

History of the Maidu Indians

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History of the Maidu Indians Oroville, California is part of the ancestral home of the Maidu people. For more than two thousand years, the Maidu people have lived in this area. Traditional Maidu boundaries begin in the north with Mount Lassen and Honey Lake, stretch westward to the Sacramento River, reach south to the American River; and climb east to the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Ancestors of the Maidu people lived a peaceful existence; with the land offering them all they needed for good health, prosperity, and a comfortable lifestyle. There was fresh, clear water, and an abundance of wildlife and plants for food, clothing and tools. They planted seeds and bulbs for food and other purposes, and had a great knowledge of botanical medicines. Their homes were made out of slabs of cedar bark, and they communicated with other tribes for socializing, ceremonies, and trade. When gold was discovered in 1848, the Maidu homelands were destroyed and taken away. Through epidemics brought to them by the colonizers, and by bounties placed on their lives by the government, the Maidu population dropped from 10,000 to 330 individuals in a matter of three decades. During the 1860s, they were rounded up and forcibly marched to a reservation in Mendocino County. Well into the 1900's, Maidu children were taken from their homes and placed in government boarding schools where they were punished for speaking their native language or practicing their traditions. Treaties, guaranteeing land and services, were not upheld. The descendants of these people are strong and resilient. They have weathered their physical conquest, epidemic diseases, poverty, and loss of land and family. The Maidu of today walks on two roads. One is the road of modern society with all its technology and scientific advances. The other road is the living history and rich traditions of a people with an ancient legacy that still serves to guide and strengthen them for their role in present-day society. Today, there are nearly 2,000 Maidu people belonging to the Berry Creek, Enterprise and Mooretown Rancherias. With pride and respect, they welcome you to their tribal health clinic and their vision of quality health care for all those who use clinic services.