

State Indian Museum

State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the museum at (916) 324-0971. This publication can be made available in alternate formats. Contact interp@parks.ca.gov or call (916) 654-2249.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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Discover the many states of California.™

State Indian Museum

State Historic Park

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Sacramento, CA 95816

(916) 324-0971

www.parks.ca.gov/indianmuseum

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*"We want to know
those who went before us
and lived in harmony
with the earth."*

– Paul Douglas Campbell

Pigment and Paint of the California Indians



Visiting the State Indian Museum is an **inspiring and memorable experience**. Since 1940, this accessible landmark has presented items from many of California's tribal groups, including an 18-foot Yurok redwood canoe, three one-millimeter-sized baskets by Pomo master weaver Mabel McKay, and paintings by the late Maidu artist Harry Fonseca.

The State Indian Museum tells the story of California's first inhabitants. More than 60 indigenous groups, with multiple smaller bands speaking more than 300 dialects, existed here before the Spanish explorers and settlers



"Coyote Dancer" by Harry Fonseca

arrived—many years before the Gold Rush. The museum honors them and their understanding and use of natural resources.

Visitors also learn about today's native people—where they live and how they make California their home in the 21st century. Native Americans are not just part of past history, but they continue to be an important and vital part of what makes California diverse and whole.

A variety of California native plants grows in the area surrounding the museum. Among the many indigenous species here are soaproot—used for centuries for making brushes and as a washing agent, and tule—used to fashion baskets, homes, boats and mats.

CALIFORNIA INDIAN HISTORY

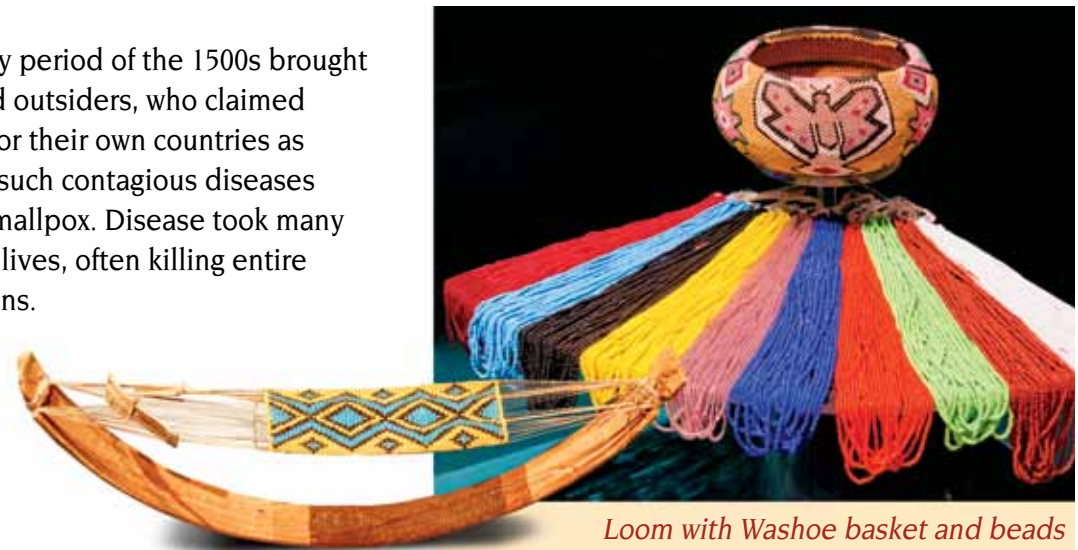
Indian people inhabited California long before recorded history. The territory that is now California was “discovered” many times through the centuries, by various travelers by land and sea.

The exploratory period of the 1500s brought the first recorded outsiders, who claimed riches and land for their own countries as they introduced such contagious diseases as malaria and smallpox. Disease took many California Indian lives, often killing entire village populations.

The mission period and the Spanish/American Era in the late 18th and early 19th centuries ushered in Spanish missionaries, who built 21 missions in California. They attempted to claim the land and destroy native culture by “converting” Indian people to Catholicism. Upper or Alta California was governed by Mexico for a short time before becoming a state in 1850.

With the discovery of gold in 1849, thousands of outsiders brought still more disease and devastation to California's native people, along with destruction of the landscape and natural environment. Indian people died from hunger, disease, displacement and violence. The Native California Indian population was reduced by 90% in less than 50 years; their ways of life were negatively and irreparably changed.

The continuous onslaught of foreigners into “California Indian Country” had long-term effects on California Indians. Attempts by



Loom with Washoe basket and beads



Bone fishing tools, circa 1500 AD

governments and religious orders to assert power and acquire land and resources led to the loss of freedom for many Indian people, destroying a complex, sophisticated way of life. Tribal peoples, whose culture was inextricably interwoven with nature, were brutally exploited and abused.

The federal government signed eighteen treaties with California tribal groups. In order to secure much-needed goods and services for their starving people, native leaders often signed the treaties under duress. None of California's treaties were ever ratified, and very few of the treaty conditions were ever honored.

CALIFORNIA'S UNIQUE CULTURE

The diverse California Indian cultures have many distinctive qualities.

- California Indian culture is ancient. Archaeological evidence tells us that people have been here for as long as 14,000 years, but Indian creation stories tell us that they have always been here.
- California Indians have an ancient spiritual relationship with the land—everyone and everything is connected. Most native people hunted and gathered; others managed both wild and cultivated foods using “self-sufficient” agriculture. These

methods provided them with enough to feed themselves and their families for the coming year.

- Hunting, fishing and gathering were done with reverence and appreciation for nature's bounty. This appreciation was conveyed through song, dance, ritual and prayer. Oak trees yield acorns, a staple food source in the Sacramento and Central Valley regions. At times, acorn meal made up as much as 80% of the diet—a substantial quantity when you consider that this translates into gathering up to one ton per adult per year.
- Music and dance remain a vital part of California Indian spirituality and ceremonies today.

BASKETRY

California's natural abundance provided ample resources for food, medicine, homes,



clothing, and basket making. Native women created a great variety of baskets for storage, cooking and travel containers, and as gifts. Weaving materials, techniques, designs and forms exhibit specific regional and cultural style. California Indian basket making, some of the finest in the world, is an extraordinary art form that expresses a native woman's self and her connection to the land.

CALIFORNIA INDIANS TODAY

Indian people continue to thrive in California today. Until recent publicity about the advent of Indian gaming, issues that concerned them was often unknown to the general public. Native groups are slowly making progress toward reestablishing a land base and federal recognition as they are revitalizing their culture. They are finally acquiring the basic inalienable rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

The museum presents an opportunity for people to engage the Indian community and to learn about their unique heritage.

EVENTS

The State Indian Museum hosts a variety of annual events, including Honored Elders Day and arts and crafts markets in the spring and fall. To celebrate Native American Heritage Month in November, events are held each Saturday, including basket weaving, a literature showcase, films and traditional skills workshops.

DIGGING DEEPER

- Scholars believe that more than one million Indians lived in California prior to outside contact with Europeans.
- California Indians resided in small groups, as opposed to large nations like the Sioux, Iroquois or Blackfeet. Each of the hundreds of California tribal bands also governed itself autonomously.
- More than 90 languages and 300 dialects were spoken here, making California one of the most linguistically diverse areas in all of the Americas.
- Clothing was appropriate to the climate, varied by season, and did not resemble the tanned buffalo hide apparel worn by the Plains Indians.
- Bison or buffalo were not present in California and are not part of native culture here.

THE CALIFORNIA INDIAN HERITAGE CENTER

Plans are underway to construct the California Indian Heritage Center in West Sacramento. Intended to foster preservation and promote restoration of California Indian culture, this center will serve as a gathering place where Indian and non-Indian peoples may study and enjoy facets of Native language, literature, arts, crafts, and lifeway traditions. Look for more information in the near future.

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- Chumash Painted Cave State Historic Park
Santa Barbara 93105 (805) 733-3713
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The State Indian Museum receives support in part from the California Indian Heritage Center Foundation, a nonprofit organization created to support the museum and future California Indian Heritage Center. For more information, call (916) 324-0971 or visit www.parks.ca.gov/cihc.

State Indian Museum

State Historic Park






← to downtown Sacramento

K Street

to  →



Legend

-  Fence
-  Pond
-  Park Building
-  Accessible Feature
-  Restroom

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