

John Parker's presentation to the State Historic Resources Commission
at their May 5th, 2006 hearing on the
Rattlesnake Island National Register Nomination

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the resources of Rattlesnake Island. I am Dr. John Parker. My wife and I nominated the Island and its resources for listing on the National Register. I just received 4 additional letters of support from Lake County residents yesterday and would like them entered into the record.

Located in the eastern arm of Clear Lake, Rattlesnake Island lies within the territory of the Southeastern Pomo. The Southeastern Pomo are one of only two California Tribes that had a true Island-based culture (the other being the Channel Island Chumash). The Southeastern Pomo are also one of the few tribal groups in the U.S. that recognized private land ownership.

The political and ceremonial centers of the three Southeastern Pomo chiefdoms were located on islands. The village of Koi was located on Indian Island at the south end of Clear Lake. The village of Kamdot was located on Anderson Island. The village of Elem was located on Rattlesnake Island.

Unfortunately, the Dodd family built a home and did major alterations to the Koi village in the 1920's. Governor Anderson constructed a three-story mansion, six car garage, and roads on the Kamdot village island.

The Elem political center on Rattlesnake Island is the only Southeastern Pomo political center remaining in a pristine, relatively undisturbed state. Its six prehistoric and historic sites chronicle the past 3,000 to 5,000 years of cultural change and development.

My knowledge of the Elem community was gathered over a 20-year period of research that culminated in my doctoral dissertation in 1994. However, my work is just the most recent. Prominent anthropologists and archaeologists have been studying and writing about the Elem community since the mid-1800's.

Salvador Vallejo visited the Island in 1843. Indian Agent Col. Redic McKee signed a treaty with the Chief of the Elem tribe in 1851. The 1871 Ghost Dance was held at Elem. Stephen Powers visited Elem in 1871 and wrote of their culture in 1877.

At the turn of the century, Elem elders were interviewed by S.A. Barrett, E.W. Gifford, Fred Kniffen, A.L. Kroeber, and others from the Phoebe Hearst Department of Anthropology at U.C. Berkeley. More recently,

linguists such as Abe Halpern, Sally McLendon, and Kenneth Whistler have revealed that the Southeastern Pomo Elem language is one of the oldest known variants of the Hokan language family. Hokan is widely accepted by linguists as the oldest known language in the New World.

There has been very little archaeology conducted on Rattlesnake Island. This is due to the close stewardship of the island by the present-day Elem community located on the mainland, just a stones throw from the island.

Mark Harrington conducted limited excavations at the ancient Elem village site on the Island in 1943. He recorded some 25 house pit depressions, including one pit that was 90 feet in diameter representing the remains of the ceremonial structure. He was escorted off the island by Elem elder John Kelsey when it was discovered that he had unearthed human remains.

The next archaeologist allowed to visit the Island took place in 1978 at the request of the Elem community. I was asked to record the prehistoric sites and I asked Dr. Adrian Preatzellis of Sonoma State University to record the historic resources.

Clearly the resources of Rattlesnake Island are a pristine example of a very unique prehistoric and historic California culture. Their significance to the fields of archaeology and cultural anthropology have been well documented and they are worthy of National Register status.

Thank you again for this opportunity and I 'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

I'd like to introduce Elem Tribal Chairman Ray Brown who will say a few words.

Speaking after Ray Brown were

Jim Brown III (Elem Tribal Admin. Officer)

Steve Archer (Big Valley Pomo, Intertribal Council Planning Director)

Christina Rivera (Santa Barbara Chumash)

Tim Rivera (Middletown Rancheria)

Name unrecorded (Miwok representing the Vallejo Intertribal Council)