

Indigenous History of Trinidad Head

Long before settlement by Europeans, the area around Trinidad Head was inhabited by the native Yurok people. The following paragraphs were submitted by the Tsurai Ancestral Society for inclusion into the City of Trinidad's Trinidad Head Assessment Report:

The Tsurai Village is the southernmost village located along the coastline within the Yurok Tribe's territory. The following quotes provide a glimpse into the significant role the Trinidad Head plays in the Yurok/Tsurai culture. The Tsurai Ancestral Society was formed by the direct lineal descendants of the Tsurai Village. The members of the Tsurai Ancestral Society continue to utilize Tsurewa (Trinidad Head) as a major part of their culture and religion.

Tsurewa was covered with grass and was more productive and accessible when free of brush. Useful herbs, berries and roots were permitted to grow after an annual burn. With the entire area accessible, it made a perfect vantage point from which to study the migration of ducks and whales and to monitor the sea lion supply. The leaders were free to travel to established places to pray, meditate or communicate with the creator. Spears were stored on the steep wall above the waterline between the bay and the point.

Then in 1775 on June 9th, the Spanish intrusion occurred, which lasted for ten days. Enough time to allow the Spaniards to study the people, the forest, and erect a cross on the beach and atop of Tsurewa, which is now known as Trinidad Head.

Yurok oral history identifies Tsurai and its surrounding landscape, particularly Trinidad Head as areas of profound spiritual significance to Yurok culture. Yurok creation stories recorded by A.L. Kroeber recount the story of Tsurewa Man and his role in the creation of the Yurok world. The Yurok people consider Tsurai Village and Trinidad Head to be sacred sites as well as areas of archeological and cultural significance. Tsurai Village, Trinidad Head, the sea stacks, and other landscape features within the Trinidad view shed are components of the Yurok cultural landscape embedded with deep cultural, historical and spiritual significance to Yurok people.

Note: information provided by Axel Lindgren II, direct lineal descendant of the Tsurai Village, and included in the City of Trinidad's Tsurai Management Plan.