

“*Megil* has natural ephedra,” she said. “We use this for a girl’s ceremony. When a young girl is becoming a woman, she goes through a rigorous ceremony, and to do that, she’s fasting for four days. This is the only thing she can take, *megil* and water. It gives you energy, makes you awake.”

Downstairs in the museum, more vendors sold Native arts and crafts, did beadwork and laughed with one other. Melanie Smokey, a

promotes healing, is an expectorant and has anti-inflammatory properties. Prayers and songs were given throughout the process.”

Smokey, who also serves as a Native Wellness Advocate for Alpine County Behavioral Health across the California state line, explained why she remains old-school in her approach to creating these non-commercial ointments and elixirs.

“I have to travel a long ways to find good growing areas, in order to pick,” she said. “So, as a basketweaver, I really have to be aware of that, because when we split our willow into thirds, I have to put it in my mouth. So, the water has to be good, the air has to be clean, the land itself has to be clean. That’s why we do so much prayer and songs for it—we have a basket song that we sing, a water song that we sing,

a mountain song. In our pine nut song—they’re not just praying for the pine nut itself. They’re praying for the tree. They’re praying for the snow. One of our songs says, after we harvest, we’re praying for the snow to come over the mountain. Then, in the springtime, it’s praying for the little bud that’s coming out. Throughout

the year, those songs travel, just like the seasons. That’s where those prayers come in, to be mindful of that, that the babies are coming alive.”

As with Natives all across Indian Country, accessibility is a top priority and a hot-button issue, one that Smokey understands first-hand.

“You go out again, to check on [pine nuts], so that you know where to harvest,” she said. “I had a big fright last year—commercial pickers were shooting off guns, because they knew my brother and I were close by. We live way out where there’s no cell service, so it’s quite a ways to get any kind of assistance. That’s another reason I don’t go out in some hills, because many people who just walk up on you, and you don’t who they are. It’s scary—with all the harm that we’ve done to our world—but people scare me more.”

Smokey said that when it comes to observing the Thanksgiving holiday, her family has their own traditions—and prefers to maintain its focus on feast and fellowship.

“Traditionally, we’ve always had get-togethers to prepare for winter time,” she said. “We get together so we can trade, just like now. That keeps respect between us, and the relationship open. We’ve done this all along. We trade food, too. Our people over the hill had acorns—that doesn’t grow here—so we, in turn, would trade our pine nuts, our chokecherries, things they don’t have on that side of the mountain. We did that in each

direction, so when we get together, we like to have our traditional foods: our chokecherry or buckberry pudding, or pine nut soup, or pine nuts in the shell—everyone likes to sit and crack ’em open and eat them. Of course, we have a contemporary lifestyle also. I personally enjoy going home. I have a cousin who got an elk this year, and I’m looking forward to seeing him, and having elk, and looking forward to my brothers bringing in deer meat. Potatoes grow naturally in our area, so those kinds of things are really important. I’ve tried drying out our wild onions and things like that, so we can have them throughout the year. With our soup, I’m going to add *dugga*, which is our wild parsley. It just changes everything. So [we enjoy] all of those foods, in addition to contemporary Thanksgiving things.”

These deep-rooted traditions and lifeways add depth to the journeys of these Indigenous women. Like food itself, maintaining cultural traditions nurtures, nourishes, fortifies and sustains the People. A feast, indeed. Reflecting on what it means to continue what they were taught, and teach her children and grandchildren, Lisa Enos pauses, emotion brimming in her eyes and voice.

“I get all sentimental,” she said. “It makes me feel really proud. I’m very proud to be a Washoe woman, and blessed to have been able to learn these traditions, and carry them on. It’s who I am. It makes me a complete, whole person.” □



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*Melanie Smokey*

Shoshone basketweaver from Yomba



Shoshone basketweaver from Yomba, Nevada, with strong ties to Washoe culture, had a table with jewelry, baby moccasins, and products featuring traditional plants known among Natives to have inherent medicinal properties. *Sunupeeh* is “Indian glue,” a pine-nut-based salve considered to be “a good medicine that

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