

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Tolowa, tolowa, Na-dene>Athapaskan>Tolowa

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): tol

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Latitude: 41-54'27" N Longitude: 124-11'56" W

1.4 Brief history: The Tolowa traditionally lived in the Smith River basin and vicinity in northwestern California and southwestern Oregon in the United States. The area was bounded by Port Orford, Oregon to the north and Wilson Creek, north of the Klamath River, in California to the south. They lived in approximately eight permanent villages in what is now California and Oregon, including on Crescent Bay, Lake Earl, and the Smith River. Epidemics hit the Tolowa before face-to-face contact with non-natives. Jedediah Smith and his exploration party were the first known non-native to contact the Tolowa in 1828. During the 1850s, over half of the Tolowa people died from disease and mass murders by Anglo-Americans, such as the Yontoket Massacre and the Achulet Massacre. In 1860, after the Chetco/Rogue River War, 600 Tolowas were forcibly relocated to Indian reservations in Oregon. Later, some were moved to the Hoopa Valley Reservation in California. The tribe embraced the Ghost Dance religion from 1872 to 1882

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: see above.

1.6 Ecology: This is a region of rugged topography and heavy annual rainfall. The coastline alternates between stretches of sandy beach and rocky headlands, and offshore there are numerous rocks and islets. Along the coast, annual rainfall averages up to 100 inches, with annual averages of up to 120 inches recorded for some areas slightly inland like Gasquet Flat. This rainfall is augmented the year round by frequent and heavy coastal fogs that completely cover the coastal plain and ocean-facing gorges. Temperatures are mild but cool during most of the year, with strong and cold northwesterly winds prevailing along the coast during the summer months. Much of the coastal plain is subject to the effects of wind-borne salt spray from the ocean and is thus treeless and covered only by assorted grasses and low shrubs. At various distances inland, beyond the reach of salt spray, there is a belt of low spruce and pine, and on the Smith River coastal plain there was a dense stand of redwood, now destroyed by logging.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density. 2,400 pre-contact. 300 mean village size. Spread over 600 square miles.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Acorns, grasses

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: elk, deer, Stellar sea lion, California sea lion, sea otters, mussels, and harbor seal.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: bow and arrow, spears, obsidian knives

2.4 Food storage: Acorns, dried fish.

2.5 Sexual division of production: a premium was put on a woman's capacity to work. When inspecting a potential bride the man would look to see if her hands were scratched and calloused as that was seen as a testament to her industriousness. Women gathered acorns, greens, and berries. Men hunted sea lions, seals and fished.

2.6 Land tenure: land and portions of river could be owned by wealthy individuals and enforced that only that person could hunt or fish there. The beach was property of the tribe.

2.7 Ceramics: not apparent

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: trade based

2.9 Food taboos: not apparent

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? canoes

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): no data

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): no data

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): no data

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): no data

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): unknown

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): approximately 15f and 18m

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: unknown

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: percent unknown but apparently very common for men of wealth

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Bride purchase price existed but generally had a compensatory gift from the girls parents. Bride service also common.

4.9 Inheritance patterns: direct patrilineal inheritance.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: not known

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: not known

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): endogamy more common however exogamy is what bound the 8 villages to one another.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Not apparent

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") Not apparent

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? Not apparent

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape. Seemingly uncommon. Sexual promiscuity was not tolerated.

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) "Normative bilateral cross-cousin marriage seems to be absent throughout the area." Sororate marriage seems to be encouraged. A man can marry and relative on his maternal side. Paternal not acceptable

- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? no
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring. Aside from wealthy men supporting multiple wives, no evidence.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? No info
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females. No info
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades. no
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) no
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Not apparent
- 4.24 Joking relationships? no
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations. Patrilineal for names, rights, and wealth.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes, no available information about the ceremony but there were “days of dancing and nights of feasting”
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? There were both real names and nicknames. Real names were used more than the latter. They were given at any age, and a person might have more than one. Name-bestowing entailed festivities. Everyone assembled, then the person who was to confer the name entered and pointing at the one to be named said, “What? Is So-and-so here? I see him sitting here.” At this everyone laughed heartily. Then the guests were feasted.
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Depending on village size. Men encouraged to marry out of the community.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Normally arranged by parents based on social status and bride purchase prices.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: no

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: precontact numbers not apparent
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: No info on in group killing. Out group warfare came mainly in three instances in the 1800’s. The first date was in 1853 when 500 to 650 Tolowa were massacred. In 1854 another 150 were killed. In 1856 another 70 were killed. During this time rampant disease also wiped out many Tolowa resulting in a total population of just 300 in the mid 1880’s.
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: White people encroaching on their territory bringing massacre and disease.
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): close to the Yuki, Hupa, Kurak and Yurok, connections and history of warfare not apparent. Generally seen to be in good relations however.
- 4.18 Cannibalism? No, Tolowa were afraid of their dead.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: 2,400 precontact population divided between 8 main villages – 300.
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Centered around 8 main villages, not migrant.
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Chieftainship was hereditary among wealthy families. A chief could have 10 to 12 wives. Class largely based on wealth gained through manipulation, haggling and patrilineal inheritance - “The eventual result of all these manipulations plus direct inheritance was that wealth goods as well as food became concentrated in particular households—those of wealthy men or *mitxbsxe*—and one such wealthy man usually appeared as paramount within each village. These men were not formal chiefs, and they lacked authority in most matters. But they acted as intermediaries in marriage negotiations and indemnity settlements, and they were in a position to initiate projects like canoe- and house-building and the annual first sea lion hunt. Given the optimizing nature of traditional Tolowa subsistence procurement systems, the presence of a non-authoritarian leader in each village who could take the initiative in the few subsistence activities that required cooperative organization and who could marshal resources to construct the facilities necessary for these activities can be regarded as highly adaptive. The institution of a “wealthy man” in each village provided a higher degree of ecological fitness for Tolowa society than would a purely egalitarian system, since without some form of leadership the opportunities to harvest sea lions and salmon would have been severely limited.”
- 5.4 Post marital residence: After marriage the couple can locate patrilocally or matrilocally but the preferred situation is for them to establish their own residence as soon as possible.
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Private land ownership common among wealthy people.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Men were paid immense respect by women. Women made to bow when greeting men, prepared food but couldn’t eat until the men had finished eating. High status women were married to rich men or shamans.
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: not apparent
- 5.8 Village and house organization: 8 main villages spread over 600 square miles which is fairly wide spread. Houses made of red cedar planks, house arrangement and village layout not apparent.
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (men’s houses): a “sweat house” where the women shamans would sometimes go during the day. Also where most of the men slept at night.
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Slept on beds of blankets on the ground
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: patrilineal, each of the 8 main villages were only loosely connected through exogamous marriages. No strong Tolowa tribe identity. The chiefs of each village would choose one of their sons to take his place after he passes.
- 5.12 Trade: trade for food, labor, and land was facilitated by the use of Dentalia – their currency.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Yes, they are a very class driven culture. Poor people were considered almost as slaves; rich people were respected and never went without a meal.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: not apparent in an exact amount of time per week but it seems relatively moderate.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): shamans were almost always women though some high class men could be shamans too. The men shamans were never considered to be skilled with medicine however.

6.2 Stimulants: Pomo, derived from the redwood tree.

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Female puberty ceremonies lasted 10 days 3 or 4 of which the girl would fast from food and water. Ceremonies were elaborate and included elaborate dancing and singing festivities. The better the ceremony the higher the expected bride price would be. Upon death the person would be evacuated from their house through a wall, washed at the cemetery, buried in traditional deer skin attire with beads and other ornamentations. Dances would sometimes be held to commemorate the dead. The "first salmon ceremony" was held at the beginning of each new fishing season. It entailed a certain old man going to catch the first salmon and bringing it back to the village for each person to partake in even if just a small bit. At this time all dried salmon must be thrown out and only the new seasons salmon may be consumed.

6.4 Other rituals: Frequently used prayers whenever negative events such as a bad storm were about to transpire. Prayers had to be known word perfectly.

6.5 Myths (Creation): "In the beginning there was nothing. Three grew, Baby Sender, Daylight, and Thunder" - "Daylight opened the Sweat House door and daylight became. The Earth came sliding from the South upon the watery deep. The Fish swarmed to the surface of the water and departed into all forks of every river. With the Waters and Earth placed, all things created, and his law set down, Baby Sender said, "Fair well," and descended."

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Several traditional songs. Gamblings, ceremonial dance, and love songs.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Women were generally the shamans. In the case a male became a shaman he was considered a second class shaman.

6.8 Missionary effect: Any missionary work would be negligible as the tribe was nearly wiped out before any non-hostile outsiders arrived.

6.9 RCR revival: Not really

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Tolowa were afraid of their dead. Instead of taking a body out through the door they would often remove a portion of an exterior wall for them to go through. "Doors are for the living". The body would be taken to the graveyard to be washed as it might contaminate a creek or river.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? "There existed also the name taboo for deceased persons. Breaking it was atoned for with a money payment. Not only the immediate family but also collateral relatives were entitled to consideration in this respect and could demand indemnification."

6.12 Is there teknonymy? no

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) animism with some ancestor worship/respect

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: not apparent

7.2 Piercings: The septum of the nose was pierced before puberty.

7.3 Haircut: no information

7.4 Scarification: no

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Dentalia strings and bracelets were highly prized and signaled a person's wealth. They were guarded closely but men would get a tattoo on their arm to show the length of their respective dentalia string. A man with a tattoo the length of his arm was considered wealthy.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: dentalia shell strings, bracelets and necklaces.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: not apparent

7.8 Missionary effect: no effect

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: no

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Couldn't find info

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Sororate. Father's side seen to be to close

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): no

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Theoretically, bastards were not tolerated. According to an informant if a child was found to be a bastard they would be thrown in the river - "we do not want that kind of child at our place".

Numbered references

1. Collins, James. *Understanding Tolowa Histories, Western Hegemonies And Native American Responses*. Psychology Press, 1998.
2. Social Organization and the Demographic Survival of the Tolowa, Russell Thornton. *Ethnohistory* , Vol. 31, No. 3 (Summer, 1984), pp. 187-196 Published by: [Duke University Press](#) Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/482620>
3. History, Structure, and Survival: A Comparison of the Yuki (Ukomno'm) and Tolowa (Hush) Indians of Northern California, Russell Thornton. *Ethnology* , Vol. 25, No. 2 (Apr., 1986), pp. 119-130 Published by: [University of Pittsburgh- Of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education](#) Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3773664>
4. Gould, R. A. (1975). Ecology and Adaptive Response Among the Tolowa Indians of Northwestern California. *Journal of California Anthropology, The*, 2(2). Retrieved from: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/65t181bq>
5. DuBOIS, C. A. (1932), TOLOWA NOTES. *American Anthropologist*, 34: 248–262. doi: [10.1525/aa.1932.34.2.02a00050](https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1932.34.2.02a00050)