

# The Kalapuya Tribe

Luther Cressman, University of Oregon professor and anthropologist, believed that culture among prehistoric Oregon Indians predated what was known about civilization in the West. His theory was proved when he discovered 9,000 year old shredded sage bark sandals at Fort Rock Cave, Oregon, in 1938. Prior to the verification of his find with radio carbon dating it was believed that human life in the far west went back no further then 4,000 years. Further findings by Cressman in 1968 suggested humans moved from Alaska to the New World 30,000 years ago.

Kalapuya Indians (also known as the Calapooya or Calapooia) lived in the lowlands between the Coast Range and the Cascades. Their territories stretched from Tualatin near present day Portland to Yoncalla just north of Roseburg. Other groups, such as the Alsea and Siuslaw, which spoke unrelated languages, occupied the western slopes of the Coast Range. Their population in 1780 has been estimated to have been about 3,000.

The Kalapuya were a semi-nomadic people who lived in permanent winter homes and migrated throughout the Willamette Valley during the summer. They had extensive trading networks across the Cascades, with the coastal groups, and into northern California. The men fished for salmon, trout and eels, and hunted deer, elk, birds and other small game, while the women gathered food items such as hazel nuts, berries, and tarweed seeds. Camas bulbs were their most abundant and important staple.

The Ampishtna Band of the Kalapuya inhabited the area east of the upper Willamette River. The Tsanchifin Band and the Tsanklightemifa Band inhabited the site that became Eugene City, while the Tsawokot Band of the Kalapuya inhabited the area north of Eugene City and the Willamette River. The Tsankupi Band of the Kalapuya inhabited the Brownsville area of Linn County.

The Kalapuya population was between 4,000 and 20,000 individuals before contact with whites, but the introduction of new diseases was catastrophic. Pre-contact epidemics and a smallpox epidemic in 1782-83 may have caused the death of half the bands' population. Malaria likewise swept the region between 1830 and 1833. Ninety percent of the Kalapuya population died of these diseases.

In the 1850s the Indians of western Oregon were removed to reservations along the coast, to Warm Springs, or even to Yakima. Most Indians removed to Grand Ronde were from the Willamette Valley, while those on the Siletz reservation were mostly from the coastal region of Oregon.

At least twenty-seven Tribes were placed on the Grand Ronde Reservation, some of whom were traditional enemies. In exchange for their lands they were told that they would be supplied with blankets, clothes, hats, sugar, flour, and plows. They were also to be provided with plots of farmland and access to a school, blacksmith shop, and general stores. Several small bands avoided removal to reservations, or returned to the traditional lands soon after removal.

At a meeting in 1871 to discuss allotment, Kalapuya Indians objected to their treatment by reservation agents and asked that the government follow through with their promises to them provide with necessary supplies and services. One individual in attendance declared: "When the treaty was made many things were promised us. We never got any of them."

Although their treaties promised the Tribes permanent land to live on forever, over time their reservation lands were steadily diminished through Executive Orders and through legislation like the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887, which assigned small plots to individuals. The remainder of the reservation was then sold off to non-Indians. By the mid-twentieth century only small remnants of Tribal land remained.