



CALIFORNIA INDIAN MUSEUM & CULTURAL CENTER

Ishi Exhibit Guide

The items in the exhibit cases and hung on the exhibit walls represent important details about Ishi's life and California native cultures. Use this guide to assist you in learning more about these important histories.

Many of these items illustrate how Ishi adapted to the changing world around him and used the resources at his disposal. These items show Ishi's resilience and adaptation.

- 1. 1850 Sterling California Souvenir Spoon:** Souvenir spoons are decorative spoons collected to remind the owner of past travels or memories. Spoons often depict scenes of events or places. Provides an interesting juxtaposition of an item first used to show positive sentiment in California in the midst of the California Indian genocide, and then used as a practical resource by Ishi. This was also the year when it became legal to enslave California Indians.
- 2. Antique Hand Saw:** Antique hand saws often made of a toothed metal blade with a wooden handle. Used for carpentry and cutting through tough materials using a sawing motion. An item that came into Ishi's possession and can reflect on how different tools can create different impacts on the landscape and the way people are involved with their surroundings.
- 3. California Gold Miner's Mining Iron:** This is an example of a tool that Ishi would have collected from night time raids of gold mining camps. When he emerged from hiding into the town of Oroville he had several items that he stole from mining camps.
- 4. Kerosene Coffee Pot:** A metal coffee pot with spout. Often used kerosene to ignite the flame used to boil the water to make coffee. Ishi was not the "wild" or "stone age" Indian he was often described as. He enjoyed a good cup of coffee.
- 5. California Gold Mining Pans:** A pan used by gold miners to separate gold from sediment, rocks, and other materials using water. This was a commonplace item and displays the zeitgeist of the California gold miners. This is another item that was likely picked up during one of Ishi's night time raids of gold mining camps.
- 6. Otter Skin:** Otter skin can be used decoratively or for clothing. Locally, the Russian river used to be home to a large amount of river otters. Numbers of river otters have depleted since the occurrence of Fort Bragg and the rise in otter pelting. Displays the presence of Fort Bragg and the wave of California Indian genocide that occurred after the arrival and creation of the fort. Otter pelts are a hallmark of the first wave of settlement in California.
- 7. Abalone Shell:** A large marine snail. It can be found off the coast of California and be utilized many ways such as for food or using the iridescent shell decoratively or for jewelry.
- 8. Pump Drill:** A drill used to make holes in light materials. Composed of a drill shaft, a narrow board it whole

through the center and a weight. Can be used to drill holes in clamshells and abalone. Clamshells were the first California currency.

Wooden Ladle: A cooking tool used to stir and transfer liquid. Similar to a large spoon.

10. Wild Cucumber: Wild cucumbers, called man-roots, are perennial broadleaf vines. Plants are named for their very large underground stems and oblong fruit capsules that contain seeds. The large tuberous root can reach the size of a sleeping man. One root, excavated at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens, weighed 467 lbs. They inhabit open areas in forests, woodland and riparian areas throughout much of California. All parts of the wild cucumber plant are toxic to some degree. The root contains a substance that stuns fish. California Natives used these plants to fish, tossing pieces of pulverized roots into ponds and streams to increase fish harvests.

11. Soap Root Brush: A perennial plant found in California that has an elongated bulbs coated in fibrous material. The black material binding it is tar, which bubbled naturally from some areas of rocks along the coast line. Soap root brushes were used for multiple purposes, including personal grooming and cleaning baskets.

12. Mortar/Pestle: Two pieces of stone. The larger stone looks like a bowl. The smaller stone is long and hand held and used to crush materials into a fine paste or powder.

13. Ax: A larger tool that can be made out of different materials. Axes can be made out of metal and wood or stone and wood. Used to cut and chop harder materials.

14. Mortar/Round Rock: A round rock used to grind up materials into a fine paste or powder, often used for food processing.

15. Obsidian Arrowheads: Obsidian is an igneous rock produced during volcanic eruptions. Has the appearance of shiny black glass. Can be chipped into sharp points and often known as a material used for arrowheads. A good example of Ishi's creatively and efficiently using natural resources. Ishi often demonstrated his skills for making these items while in San Francisco.

16. Glass Arrowheads: Ishi resourcefully found glass bottles and used the material to create arrowheads. Glass arrowheads show Ishi's ability to adapt in a changing environment and utilize new materials.

17. \$5.00 Sign: The picture of the \$5.00 represents an average amount paid to private California citizens to hunt

"unruly Indians" during the early years of statehood. The Governor (Peter Hardeman Burnett) of California waged a "war of extermination" against California tribes. These private groups were paid per Indian scalp. The total amount of claims they submitted to State of California Comptroller for the killings of California Indians tolerated \$1,293,179.20. This policy was implemented along side the "Act for the Government and Protection of California Indians," and facilitated human trafficking of Indians. Thus, Indian minors were placed with white families until their age of majority (majority was defined as thirty years old in many cases.) Traffickers were known to go into Indian villages and kill all of the adults so that the children could be sold. Boys were sold for \$60.00 and girls were sold for \$200.00, thus resulting in large scale prostitution of Indian girls.

18. Baby basket: A woven basket used as a holding device or cradle for babies. Baby basket techniques, forms and materials reflect diversity and locality. Materials ranged from mesquite root, tulle, to hazel depending on what resources are available in the area. The smaller baby baskets were made for little girls to use to model after their mothers. Cradle/ baby baskets also serve as a symbol for the long term shaping of a child's personality.

19. Clapper stick: A percussion instrument commonly made out of elderberry.

20. Gathering Basket: A woven basket that is beautifully crafted as well as useful. Can be used to hold materials such as gathered food. Similar to the baby baskets the materials and patterns show locality.

21. Shell Money Necklace with Magnesite: A necklace as a form of currency using shell. Depending on location the shells can vary. Dentalium, also referred to as tusk shells, are formed by marine mollusks and used throughout California Indians as currency. The shells are shaped so that they can be strung on necklaces and used as beads. Magnesite is a mineral found in veins and is a product of serpentine or magnesium rich material and metamorphic rocks. Magnesite can be polished, fired and dyed different colors.

22. Walnut Dice: Games using dice were a common feature of Native American Culture. Materials varied depending on location but often used bone and nuts.

23. Angelica Root: Angelica root also called wild celery, is a medicinal perennial or biennial herb that is related to the carrot. Angelica root can be found up to 10 feet long. Has bright green leaves and hollow stems with light green flowers. The root is used to help stomachaches, headaches, respiratory

problems, and is nerve calming. Reduces blood pressure and body temperature. Helps fight off infections.

24. Stick Games: Stick games may also be called hand games and uses either carved bone or sticks with markings. Two to eight people can play this guessing game. Can be played recreationally or play to win items.

25. Round Basket: A round woven basket used to hold items or used during gathering. Baskets vary in material, size and pattern. Diversity in baskets can further help identify locality.

26. Pattern Basket: A woven basket featuring a pattern. Patterns can be decorative or have a symbolic meaning. Similar to baby baskets and round baskets analyzing the materials and pattern can help identify locality.

27. Doll Basket: A small baby basket made for young girls. This helps the girls learn how to use a baby basket and it is a way for girls to emulate older women and learn about motherhood.

28. Ishi Bow Picture: This picture was taken after Ishi emerged from hiding. Ishi was taken to San Francisco and the Museum of Anthropology. Here Ishi demonstrated many times fire making, arrowhead making and using a bow and arrow. Over time Ishi became acquainted with UC Surgeon, Dr. Saxton Pope and they began archery collaboration. It is still debated whether the pictures were taken in light of education or spectacle. Questions arise if these images were carefully manufactured or if these images authentically represent Ishi.

29. Ishi with Alfred Kroeber and Sam Batwi: This picture was taken in Berkeley. Alfred Kroeber was an American cultural anthropologist based out of U.C. Berkeley that worked closely with Ishi. Sam Batwi was an Indian interpreter hired by Kroeber. He was Yahi and spoke a different dialect than Ishi. Ishi avoided answering Batwi's questions in fear that they might be used against him.

30. Ishi Making Fire: This picture was taken when Ishi demonstrated how to create fire for anthropologists. Likely Waterman, Alfred Kroeber and Saxton Pope. Similar questions arise with this photo in relation to the Ishi Bow Picture.

31. Tiffany Clock: The Tiffany Clock was created in about 1915. It is a symbol of the time period Ishi spent in San Francisco. The clock being ornate and impractical, a symbol for difference in culture and what is considered abundance.

Value Panels: Underneath each image of Ishi is a description of how he demonstrated these values.