

Resume of Byron Nelson, Jr.

Education ~ Background ~ Work History

Byron graduated from Hoopa High School in 1960. He attended Shasta College for two years majoring in Business, after which he used his tribal per-capita eighteen money to travel Europe. During that time he lived and worked in Copenhagen, Denmark. He returned after being drafted into the U.S. Army. After serving in the Sixth Cavalry at Fort Meade, Md., he was honorably discharged in 1968 as a SGT E-5. Returning home, Byron enrolled at Humboldt State majoring in Speech Pathology with a minor in Elementary Education. Near the end of his studies, school was interrupted due to a life threatening illness. After a three month stay at Ft. Miley Veterans Hospital in San Francisco, He returned to become employed at the Indian Action Council in Eureka. Serving as its first director, he helped develop the first Indian Library in California owned by American Indians.

In 1976, Byron applied for the position of Tribal Historian with the task of organizing and writing the Hupa history. He was chosen by the Tribal Council out of 16 other tribal member applicants to serve in that capacity. "Our Home Forever" was published three years later. He then went to work for the Tribal Planning Department. His first assignment there was to develop a project out of the tribe's newly acquired BIA Johnson O'Malley grant money used formally by the school district. Not willing to follow the status quo use of the grant by hiring tutors, Byron came up with an innovative way to teach the youth in the Hupa language, Culture and History. From this project, KIDE-FM became a reality. Since a ten year plan was developed for the radio station calling for the establishment of a tribal television station, Byron received a two year grant to train at the PBS television station in Eureka as a station manager. At the same time he worked at KEET-TV in Eureka, he also served as a Council Member for the Hostler/Matilton District. Upon completion of his training, he became the General Manager at KIDE for three years. In the mid 1980's Byron wrote and received a grant to write a second Hupa History, taking off where "Our Home Forever" left off. After completing the required research and draft manuscript, most all normal activities at the tribe were put on hold due to the winding down of the Jessie Short Case. It was during this time that he was elected back on the tribal council in 1988 where he served alongside other council members in Washington D.C. for the passage of *the Hoopa Yurok Settlement Act*.

In the early 1990's, Byron returned to the planning department where he successfully reconstructed the tribe's required reports on past Environmental Protection grants allowing the tribe to receive continued funding from that agency. From the planning department, he assumed the responsibility of publishing the tribe's monthly newsletter, the *Hoopa People*. While there, with no increase in funding, he turned the newsletter into a weekly newspaper. That paper is now called the *Two Rivers Tribune*. He left the newspaper after he was elected to the tribal council in 1996. From the council, Byron was elected Chief Judge for the tribe in 1998. Leaving that office in 2002, he worked as a consulting Judge for three years at NCIDC in Eureka. While there, Evelyn McCombs former HSU professor, nominated him as the "*Most Outstanding American Indian*" in the State of California for 2005-06 by the Society of the Daughters of the Revolution. Chosen from a field of nine other nominated Indians, he received the award in March of 2005. "*With a minimum of politics and an emphasis on achievements, the award is given once every two years for lifetime accomplishments that relate to preserving American history and securing America's future through better education for children.*" In 2005, he was elected back on to the Tribal Council. After his term was up, he became involved in the effort to amend the tribe's enrollment standard. He helped organize a committee of eight tribal members and served as the chairman of that committee and sole petitioner to the election board for a change in the Tribal Constitution. That effort was successful in 2008 bringing new members on to the tribal roll and stopping the severe enrollment decline of the tribe. The following year, Byron was placed back on the council for two years serving as Vice-Chairman during the last part of his term. During 2009 he was once again elected to represent the Hostler/Matilton District where he has served as the Vice-Chairman to the present.