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## Member Tribes



### Bridgeport Indian Reservation

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**Chairperson:** Gerald Sam  
**Tribal Administrator:** Ken Goode

**County:** Mono

**Tribal Status:** Federally Recognized

**Membership - Tribe Wide:** 112

**Membership - Service Area:** 44

**Membership Criteria:** Lineal Descendancy Blood Quantum, Min. 1/4 and 5 years con residency

**Landbase:** 40 Acres

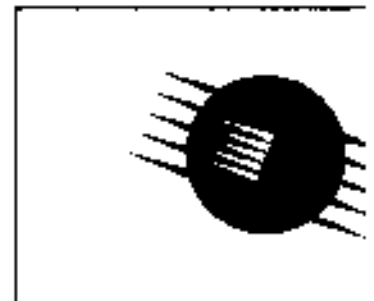
**IRA Status:** IRA Constitution approved July 21, 1976. Attended Approved 9-27-94

**Governing Body:** General Council, Tribal Council - Members 18 years or older, 30%

**Elections:** Annually in July for staggered terms

**Date of Last Election:** September 21, 2001

**Culture/Language:** Paiute, Washoe, Miwok, Mono, Shoshone/Siatic, Uto-Aztecan, I



### BRIDGEPORT INDIAN COLONY

#### LOCATION AND LAND STATUS

The Bridgeport Colony spans 40 acres of land adjacent to the community of Bridgeport County, California, close to the Nevada border. The term "colony" is used for reservation land bases located near Euro-American towns, although Bridgeport residents use the term "reservation." The average elevation of the Bridgeport Colony is about 6,500 feet. The bounded by the Bodie Hills on the east, alluvial fans on the north and south, by the Bri Reservoir to the west, and the community of Bridgeport to the southwest. The Bridgeport established by Executive Order on October 18, 1974.

#### CULTURE AND HISTORY:

Residents of the Bridgeport Colony are members of the northern Paiute people, who traditionally occupied a large area paralleling the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade r roughly Mono Lake in California to John Day River in Oregon. Paiute-speaking people inhabited parts of California, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. All these culturally spoke a language belonging to the Numic branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family, of which are spoken by peoples from the Great Basin into central Mexico.

The northern Paiutes living around Mono Lake traditionally subsisted by hunting and gathering native plants, and fishing in area streams and lakes.

After gold was discovered in the Sierra Nevada, in the middle of the 1800s, Paiute people moved out of their traditional territories. This contact sometimes resulted in warfare, as the Paiutes defended their ancestral territory. By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, less than 5 percent of the area remained in Indian control. An executive Order established the first Paiute reserve and Walker lakes in western Nevada in 1874. Yet many Paiute groups did not go to the reserve, refusing to abandon their traditional lands.

The Bridgeport Paiutes have lived on the land adjacent to the town of Bridgeport for over a century. They were employed in service jobs in the town and also worked as ranch hands. In the middle of the 1930s, many of the northern Paiutes had apparently assimilated the Euro-American lifestyle.

Bridgeport tribal land was threatened in 1968 when a contractor, wishing to build a substation, produced a title for the land. Evidently the land patent had been issued illegally to a man in 1914. This patent disbursement contradicted the Desert Land Act, which prohibited issuing land on which the occupants have always resided.

Through their own lobbying efforts, the Bridgeport Paiutes acquired 40 acres of Bureau of Land Management land less than a mile from their camp in 1974. President Ford signed the 1974 Bill, which put this land into trust for the Bridgeport Paiute. A few members retain the traditional language skills, and some practice other traditional art forms. Bridgeport Paiute elders prepare traditional foods, such as acorn or pine nut soup and biscuits. In addition, some residents make traditional beaded work, and make arrowheads.

**PAIUTE** - There are three main groupings of Paiute people: the Northern Paiute, Owens Valley Paiute, and Southern Paiute. Only the first two groups lived in what is now California; they traditionally occupied the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada from the northern border with Oregon to the east in the Great Basin, and south into central Mexico and beyond. Traditionally living by hunting and gathering, with some irrigating of areas supporting plants with cacti. Today about 150 Northern Paiute people live in the Bridgeport Colony, on the Colusa Rancheria, and the Fort Bidwell Reservation, while about 2,200 Owens Valley Paiutes live on the Benton, Bishop, Big Pine, Lone Pine, and Fort Independence reservations.

**WASHOE** - The traditional lands of the Washoe people covered an area of more than 100,000 acres centered on Lake Tahoe, on the present California-Nevada border. The Washoe-Hakani language related to other California languages and extending from the northern border south into Mexico and east into the Great Basin and the Southwest. Their way of life was based on desert hunting and gathering, with frequent seasonal movement of bands based on environmental conditions. Today over 300 Washoe people live in the Woodlands Indian Colony in Alpine County, the Susanville Rancheria and on private lands in the area.

**MIWOK (ME-WUK, MI-WUK, MEWUK)** - There are three main Miwok groups - the Lake Miwok, and the Sierra Mewuk, with homelands in north-central California. They lived along the Pacific Coast from present-day Sausalito to the Duncan's Point, including Tomales Bay, and San Pablo Bay, inland to the area near Sonoma, the Lake Miwok (in

to the east and south of Clear Lake; and the Sierra Mewuk lands were located in the Sierran foothills of the central part of the state. These groups spoke Hokan languages, related to California languages from the north along the coast and extending into Mexico and the West. The coast people depended on tideland gathering of fish and shellfish, with secondary hunting and game; the lake people used fish, waterfowl, and other lake foods, as well as acorns; the Sierra people depended on king salmon in the major river valleys, with increasing hunting and game in the foothills. Today many Coast Miwok people live in their traditional area, by recognized tribal lands; in 1992 they formed an organization to pursue federal recognition. Miwok people live today on the Middletown Rancheria. Many Sierra Mewuk people sit on traditional lands, either on the Jackson, Shingle Springs, and Tuolumne rancherias (with trust lands) and the Sheep Ranch, Buena Vista, and Chicken Ranch rancherias (which have trust lands), or in surrounding areas. There are about 2,500 Mewuk people today.

**MONO-WESTERN (MONACHE)** - The traditional territory of the Western Mono people is in the south-central Sierra Nevada foothills. Their language belongs to the Uto-Aztecan language family, related to Paiute and to languages extending eastward into the Great Basin and the Southwest as into central Mexico and beyond. Their main food source was acorns, while they depended extensively on other vegetable foods and game.

**SHOSHONE (WESTERN SHOSHONE)** - The traditional lands of the Shoshone people are located in the east-central area to the east of the Sierra Nevada, including Owens Valley lands south of it. The Shoshone language is closely related to Paiute and belongs to the Uto-Aztecan family, spoken throughout southern California, eastward into the Great Basin, and south into Mexico. Traditionally the Shoshone people made a living by desert hunting and gathering in particular areas in small, extended-family groups. Today the fewer than 2,000 Shoshone in California live mainly on the Big Pine, Bishop, Timbisha, and Lone Pine Reservations; individuals live on other locations as well.

#### GOVERNMENT

The Bridgeport Tribe and its Reservation is governed by a General Council composed of members 18 years of age or older. 50 percent of the tribe, and two at-large members, represent the council is presided over by an elected chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. The tribe's constitution, adopted under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, was approved by the commissioner of Indian affairs on July 21, 1976.

#### Credits:

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