

THE CENTRAL SIERRA MIWOK OF TUOLUMNE COUNTY

The Circle of Life

The Central Sierra Miwok were indigenous to Central California and were the first people to live in the area that became Tuolumne County. The area located along the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range between 2,000 to 6,000 feet elevation.

For thousands of years they lived throughout the area hunting and gathering food as the season allowed. Their way of life left no harmful impact on the environment because everything that they used, when they were through went back into the earth. This included their shelters that were made of poles and cedar bark and their tools were made from wood and animal bones. The most visible trace of their existence is the rock mortars and pestles that we find scattered throughout the area.

For the Miwok to maintain a sustainable way of life throughout the annual seasons, they developed a keen awareness of their environmental surroundings. In predicting the weather they relied on the sun, moon, stars, clouds, wind, sunrise and sunset and the animals. The animal's behavior was clear signs to the Miwok people. The four seasons were their circle of life. The Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Tribe are the descendants of the Central Sierra Miwok.

It has only been within the last 500 years that we have measured the harmful effects to the environment. We now must make every effort to protect and preserve our natural resources. In some ways we may be too late. It will take a united effort by everyone in order to have any impact at all. Actually, it will take everyone in each country to make every effort to conserve our resources, worldwide.

The Creator provided the air, water and land that are required for every living being. These gifts of the Creator are irreplaceable by humans and we now have pollution of the air, a shortage of water supply and land being over developed. Each one of us has a shared responsibility to protect and preserve the resources within our environment for our future generations.