



NATIVE AMERICANS

Living around Batiquitos

*BATIQUITOS LAGOON
FOUNDATION*

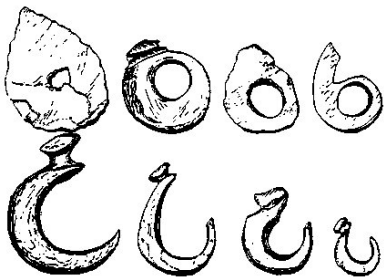
Native Americans first lived on the shores of Batiquitos Lagoon 8,000 years ago. This was the beginning of the so-called Early or Archaic Period, which then lasted for several thousand years. After that, there was a period for which there is no archaeological record, ending about 1300 years ago (or 650 A.D.) when some newcomers came to the lagoon (people of the Late Period). These people were still living in this area when the Spanish invaded in 1769.



Something must have happened to cause the early inhabitants to leave: it seems likely that it was because of a geological change in the lagoon environment. Beginning before 10,000 years ago, a warming trend caused ice caps to melt and sea levels to rise, filling coastal valleys and creating deep coastal lagoons. At that time, Batiquitos Lagoon had a wide range of shellfish and fish species that provided a rich and varied exploitable resource for the Native Americans who came and camped here during the Early Period. But, about 3500 years ago, the sea level stabilized, and the lagoon started getting shallower because of siltation. As a result, there were significant changes in the type of habitat and a loss of food resources, thereby, causing people to abandon the lagoon over the next few millennia. Years later (about 1300 years ago), the Kumeyaay repopulated the lagoon (i.e., the Late Period).

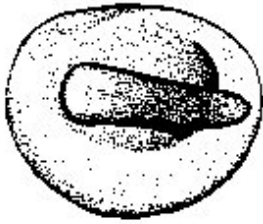
Native Populations in America

The first ancestors of American Indian tribes probably came from Asia over a land bridge in the Bering Sea that connected North America to Asia at least 12,000 years ago. It is likely that several migrations took place as the ice sheets gradually subsided at the end of the ice age. These early ancestors of today's Native Americans quickly spread over the entire continent, so that, by 10,000 years ago, there were camps and villages from Alaska to the tip of South America.



Abalone Fishhooks (in stages)

Not much is known about the lives of the Early Period people. Artifacts found include biface points and knives, scrapers, manos, metate fragments, stone bowls, pottery sherds, bone tools, and beads, including some involved in trade. They must have caught and eaten a variety of animals (including marine mammals) and fish (some taken with nets and bigger ones with hooks and lines).



Native Americans were misnamed "Indians" by Columbus or referred to by the closest mission (e.g., Diegueño or Luiseño); however, each Native American group had its own name for itself and its neighbors. The Kumeyaay (Iipai and Tipai) were the more recent caretakers for this part of San Diego County. While they shared a language and many cultural characteristics, they were not a tribe. The Kumeyaay are one of many Native American groups still living in San Diego.

The Kumeyaay

Before contact, the Kumeyaay lived along oceans and rivers. They lived in small family groups which had to move frequently to find new sources of food and water. Some of these nomadic clans were allies, others were enemies. Each clan wintered in a sheltered valley and migrated into the mountains in the spring.



Their houses were dome-shaped structures covered with bundles of rushes and long grasses. In the mountains, they had sturdy, triangular-shaped houses of wood and bark. They had no horses or other beasts of burden. The men wore bark or buckskin loincloths, and the women wore grass or bark skirts.

The Kumeyaay worked together to plan their meals. Some people gathered plants (seeds, leaves, and bulbs), such as prickly pear, acorns, nuts, and agave hearts. Others made bows and arrows, hunting sticks, and nets to capture rabbits, deer, quail, mountain sheep, antelope, fish, and shellfish. Daily activities must also have included travelling to visit relatives, trading, and making tools and utensils, especially baskets. Some baskets were waterproof for cooking, some were ceremonial ones elaborately patterned and embellished with feathers and shells, and others were very large storage baskets.



The Kumeyaay celebrated life in many ways. To dress up for a holiday, they would wear jewelry made of shells, stone, and bone. Songs were sung, accompanied by music from flutes, stiff basket drums, bone whistles, and rattles made from turtle shells and gourds.