

Big Valley Rancheria Tule Boat Festival

By Miriam Casey

Co-chair, Commission for Intercultural Ministries

Sights and Sounds of singing, dancing, children splashing in the lake, and craftspeople constructing Tule boats greeted Church of the Incarnation Beloved Community Ministry members as they walked into the Big Valley Rancheria Tule Boat Festival on Saturday, July 26 at the Rancheria on Clear Lake, near Lakeport.

The theme of the 22nd Annual Festival was Awakening Traditions for our Youth. Craft canopies were filled with young people learning Tule boat building, basket weaving, and jewelry making being guided by experts, skilled at these traditional crafts.

It was particularly interesting to watch the gathering of harvested tule reeds into bunches and tying them together with twine. The bunches were then lashed together to form a boat. A special treat was to see the launching of a boat and its maiden voyage skippered by its young captain. She was all set to participate in the next day's races.

In addition to learning traditional crafts, the festival featured a score of wellness and environmental organizations offering resources for the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

The day ended with the premier showing of the animated film Tule, created and directed by Jocelyn Garcia, a member of the Big Valley Rancheria Pomo. The film tells the story of a modern-day Pomo girl who is empowered through poetic reflection on conversations with her Native community about the culturally vital, but now suffering tule plant at Clear Lake. The film can be viewed [on YouTube](#).

The non-native community is warmly welcomed to these cultural celebrations and attending is the best way to connect with our Indigenous neighbors.

For more information about our local Pomo community and future events, go to the [Redbud Resource Group](#) webpage.