

# California Indians



## Introduction

Because children find the culture so appealing, California Indian programs can be one of the most meaningful Junior Ranger subjects to interpret. Take the children back in time, and help the Junior Rangers envision California the way it was for the California Indians.<sup>1</sup>

An interpreter can emphasize many different topics related to the local Indian culture. Included here is a sample program about what the people ate and about the respectful relationship between the people and animals. However, you can present California Indians in many other ways. If you take advantage of these possibilities for variety, even a Junior

Ranger who has already completed a California Indian program can repeat the section and have a completely different experience the second time.

One effective way to interpret this subject is to include opportunities for Junior Rangers to participate in native lifestyle activities. Children will be curious about the early uses of plants, and an activity such as making acorn mush will help participants imagine what it would be like to gather and prepare their food from what can be found in the immediate environment. As Junior Rangers find out about the medicinal uses of plants, they will be able to see how, even today, we are dependent on the plant world to provide us with important resources.

California is a large state, and the environment varies widely from place to place. Since people adapted their lifestyle to the environment and used materials at hand to sustain their way of life, specific lifestyles differed from the mountains to the valleys, and from the coasts to the desert regions. Although the following information applies in a general way to most California Indians, we encourage you to find out about the people who lived (and may still live) near your park. Tailor your program so it focuses on the local tribe, its customs and stories. Also try to stress regional differences

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<sup>1</sup> All American Indian groups have names that mean "the people." In the spirit of this tradition, California Indians will often be referred to in this section as "the people." A good reference is Dolan H. Eargle Jr.'s *Native California Guide: Weaving the Past & Present*, (San Francisco, CA: Trees Company Press, 2000).





















































