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## *Right To Know* at SFSU: Indigenous Youth Filmmaking for Social Justice and Human Rights

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### **Right To Know**

*Right To Know* (RTK) is an interactive web-based initiative whose main goal is to create a collaborative of activists, artists, scholars, community members, and youth leaders invested in promoting environmental justice, health equity, and human rights (<http://righttoknow.sfsu.edu>). The specific aims of RTK are: (1) to engage minority youth from low-income neighborhoods in online community asset mapping using Google Earth and Google Maps in order to identify local resources, including important leaders as well as community organizations; (2) to train community members in participatory action research in order to study the possible correlations between environmental hazards and health disparities, in particular the relationship between chemical toxins released by power and petroleum plants, and cancer and respiratory incidence; and (3) to create online RTK materials starting with interactive map making online, video production, and open theater, dance, and mural art in order to help community organizations develop successful educational programs. The RTK website was launched at the 5th Annual SFSU Human Rights Summit on May 1, 2008, and has ever since, in all of our annual Human Rights Summits, incorporated community-based insights into how academic knowledge may better serve indigenous communities in their plight to secure resources to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP 2007).<sup>1</sup>

This paper documents RTK's growth as a multimedia initiative by focusing on one specific RTK project. During the summer of 2008, Prandini and Ferreira, assisted by SFSU Anthropology graduate Nathan Embretson, conducted a video camp for students at the Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods (KRECR). Located on the Yurok Indian Reservation, the mission of this independent charter high school is "to create healthy and sustainable communities" in Northern California ([www.klamathriverschool.org](http://www.klamathriverschool.org)). The video camp's main objectives were to provide KRECR students with the opportunity to receive training in video production, and to create a promotional video for the school, titled *Between the River and Our Future* (which can be seen on the school's website and on YouTube by searching for the film's title), that would not only highlight all the exciting activities and wonderful opportunities provided by the charter school but also tell the story of what American Indian youth are doing to save the sacred Klamath River. The river runs through 40 miles of the Yurok Indian Reservation before entering the Pacific Ocean. Salmon fishing is a major component of the local economy.

As of late, however, fish stocks are in decline due to giant dams and water pollution by upstream agribusinesses in the Klamath Falls area. The finished video project was publicly screened for the first time at KRECR in October 2008, in the presence of students, faculty, parents, community members, and Yurok Tribal Council members.

RTK maintains that the future of community-based participatory research (CBPR) action must utilize new pedagogical methods and technological tools in order to transform education and build stronger, more effective community partnerships for social change. Multimedia and web-based tools have increasingly been used to help build the capacity for participatory research and action in American Indian leadership programs (Jones, et al. 2008). For instance, there has been a rise in the dissemination via the Internet of environmental and health related videos produced either independently by indigenous peoples and their youth, or else collectively in partnership with non-governmental organizations and academic scholars. A brief search on the Internet reveals dozens of such community-based initiatives. For example, the Klamath Forest Alliance website is home to 20 such videos (<http://www.klamathforestalliance.org>). In Montana, the Center for Native Health Partnerships has just released *On This Day I'm Going to Speak to You from My Heart* (<http://www.cnhp.montana.edu>). *Messengers for Health on the Apsáalooke Reservation* is also a striking CBPR video produced collectively by the Crow Nation and Montana State University-Bozeman (<http://www.montana.edu/messengers/>). In Washington, three Tlicho College students discuss their community's work with local health researchers at the Northwest Indian College in Bellingham and at the University of Washington in *The Partnership and Bridging Worlds* (<http://www.bearpaw-media.ca>). In Canada, the Mohawk Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project's video *Taking the Responsibility to Heal Ourselves* (<http://www.ksdpp.org>) also highlights the capacity of CBPR to empower and heal indigenous communities.

In all of these CBPR action-oriented projects, youth filmmaking as a critical pedagogical intervention is well aligned with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's theory of "conscientization" or critical consciousness. Freire is "a major source of inspiration" to many CBPR practitioners (Wallerstein and Duran 2008:37) to whom the purpose of education is human liberation – meaning that knowledge is produced by the people, for the people, rather than exclusively from outside experts (Freire 2006[1970]). Much of the creativity of the Freirian approach, also called *popular* or *empowerment education*, is at the root of RTK video-making projects and other multimedia initiatives. Ultimately, we have faith in people and believe in the possibility that communities should use web-based tools and technologies to create a more just and humane world.

### **Fighting for the Klamath River: A Historic Perspective**

The Klamath River Reserve was created by executive order in 1855. In 1864 another section of Yurok aboriginal land became a part of the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation (known as the 12 mile "Square"), which was set apart for Yuroks and other northern California populations. In 1891, a further part of Yurok territory was added to the Klamath River Reserve when "The Extension" to the Hoopa Reservation was set aside by executive order. The Yurok Indian Reservation now extends from the mouth of

the Klamath River, including the old Klamath River Reserve about fifty miles inland, encompassing the river and its bed along with one mile on both sides of the river.<sup>2</sup>

In 1855, the original Klamath River Reserve was opened “to settlement, entry, and purchase under the laws of the United States granting homestead rights.” Yuroks could apply, “at any time within one year... to the Secretary of the Interior for an allotment of land.” But the Secretary of the Interior could also “reserve... any tract... upon which any village or settlement of Indians is now located” for settlement, entry or purchase.<sup>3</sup> Today, only ten percent of the Yurok Reservation is owned by Yuroks, while approximately 85 percent is in the hands of timber companies. The remaining five percent is in the hands of other private owners.<sup>4</sup>

The Klamath River system used to have a fairly large run of Chinook (king) salmon (*oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Coho (silver) salmon (*oncorhynchus kisutch*), and steelhead rainbow trout (*salmo gairdneri gairdneri*). However, this run has declined significantly because of habitat changes brought about by mining, logging, damming, and pesticide spraying (Voight 1999). The Dawes General Allotment Act and consequent termination of Indian reservation status in 1892 banned indigenous subsistence and ceremonial fishing on the Klamath River and its tributaries in northern California until 1973. Raymond Mattz, a Yurok fisherman from Requa, a Yurok village located on the mouth of the Klamath River and the Pacific Ocean, fought in court for 12 years to see Yurok territory regain its “Indian country” status according to federal law.<sup>5</sup> However, the new set of federal regulations on “Indian Fishing,” published in 1978, favored non-Indian ocean sport fishery, commercial troll fishery and river sport fishery, over Yurok gill-net and drift-net fishing rights.<sup>6</sup> It prohibited commercial fishing on the reservation, restricted the use of fishing gear, demanded strict compliance with fish-catch reporting to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and imposed penalties (fees, jail terms and suspension of tribal fishing rights) for violations of the regulations.

According to Mollie Ruud (1928–2004), a Yurok fisherwoman born on the Yurok Indian Reservation in northern California and a very active defender of the rights of her people, especially water and fishing rights:

It was like, “OK, you’ve got the right to fish now, but we’re going to tell you how.” We didn’t like that, them telling us when and how we could fish, how much fish we needed for subsistence, what ceremonial fishing meant. Right after [the Department of Interior] published the regulations, the feds came down on us real hard, acting like a bunch of wild hogs, beating the shit out of everybody. We’d fool them pretending we were gill netting, but it was just a line stretched out with corks on it, no web hanging on the net. They’d go furious and come down on us even harder, taking our nets, arresting everybody, getting real tough. They wanted us to fish at night not to bother the tourists during the day. Unbelievable. But we didn’t give in. They declared war on us. It was a pretty amazing spectacle of their military power.

War indeed it was to the federal government. Yurok resistance to enforcement efforts of the 1978 Indian Fishing Regulations on the Klamath River was met with a “strike force”

of special agents, U.S. Park Police and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) officers. Some 134 Indians were arrested by special agents who used riot control tactics, tear gas and mace, firebomb defense, air support, anti-sniper tactics and equipment-tuned-up and sighted-in AR-15 and M-16 rifles, and riot guns.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Yuroks, however, the U.S. strike force did not produce “a notable improvement in compliance” as the director of the Division of Law Enforcement believes it did. Determining the catch taken by the Indian gill-net fishery, for example, is also in the best interest of the Yuroks, whose fishing practices include an awareness of spawning seasons and the danger of overfishing wild stocks. Reporting the harvest of salmon and steelhead to the BIA is also aimed at showing the public that the Yuroks are not responsible for depleting wild stocks of fish and that they do have a fishery management program. This, in turn, prevents the federal government from imposing further restrictions on Yurok fishermen. These management strategies are far from being totally compliant with federal rules and regulations. Frank McCovey, a Yurok fisherman who confronted the U.S. strike force on several occasions in 1978, revealed that this type of situation is upsetting.<sup>8</sup> Mollie Ruud agrees: “They’ve made people so mad, so angry, so much hatred brought into our hearts... It’s like they make you hate the world, be angry all the time. You just can’t stand being under all this control” (Ferreira 2006b:359-361).

Throughout the frequent encounters between Mariana Ferreira and Mollie Ruud in the 1990s until her death on June 4, 2004, Mollie Ruud also spoke about her early childhood on the Yurok Reservation, boarding school experiences in Salem, Oregon, and work in fish canneries in Northern California. Her reminiscences included moments of her brothers’, mother’s, grandmother’s and close friends’ lives on or near the reservation. Whether she spoke about her “wild little Indian” childhood, life on the reservation, feelings at the off-reservation Chemawa Boarding School for Indian children, the fish filleter routine, alcohol and drug abuse, or her perceptions on diabetes, the issue of “control” wove these seemingly diversified experiences together. For instance, there was control on the part of individuals who, like Mollie, “tried to keep my dignity as a person when they tried to make me into an animal”; control on the part of the Yuroks as a community to regain what they call their “aboriginal rights”; and control on the part of the United States government to discipline and rehabilitate individuals and populations. As Yurok Tribal member Robert McCoy explained at a 1979 fish meeting:

Control means that they are going to control, and I’m talking about the Bureau of Indian Affairs here. They are going to control every aspect of whatever you Indians do. They have had control for a hundred years or more and they are still going to maintain that control, so control means that there is an overall plan and the plan is the fishing regulations, as a part of that plan. . . . They want to take control away from the Court of Claims. They do not want you, as individuals, to be qualified by the Court of Claims because then we would probably have justice. Now, if they can take that control away from the courts and they come up with their own regulations . . . they will have complete control over everything that happens to you people. . . . What they are doing

is control[ling] you until you can't even breathe like they've been doing for years and years.<sup>9</sup>

Mollie Ruud is a Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods (KRECR) hero because of her life-long dedication to the fishing rights of her people on the Klamath River. A “Mollie Ruud Scholarship” is being set up at KRECR to support Yurok youth committed to the protection of the main source of life of the Yurok people. It was only fitting that after the completion of their film *Between the River and Our Future* the students dedicated it to Mollie.

Once the lifeline of the Yurok, Tolowa, Karuk, Hupa and other local indigenous peoples, the Klamath River's supply of salmon is now dwindling due to six major hydroelectric dams and heavy pesticide spraying by giant multinational power and timber companies. Students at KRECR have joined the Yurok Tribe's, and local community efforts, to protect the Klamath watershed and bring salmon back to the people. Their struggle for environmental justice and the right to quality, nutritious food is part of KRECR's “Fighting to Correct Injustices” program to exercise the aboriginal and sovereign rights of indigenous peoples in northern California. These activities have connected students to community leaders and local organizations in order to develop environmental strategies that have the power to restore the stewardship of aboriginal lands, waters, and other natural endowments to its original inhabitants.



*Mollie Ruud, defender of the Klamath. Photo Credit: Unknown. Courtesy of Reidar Ruud.*

## Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods

The Klamath River Early College of the Redwoods (KRECR) was founded in 2005 in the small town of Klamath (population 650) by local American Indian communities, including the Yurok and Tolowa. At least half of Klamath's inhabitants are American Indian, and most live below the federal poverty line. KRECR is a unique place-based and community-centered educational experience. As Del Norte County's only independent public charter high school, KRECR has the ability to design an individually tailored and custom fit model of education for each of its minority students. More than that, the school's transformational pedagogy gives students the opportunity to decide what is important to study, thereby allowing students themselves to develop a learning plan that best helps achieve their "dreams and desires" ([www.klamathriverschool.org](http://www.klamathriverschool.org)). The school believes in connecting students with community leaders to apply research to real-life situations. Through this "hands-on" approach to learning, students gain leadership, job and life skills. KRECR's network of community partnerships gives students access to a range of resources, experiences, and mentors to allow for educational freedom. In addition, as part of the national Early College initiative, KRECR can offer up to two years of college credit tuition-free at the local College of the Redwoods or at any other community college. KRECR's overall vision is to "Increase the number of high school and college graduates who are grounded in culture, place and community" ([www.klamathriverschool.org](http://www.klamathriverschool.org)). As of 2009, at least four of its high school graduates are attending colleges or universities in California and Oregon.

Students at KRECR, however, learn more than what is simply necessary to get into college. An education grounded in culture, place and community takes seriously Paulo Freire's teachings of education for liberation to improve people's lives starting from a local and well-informed perspective. Work-study opportunities provided by local tribes and rancherias, such as the Yurok Tribal Fisheries Program (<http://www.yuroktribe.org/departments/fisheries>), allow students to gain hands-on experience working closely with elders, community leaders, and fish biologists. This is important to note because the process of taking down the dams on the Klamath River will certainly involve Yurok and local indigenous youth, who have been instrumental, for generations, in fighting for environmental justice in the area (see *Solving the Klamath Crisis: Keeping Farms & Fish Alive* by Klamath-Salmon Media Collaborative at [www.klamathmedia.org](http://www.klamathmedia.org)).

KRECR teaches California-mandated standards in order to prepare students for a "life in two worlds." Current school director Sarah Supahan says: "We can tell them the way to meet the standards, but we're putting the responsibility for their education on them" (<http://www.klamathriverschool.org>). This is exactly where the video *Between the River and Our Future* takes its course. In the words of Yurok student Mistey Ridenour, "The Klamath River has been a part of our native culture for thousands of years . . . it's kept us grounded and intact with our cultural roots." KRECR students themselves have made it a priority to connect the land, the people, and the environment to their language and culture in their video-making activities.

This crucial connection between the river and the future of the Yurok people expands what Alfred Kroeber called the "political and national sense" of the

Yurok, which was, from his perspective in the early 1920s, “as confined as that of most northern Californians” (Kroeber 1976[1925]:13). Instead of being restricted to “ceremonial visits to adjacent tribes” including the Wiyot, Karuk, and Tolowa, Yurok youth today are using multimedia technology to claim a much broader political and national sense of sovereignty and identity. Video-making and other modern computer technologies, such as the Geographic Information System (GIS) and its related GPS instruments in indigenous mapping initiatives (see <http://indigenoumapping.net>) are increasingly being used by indigenous peoples around the world to foster global support for the effective implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In this way, modern video and computer technologies can be used as a powerful tool to protect the fundamental human rights of indigenous peoples to life, liberty, equality, nationality, religion, and education here in northern California, in the United States, and across the planet.

KRECR students defend their human right to self-determination, to “freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,” as attested in Article 3 of the UNDRIP (2007). In addition, Article 11 states that “indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs,” which is exactly what KRECR students are doing when they use video-making to “manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions and ceremonies” (Article 12, UNDRIP 2007). Moreover, Yurok youth are further exercising their rights “to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, and philosophies” as Article 13 declares. From a human rights framework, Yurok youth are ultimately using video-making to implement their fundamental rights promoted in the UNDRIP and in other international documents of human rights protection, further commemorating a major victory for all indigenous peoples who actively took part in crafting this declaration after 30 years from its initial inception.

### **American Indian Youth - Video Voice**

In an effort to empower American Indian youth in Del Norte County, RTK developed and ran a video camp for KRECR students with the objective of creating a video that would not only promote the school but also raise awareness about the Klamath River Watershed Restoration. Over the period of one week, students at KRECR were trained in basic video production, including: screenplay writing, equipment handling, composition theory, interview strategies, and editing techniques. The students worked in small teams to identify aspects of their school and community they found to be most important and then proceeded to conduct interviews with school staff, family members, and Yurok Tribal members as well as take photographs and video of their surrounding community.

As mentioned above, the main framework for this project comes from the concept of *conscientization* from Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006[1970]). Another key concept Freire (1985) proposes is *codification* – a way of using visual images to elicit critical discussions. His approach to education does away with the



*KRECR students film the mouth of the Klamath River. Photo Credit: Kellen Prandini*

traditional teacher–student verticalization of power. Instead, Freire advocates that disenfranchised segments of society identify the most important problems they have, and educators work in communion with them to help create learning environments where they can collectively find their *own* solutions. This framework allowed both Prandini and Ferreira to develop a learning environment that gave KRECR students the ability to shape program activities themselves as well as make important decisions about the content of the film – actions that make the students *participants* rather than *recipients* of the process of knowledge production and dissemination.

This approach is also in line with the work of ethnographic filmmaker Sarah Elder (1995) and her views on *community collaborative filmmaking*. Informed by 23 years of work at the Alaska Native Heritage Film Center (where she is co-founder and co-director) and her time spent with Inupiaq and Yup'ik Eskimo communities, she advocates a process of filmmaking based on open dialogue between filmmakers and film “subjects” – where representation and authorship are shared. Elder’s approach shows how the adult instructor as “outsider” and youth filmmaker as “insider” can position themselves in a more equal place of power where they both can provide certain “knowledge, skills, and access” that the other wants. Echoing this idea, Hobbs and Yoon (2008), who have done extensive work on the subject of youth media literacy education, discovered that in order for youth video programs to be successful they had to be structured in such a way as to allow youth to feel respected and trusted by adults.

Understanding that video production lends itself to many stages of decision making (e.g. choosing a topic, deciding what/who/where to shoot, and how to edit), Hobbs and Yoon suggest placing youth at the *center* of this process – in this way creating non-hierarchical relationships with instructors.

Using these ideas as a theoretical framework, we were able to offer video production training to KRECR students in a manner that would be most beneficial to the needs of their community. Done this way, the finished film would stand as a powerful tool, relevant to the members in the surrounding area. The finished film would also find itself in line with other applied films, or so-called “interventionist” films. For example, Peter Biella (2008) expounds the subject of *applied visual anthropology* by breaking it into four types: autobiographical collaboration, indigenous political activism, messages to dominant powers, and collaborative community outreach and education. Biella claims that *all* visual anthropological works are applied because they implicitly “attack” dominant ideologies (e.g. racism, sexism, hyper-masculinity, imperialism, and militarism). Based on his experience working with Maasai migrants in Tanzania, and his lengthy career teaching applied visual anthropology to students at SFSU, Biella sees the applied visual anthropologist as a “cultural mediator” familiar with two sets of worlds: (1) the local (indigenous) and the global (dominant), and (2) anthropology and film. The style of collaborative filmmaking proposed by Biella is *interventionist* in nature – it is structured with a particular purpose. In our case, the finished film’s purpose was to promote KRECR and raise awareness about the important issues surrounding the



*KRECR students discuss the creation of their film project. Photo Credit: Kellen Prandini*

Klamath River.

## **Between the River and Our Future**

The finished film, *Between the River and Our Future*, tells the story of what American Indian youth in northern California are doing to save the Klamath River. The film shows how the restoration of the Klamath water basin is an intrinsic part of the local tribes' cultural and spiritual preservation, and balanced social and economic development. *Between the River and Our Future* is connected to multiple KRECR community projects, in particular the protection of local salmon fisheries, as well as the revitalization of traditional languages, and the creation of community organic gardens. In the words of Yurok student Ashley Powell, "The river gives us life, like the school gives us our future." Yurok fisherman, salmon activist, and KRECR Board Member Raymond Mattz agrees: "The river is my church. The school is the opportunity for the kids to work with tribal fish biologists to get the dams out. This is a lifelong job."

The target audience for this video project included: (1) the Native American community in northern California, in particular the Klamath River Community in Del Norte County; (2) American Indian youth in the United States; and (3) the general public interested in environmental justice, health equity, and indigenous peoples' rights. Students of the humanities, and those enrolled in postcolonial, American Indian, global peace, social justice, and human rights programs will also benefit from the video. Since its creation, *Between the River and Our Future* has been used by KRECR as a useful marketing tool to raise funds and recruit prospective scholars. The Yurok Tribal Council has also taken an interest in the film and has utilized it as a way to spark community discussion and raise awareness about the Klamath River Watershed Restoration. In addition, the manual *Five Tips For Video Composition* (Prandini 2008), which was initially designed as supporting material for the video camp and provided the students with introductory lessons in the basics of video composition, has continued to be used by the community.

*Between the River and Our Future* is thus a bold attempt by Yurok youth today, supported by their elders, to take control of the destiny of the Klamath River after more than two centuries of intensive exploitation of the Klamath River Basin since the Spaniards first landed in Trinidad Bay in 1775. In this respect, video making is a powerful tool that has helped the Yurok people regain control of their land, natural resources, and ultimately, their social and emotional health.

In addition, the video *Between the River and Our Future* illuminates the different ways in which the Yurok people define and experience *culture*. Rather than rely exclusively on the classic definition of culture that Kroeber used in most of his writings, that is, culture as a set of norms and values that determines behavior, the Yurok community today resort to their own feelings, thoughts, embodied skills, actions and modes of communication to construct and make sense of the world they live in. In this sense, they are *agents of their own destinies* rather than passive victims of an oppressive history between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. In the process, they produce knowledge about this world, and this knowledge is ultimately associated with culture.

According to local Yurok community members, knowledge encompasses the ways in which individuals think about the world, how people see and feel about themselves and others around them, and what people do in their daily lives.

Culture is a state of mind almost. It includes your history, stories that are told, the ways families have done things, and the language itself, because we learn culture through the language. Culture is fluid, too, which means it is always changing. There are certain things that you need to do the same, such as ceremonies, but those, too, can change over time. It is the sudden change in culture that upsets people, such as the changes brought about by the gold rush (William Einman, Yurok).

I wish I could tell everybody how good I feel about my culture. Actually, culture is about feeling good about yourself, [knowing] that everything you do, say or think really matters. Your ideas matter. The stuff you know matters. Your spirituality matters. Now, when you don't feel good about yourself, everything can go to hell, there's no culture left (Mollie Ruud, Yurok).

Culture is a person's belief system, their traditions, the ways a certain group of people are used to doing certain things. People sharing a same culture have the same ceremonies in common, expressing the ways in which they communicate collectively (Twila Sanchez, Yurok).

Culture to me is valuing our traditions, our prayers. I pray every day for the Creator, so that he can bless us and always bring happiness to the people. To be truly cultural, a person has to be loving. There is love in culture, culture is about love, our Indian love (Aileen Figueroa, Yurok).

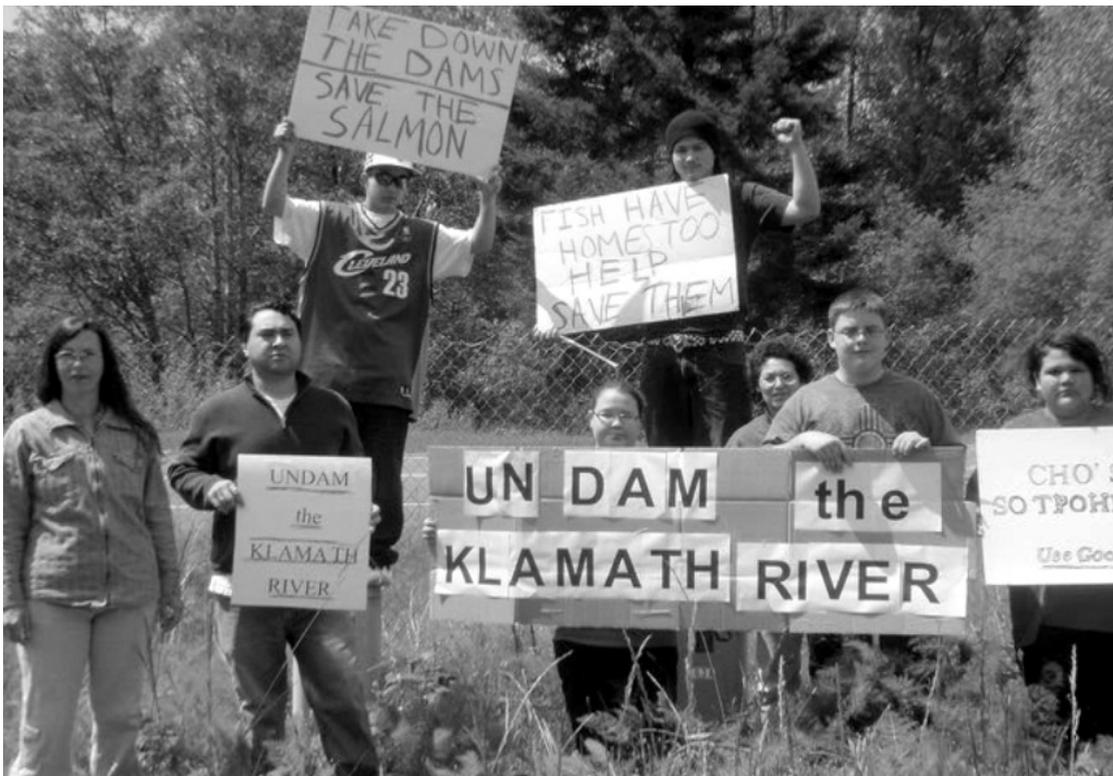
I think culture is a way of life, how we connect to the Creator and live a spiritual life. If all of that is gone, the Tolowa people will also disappear. I started this place here [the Table Bluff Rancheria], and I will die here. We maintain our culture alive because we feel good about who we are, and who we want to be. This is because we have the Creator in us, to keep us alive (Betty Green, Yurok).

Is it possible to talk about what we are like without considering what we have gone through? What kind of idea of culture is this? Something stuck in the past? Some people say because an idea is "old," it is valuable. I don't think so. There are ideas that have survived because they are based on knowledge, and ideas that are based on feelings. Culture is a blend of both. If knowledge changes, if feelings change, culture also changes (Bea Nix, Yurok).

Yurok youth today at KRECR are experimenting with and elaborating even further on their elders' social theories about culture mentioned above (Ferreira, et al.

2006:464-465). Yurok ideas about culture today form the grounding basis for modern conceptions of culture advanced by critical anthropologists and theorists of social practice interested in intersections of culture, social justice, and human rights (Barth 1995; Farmer 2003; Ferreira 2006a,b; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Schepher-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Preis 1996). In their video-making and other hands-on activities at KRECR, including but not limited to their work alongside the Yurok Tribe helping to protect the Yurok fisheries on the Klamath River, it is evident that Yurok youth are seeking to become specialized in modern multimedia technology to better attain tribal sovereignty and protect their fundamental human rights.

The struggle, however, to restore the original run of Chinook (king) salmon, Coho (silver) salmon, and steelhead rainbow trout, continues. As mentioned above, only about ten percent of the Yurok reservation is owned by Yuroks, while approximately 85 percent is in the hands of timber companies. Pacific Lumber is one such company, owned by the giant real estate and gaming enterprise Maxxam Incorporated, in Texas. The six major hydroelectric dams, in turn, are operated by PacifiCorp, a subsidiary of the mega power plant ScottishPowers, in Scotland, United Kingdom. Needless to say, California indigenous communities do not benefit at all from their goods, services, or profits. On the contrary, the corporations' real estate (five-star hotels), logging (redwoods), gaming (casinos and golf) and racing (greyhounds and horses) activities are largely responsible for the sharp decline of the Klamath salmon run, and the ill health of local communities. The immediate social effect of the depleted salmon stocks is a dramatic



*KRECR students protest the damming of the Klamath River. Photo Credit: <http://www.krecr.org/> (with permission)*

increase in poverty, despair, and health disparities. The youth suffer the most. For Del Norte County, issues of immediate concern are: (1) school failure; (2) non-Indian foster care; (3) Juvenile Hall; (4) violence in dysfunctional families due to alcoholism, substance and tobacco abuse; and (5) suicide (Ferreira 2006a,b; Ferreira, et al. 2006). Fortunately, this situation is slowly changing. The Yurok Tribe's and other independent indigenous initiatives in the area, such as KRECR itself, have helped protect and restore the Klamath River Basin and have thus promoted social and emotional wellbeing in the area.

### **RTK: Moving Forward**

Through the use of new pedagogical methods and innovative technological tools in the area of indigenous youth filmmaking, RTK has grown as a collaborative multimedia initiative invested in transforming education, and building stronger, more effective partnerships for social change via community action. More documentation about emerging community-oriented initiatives geared towards the protection of indigenous peoples' rights are greatly needed in order to foster greater collaboration among local communities, academics, and environmental and human rights activists in this increasingly globalizing world. While globalization has enhanced the ability of civil society to function across borders and promote human rights, state governments and multinational corporations have retained the power to violate human rights in unpredicted and ever-changing ways.

The United States played a key role in composing the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other key principles that changed the nature of international human rights legislation. However, the U.S. has failed to ratify several principal international agreements designed to enhance civil and human rights worldwide, compromising its credibility as a leader for human rights. International treaties awaiting U.S. ratification (meaning approval by at least two-thirds of Congress) include the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Only recently, in December 2010, did President Obama declare his support for the UNDRIP, mentioned throughout this essay.<sup>10</sup>

However, among the objections still held by the U.S. in relation to the UNDRIP is the declaration's use of "Indigenous Peoples" in its plural form, which raises the status of each and every federally recognized American Indian Tribe in the U.S. to that of an independent nation holding rights to its own land and form of government. The crucial step is to now work towards a *Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, since a human rights declaration establishes agreed upon principles and standards but doesn't impose legally binding obligations on the countries that sign and ratify it. A convention or treaty, on the other hand, is a legally binding agreement among states. Once a convention is ratified, a government can be held accountable for violating its terms.

By joining the global indigenous movement to protect their human rights using web-based tools and technologies, Yurok youth are actively engaged in *conscientization*

to analyze the societal context of the challenges they face today and the world they would like to see tomorrow. Critical consciousness and personal engagement via video-making allow for the type of praxis that Paulo Freire ([2006]1970) defended, that is, the ongoing interaction between reflection and the actions people take to promote individual and social change. In this community-based educational collaborative, academic researchers also become transformed, a process which “eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing silent interrogators” as bell hooks notes (Wallerstein and Duran 2008:38).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Initial funding for RTK was provided by a collaborative SFSU-UCSF training mini-grant awarded by the National Cancer Institute to reduce cancer disparities in the SF Bay. Additional support has been granted by the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH awards number P20 MD000544 and 1R13MD005792-01); the Health Equity Institute for Research, Practice and Policy at SFSU; and the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development at SFSU.

<sup>2</sup> This statutory reservation extension, which became the Yurok Reservation after the Yurok-Hoopa split in 1963, is described in the Jessie Short case.

<sup>3</sup> *Mattz v. Arnett*, 412 U. S. 481 (1973).

<sup>4</sup> To learn more about the history of the Yurok Tribe and its Constitution, see <http://www.yuroktribe.org/culture/history/history.htm>. On November 24, 1993, the Constitution of the Yurok Tribe was certified and approved, after having passed a Ratification Election by a majority of the Yurok Tribal members. The Constitution defines the territory, jurisdiction and authority of the Yurok Tribal Government. In order to exercise its inherent sovereignty, the Yurok Tribe pledges to: (1) Preserve forever the survival of the tribe and protect it from forces which may threaten its existence; (2) Uphold and protect its tribal sovereignty which has existed from time immemorial and which remains undiminished; (3) Reclaim the tribal land base within the Yurok Reservation and enlarge the reservation boundaries to the maximum extent possible within the ancestral lands of its tribe and/or any compensatory land area; (4) Preserve and promote its culture, language, religious beliefs and practices and pass them on to its children, grandchildren, and to their children forever; (5) Provide for the health, education, economy and social well-being of its members and future members; (6) Restore, enhance and manage tribal fishery, tribal water rights, tribal forests and all other natural resources; and (7) Insure peace, harmony and protection of individual human rights among its members and among others who may come within the jurisdiction of its tribal government.

<sup>5</sup> *Mattz v. Arnett*, 412 U. S. 481 (1973).

<sup>6</sup> A gill net is “a flat net suspended vertically in the water with meshes that allow the head of a fish to pass but entangle the fish when it seeks to withdraw.” A drift net or a pole net is “a gill net which is not staked, anchored or weighted, but drifts free” (Rules and Regulations of Indian Fishing, Federal Register, vol. 44, no. 55, March 20, 1979, pp. 17148-17149).

<sup>7</sup> “Analysis of Klamath River Fishery Enforcement Project - 1978.” Memorandum in reply

to FWS/LE ENF 1-04, June 22, 1979, from the Chief of Division of Law Enforcement to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (pp. 1-7).

<sup>8</sup> Deposition to a community meeting promoted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the “Regulations Governing Indian Fishing on the Hoopa Indian Reservation in Northern California, including the Square and the Extension [the Yurok Indian Reservation],” Jan. 21, 1979, in Arcata, CA (p. 28).

<sup>9</sup> Deposition to a community meeting promoted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the “Regulations Governing Indian Fishing on the Hoopa Indian Reservation in Northern California, including the Square and the Extension [the Yurok Indian Reservation],” Jan. 21, 1979, in Arcata, CA (pp. 16-18).

<sup>10</sup> On December 17, 2010, President Obama announced that the United States is lending its support to the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and told a gathering of Native Americans that he hopes “we are seeing a turning point in the relationship between our nations” (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>).

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