
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 of the Rogue River Valley.

BLM Takelma Indian Web Publication¹

The Takelma expressed many spiritual beliefs through their myths and legends and the mythological characters found in these stories - several of which relate to the Table Rocks area.

This belief system is described as animistic and is based on the belief that all natural objects are inhabited by a spirit. Animists also believe humans possess souls with a distinct life that is separate from the human body before and after death.



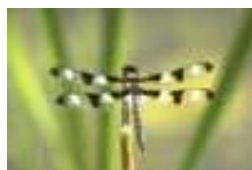
Anthropologists consider animism to be probably the oldest form of religious belief on earth.

For the Takelma, the spirits were associated with particular plants, animals, and places thought to be the transformed manifestations of primeval earthly inhabitants (Gray 1987:43, Sapir 1907:34). Animals, plants, rocks, and weather all had spiritual meaning and a person's fate, as well as events of nature, were controlled by supernatural spirits. Thus, although maintaining good relationships among and between people was important, it was also crucial for the Takelma to maintain positive interactions with the many unseen spirits (the plants, the trees, the rocks, the animals) that surrounded them (Tveskov 2002:15).

Hugo's Takelma Indians

Mediation between the spirit world and the Takelma was normally accomplished by a shaman (Goyo). A shaman obtained his/her special powers from one or several guardian spirits, which were contacted during fasting and praying in the mountains (Sapir 1907:41). A shaman could be either a man or a woman, and held extraordinary powers to effect good or evil.

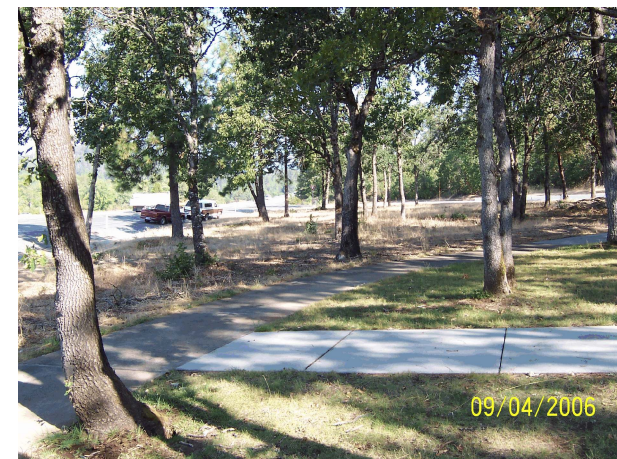
Ceremonies were also a part of Takelman life, though they were limited to the practice of certain rituals during important crises and life phases, during warfare, and for annual renewals of significant food resources (Gray 1987:40, Sapir 1907). Annual renewal ceremonies focused on the two main food resources of the Takelma, the acorn and the salmon. Their First Salmon ceremony was probably very similar to those practiced by other Native groups in the Pacific Northwest. The object of the ceremonies was to ensure the return of large populations of spawning salmon and abundant acorn crops (Sapir 1907a:33).



1. BLM Medford District. Downloaded January 2, 2010. *Ceremonies and Spiritual Beliefs of the Takelma*. Department of the Interior. Medford, OR. <http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/tablerock/table-rock-ceremonies.php>

Ceremonies & Spiritual Beliefs

A version of these subsistence ceremonies has been revitalized today in the Rogue Valley. The eldest surviving Takelma elder, Agnes Baker-Pilgrim, is an active member of the local Native community. Though a huge amount of traditional Takelman culture was lost, Agnes has made an effort to learn as much as possible about her people and their history. She has restarted the tradition of both a salmon and an acorn ceremony in the hopes of further sharing her knowledge about Takelma culture with other Native descendants and the general public. All are encouraged to attend these ceremonies which take place in the summer and the fall!



Oak Trees At East Manzanita I-5 Rest Area

Want more information? Contact a member of the HNAT.

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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Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/>

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Ceremonies and Spiritual Beliefs of the Takelma



Brochure NA-13 Of Hugo's
Native American Brochure Series



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Joe Creek*

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**Hugo Neighborhood Association &
Historical Society
Josephine County Historical Society**