

**Michael Mavris, Mary Peacock, 5th Grade**

**Del Norte County Unified School District**

**What does the theme “Six Rivers, Many Peoples, One Tree” mean to me?**

**As I ponder the question presented here, I consider where I am living – literally in the heart of the Six Rivers National Forest.**

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**Here, tucked deep within the Northwestern corner of California is a remote land, whose majesty comes not from achievements of humankind, but rather nature itself.**

**Six mighty rivers criss-cross this rugged land. From the Smith and Klamath rivers in the north, stretching over to the Eel and the Mad, meeting the Van Duzen and the Trinity in the South, all of our rivers, amongst the cleanest in the world, represent life itself.**

**Like the First Peoples who have lived here since time immemorial, these rivers overcome every obstacle to ultimately reach their goal of becoming one with the Pacific Ocean.**

**Is this done by an exhibition of power or a show of strength?**

**No.**

**It is accomplished by sheer persistence. The indomitable spirit of never giving up which is representative of this land and the Peoples that live here.**

**From the great tribes: the Yurok, Tolowa, Karuk, Wiyot, Chimariko, Nongatl, Hupa, and Wailaki, we are taught to commune and truly be one with nature. This ethos teaches us to view rugged**

**lands, secluded forests, and fierce weather patterns, as something genuinely beautiful.**

**Such is the story of the White Fir, also known as *Abies Concolor*, whose beginnings trace back to a single seed. From this humble seed, dropped onto Mother Earth in a remote region the process begins. Nurtured by the fertile soil, which the Six Rivers saturates throughout the year and, against all apparent odds, not only confronts the weather but embraces it. The young tree emerges proudly upward towards the shining sun.**

**From this great forest, we bring you the majestic White Fir, to be the Capitol Christmas tree. As the lights are strung and the ornaments placed, we, the People who live in the tree’s symbolic shadow, hope that its beauty and grandeur provide a beacon to America and a reminder on this Christmas, that all things are possible.**