

## 2016 Governor's Historic Preservation Awards

Project: **Ancestors 1 and County of Lake Memorandum of Agreement**

The Memorandum of Agreement between the consortium of Pomo tribes known as Ancestors 1 and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Lake was an effort that took one and a half years to bring to fruition, and created a partnership dedicated to the protection of sacred cultural resources. This Memorandum of Agreement is only the sixth of its type to be accomplished in state history. The agreement arose out of a growing awareness that pre-historic Native American sacred sites in Lake County needed protection from looting, and potential damage during development. There are more than 2,600 known and recorded pre-historic sites in the County. Those sites reflect only 5 percent of the actual sites in the Clear Lake Basin according to archaeologists Dr. John Parker and Dr. Greg White. The Koi Nation and the Elem tribe have the distinction of having the longest human habitation in one area in all of North America, dating back as far as 17,000 years.

In 2014 tribal leaders of the Koi Nation of Northern California reached out to other tribes of the Clear Lake region, resulting in the creation of a tribal consortium—Ancestors 1. It is one of only two such consortiums in California that endeavor to protect sacred cultural resources that are threatened during the development process. Ancestors 1 began the process of working with the County administration, the Sheriff's office and the District Attorney to bring about the MOA. At the County Board of Supervisors meeting in December 2015, Dino Beltran of the Koi Nation and Sherry Treppa of the Habematolel Upper Lake Pomo emphasized the importance of sacred sites to the Native American communities, and the historic significance of the agreement. The Board voted unanimously to approve the agreement. On December 21, 2015, Ancestors 1 representatives joined County of Lake supervisors to sign the agreement.

Following the signing and the subsequent publicity surrounding the agreement, tribes have noted that area developers are reaching out to archaeologists to inquire what they need to do to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and Assembly Bill 52, the law that strengthens the cultural resources requirements of CEQA. Archaeologists working on development projects have remarked at the degree of mutual understanding and cooperation to protect sacred resources that has grown out of the agreement. As noted by Dino Beltran, tribal administrator of the Koi Nation, "The whole intent to start this process was to educate the public and local municipalities that we can all work together to protect these valuable resources for future California generations. I believe we have accomplished that."