
Native Americans

Overview Hugo, Oregon like most places has its Native American history, some known, most not. Hugo's first citizens or peoples were the Takelma Indians in the Rogue River Valley.

Hugo History Day II Essay¹ Native inhabitants date back as far as 10,000 years ago in the Hugo area. They lived in semi-permanent villages during the winter and then broke up into smaller bands during fall, spring and summer to hunt, fish and gather in the neighboring foothills. During their time away from their village, they lived in temporary camps in brush houses. There is a high probability that the Hugo area was the site of one of these temporary camps. It is alive with the preferred black acorn trees and close to both Mt. Sexton and Red Mountain where upland game is and was abundant. Also, numerous creeks are present here as a source of water. Not named then, but



Bummer and Quartz creeks are two major perennial creeks in the Hugo area. The 1855 U.S. General Surveyor Office's map documents an Indian trail going straight through the Hugo area.

The bloody Rogue River Wars of the 1850's, reduced these people from 9,500 to 2,000 in six years before they were removed from their homeland to the reservations in the north. Local Euro-American immigrants joined in groups known as "volunteers" with the sole purpose of exterminating the native Indians. David Sexton, longtime pioneer in the Hugo area was a leader of one of these groups of "volunteers". By 1856, the Taylor and Jumpoff Joe Creek band was comprised of 14 men, 27 women and 19 children.

Hugo's Takelma Indians

Use Of Fire One of the most important tools for survival and subsistence was the use of fire by these native inhabitants. The reasons for the use of fire included game drives, gathering of acorns, hazel nuts, tarweed seeds, grass seeds, insects, root and berry propagation, procurement of sugar pine sap, snake control, preparation for tobacco planting, enhancement of basketry materials, warfare, communication and ceremonial purposes as well as cooking, warmth and light



Tarweed

Fires were set during spring, summer and fall for various reasons in various locations. They were usually set by "fire specialists" who understood the importance of wind direction, temperature and what impact the fire would have on different plants and animals. They managed their environment by fire to obtain the best harvest and enhance their winter store of food.

1. The Takelma would light fires in the shape of a horseshoe to drive deer toward the bottom of the semi-circle where the women stood rattling deer bones and the men waited to shoot them. They also would use this method to drive the deer into elaborately constructed brush fences where they could be taken in snares. The Takelma also regularly burned their hunting area to produce better grass with which to attract wild game and maintain their habitat by reducing the underbrush.

1. Rose, Karen. May 25, 2002. *Takelma Indians: An Essay on Native Americans in the Rogue River Area*. Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society. Hugo, OR. For the entire article go to <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/takelma.htm>.

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2. Hillsides of the Rogue Valley were burned around oak groves to clear the underbrush and vegetation to protect the trees existence and make it easier to gather the fallen acorns. These fires also killed young conifers which if left alone would have grown taller than the oaks and overtopped them.

3. In midsummer when the hazelnuts were ripe, burning of these areas would hasten the nuts to drop and be roasted. The nuts were easier to collect without the competing vegetation.

4. The sowing of Indian oats or tarweed began in midsummer with the burning of the stalks. Yellow-flowered tarweed was very sticky and the burning would remove the pitchy substance. At night, 4 or 5 unmarried men standing at a distance of about 100 yards apart would set fire to the prairie. The next day, they would use long paddles to harvest the seeds by hitting the stalks, directing the falling seeds into shallow baskets.



Mortar & Pestle

Want more information? Contact a member of Hugo's Native American Team..

2. Map 1 from Gray, Dennis J. (1987). *The Takelmas and Their Athapascan Neighbors: A New Ethnographic Synthesis for the Upper Rogue River Area of Southwestern Oregon*, University of Oregon Anthropological Papers, No. 37. Eugene: Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon.

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission of promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

Land Use & History

The *Hugo Neighborhood's* land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and to preserve, protect, and enhance the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, if requested, as a technical resource assisting neighbors to represent themselves.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Volunteer membership dues are \$10.00 annually per family and normally used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Send us your e-mail address if you want to know what we are doing.

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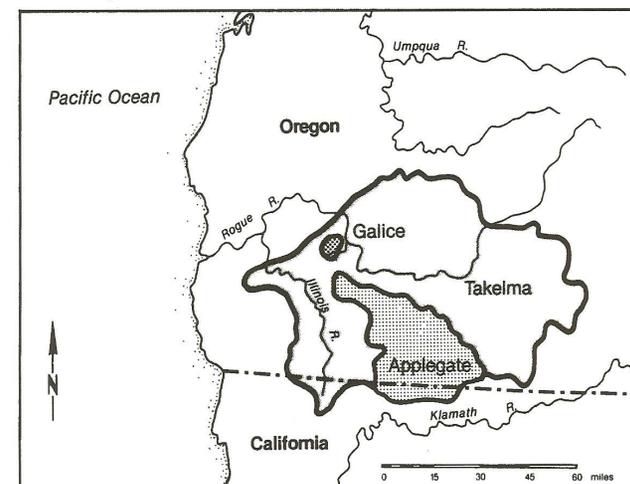
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Takelma Indians: An Essay on Native Americans in the Rogue River Area



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Map 1. Takelma Lands

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Hugo Neighborhood Association &
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Josephine County Historical Society