

Nisenan Timeline



BCE - Origin

Traditional Nisenan belief holds that the tribe originated from the 'estom yanim mountain, which they still hold sacred.



BCE - Territory

The Ancestors of today's Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribal Membership made their home in the foothills of present-day Nevada County, California and surrounding lands. The Nisenan-speaking people held a vast territory within the Bear and Yuba River watersheds. Prior to contact with Europeans, approximately one third of all Native Americans in what is now the United States were living in the area of



1769 - Missions

Spanish missionaries founded the first mission in California in 1769. Spanish colonization began the mass death of Native Californians, decimating their numbers through epidemics of diseases for which they had no natural immunities.



1848-1855 - The "Gold Rush"

The news of gold brought approximately 300,000 people to California during the seven years designated as the "gold rush". The Native Californian population declined drastically from disease, murder, and starvation.



1851 - Treaties

The Camp Union Treaty, negotiated by Chief Weimar and other local territorial headmen, was one of 18 treaties the US negotiated, which set aside approximately one third of the state as Native Californian territory. The Senate refused to ratify the treaties and ordered them sealed and kept secret, which they remained until 1905.



1956-1964 - Illegal Termination

The California Rancheria Termination Act illegally terminated California reservations, known as Rancherias. In the 1950s and 1960s, 44 Rancherias were terminated. Most have been restored. The Nevada City Rancheria has not yet. The rancheria land was sold in June 1964.



1913 - Establishing a Reservation

After his death in 1911, Chief Charlie Cully's land allotment was converted by President Woodrow Wilson's executive order into the Nevada City Rancheria. The land on Cement Hill became Federal Trust Land and the Tribal government became a federally recognized entity.



1887 - Acquiring an Allotment

In 1887, Chief Charlie Cully obtained a 76-acre allotment under the General Allotment Act of 1887 (the Dawes Act) for the property originally selected in the 1850s, which would later become the reservation.



1800s-1900s - Stolen Generations

First established by Christian missionaries and financially supported by the American government, the United States adopted a policy to rob over 100,000 Native American children of their culture through forced assimilation in boarding schools. Many children died there, never coming home.



1979 - Litigation

The Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan joined the Tillie Hardwick v. United States class action lawsuit asserting that the terminations were illegal. In 1983, a US District Court restored the status of 17 California rancherias but the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan were left off the paperwork so they were neither restored nor denied restoration.



2009 - Continued Litigation

After falling through the cracks in the Tillie Hardwick case, the Nevada City Rancheria brought suit against the government. They were denied restoration. The government used as its defense the six year statute of limitations, leaving legislation as the tribe's only recourse.



2015 - CHIRP 501(c)(3) Established

The California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project (CHIRP) was founded to research, document, preserve, and protect California Indigenous Nisenan culture. It's the vehicle for accepting charitable donations, grants, land and property and to educate the local community about the Nisenan.



2018 and Beyond

The Tribe and CHIRP are engaged in a campaign for restoration of their Federal Recognition and to reestablish their history and culture within their homeland. And for this, we need your support.

Four ways to help



Donate Money

Your tax-deductible donation to CHIRP, our nonprofit, allows us to continue to promote and preserve our culture in this community and beyond. Visit www.chirpca.org to make your donation.



Donate Time

Volunteer at Nisenan Heritage Day, our next Vox Musica concert, the Firehouse Museum, or in the CHIRP office. Contact us using the information on this brochure.

Promote Reciprocity

Help contact businesses that operate on Nisenan Ancestral Homelands about joining our Reciprocity Program. Visit ancestralhomelands.org to learn more.



Learn and Share

Check out the Resource and Media List at Nisenan.org to learn more about the Tribe's history, stories and projects. Follow us on social media and raise the Tribe's visibility by sharing with others.



Contact us

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You can help the Nisenan in their efforts to regain their federal recognition

