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From fires to raisins, outlaws to irrigation — Fresno County witnessed some rich history in its first 150 years. This year's sesquicentennial celebration has highlighted stories from the county's early days.

While historical research can be expensive, local groups have pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars to preserve the Valley's legacy. This includes two local Indian tribes who've funded research projects to capture the past for posterity.

Last week, more than 400 people crowded into Edwards Fresno Stadium Cinemas for the premiere of "A Land Between Rivers." The one-hour documentary, made by Full Frame Productions in San Francisco, tells the history of the Valley between the Kings and San Joaquin rivers. It features early footage of the Fresno Fair and local Indian tribes that was never seen before by the public.

Jill Moffat, executive director of the Fresno County Historical Society, said the film is part of Fresno County's sesquicentennial celebrations. She said the Table Mountain Rancheria contributed \$350,000 to make the film. This involved gathering a team of

## TRIBES BANKROLL RESEARCH INTO VALLEY HISTORY

historians to pour through reams of documents. Production began in February.

The film, which was also broadcast one time on local television station ABC 30, has high production value. It features sweeping aerial footage in high-definition and original music performed by a studio orchestra. She said a project of this magnitude wasn't possible without Table Mountain's underwriting.

"They are the group that made this possible. They not only gave the funding but also provided resources," Moffat said. "It's a film that will resonate with people outside of this area. It has national appeal."

"A Land Between Rivers," which is available for purchase for \$19.95, takes a holistic approach to Valley history, highlighting how various cultural and ethnic groups contributed to the overall mosaic.

In 2004, the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians decided to take a more focused look at their history. The result is a 400-plus page ethnohistory report of their legacy in the Sierra foothills. A draft of the report was completed in July and the tribal elders are currently making revisions where necessary, said Jacquie Davis-Van Huss, tribal council secretary.

The document, prepared by a Michigan firm specializing in tribal research, tells of the North Fork Mono's mobility from the mountains to the Valley floor. As more settlers came to the area, tribal members took jobs as miners, lumberjacks and farm laborers, contributing to important early industries.

The report also tells about the tribe's experience with the federal government's land use policies. These dealings left the tribe without any land in trust. Their current 80-acre rancheria is still privately owned.

Davis-Van Huss said the report can be used as a textbook for tribal education, for the current 1,385 North Fork Monos, and any other people who might join the tribe in the future.

"This represents our commitment to having our people better relate to our history," Davis-Van Huss said. "It represents our values to ourselves and the whole community."

The North Fork Rancheria is entering a pivotal period with a plan to build a \$250 million resort hotel and casino on 55 acres along Highway 99 in Madera County. The term "reservation shopping" was used to describe tribes that seek to build casinos away from established tribal land. The Picayune Tribe of

Chukchansi Indians also expressed opposition to the casino.

The North Fork Monos maintain that the tribe traditionally used the area around Madera for hunting and gathering purposes, while keeping permanent homes in the foothills. John Maier, tribal counsel, said the term "reservation shopping" doesn't apply to North Fork because of the historical ties. The tribe is also following the complicated legal process to place the land into trust. The government is currently evaluating an environmental impact statement for the casino.

The council said the casino might be open as early as 2008.

Davis-Van Huss said the ethnohistory report would've been done regardless of the casino project. Elaine Bethel Fink, tribal chairperson, said the council wants to ensure a secure future for the tribe, as well as contribute to the local economy. She said the casino would create thousands of jobs and pump as much as \$100 million into the economy each year.

"We just want to provide that growth and add those jobs to the area," Fink said.