
Pre-Contact—Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians

Key vocabulary words

Abundant (adjective) Existing or available in large quantities; plentiful.

Example sentence: Natural resources were abundant in the region.

Sustenance (noun) Food and drink regarded as a source of strength; nourishment.

Example sentence: The Tribe relied on hunting and gathering for sustenance.

Decoy (noun) A person or thing used to trick or attract attention away from something else.

Example sentence: The hunter used a deer-head decoy to lure the animals closer.

Relocate (verb) Move to a new place and establish one's home or business there.

Example sentence: The Tribe would relocate to the lowlands during the winter months.

Significant (adjective)  Sufficiently great or important to be worthy of attention; noteworthy.

Example sentence: The arrival of Europeans had a significant impact on the Tribe's way of life.

Adapted reading passage

Our people, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, lived in southwestern Oregon between the Cascade and Coast ranges. Our homeland was filled with tall mountains, forests, and valleys that provided us with abundant resources to support our way of life. The South Umpqua River and Cow Creek were particularly important to us.

We had various methods for catching salmon from the rivers and streams, such as spearing, netting, and trapping. We even built stick dams and used baskets made of hazel shoots to catch salmon as they swam upstream. Lamprey were also a valuable food source, and men would venture into the water to grab them from the rocks. We smoked and dried both salmon and lamprey so we could enjoy them during the winter. Additionally, we found trout, crawfish, and freshwater mussels in the creeks and rivers, which provided us with even more sustenance.

In our region, there were plentiful deer, elk, and bear, and we used different hunting techniques to capture them. One method involved constructing long brush fences across canyons and setting up snares made of iris fiber to trap the deer. Some hunters would wear dried deer-head decoys and use bows and arrows to stealthily approach their prey. We made sure to use every part of the animal—drying the meat, tanning the hide for clothing, crafting tools from the bones, using the dewclaws for rattles, and using the sinews as bow strings. Bears were especially valuable due to their grease, marrow, and decorative claws.

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Gathering seeds, nuts, and berries was another essential aspect of our lives. We collected acorns and ground them up for storage during the winter. To obtain tarweed seeds, we burned the fields to remove the sticky substance and then beat the tarweed pods over a basket to extract the seeds. Women in our Tribe used deer-horn-handled digging sticks to gather camas bulbs, which were then placed in burden baskets over their shoulders. After baking them in an earth oven, the camas bulbs could be dried in the sun or mashed into cakes for winter storage. We also relied on hazelnuts, chinquapin, elderberries, blackberries, strawberries, service berries, salal, and blackcaps—all of these plants played crucial roles in our lives.

During late summer and early fall, we embarked on an important activity as a Tribe. We journeyed to the Rogue-Umpqua Divide to gather huckleberries, which we would then dry on large flat rocks under the sun. In the evenings, we would come together to sing songs and share stories that had been passed down through generations. As the nights grew colder and winter rain approached, we would leave the mountains and relocate to permanent winter villages in the lowlands. These villages consisted of houses made from split wood planks supported by tall posts. The roofs were held up by beams tied with hazel bark ropes. Inside, there was a fire pit where we gathered. A ladder made from a notched log led to the main area. These houses served as storage for the food we had gathered, including acorns, hazelnuts, camas cakes, tarweed seeds, smoked salmon, lamprey, and dried meat.

This was our way of life until we encountered people from Europe and America in the early 1800s, which brought significant changes to our Tribe and culture.

Summary

- The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians lived in southwestern Oregon and relied on the abundant resources of tall mountains, forests, and rivers.
- They used various methods to catch salmon and lamprey and also hunted deer, elk, and bear for food and materials.
- Gathering seeds, nuts, and berries was an important part of their lives, and they would gather huckleberries in late summer and early fall.

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Multiple choice questions

According to the text, what were some of the methods used by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians to catch salmon?

- a. Using stick dams and hazel shoot baskets
- b. Setting up snares made of iris fiber
- c. Venturing into the water to grab them from the rocks
- d. Burning the fields to remove the sticky substance

What did the women in the Tribe use deer-horn-handled digging sticks for?

- a. To gather huckleberries
- b. To trap deer
- c. To gather camas bulbs
- d. To construct long brush fences

What was an important activity for the Tribe during late summer and early fall?

- a. Building houses made from split wood planks
- b. Relocating to permanent winter villages
- c. Gathering seeds, nuts, and berries
- d. Encountering people from Europe and America

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Short answer questions

1. What were some methods used by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians to catch salmon?

2. What were some animals hunted by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians?

3. What were some plants gathered by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians?