

Huimucse



An Ohlone Indian boy
(composite)

In the time of our people

Huimucse

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(Source: Randall Milliken. *A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area 1769-1810*. Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1995)
- Mural at Coyote Hills Regional Park depicting Ohlone Life
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Huimucse

Teacher Introduction

The story of Huimucse is of course based on our best perceptions about traditional Ohlone culture. Because so much of native tradition was lost after the colonization of California there is much about some California Indians that we cannot be certain. Students should be aware that our understanding of native people comes from many sources, including today's Native American people who have been able to keep the oral traditions alive over the decades. Archaeological evidence, journals from explorers and non-Indian settlers, and comparisons with modern indigenous people all help determine what the past was like for those cultures who did not keep written records.

The name Huimucse comes from the baptismal records at Mission San Jose. It is known that he was 8 years old when he was baptized there. His name means "the esteemed" and according to anthropologist Randall Milliken, boys were often named for places or qualities and girls were named for things (such as the name Jovocme means "shell bead"). Huimucse was from one of the villages that dotted the East Bay, possibly of the Yrgin people who lived in this immediate area. This story represents the traditional times for the Ohlone.

The word Ohlone is a modern way to describe people who have a similar "cultural nationality" according to Beverly Ortiz. Several tribes of people have been grouped together under this umbrella name to describe people of similar lifeways and linguistic traditions. The Ohlone are not recognized as official tribe by the federal government as say, the Navajo are. However, they identify themselves as native people of the Bay Area and share many traditions and experiences.

This story was researched and written by two teachers from Grant Elementary School in San Lorenzo: Michelle Bonnin, who teaches 3rd grade, and Stephanie Seeger, who teaches 4th grade. We would also like to thank Andrew Galvan, Paul Ferreira, Randall Milliken, and Beverly Ortiz for their assistance in developing this story.

Huimucse

Introduction

Hello, my name is Huimucse. I live with my family in an Ohlone village near the big bay. Some people think that my people have lived in this part of the world for almost 12,000 years. Of course, we believe our people have always been here - since the beginning of time. There is a lot more you can learn about me and my people and how we lived.



Our Homeland

Many years ago it is said that the **bay** and the hills were full of wildlife. Creeks ran to the bay and provided a source of food when the **salmon** ran. In winter, creeks would create large marshy areas and in summer would still run swiftly. Salt and freshwater **marshes** and **foothills** were



part of the scenery. Oak and redwood trees lined the hills and tall **bunch grasses** made a blanket over the **lowland** areas.

Deer, antelope, rabbits and other animals roamed the hills. Grizzly bears were seen near creeks and among the trees. Marine life was **plentiful** and finding clams, oysters and mussels was easy. Birds that lived in the **tule** marsh along the bay provided more than enough food. Rabbits and otters provided **pelts** for blankets and clothing. The bay

and the land gave us everything we needed to live well and have lots of free time.

Our Village

In the village, we lived in rounded homes made of **tule reeds** and **bunch grass**. Homes are called *ruway* in my language. Each was the home of one or two related families and had many of the families' **possessions** hanging inside. Our homes were mostly for sleeping in and for storing things. We slept on tule mats and rabbit blankets. There was a fire pit in the center of the home for warmth. Outside of the home was another fire. This fire was used for cooking.



Huimucse

There were other **structures** in the village, too.

One of the houses in the village was for the **headman**. The headman was responsible for making important decisions. He also gave out food to those in need. Guests who came to the village would stay with him and his family.

Another structure was the **sweathouse**, called a *tupen* in my language. This building was dug out of the earth and was used for special ceremonies. The door of the sweathouse was tiny so the heat would stay in. Men would crawl to get inside. It was very hot in there!



Standing around the village were big baskets that held acorns. These baskets, or **granaries**, were held up off the ground by poles so that mice and other animals could not get into them.

There were other structures that had only a roof held up by poles. These were used as shelter from the afternoon sun. Women sometimes prepared food and wove baskets under these shelters.

Our Families



Seven members of my family shared a home together - my grandmother, my parents, my aunt, my older brother, my younger sister, and me. Everyone in the house had a job to do. Our mother sometimes began the day by preparing acorns for mush. We ate acorn mush often. After the morning meal my father and brother would go to be with the men.

When we were younger my sister and I played together with other young boys and girls. But around age eleven, my days changed. I was old enough to join the men. I learned to make rope and **netting** for fishing. I also learned to make arrows and bows for hunting.

When my sister was old enough she joined the women of the **tribe** to help them work. She learned to pound acorns to make the acorn flour. They had to make the flour fine enough for eating. Then they had to rinse the flour to sweeten it.

Huimucse

During the cool parts of the day they searched for roots and herbs for cooking and other plants for basket weaving. It could take years just to learn about all the plants of the area. The women needed to know so much about the plants: when to **gather** each plant, where it grows, and what it is used for. There were songs to sing while gathering the plants.

Finally my sister began to learn how to make baskets. She said it was very hard. My mother said it takes lots of practice to become a good basket weaver like she is. We believed her!

We learned our ways from the elders.

Our Clothes



The weather where we lived was so nice we didn't need much clothing to keep warm. In the summer, my brothers and I, and the other men and boys wore nothing. When it became cooler we wore rabbit skin over our shoulders.

Girls and women wore skirts made of plants or skins. Women wore more clothes than men because they have the power to bring life into the world. We believed that the part of the woman's body that the baby comes from was so powerful that it needed to be covered. Women and girls wore cloaks when it was cooler.

During dancing and festive times, people put on bird feathers, shell beads, and body paints for the celebration.

Our Food

In the fall everyone would gather acorns. Several families would go to the grove of oak trees where we gathered acorns. While at the grove, everyone helped to gather acorns. The boys climbed the trees and shook the branches that were heavy with acorns. Some of the people used long sticks to knock them down. The women and girls gathered the fallen acorns and inspected them for worm holes and disease. Acorns were collected in large **burden baskets**. When a basket was filled it was taken to a clearing. The acorns were spread out to dry in the sun.

Huimucse



After the harvest was time to celebrate. It was a time for gambling, trading, playing games, and having beautiful evening dances. These ceremonies were important to all of us. The dancers wore fine feathers and body paint. Watching them move to music was one of my favorite things about this time of year.

But after the harvest festival there was still a great deal of work to be done. All of the acorn baskets had to have fresh **herbs** put in them. This helped to keep insects away and stopped mold from growing.

The acorn **granaries** also had to be rebuilt. The granaries were held up by long poles. This put them up off the ground to keep out squirrels and small animals. The acorn granaries were used to store acorns. Even though acorns were a daily source of food, we ate many other types of food, too.

Some foods, like insects, could be caught all the time. We caught small rodents like gophers and mice by **snaring** them. Birds like quail, robins, and doves were caught with **basket traps**. Snakes and lizards were also hunted and eaten. There were two ways to get a rabbit. One was to hit it with a **throwing stick**. In the other way, a group of men chased the rabbits into a big net, catching many at once. The group hunting was followed by feasting and lots of fun.



Deer hunting was always done with much respect for the animals. Before hunting, men went into the **sweathouse** to **cleanse** their bodies of human smell. After they had been in there for a



long time they got very hot and started to sweat. Next they scraped the sweat off their bodies. Then they rubbed their bodies and their bow and arrows with sweet smelling herbs so that they did not smell like people. Going into the sweathouse is also meant we would have good luck for the hunt.

The men set out to hunt. Sometimes they used the heads and skin of other deer to **disguise** themselves while hunting - like **camouflage**. They also acted like a deer to not scare the deer. In this way they could be within a few inches of the deer when they shot it with their arrow.

Huimucse

Once a deer was killed, it was brought back to the village. It was cut up and each hunter got some of the meat. Every step of the deer hunt was very special for the whole tribe.

We also gathered shellfish: mussels, clams, oysters. Mushrooms were a special winter treat. But it was very important to know which mushrooms were good and which ones were poisonous. We had so much acorn flour and dried meat from the summer and fall that we didn't need to do as much hunting and gathering in the winter.



Come spring we gathered fresh greens and new **shoots**. **Tule** boats were used to go out into the marsh to gather cormorant, duck, and goose eggs. Roots for eating and basket making were also gathered at this time.

My sister helped our mother gather seeds from the tall grasses that grew. The women would go to the same seed gathering place every year. It was well known to the women of our village. They walked along the creek to the meadow and carried two types of baskets: a **burden basket** and a **seed beater**.

They used the baskets like this: the burden basket was held under one arm and the seed beater was in the other hand. With a large **sweeping motion** the seed beater was swept over the grass toward the burden basket. The seeds were swept into the burden basket this way. When the burden baskets filled up the women took them back to the village. The seeds were an important part of our diet.

Like the other seasons, summer brought its own **bounty** of food. Berries were one of our favorite summer foods. We ate them fresh or made juice. Cooked or dried berries were also delicious.

Our Fun Times

Cooking, weaving baskets, and making arrow heads were all done in the morning. When the day got warmer in the afternoon, this was a time for rest and play.



Young children ran and chased each other. Older children practiced their skills every day. Adults rested and relaxed. Everyone told stories and many times we made music. There were fun games to be played, too! One game the women played was the game of staves.

Huimucse

Staves were short sticks, flat on one side and round on the other. The round side was decorated with designs. To play, one person picked up the **staves** and then dropped them on the ground. Winning depended on how many of the decorated sides faced up and how many faced down

The spear and hoop game was popular among the young boys.

To play, you have to roll the hoop along the ground and throw the spear through the center.

What Happened to My People?

Things are different for my people now.

After the Spaniards came and built missions here in California, our way of life was forever changed. Indians who lived at the **missions** learned the skills and the ways of the Spaniards. By the time the Mexicans took control of California in 1820 we stopped living in our old way. Many native people went to work on the Mexican ranchos.

But when the **Gold Rush** happened many of our people were forced out of their homes on the Mexican ranches. The Indians who were still living in the mountains were pushed off their land so people could mine the gold. Others were forced out when rivers were poisoned during the mining process. Even worse, many Indians were killed or died from diseases. Sadly, the last **full blooded** Ohlone Indian died in the 1930s.

Today, there are many people who have Ohlone **ancestors**. Some also have ancestors from different tribes and others even have ancestors that are European. Ohlone Indians live in cities and towns all over California.

We wear the same clothes as you, go to the same schools as you, and listen to the same music as you. Even after all these changes, many of our traditions are still handed down from parent to child. We still make baskets, prepare acorns, and make arrow heads. Even though it's hard to we continue to keep our traditions alive and to teach them to others.

Every year many of my people come together to celebrate the old ways. The Ohlone Gathering is held in October at Coyote Hills Regional Park.



Huimucse

Vocabulary

ancestor – a family member who lived before you

bay – part of the ocean surrounded by land

basket trap – a basket used to trap small animals

bounty – a large amount

bunch grass – tall grasses

burden basket – a tall basket used for gathering seeds and acorns

camouflage – using clothing or a costume so that you look like your surroundings to hide

cleanse – to clean off

disguise – to hide

foothills – smaller hills beneath a mountain range

full-blooded – someone whose ancestors are from the same tribe

gather – to collect items

granary – a big basket used to store acorns and seeds

Gold Rush – a time when many people came to California in search of gold

headman – the leader of the tribe

herb – a plant used for its smell or flavor, also used like medicine

lowland – flat land beneath foothills or mountains

marshes – very wet lowlands with grassy plants and reeds

mission – a church with a farm and small village

netting – reeds woven together to make a net

pelts – the skin of furry animals

plentiful – having more than you need

possessions – things you own

preserve – to save

reed – a tall grass that grows by water

salmon – a type of fish

seed beater – a scoop-like basket used for gathering seeds and acorns

seed hamper – a basket for storing acorns and seeds

shoots – new growth on plants

snaring – to catch something

staves – a game played with decorated sticks and counting sticks

Huimucse

Vocabulary

structures - buildings

sweathouse – a place used by men to cleanse themselves

sweeping motion – to move back and forth

throwing stick – a carved stick used to hunt small animals

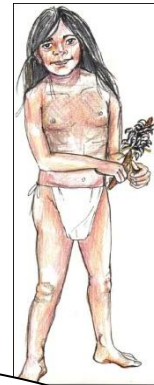
tule – long reeds that grow in the marshland

Huimucse

Lesson Plan #1

People: Huimucse
Timeline: Native People Timeline
Pathways: Ohlone Trails
Classroom Kit: Ohlone Discovery Kit=

Prepared by Michelle Bonnin and Stephanie Seeger



1 - Read it – Learn it

Activity Goals

- To introduce children to the lifeways of the native people
- To have students understand the use of natural resources in the daily lives of the traditional Ohlone

Setting the Context

Before beginning a unit on California Indians, discuss with your students what preconceptions they have about native people. Many children (and some adults) will have a stereotypical view of native people. They may confuse the characteristics and customs of several American Indian nations or even indigenous people from other parts of the world. Often there is confusion about the natural resources and wildlife that were present in California in pre-contact times. For example, it is common for children to wrongly associate buffalo with all native people. It is important to clarify with the students that Central California Indian tribes did not practice agriculture, raise livestock, or have horses. These were all introduced by Europeans. Another common misconception is that there are no longer native people in our community. Again, it is important to stress this falsehood.

Make a list of concepts that students have about California Indians and/or Ohlone people before the unit. Revisit this list at the end of the unit and find out what they knew, what they were misinformed about, and what they learned. What facts substantiate this knowledge

Activity Instructions

Have the students read Huimucse’s story and complete the worksheet.

Huimucse**Instructions:**

Read the story of **Huimucse** and answer these questions.

1. Look at the tribal map. How many tribes do you think there are? _____
Now count them. Were you surprised at your answer? _____
2. What were the Ohlone houses made of? _____
3. The Ohlone used baskets for many things. Name two ways they used them:
1. _____ 2. _____
4. Name three types of food the Ohlone ate:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
5. What did the men use to disguise themselves while hunting? _____
6. The Ohlone used many tools. Name one type of tool: _____
7. Name two things they did for fun:
1. _____ 2. _____
8. What changed the life of the Ohlone forever?

Huimucse

Lesson Plan #2

People: Huimucse
Timeline: Native People Timeline
Pathways: Ohlone Trails
Classroom Kit: Ohlone Discovery Kit



2 - Map it – Learn it

Activity Goals

- To introduce children to the lifeways of the native people
- To strengthen students' mapping skills

Activity Instructions

The Village

- Have students read the “Our Village” section of Huimucse’s story.
- Have students draw an aerial view of an Ohlone village. They should color and label each type of structure: headman’s house, houses, sweatlodge, shade structures, granaries.

The Area

- Print a copy of the base map found on the Pathways section of the website <http://www.historycrossroads.org/pathways.asp>
- Using colored pencils, have the students draw and label the map using these vocabulary words: bay, foothills, lowlands, marshes

3 - Time Travel

Activity Goals

- To introduce children to the lifeways of the native people
- To strengthen students' creative

Activity Instructions

Here are two wrap-up activities for this unit:

1 – Have students write a story about meeting Huimucse.

He offers you one tool to bring back to the future. What would you choose and why?

If you could offer Huimucse one tool from 2010, what would it be and why?

2 – Using at least 6 of the vocabulary words, write a story about your life, family, school, traditions, what you do for fun, etc.

Storybook Summary - *Huimucse & Jovocme*

Home to Medicine Mountain

By Chiori Santiago, Illustrated by Judith Lowry

Children's Book Press, San Francisco, 1998

This richly illustrated book, set in the 1930s, is based on a true story of a boy and his cousin who grow up living between their home in Northern California and an Indian boarding school in Riverside. Benny Len and Stanley are Maidu boys, who like hundreds of other native people, were shipped away to school so that they could “unlearn Indian ways.”

Their experiences at boarding school are typical of all the children who attended these government-sponsored schools. The book brings up nuances of life that the boys encountered such as learning through scholastics versus storytelling as is the way in their culture, and going by time on the clock rather than the sun and the seasons. Benny Len makes observations about food, clothing, and relationship between people.

After the boys' first year at school, they realize that they will not be going home for summer break because no one will be paying for the trip. So Benny Len promises Stanley that they will find a way home to Susanville. The boys end up jumping the train and riding the several hundreds of miles between school and home, seeing many things along the way. They will repeat this journey each year.

- Written and illustrated by Native Americans and recommended by the Indian press
- Winner of the American Book Award
- A Notable Book by the Association for Library Service for Children

Discussion Topics

- Indian boarding schools
- Changes in lifeways for Indian people as society changed around them
- Differences in the boys' life between home and at the boarding school
- Riding the rails
- Similarities between the story of Benny Len and Stanley with the *Crossroads* children:
 - Jovocme and her family moved to Mission San Jose and had to learn the lifestyle of the Spaniards, and in many ways gave up their traditional ways. What new customs and skills were learned by the Indian children in both stories?
 - Jovocme, Mary, and Francisco had to learn English. What were the ways that each of these children learned to speak a new language?
 - The stories of Benny Len and Stanley and that of John Campbell are set in the 1930s, during the Great Depression. How were the lives of these boys the same and how were they different?

Storybook Summary - *Huimucse & Jovocme*

Ooti- A Child of Nisenan

The American River Natural History Association, Carmichael, 2000

The main character, Ooti, is from a tribe on the American River. There are many similarities to the lives of the native people who lived in the Bay Area. Ooti, a girl of 9 summers, shares information about many aspects of her life. She describes her village, home, and chores and talks about other members of her family and tribe. The story culminates with Big Time.

This book has been recommended by the Indian press. One reason may be something that stands out from other books about native people – Ooti is drawn with a smile. This small detail draws the reader into the life of this child as a *real* person. It gives her a personality and helps us relate to her.

About half of the book is comprised of photocopy-able activities: reading comprehension, word games, worksheets, and crafts. It also includes Ooti’s favorite story – the Creation myth from her culture.

Discussion Topics

- Reliance on the land for sustenance
- Family unit includes grandparents
- Distinct gender roles
- Importance of age (coming of age, the “adult world”)
- Importance of Big Times for tradition, community, socialization, trade
- Compare Ooti’s story with that of the *Crossroads* children Huimucse and Jovocme