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The history and future of KIDE Hoopa Tribal Radio

By Joseph R. Orozco

Because we Hoopa Valley people were getting a lot of bad press from a local weekly newspaper in Willow Creek, the Klamity Kourier and the regional daily newspaper in Eureka, the Times Standard at the time we were ensnarled in the infamous 25 year long legal court battle called the Jessie Short Case. We experienced some media taking our opposer's side in this battle, we had no such media support. Some people thought we could use a local 10-Watt radio station so people could hear and tell good stories about themselves and raise our community self-esteem.

At that time through the efforts of the Hoopa Tribal Education Committee we succeeded to build the 10-watt station on the second floor of the Neighborhood Facilities Building. The signal worked very well covering most of the valley and extending through parts of Willow Creek to the south. The next step was to get the frequency licensed with the Federal Communication Commission. We knew that if someone complained to the FCC, the FCC had the legal right to confiscate any unlicensed broadcast equipment. To our dismay the FCC that same year stopped licensing 10-watt radio stations, telling us that if we wanted a radio station we needed to apply for a Full Service, Full Power FM signal that was 100-watts or more.

Considering our options we found that to get a Commercial License would take an open bidding process that could cost thousands of dollars in the 5 to 6 digit range. Our best chance was to go after a Non-Commercial Educational FM, (NCE license) that did not cost anything if the FCC NCE regulations were met.

At that same time due to the pressure of several Non-Profit media organizations complaining that most all FM radio stations were owned and operated by "Anglo" males in larger cities the FCC was convinced to open 14 licensing opportunities in five categories of ownership, Women, Rural Communities, the Black Communities, the Hispanic Communities and Native American Tribes. So, we start designing a new purpose and a new daily broadcast format. The only other NCE station operating in Humboldt County was Humboldt State University station KHSU-FM and their signal did not reach Hoopa Valley so very few people had ever heard an NCE station, we mostly received Commercial FM and AM signals.

To meet the FCC regulations, we chartered a Non-Commercial media Board of Directors separate from the Hoopa Valley Tribal Council, called the Hoopa Valley Telecommunications Corporation. We purposely called it telecommunications and not a "Radio Board" because we wanted this entity to oversee the coordinated development of future communication tools and services. The radio station was our first project, it was our first attempt to address the WHY we needed to own our own media systems.

In our FCC application we requested the Call-Letters to be KIDE which is a Hupa word for an antler taken off the deer and decorated or used as a tool. We got that name by asking a Hoopa Elementary School 4th grade Hupa Language class for a four letter name for the radio station starting with the letter "K", k'ide.

In 1978 we submitted the FCC application as one of ninety-eight other tribes and we got one of the fourteen available frequencies. The FCC issued the frequency 91.3 FM to the Hoopa Valley Tribal Members over the age 18 years. Not to the Telecommunication Corporation or the Hoopa Valley Tribal

Council. To the FCC the Corporation or the Council are the trustees of the license for the benefit of the membership.

KIDE-FM signed On-air on December 16, 1980 at 10:00 AM. Our Spiritual Leader at the time, the late, Rudolf Sotich said a prayer for the station and throw a mock switch mounted on the wall and KIDE went live on-air.

Through the 1980s and 1990s KIDE went through financial good times and bad times. There was a two-year period 1985 to 1987 we operated on a \$20,000 budget with not one dime used for wages. We operated 18 hours a day seven days a week with 21 community volunteers. We worked in weekly rotating shifts so no one person was expected to always early or had to work late. We scheduled different music genres during the broadcast day and over the weekends. KIDE was a music box.

After two years the Tribal Chairman felt we were serious and allocated the radio station \$113,000 to pay a staff. Our staff numbers reduced from 21 volunteers to 6 full time paid, 3 part-time paid and 4 volunteers. Having a small administrative staff, we entered project proposals to create talk shows like other NCE stations. This opened our listenership to other age groups. We felt that if we targeted our broadcasting to Native American Women between the ages of 25 to 55 years of age, we would increase our audience numbers and deepen our program content. It worked.

We did a three years study using a small rural audience survey service who did man-on-the-street surveys with 300 people before we changed our programming to target Native women between the ages of 25 to 55 years old. We followed the first survey with two more similar surveys in year 2 and after year 3. We added some local outreach as non-broadcast events like a Lip-Sync Contest, a Local Talent Show, several Ya Xotchi Xolik,- People Telling Stories, events, and live remote Tribal Council Candidates forums and the live coverage of other important community events. Having the human capacity of several dedicated paid staff makes a difference in our services to the community.

KIDE made the prime-time broadcast programming to address our target audience and we respectfully used the early and late hours for older adult music tastes and younger adult music tastes. We did our first and only successful On-Air Fundraiser, a ten-day drive. Our goal was to raise \$5,000 in 10 days. By day 3 we had \$5,000 in pledges and decided to see what we could reach in 10 days. We received \$15,000 in pledges and received \$13,000 in donations. People wanted us to do this again. They didn't know the amount of work that went on before we started the drive. It took us 6 months to gather premium donations to offer listeners if they pledge and paid us \$25, \$35, \$50, or \$100. We worked out forms to keep records of who owed us what amount, and what we owed them. Two weeks after the drive we were still toast.

This format has worked well for us, until the advent of the internet and social media.

When the public of all ages had access to computers and the internet, we experienced a decreasing shift in the number our community audience. People had more choices for information and entertainment. We still had the local thumb on the pulse of the community. Localism is one of our strengths. Our networking with outside and other local media and with non-media support agencies kept Hoopa Valley known to the world even as social media provided even more media options to our local audience. We took on the audience number challenge by linking our signal to the internet, aka, Streaming. We are

available to the world off our website Home Page and by a link to Live FM, Radio Garden – Hoopa, CA on radio.garden. And on Tunein

Where else can we reach?

We need to take on the social media challenge next. We need to utilize Facebook as a promotional tool more often. We are working on adding a Podcast line to our website. We will shift many of our local production features to Podcast format to allow another audience expansion. We will add more Podcast titles to our line-up and promote these on Facebook and add Instagram or other popular social media formats.

As for expanding our broadcast line-up options to listeners worldwide we will need to expand our transmission from the current one-channel analog frequency to a six channel Digital Frequencies. This will allow us to add special program content beyond what we offer now. One digital channel can remain as our main signal is now, and the other five can have different content, such as one channel can be a Native Language channel where the three local languages can share, in rotation, their own 8-hour broadcast of their Native language teaching and program features. The rotation could move the language time slots so no one language remains only in early morning hours and one is in only late night hours. Other channels could be open to address other needs and imaginations.

To expand in such services and options we need to expand our staff numbers to supply the human support and production capacities as well. This will also require more floor space. If we were to reach this probability the worst thing that could happen, is we don't find enough interest in creating more such in-depth media. In that case we must find the means to inspire people to meet the challenge and who agree this is the right thing to do and they want to be a part of, for us, a new frontier. The best possible outcome is we not only find enough local people to fill our needs, we may also find people related to local Native families, but are living far away from home and they too get inspired and want to reconnect to Home via Native media productions.

Let us Learn, Understand, and Improve upon the ownership of Native Media for generations to come.