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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Commission for Women Office
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652-7611, M-F, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Candelaria Valenzuela (1838-1915), last of the Sespe Chumash, will be honored during a Women's History Month celebration set for March 1 at the State Capitol in Sacramento.

The Ventura County Commission for Women selected Candelaria to be honored by the California Commission on the Status of Women to reflect our commitment to recognize the multi-cultural history of the development of what is now Ventura County.

Presentations on women honored throughout the state will be given in the Governor's Council Chambers. A reception follows in the south hallway of the restored portion of the State Capitol.

Candelaria Valenzuela was the last of the fierce Sespe Chumash, and as such, a valuable source of information for local Ventura County anthropologists as well as John P. Harrington of the Smithsonian.

Certain of the value of her culture, Candelaria fully cooperated with those more formally educated than she to insure that her store of songs, legends and craftsmanship would not disappear upon her death.

It is through Candelaria that much of the Sespe dialect of the Chumash language has been recorded as well; it is because of her classes in basketmaking that our knowledge of local basketmaking techniques is so extensive.

Her lore continues to enrich the works of today's anthropologists; for example, Travis Hudson's and Thomas Blackburn's five-volume "The Material Culture of the Chumash Interaction Sphere."

Through the efforts of this dedicated woman, we have come to know and appreciate the culture of the Chumash and, on a larger scale, that of all California Indians.

The Ventura County Commission for Women is grateful to the Ventura County Historical Society, and especially to Alberta Word and Patricia Clark Callachor for their research and writing about Candelaria.