

Modoc descendant bridges Klamath Basin past, present

By LEE JUILLERAT
H&N Regional Editor

Cheewa James' interest in the Modoc War is personal.

James, the author of "Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn't Die," is the great-granddaughter of Shacknasty Jim, one of the Modocs who fought with Captain Jack during the 1872-73 war. Her grandfather, Clark James, was born during the war at Captain Jack's Stronghold.

James, 71, a Modoc descendant, was born at the Klamath Agency Hospital. As a young girl, she heard stories from Jennie Lawver Clinton, the war's last survivor, who died in 1950.

During the summers of 1979 and 1980, James was a seasonal ranger at Lava Beds National Monument, where most of the war's significant events occurred, and led guided hikes through the Stronghold.

"It was very emotional. That's where my relatives were."

A professional speaker and former television reporter, James lives in the Sacramento area.

She'll return to the Klamath Basin in early November to tour the Stronghold with National Park Service archaeologists, attend a drumming event at Oregon Institute of Technology's Native American Student Union and give a public talk, "The Modoc War: New Discoveries, New Insights," 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 4 at the College Union auditorium.

See MODOC, page C2



Shaw banquet, public program

The Shaw Historical Library Banquet, featuring Cheewa James, is Thursday, Nov. 4, at Oregon Institute of Technology's College Union.

A no-host social hour will run from 5 to 6 p.m., on the second floor, when James will sell and sign copies of her book, "Modoc: The Tribe That Wouldn't Die." The banquet — which costs \$30 per person, \$55 per couple or \$165 for a table of six — will begin at 6.

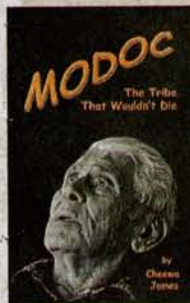
James' public program, "The Modoc War: New Discoveries, New Insights," will be at the College Union auditorium at 7:30 p.m. There is no charge but donations will be accepted to help defray program costs.

For banquet reservations and information about reserved seats for the talk, call the Shaw Library at 541-885-1686 or visit its website at www.library.oit.edu/shaw/banquet_order_form.html.

Deep roots in Klamath Basin history

Cheewa James has deep Klamath Basin connections.

James is the great-granddaughter of Shacknasty Jim, leader of the Hot Creek band of the Modoc Tribe and one of the warriors who sided with Captain Jack during the Modoc War. That connection was among the reasons she spent more than a decade researching and writing, "Modoc, The Tribe That Wouldn't Die," published in 2008. For more about James' personal history, and her book, visit her website at www.cheewa.com.



Research gave her a new perspective on the war

"History is never a closed book," James said of her program, which will be a "summary of all the things I discovered, that research turned up."

New information discovered while doing research for her book "helped me to formulate a whole new way of looking at the war and what happened afterward," she says. "Things that happened after the war were as sad as what happened during the war, and I didn't know that. That's what history and books are all about — history is fluid, it isn't set in stone."

James, for example, believes the war was not the result of skirmishes between Modocs and settlers but, instead, "was master-minded by a couple of men who desperately wanted Modoc land," Jesse Applegate and Jesse Carr. "It's when you study the post-war period the validation kicks in."

She also believes it's necessary to understand how tribal culture "dictated how the Modocs fought the war."

For James, understanding the war and

her heritage has been an ongoing process, including emotions stemming from watching movies at the former Tower Theater.

"I can remember sitting there and watching westerns," including "Drum Beat," which is loosely based on the Modoc War, "and coming home and hating the fact I was an Indian. All I knew was cowboys were good and Indians were bad," she tells, noting that embarrassment later transformed to anger.

"It took a while because I was just a child," she says of dealing with the portrayals of Indians. "To me it is more a commentary of movies of that time."

At her talk, she'll discuss how researching and writing her book has helped her gain understanding about her heritage and, more significantly, those involved in the conflict, including Indians, settlers, Army troops and Indian and non-Indian women.

"I entered the writing very sympathetic to the Modocs," James explains. "I entered the book as a Modoc and came out as a human being. I came out with a lot of empathy for all of them."