Latgawa Naming Proposals

South Fork of Little Butte Creek Area

Presented by Dr. Alice G. Knotts

There are moments in history when it is appropriate for leaders of the people to return earlier historical names to places, especially ancient sites. Such a time has arrived for the State of Oregon to reclaim the name Latgawa in southern Oregon. Latgawa is a word in the Takelma language of a native tribe of people in southern Oregon who lived along the Rogue River and its tributaries. Latgawa means “upland water source.” The area covered by this description includes the South Fork of Little Butte Creek, whose waters flow into the Rogue River. The water comes from mountains and springs into creeks and the tributaries of the Rogue River.

The Takelma people who lived in this area longer than we have recorded history called themselves Latgawa, the people of the upland water source. Borrowing words of Senator Lisa Murkowski who spoke about returning to the name of Denali in Alaska, this naming proposal is “all about ensuring that respect for the land and respect for native people of the region is afforded.” Oregon’s place names should reflect and respect the rich cultural history of the state. Through naming, we can show honor, respect and gratitude to the native people of southern Oregon.

All things in southern Oregon that are “Dead Indian” were named by European American settlers, perhaps including Patrick Dunn of Ashland, about 1854 or 1855, when they found two dead Indians in deserted wickups near the headwaters of a creek not far from the turn off of Dead Indian Memorial Highway for Hyatt-Prairie Road. Even if no one intended to offend anyone by using that name, as cultural sensitivity has changed, now the name sounds offensive and degrading to many people.

Why should a name change be considered at this time after some 165 years of use that has been appropriated into the history of southern Oregon? This proposal claims, first of all, that the prior name for the area of the upland water sources under consideration is Latgawa, and consequently, that it has a prior claim. Secondly, it claims that the meaning of the word is a fitting description for these places. Thirdly, it claims that making these changes shows both respect for the land and respect for native people. Fourthly, the return of the name Latgawa to common use would give native descendants and all of us a better understanding of our identity and of the historic culture of the area.

Please note that no mailing addresses, businesses or residences are impacted by these changes.
Three Re-Naming Proposals

1. To change Dead Indian Mountain to Latgawa Mountain.
2. To change Dead Indian Creek to Latgawa Creek.
3. To change Dead Indian Soda Springs to Latgawa Soda Springs.
Consultants and References

Dr. Alice G. Knotts, former resident of Ashland and Phoenix. former volunteer and employee with Camp Latgawa, daughter of Ross and Marjorie Knotts

PO Box 19291, San Diego, CA 92159      619-955-0925

Dan MacKay, volunteer with Camp Latgawa, life-long resident of Ashland

1586 Ashland Mine Road, Ashland OR 97520      541-601-5125

Joe Knotts, former manager of Camp Latgawa, hiker and author of books on southern Oregon trails, resident of Medford, OR

873 Olympic Avenue, Medford, OR 97504      541-230-8286

Geographic Names Information System website

Google Maps


Photos courtesy of Alice Knotts, Joe Knotts and internet.

The South Fork of Little Butte Creek can be located on maps showing the area between Crater Lake and California, Klamath Falls and Ashland. The area shows tributaries east of Medford.
USGS Map of the overview area, 1891
1. Latgawa Mountain
Change the name of Dead Indian Mountain, which rises above the South Fork of Little Butte Creek to Latgawa Mountain. We do not have a photo of Dead Indian Mountain but it rises in the area above this photo taken looking west from Fish Lake Road.

2. Latgawa Creek
Change the name of Dead Indian Creek to Latgawa Creek.
The original featured soda spring as it appeared in 1954 in the center of this enclosure. The rock work was washed away in a flood.

3. Latgawa Soda Springs

Change the name of Dead Indian Soda Springs to Latgawa Soda Springs.
About the Soda Springs

This is a proposal to change the name of the Dead Indian Soda Springs to Latgawa Soda Springs. Not all of the springs show up on existing maps. There are four. Please note the following locations that are identified on Cal-Topo maps with waypoints, red dots that mark each water source. The red lines indicate the route taken by the hiker to reach these springs. For purposes of this discussion they are assigned numbers from north to south.
Soda Springs trailhead #1009

Left #1: Spring with tiered orange skirt

Right #2: Spring directly below stone bench along trail

Left #3: Original spring featured by spa resort

Right #4: Spring at highest elevation

Marjorie Falls
Latgawa Soda Springs #2
Latgawa Soda Springs  #3
the “original” historic spring
Latgawa Soda Springs #4
located next to #3
AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF THE NAME “DEAD INDIAN”

The old Applegate Trail brought emigrants to Oregon via Klamath Falls to Ashland. Some of those who settled in Klamath Falls raised wheat, but Ashland had a grist mill. There are multiple versions of the story, but the one I grew up with told since the 1950s at Camp Latgawa is that a group of settlers brought their wheat by wagon to Ashland to have it ground into flour. They were hauling it back over the mountains toward Klamath Falls when a small group of Indians attacked them. The Indians were not interested in the people or the flour, but rather the flour sacks. That’s what they took. But as they were traveling, another rival group of Indians attacked the first group of Indians. Since the Shasta people were rivals of the Latgawa people, the second attack may have been between these two tribes, but we don’t know who attacked whom. The prize flour sacks were taken and at least one Indian was killed.
Moving into the 21st Century with a New Name

Since 1953, the story of the Dead Indian has been told around campfires at night and the legend carried forward. Central to this storytelling is a camp located by the confluence of the South Fork of Little Butte Creek and Dead Indian Creek. In the Appendix to this proposal, a history of the camp and its naming provides more detail about how this campground was a gathering ground for Native Americans, the Soda Springs a draw for a spa and retreat center, and how the camp came to negotiate a 99-year lease on U.S. Forest Service property. The camp has attracted and served thousands of people over the years. Campers have explored many of the geographic features now proposed to be named.

Leaders of the camp, especially Marjorie Knotts, engaged campers in becoming more sensitive to the Native American heritage of the area by bringing in leaders such as Thomas Doty, the storyteller par excellence of Latgawa traditions. She conducted research on the early Native American name for this area in the 1980s. She sought advice and met with members of tribes, with people who knew the old languages and with faculty at Southern Oregon University. Her passion was to find a more appropriate name than “Dead Indian Soda Springs Camp” for what is now known as Camp Latgawa. She led the official name change of the camp in 1983. Over the years, thousands of English speaking people who have been to the camp have become accustomed to using that name.
CHOOSING THE NAME “LATGAWA”

The name Latgawa has several meanings. Latgawa is the name for a sub-group of the Takelma Indian tribe that lived along the Rogue River. The Takelma name means “the people who live along the river.” The Latgawa people lived in the upland area that incorporates tributaries of the upper Rogue River. Brief histories in Wikipedia.com searched under the terms “Latgawa,” “Takelma,” and “South Fork of Little Butte Creek” provide an orientation to the history of the area prior to 1900. Joe Knotts remembers three Takelma words brought together: La T’ga Wa, meaning “land along the upland waters.” Latgawa can mean “upland water source” or “people of the upland.” The Latgawa people spoke the Takelma language.

A large geographic area south of Mt. McLaughlin that extends from the Cascade summit west and includes tributaries of the Rogue River has been called the “Dead Indian Area.” It is nature’s upland water source. The “Dead Indian Area” appellation is not recorded on maps. The historic event recalled by this name could be remembered on signs and in books and museums, but the name “Dead Indian” does not fit well in today’s culture.

CREATING A LATGAWA NAMING CLUSTER

The Latgawa people who lived in the area are now almost invisible and nearly gone. After extensive Rogue Valley wars, they were removed in the 1850s to the Grande Ronde Reservation and the Siletz Reservation. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latgawa

At this point, no geographic naming in Oregon recognizes Latgawa heritage. The proposals being submitted to name a cluster of geographic features in a small portion of the area that they occupied would help to reclaim Latgawa heritage of southern Oregon. Repetition of the name would reinforce this claim. There are many possibilities for naming.
The Dead Indian Soda Springs are already on record with GNIS as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dead Indian Soda Springs</th>
<th>ID 1140703</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Jackson Co, Oregon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>421954N 1222700W</td>
<td>el. 2768'</td>
<td>Robinson Butte map</td>
<td>entry 28 Nov. 1980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Archaeological Notes

Camp Latgawa and the US Forest Service land around it may provide a site for future archaeological exploration. When Dead Indian Creek had a huge flood, perhaps 40 years ago, it washed out a new creek next to the camp and turned up a mortar and pestal that may have gone to Southern Oregon University. That area was bulldozed for flood protection. Whatever arrowheads and scrapers were found have been provided to the Southern Oregon Historical Society with articles given by Marjorie Knotts. The memorabilia from the Ross Knotts collection did not include Indian artefacts.

APPENDICES

Index

1. Camp Latgawa photos

2. Social History and Naming of Camp Latgawa

3. Historic correspondence about changing the name Dead Indian Soda Springs Camp to Camp Latgawa, 1979-1982

   Indian Student Services

   Marjorie Knotts
Photos at Camp Latgawa

Above: The old Tyrell House at Camp Latgawa. Below: a Natural Builders project
Social History and Naming of Camp Latgawa

Alice G. Knotts

From time immemorial, the soda springs located along what is known as Dead Indian Creek in the Rogue Valley of southern Oregon have been considered to have restorative and healing properties. Known for perhaps 170 years as Dead Indian Soda Springs, the water is named for its distinctive mineral flavors that taste disgusting to some and delightful to others.

The peninsula located at the convergence of the South Fork of Little Butte Creek and Dead Indian Creek became a summer gathering point for native people for thousands of years as is marked with evidence of stone tools such as mortars and pestles, scrapers, pounding stones and a fire ring in a cave about two miles away. It was only when white settlers came to the area and were raising cattle, farming, and milling flour, and then trading goods between Klamath Falls and Ashland that the incident occurred from which the area, the creek, and the soda spring were named. The Indians who held up a wagon train carrying sacks of flour dumped the flour and saved the flour sacks. They were then attacked by other Indians, and the ensuing conflict left at least one Indian dead. For decades this story has been told and retold, usually at night beside the soda spring or around a campfire for dramatic effect, with persons prepared to jump out of the dark, whooping and hollering at the moment the storyteller describes the attack.

For perhaps half a century in the early 20th Century, the Tyrrell family operated a resort or spa on this peninsula of land owned by the U.S. Forest Service. People of the Rogue Valley came by wagon or by car and stayed in cabins that formed a large circle around the grounds. Some of the cabins had kitchens so that people could prepare their own meals.

In 1953 the U.S. Forest Service issued a lease to the precursor organization of The United Methodist Church to operate a camp and retreat center on this site. Initially it was called Dead Indian Soda Springs Camp, but that name was changed in 1983 to Camp Latgawa. The camp has served thousands of people over the past 67 years. Camp Latgawa continues to serve as a valuable retreat center and outdoor education site for southern Oregon.
Notes on the historic naming documents

Inquiries about the naming of the camp may have set the naming question into motion that resulted in the 28 Nov. 1980 GNIS entries naming the Dead Indian Soda Springs and Dead Indian Creek. In that time, as reported in one letter, the State of Oregon was of a mind to stay with the name Dead Indian. However, we see with the letters from Indian Student Services the unrest and frustration over the naming that precipitated Marjorie Knotts to follow through with committees and structures to change the name of the camp.

The first letter included below was never mailed. Instead an informative and cooperative process was used to determine the camp naming. The letter is included here to show the arguments that have been made for retaining the name Dead Indian. These same arguments may re-surface at this point, but the times have changed and we believe that the time has come to change the name.
June 6, 1979

TO: Mr. Earl Riddle
Oregon-Idaho Conference
The United Methodist Church
1505 S W 18th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97201

FROM: Dead Indian Camp Site Committee

SUBJECT: The name used for the conference camp site in Southern Oregon

It has come to our attention that a petition (No. 37) has been presented to the Education/Camp work areas for the consideration of deleting the name Dead Indian from the conference camp in Southern Oregon, for a more desirable name. The petitioner feels that the name Dead Indian is in poor taste in view that it belittles and degrades Indians.

To those who understand the true significance of the name Dead Indian as well as the importance of the part it plays in the heritage of Southern Oregon, know that this is not a true issue. Pertinent facts to the support in retaining the name of Dead Indian is listed below, coming from the members of the site committee.

1. Dead Indian camp is in the Dead Indian area of Jackson and Klamath Counties.
2. It is situated a few miles from the main road known as Dead Indian Road. The Dead Indian Creek bounds one side of the camp site and the Dead Indian Soda Springs is located a half a mile away.
3. Over the years, members of the site committee have talked to persons at the Klamath Indian Agency as well as Indians in the vicinity and they take no offense in the name because of its history. A same discussion was held with a member of the Indian Museum in Klamath Falls and they found no offense.
4. All campers who attend camps at Dead Indian, sometime during their stay are educated through the program in the historical story of how the camp came to be called Dead Indian.
5. Children, youth and adults are intrigued by the name and very receptive to and very proud to be involved with a location of such historical importance, that such a large area, that covers two counties, covers. Therefore, the story of how the camp obtained its name is an important tool to use in our program at camp. To aid in instilling the value of learning all we can of heritage in our country.
6. Years ago this same matter was brought up by a very same group of people in the Dead Indian area, but both the county and the state voted the idea of a name change in the area because of its history to the area. Under pressure the name of Dead Indian Soda Springs was changed to Indian Springs Camp, but more pressure came from people wanting to preserve the original name that it was changed back, for the same reasons that it should be retained today.

Speaking for all the members of the Dead Indian Camp Site Committee and by the motion from the same, I am writing this letter for the purpose of requesting all consideration of retaining the present name of the camp. Anyone on the site committee would be more than willing to talk to anyone who questions the name as well as send a copy of the historical story that is used. We urge that you give our feelings a study.

Mary Jane France
Secretary
Dead Indian Camp Site Committee
March 31, 1982

United Methodist Church
Director of Outdoor Ministries

Dear Sir:

On behalf of the Indian community in Jackson County, I would like to take this opportunity to respectfully request that the name of your camp in our area be changed from Dead Indian Soda Springs Methodist Camp to any other appropriate name, such as Soda Springs Methodist Camp.

As the coordinator of the Jackson County Indian Student Services (ISS) program, I find the present name to have a negative connotation. One of the goals of the ISS program is to promote the positive image of our Indian people, the positive self-esteem of our Indian children, and to eliminate negative stereotypes, therefore I request the name change.

In the past the camp had been considered for use by our Indian students for their summer enrichment program, but due to the image this name portrays, other locations were used. Parents were not willing to send their children to a location with this name.

We sincerely hope that consideration will be given to this request of a name change. The location of your camp is a beautiful site, but the present name detracts, not only from its beauty, but is offensive to our people.

Sincerely,

Gary Lockett, Coordinator
Title IV-A Indian Student Services
Marjorie Knotts  
220 Chateau Drive  
Eagle Point, OR 97524

Dear Marjorie,

I'm really sorry that I didn't get back to you right away on the name change proposal for the camp, but I was ill.

It would be alright to use the "Guardian Spirit Water" - "Yo lap hi" name, but it would be even better if you could find the words for "Medicine Water". When Indian people talk about medicine it is not in the same context that Anglo people do - medicine to American Indians is anything of a spiritual quality which influences their lives, and therefore I think that this name would actually have more significance and actually be more in keeping with what the springs there were used for by the Takelma.

Are you aware that near the camp there is a window rock where the local Indians used the caves. Rock writing is still to be seen and the evidence of ancient fires is on the cave ceilings. Someone has gone over them pretty thoroughly, though, and screened for anything of significance that might have told us more about the Takelma. There is also other evidence of use in the area, but little knowledge about any of it. Our former coordinator, Rick Wheelock, and Mark Flint, editor of the Eagle Point Independent Newspaper went over the area and came across some interesting, unexplainable sites. It's really too bad that we don't know the details as the whole area up there was extensively used by the Indians, and consensus is that it was probably in a spiritual nature.

Hope this helps -- keep in touch if you need anything else.

Walk in Balance,

Lu Anthony  
Indian Student Services
from the desk of
MARGE KNOTTS
13 April 1982

Dr. Bill McDonald
United Methodist Center
1505 S.W. 18th Ave.
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Bill:

Re: Naming of Dead Indian Soda Springs Camp

Enclosed is a copy of the letter written March 31 from the Jackson County Indian Student Services to "Director of Outdoor Ministries". This letter, I found, was never mailed to you, but rather sent to Carol Colley, formerly of Medford and employed by the Indian Student Services, but now living in Corvallis. Carol, in turn, took the letter and the request for camp name change to the Social Action group, from whom the request will come to the Annual Conference.

A committee of three persons—Marge Knotts, Meg Sellers, and (name)—has been appointed by the Southern Oregon Ecumenical Camping Committee and the Dead Indian Site Committee. We have met as a committee and planned the following strategy:

1. Refer to CPC and CCC the planning for referral action at Annual Conference. (April 1982)
2. Do our own "homework", i.e., study the Takelma Indian language, stories, and all available literature, in order to keep the unique "Indian" emphasis, hopefully combining faith meaning and Indian identity. (May 1982)
3. Meet with the Jackson County Indian Student Services group and/or informed local Indians to test our knowledge and possible names. (May 1982)
4. Publicize information gained and possible name or names for all summer camps and for southern Oregon churches... (June 1982)
5. At end of summer, 1982, choose most meaningful name, vote of SOESC and DI Site Comm.
6. Report to CPC and CCC Fall 1982 for acceptance.
7. Report to Annual Conference June 1983. (I think that no conference action is required—that CCC can do this.)

I will have copies of some of the stories when I come to the CPC meeting on April 25-27 at Eugene. The SOESC group today was in accord that "Soda Springs Camp" is not adequate because there are many soda springs in Oregon.

Shalom,

[Signature]

Sherry Tanquist (CCC)

The initials CPC stand for Camp Program Council.
The letters CCC stand for Camp Coordinating Committee.