caltribalfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Active-Efforts-PPT.pdf