

The Tribes of the Golden Empire Council

by Alan O'Connor

The intent of this article is to trace the history of the pre-Order of the Arrow camp honor societies through the councils which are now consolidated in Golden Empire Council.

Tribe of Tahoe

Boy Scouts in the Sacramento Area Council and later in the Golden Empire Council enjoyed cool summers in the High Sierra near Echo Summit at Camp Audrain, which opened in 1925. During the next summer, 1926, a Scout Honor Society, called the "Tribe of Tahoe", was formed. Members of this honor society fulfilled various requirements at camp and earned titles such as "Brave", "Warrior", "Medicine Man", and "Chief". Some of the tribe's ceremonies were "borrowed" from the "Order of the Arrow".

A Council camping brochure from 1929 stated that at Camp Audrain "Only real Scouts who enter whole-heartedly into the Scouting program and have a fine Scout Spirit will be invited to join". The 1932 camp brochure said, "Outstanding Scouts are eligible to membership in the 'Tribe of Tahoe', a camp honor society ... camp pins and belt awards will be given for achievement in specific fields of endeavor". Later camp pins and belt awards, (none of which are known to exist today) were replaced by beanies, in the 1930's (figure 1).

The tribe rank, beanie color, and requirements are listed below:

Brave (blue beanie)

- Good Scout
- Satisfactory camper
- Contributes to camp development

Warrior (red beanie)

- Second season in Camp
- At least Second Class
- Good Scout
- Good camper
- Contributes to camp development
- Contributes to program's success

Medicine Man (gold beanie)

- Third season at Camp
- At least, First Class rank
- Contributes to program's success
- Outstanding character
- Complete meditation

Besides the four basic beanie colors, variations exist in the screening of the lettering and construction of the beanies. Due to these factors, at least seven major beanie variations exist.

"Boy Scouts enjoyed cool summers in the High Sierra near Echo Summit at Camp Audrain, which opened in 1925"

Chief (white beanie)

- Fourth season in camp
- Eagle rank
- Honor camper
- Has character & leadership ability



Figure 1- Tribe of Tahoe beanies from the 1930's.

The "Tribe of Tahoe" was disbanded after the 1945 summer camp season, and replaced in 1946, by the Mayi Lodge #354, Order of the Arrow.

Tribe of Sierra

In the late 1920's to early 1930's, long before the Order of the Arrow was the scout honor society for Mount Lassen Council, there was the "Tribe of Sierra". This "tribe" honored outstanding good campers at Camp Na-Wa-Kwa. Scouts chosen to become members were notified to be at a certain place at a specified hour where they were taken in tow by members of the "tribe". The initiation was conferred in an old trapper or hunter's cabin near the camp. The ceremony was conducted in a room with little light and was very impressive. The first year a boy was initiated as a "Brave". In succeeding years, when attending camp, he could become a "Warrior", "Medicine Man", or "Chief".

Known memorabilia from the Tribe when it was at Na-Wa-Kwa is limited to the "Medicine Man" strip (figure 2). This strip was given to the author by an early 1930's Tribe member who remembered strips for the other "ranks" (similar strips can be seen in 1930's photographs).

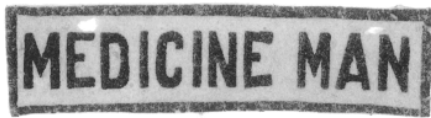


Figure 2- Tribe of Sierra "Medicine Man" strip, early 1930's.

The Tribe of Sierra moved from Camp Na-Wa-Kwa to Camp Lassen in 1935 and remained an active part of the camp's program up until at least the late 1940's and possibly until the Order of the Arrow started in 1952.

First year campers were eligible for the Tribe. Those who were selected were blindfolded and taken to a secluded campfire for an induction ceremony. After the ceremony and some hazing the Scout became a "Papoose" member of the Tribe and received a blue and yellow round patch with an Indian's head on it. Second year campers could earn a "Brave" arc; third year campers a "Warrior" arc; and, fourth year campers a "Medicine Man" arc to go around the "Papoose" segment. Finally, in the fifth year at camp, a Scout



Figure 3 - Memorabilia from the Tribe of Sierra at Camp Lassen which was earned between 1945 and 1949.

could work hard and be chosen to the "Chiefs Council". Following his selection, a final special activity, such as a three day back pack, was required to earn the final arc.

Tribe of Pahatsi

The Tahoe Area Council also had a Scout Honor Society before "Order of the Arrow's" Canaku Lodge. Organized in 1929, and called the "Tribe of Pahatsi", it existed at Camp Pahatsi. There were four degrees a boy could earn: "Brave", "Warrior", "Medicine Man", and "Chief". This tribe continued to function beyond 1955, when Canaku Lodge was formed and after the Tahoe Area Council merged with Golden Empire. In fact, the "Tribe of Pahatsi" still endures at its original camp.

Some of the Tribe's memorabilia are shown in figure 3. The four arcs were sewn around the council patch in the 1950's. The diamond shaped patch was used in the 1980's. No other items are known to exist.



Figure 3 - Tribe of Pahatsi round patch with arcs from the 1950's and diamond-shape patch from the 1980's.

Tribe of Winton

As an incentive to encourage production and spirited campers, Camp Winton presents the Tribe of Winton. This program, which allows campers to earn beads for accomplishments and for Scouting spirit, culminates in a very impressive ceremony on Thursday evenings. Unlike most incentive programs, the “Tribe of Winton” concept can be adopted by each Troop, to encourage its members to participate and display good camping. The beads, themselves, are awarded by each Troop’s leaders. Promotion and ceremony are provided by the camp staff. When Scouts earn six beads, including a red one for spirit, they receive a “bear claw” for their necklace and are eligible to participate in the induction ceremony conducted by the staff. The ceremony features a blindfolded walk to the bonfire area, Indian outfits, arrival of the officiating ceremonial team by canoes across the lake, an oath of allegiance, Indian dancing, an explanation of the purpose and history of the Tribe, and stories of Indian lore.

The Tribe concept was brought to Winton by “Skip” Treganza in 1986 from Camp Pahatsi. The ceremony and procedures have been adapted from the original script by Mike Burns. In 1990, Mike “Jake” Hallerman, then Winton program director, designed a perpetual patch to

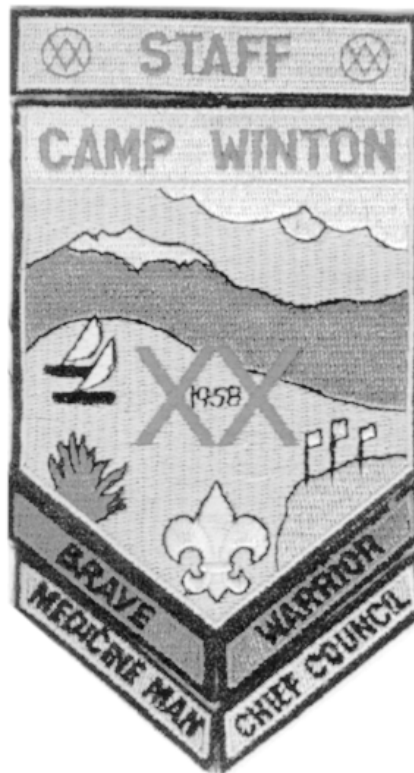


Figure 4 – Tribe of Winton patch from 1990.

accompany the Tribe (figure 4). The patch features a depiction of the lake and mountains at Winton, the famous “Winton brand”, and Winton’s landmark flagpole rock. It has provisions for segments to be added as campers progress through the “ranks” of the Tribe; a strip is also available for camp staff.

Tribe of La Porte

The Blue Book lists the name for Order of the Arrow lodge #395 for the years 1948-50 as Tribe of La Porte. While this may have been the name submitted to National on the lodge charter during those years, this author was not able to find any local reference to a Tribe of La Porte. From 1929 through 1951, Buttes Area Council’s summer camp was named La Porte, however, numerous interviews of campers and camp staff from those years resulted in no knowledge of any camp tribe (or honor society) during that time. My feeling is that there never was a Tribe of La Porte (or any tribe). □

Alan O'Connor is a 40-year veteran of scouting. Eagle, Vigil Honor, and Silver Beaver are among his honors, while scoutmaster, lodge and section adviser, and commissioner are among the scouting positions he has held. Co-author of *Region Twelve Lodge Emblem Handbook* and *California Green Book*, he was also author of *History of the Golden Empire Council*. Mr. O'Connor lives in Sacramento, California where he works for the California Department of Aging administering programs for seniors. Once owner of a premier California OA collection, he still has perhaps the finest California camp and council memorabilia collection in addition to his “old” region and insignia collections.

