Recent excavations of ancestors. Prehistory is a tangible focus for people who visited the Squamish perspective and more. The difficulty of researching the past increases the potential.

?itdi'yu.
Two kinds of ?itdi'yu.
Investigation of Chief Wa'siw.

2001 SCA Annual Meeting.

Wa'siw Knowledge.

Many Wa'siw and ?itdi'yu. Wa'siw...
Recent excavations in Squaw Valley uncovered large and small ovens used by Wa'siw (Washoe) ancestors. Prehistoric ovens - rare finds in the northern Sierra - are important because they serve as a tangible focus for Wa'siw remembrance, as well as for archaeological investigation. Wa'siw elders who visited the Squaw Valley excavation talked about how the ovens were used - offering insight, perspective and a real connection with Squaw Valley prehistory. In addition, as this case illustrates, the difficulty of recognizing rock ovens amidst glacial till, and shows that large area exposures increase the potential for discovery.

7itdi'yu.

Two kinds of 7itdi'yu - rare finds in the Wa'siw Sierra - were uncovered during the 1999 investigation of CA-PLA-165, at Squaw Valley. This paper, a poster session presented at the 2001 SCA Annual Meetings in Modesto, is a visual representation of the findings.

7itdi'yu means "that which is fire", and is used by Wa'siw to refer to ovens and hearths.

Wa'siw is Washoe

Figure 1. Project location.

Wa'siw Knowledge

Many Wa'siw elders, their children and grandchildren, came to view and talk about the 7itdi'yu. Wa'siw memory and insight offered knowledge about how 7itdi'yu were used ... and
conveyed a rich perspective for archaeological interpretation. Laura Fillmore, remembered steaming greens in large ʔitdi'yu.

Large ʔitdi'yu: Ovens

Feature 8 is a large ʔitdi'yu constructed of granite slabs and blocks. A single outer ring defines its form. The ring was laid on glacial till, creating a rock lined bottom. A second half ring, an upper tier, was added to the western arch increasing the center depth. Charcoal recovered from between the upper and lower tiers returned a C14 date of 2860 B.P. Feature 8 was completely removed, but all its structural rocks were numbered, mapped, and collected for reconstruction.

Figure 2. William Bloomer recording.

Figure 3. Feature 8 Cross-section.

Figure 4. Feature 8 Plan.
Figure 4. Feature 8 Plan View.
Figure 5. Glacial cobbles provided a natural rock lined bottom for the large 7itdi'yu.

Small 7itdi'yu: Hot Plates

Features 9 and 10 are small 7itdi'yu constructed with a single ring of granite blocks set on a granite slab base. These 7itdi'yu were possibly swept clean after heating, with food cooked directly on the hot slabs like “hot plates”.

Figure 6. Steven James suggests the small 7itdi'yu might have been used for sun drying.
Feature 9. Charcoal recovered from Feature 9 sediments returned a C14 date of 2320 B.P.

Feature 10. Charcoal recovered from Feature 10 sediments returned a C14 date of 2000 B.P.
Finding Fulford on a Glacial Moraine

Large area exposures are necessary to recognize Fulford in cobble rich sediments. With large exposures, the granite slabs and blocks used for building Fulford sit in contrast to the rounded glacial cobbles.

Figure 9. Feature 1 at CA-PLA-168 is a remnant Fulford, recognized by the association of granite slabs and millingstones and the dense glacial till. Two C14 samples date this near surface Fulford between 970 B.P. and 410 B.P.

Eventually, the fragments surround were stacked for exam.
The Big Picture

Eventually, a large area exposure revealed three piles of granite slabs, blocks, and milling fragments surrounding Feature 8. These piles, Features 11, 12, and 13, are ?itdi'yu rock, likely stacked for eventual use in ?itdi'yu construction. Their proximity to Feature 8 constitutes a complex of ?itdi'yu related features.

Figure 11. This 1x1 meter excavation unit was dug through Feature 8 without recognition.

Figure 12. Lynda Shoshone, Rema John, Lyman Joe, Dinah Pete and her granddaughter view the Big Picture.
Figure 13. The Big Picture. Sketch map of Features 8, 10, 11, and 12.