

Witness – Short Biography:

Ali Meders-Knight is a Mechoopda Tribal member, mother of five, and traditional basketweaver based in Chico, CA. As a Master TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) Practitioner for the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria, Ali is a Tribal liaison working to form partnerships for forest stewardship contracting and tribal restoration programs on public lands. She has been a Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) practitioner for over 20 years, collaborating on environmental education and land restoration projects with Chico State University, the City of Chico, Resource Conservation Districts of Butte and Tehama Counties, and many other local and federal land management agencies.

Witness - Relevant Experience & Training:

- 1998** **Mechoopda Tribe Cultural Camp – Sacramento River**
Introduction to Mechoopda cultural keystone species, basket weaving, Indigenous food traditions, and ecological stewardship practices
- 2000-2009** **Kids & Creeks Outdoor Education Program**
Ran the ‘Native Station’ for outdoor education & field trips for Chico area schools; Taught & demonstrated basketry, acorn processing, and gathering of edible Native foods & medicines
- 2000-Present** **Mechoopda Tribal Youth Programs – Outdoor Education**
Teach & demonstrate basketry, plant processing and gathering of edible Native foods & medicines to Tribal youth on various sites at the Chico State University Ecological Reserves
- 2007-2014** **Volunteer Steward – Butte Creek Ecological Preserve**
Managed Tribal living cultural resources and worked with Chico State University students under supervision of Prof. Don Hankins and the CSU Ecological Reserves
- 2009** **California Indian Manpower Consortium – Tribal Leadership & Entrepreneurial Training Program**
Completed training on Tribal business development provided to Tribal communities through Harvard Business School; Developed Tribal land management workforce plan (Indigenous Earth Relations Alliance) recognized with distinction by the Secretary of Interior
- 2009** **Verbena Fields – City of Chico / Chico State University**
Helped plan and establish Verbena Fields, a unique 17-acre interactive food forest and interpretive park in North Chico to help educate the community about the rich ecological heritage of the Mechoopda people.

- 2013-2016 Lower Klamath River Tribal Communities**
Lived in Orleans, CA and worked with Traditional practitioners from the Karuk, Yurok, and Hoopa Tribes to learn more about Indigenous stewardship practices; Community advocate for Tribal stewardship programs; Attended and observed meetings during the process of developing Karuk federal forest stewardship and climate change adaptation programs, as well as dam removal processes for salmon habitat restoration.
- 2016-Present Stewardship Mentor and Public Educator, Verbena Fields**
Upon returning to Chico, CA, began and continues to lead community-based education and stewardship programs for Tribally led management of Verbena Fields, and advocates for Traditional Ecological Knowledge in land management
- 2019 Butte Environmental Council – Environmentalist of the Year**
Recognized by Butte Environmental Council as Environmentalist of the Year for advocacy and initiatives for wildfire recovery and Indigenous land stewardship after the Camp Fire destroyed Paradise, CA and several other communities within Mechoopda Territory.
- 2019-Present Chico Traditional Ecological Stewardship Program**
Founded the Chico Traditional Ecological Stewardship Program as a grassroots community-based initiative for education and workforce development based on TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) and Tribally led stewardship of public lands and federal forests.
- 2019-Present Intertribal Stewardship Workforce Initiative (ISWI)**
Co-founded ISWI (along with the Washoe Tribe and other Butte County Tribal communities) as an ad-hoc coalition in late 2019 to pursue Tribal carve-outs for tree removal contracts after the Camp Fire; consultation requests were denied by FEMA; After the 2020 wildfires, ISWI was established as a Tribally led/Tribally run platform for Tribal leaders to discuss priorities for workforce development & to share resources, information, strategies and opportunities for land stewardship of ancestral territories.
- 2020-Present Master TEK Practitioner, Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria**
Recognized by the Mechoopda Tribal Council as a Master Practitioner of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, based on 20 years of land stewardship and community education on Mechoopda place-based indigenous science
- 2020-Present Consultant, Mechoopda Cultural Resources Preservation Enterprise**
Developing a TEK Certification program for the Mechoopda Tribe; Consults on Mechoopda living cultural resources preservation with local, state, and federal land management agencies; Trains & manages a Mechoopda TEK professional restoration crew for specialty contracts on fuels management, cultural/prescribed burning, and watershed & forest restoration projects in and around Mechoopda territory (Butte/Tehama/Plumas/Lassen Counties in Northern California)

- 2020** **Contributor, Butte County Forest Health Handbook**
Contributed original artwork and TEK-based ecological information to the Butte County Resource Conservation District and the Butte Fire Safe Council for the development of the Butte County Forest Handbook, a guide for private landowners and public agencies on wildfire mitigation and forest restoration after the Camp and North Complex wildfire disasters in Butte County
- 2021** **US Forest Service Education & Conservation Committee – Northwest Forests**
Participated in Tribal listening sessions for reforms in forest education & conservation for USFS Tribal Relations
- 2021-Present** **US Forest Service Tribal Relations – Region 5 Strategic Planning Team**
Serves on an advisory committee for USFS Region 5 Tribal Relations for the development of a Tribal Relations Strategic Plan
- 2022-Present** **Mechoopda Tribal Seed Bank – Mendocino National Forest/Chico Seed Orchard**
Currently advising on development of a P.L. 638 stewardship agreement between the Mechoopda Tribe and the US Forest Service for use of surplus USFS facilities on the Chico Seed Orchard to establish an Intertribal Seed Bank – which would provide a reliable and scalable source of over 100 species of native plant seeds from the Sierra Nevada region that can supply the Forest Service and other public agencies to meet ecologically and culturally appropriate recovery and restoration goals in wildfire burn scars
- 2022** **Cultural Burn Practitioner, Verbena Fields**
In collaboration with Native cultural burning practitioner and Chico State Professor Don Hankins, helped to lead Mechoopda Tribal and Chico community members in conducting the first Indigenous cultural burn within Chico city limits in nearly 150 years. Cultural burning was used to renew established stands of Ósoko sáwi (deergrass / Muhlenbergia rigens) and to educate the public about the benefits of ‘good fire’ on Northern California lands. The burn was conducted in collaboration with Chico State Ecological Reserves, Butte County Resource Conservation District, Butte Cal-TREX, the City of Chico, Butte County Air Quality Management District, and the United States Forest Service.