

## Yachats New Year's Day Peace Hike History

By Joanne Kittel with contributions from Lauralee Svendsgaard

The Peace Hike began evolved from an unplanned event that took place in the Amanda Grotto immediately following the dedication of the Amanda Trail in July 2009. The Trail was a 25-year endeavor to plan and build.

Many Tribal members attended the formal opening at the north trail head. At the end of the dedication ceremony, and at the request of attending Tribal members, people hiked over to the Amanda Grotto where the Amanda statue stands. Over 50 individuals gathered in silence at the site of the statue. Tribal Flutist Doc Slyter began playing *Amazing Grace*. It was at that moment, in the peace of the grotto, the statue, and the sweet music that filled the air, that a profound awareness enveloped the group acknowledging the fact that atrocities like those faced by Amanda and her people have occurred longer than we'd like to admit and continue to occur throughout the world; And recognizing that it falls to all of us to take responsibility to do better.

Attending that event in the Amanda Grotto was Lauralee Svendsgaard, Yachats Trail Chair who was deeply moved. It was from that experience that Lauralee conceived the idea of the Peace Hike. Having the Peace Hike at the beginning of the new year commemorates the tragic experience that Amanda has come to symbolize, while making a solemn commitment by each of us to find that place of peace within us; to vow to let that power direct our actions in the new year when we engage others; and to courageously speak out against injustice, bigotry, and callous perspectives on those who suffer; to treat people of all cultures with honor, dignity and respect.

As importantly, the Amanda Trail has helped to heal wounds carried intergenerationally by tribal people, to build trust, and to bring reconciliation between a previously divided people.

Hence, the first Yachats New Year's Day Peace Hike came into being January 1, 2010 and has continued annually no matter what challenges have occurred.

In December 2016 Mayor Ron Brean and the Yachats City Council declared January 1 to be "Indigenous Peoples Day" to coincide with the intention of the now annual Yachats New Year's Day Peace Hike.