GURPS: Mythic American Indian

(This is a test copy! It is not in final form.)

Although designed for use with GURPS, this suppliment is neither approved by Steve Jackson games, nor reviewed by them in any way. This suppliment requires a minimum of GURPS: Basic and GURPS: Compendium I to play. It plays better with GURPS: Spirits and other GURPS books.

THE HUNTER—LAKE POMO

By Joshua Levy

To Do List

- Totems:
    - Fill in Descriptions from book
    - Fill in more details
    - Mark good ones.
- Update text in people section.
- Update Shamans
- Update other magical types
- Add chapter on Herbalist:
    - list of plants
    - A little more.

- Add chapter on creating tribes.
- Fix table in the beastiary.
- Update text in bestiary.
- Add 4 images.

Warning One: This setting is **MYTHIC** California Indian, not real California Indian. It is not a historical setting, any more than classic swords and sorcery is 'European'. In the same way that classic fantacy is a mishmash of different mythic elements from different cultures spread over 100s (if not 1000s) of years, this setting is also a mishmash of different American Indian mythic elements from many different tribes and many different time periods. It is designed to be fun to role play in, not to be a historical reenactment.

Warning Two: There is no universally accepted name for the people who lived here before Europeans arrived. I've used terms like California Indians" and "American Indians". Some people prefer "Native American", but that could apply to everyone born in the New World. Besides "Californian Native American" doesn't exactly flow off the tongue, and "Native Californian" commony refers to anyone born here. Other terms (Aboriginals in Australia, First Nations in Canada) are rarely used in the US.

Myths you won't find here:

The **Noble Savage**. Native americans were neither noble nor savages.

Indians as **protectors of nature** or **living in harmony with nature**. While native americans lacked the technology to do huge damage to their environment, they did not particularly protect it, either.

Introduction

My goal here is to describe a world which works as a setting for role playing; a world which is fun to play in, and easy to run. I have not tried to construct a historically acurate world, or a school text.

In an attempt -- probably doomed -- to minimize controversy, I have choosen not to cover the interactions between aboriginal Californians and the whites. So you won't see discussion of Spanish explorers, Mexican rancheros, or golddiggers of any nationality. If you want that, GURPS: Aztec covers Spanish explorers, and GURPS Wild West covers some of the rest.

It is important, but difficult, to realize just how primative California Indians were. They are often described as "stone age", which is true, but insuffient. They did not farm or use the wheel, either. They had no beasts of burden or horses. Horses came across with the Spanish.

GURPS Materials

The beauty of GURPS is that it has been around for a long time, and has always been generic and compatible. GURPS: Mythic American Indian takes bits and pieces published over the years, and builds on that base:

GURPS: Basic and Compendium I: (everything).
GURPS: Spirits: (one set of Shaman rules).
GURPS: Low Tech (MAI is very low tech)
GURPS: Fantasy Beastiary (Mythic Animals)
GURPS: Beastiary (North American Animals)
GURPS: Bunnies and Burrows (for the Herbalist rules)
GURPS: Old West (One Indian Magic System)
GURPS: Magic
GURPS: Aztecs
GURPS: Religion (more Shaman rules)

Players can enjoy this setting with just these rules and **GURPS: Lite**. Game Masters can run a game with just these rules, **GURPS: Basic**, **GURPS: Magic**, **GURPS: Spirits**, and **GURPS: Compendium I**. However, **GURPS: Old West** and **Spirits** are valuable additions. The other books listed above are all helpful, but none are required, and many are "niche players" containing one or two chapters helpful for certain types of MAI adventures.

About the Pictures

This work is illustrated with picture and drawings of native americans, made between 1600 and 1922.

Differnt Sources

It is very interesting to compare an Indian-centric source such as: **Native California Guide** "weaving the past & present" by Dolan H. Eargle, Jr. To an archaeological source such as **The Archaeology of CALIFORNIA** by Chartkoff and Chartkoff.

Technology

These are two archiological time periods in Californian Indian development. Archaic is earlier, Pacific later. Most of MAI is based on conditions during the Pacific period. Every now and then, however, there will be a side note about how things were slightly different in the archaic period. Such as below:

In GURPS terms, American Indians were tech level one (TL1) in a few ways but tech level zero (TL0) in most ways, as summarized by the table below:

Technology	Level	Comments
Materials	0/1	Mostly Wood, leather, stone, some ceramics.
Energy	0	Fire
Tools	0	Hand tools
Construction	0/1	Mostly shelter, some communal buildings and small monuments.
Transportation	0	Walking, sledges, boats
Warfare	0	Stone weapons and shields
Food	0/1	Hunting, gathering, and horticulture, with some argiculture.
Medicine	0	Herbs

Important Indian technology is quite different than important western technology:

Basketry:

Fish Dams:

In the Archaic…

The major technological differences between the Archaic and the Pasific is the use of the Bow (in the Pacific). In the earlier Archaic, the common ranged weapon was the hand thrown spear or the spear thrown with a special "spear thrower". However, this change did not create new uses for the Bow; it was still used for the same things as the spear had been used for in the past.

Life in an Indian Tribe

This section describes life in a native american tribe, such as the characters are likely to belong to.

Food and Drink

California indians ate acorn flour every day. It was sometimes eaten as a thin soup ("gruel"), or as bread, but most often as a thick porrage. This was the staple food. The daily rythim of an Indian camp was set by the preperation and consumption of accorns. California is home to several species of oak trees. Acorn flour could be made from all of them, but the different species had different levels of natural bitterness. The least bitter were the most prized. All acorn flour had to be soaked in water to remove bitterness. Most had to be soaked repeatedly. In some tribes, different families or clans had a heretiry right to harvest acorns from certain trees or stands of trees, and bitterness varied greatly from stand to stand, and even from tree to tree, even of the same species.

The staple meat was Salmon, fresh or dried into jerky. Tribes which lived near the bay or sea harvested clams and mussels as a staple. Venison was also hunted.

In addition, California Indians ate almost everything else that could be gathered, hunted, or fished, but acorn flour was the staple.

Housing

Housing used by California Indians varied widely, and included all of the following:

Plank Teepees:

"Haystack" style straw house.

"Walled" style straw house:

"Thatched" style straw house:

Planked "long house":

Sod covered "long house":

Sod covered round house:

Farming

It is important to remember that California Indians were not big farmers. The only farming was in the South East part of the state, where irrigation was used to farm dry areas.

If a tribe does farming, then there are two crop groups they can use. The historical crop group (imported from Mexico) includes corn, beans, and squash. An older crop group (from the North East) includes sunflower, sumpweed, and a few others.

See **Germs, Guns, and Steel** by Jared X (pages 150-154) for details of this second crop group
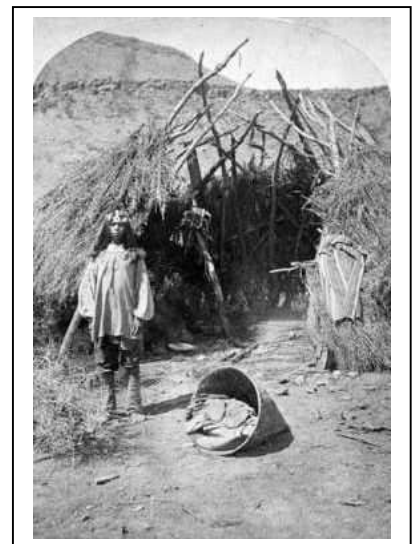
Other Buildings

Ramadas

Basically a roof on stilts. These were used in the summer and in southern california as shaded work areas.

Graineries

It was common for each family to have a grainery to store their own acorns. The head man would often have a larger grainery, which often served as the village's shared grainery. In other villages, there would be a seperate grainery to hold food saved for a major festival or for emergency use.

Roundhouses or Dancehouses

These are large, complex buildings used as meeting houses and to host important dances. Often not in villages.

Territory

Tribes (which shared one language) generally occupied fixed territory, which the various tribelets and villages moved around in. Territory was usually marked via natural features, such as the sea, rivers, mountains, ridges, etc. It could also be marked by natural resources like obseadian stones or a hot spring. Such resources were often on the border of different tribes, and used by both in relative peace.

Sex and Marrage

Most tribes were monogomus, but in some, the chief had several wives, and in others polygamy was common.

Children

Semi-nomadic peoples generally had surviving children about four years appart. That is because a four year old could keep up with the tribe as it moved from camp to camp. A younger child could not. Non-nomadic peoples could have children spaced more closesly (2 years apart was common). Farming people would often have children spaced even more closely (1 ½ or even 1 year apart) because of the advantages of more labor on the farm.

Children were often given names only when several years old. A naming was usually an important event, celebrated by the entire village.

Property

You can only own what you can carry. Because you live a semi-

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The issue of language is much more complex than is presented here. In truth, scores (maybe hundreds) of different languages were spoken in California. Travelling 100 miles could bring the traveller through 3, 4, or more different languages. To keep things reasonable (and improve playablity), I have used the major language groups as though they were single languages (rather than the large families of languages, which they actually were).
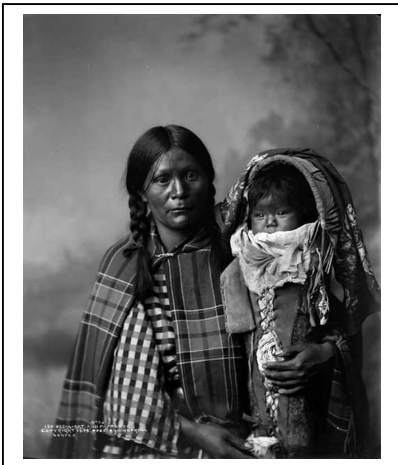
nomadic life, you must be able to carry all of your possesstions on your back. California indians can also own natural resources in a sense. Individuals and families often owned the right to harvest accons from particular trees or groups of trees. You might own the right to fish from a particular spot. You could not own land *per se ope*.

Money

Specially processed shells are used for money. However, three different sets of shells are used.   But even taking all of these money systems together, most trade is based on barter, especially the barter of common items, such as obsydian arrow points and knives.

Gambling

Gambling was a popular past time among native americans (and I'm not talking about Bingo or cansino style gambling!) ...

Government and Law

Different tribes had different ways of selecting rulers. Most tribes were organized into towns or "tribelets" of 50-100 people. Each tribelet would have a headman (or chief). Sometimes a couple of tribelets would have a chief for them all. In some tribes rulers were selected by the concensous of the village elders, who would choose the bravest man. In other tribes, the leadership passed from father to son.

In general, the rulership was limited by tension between the chief's leadership, the spiritual leader, and the respected elders. This did not create a US Constitutional style "checks and balences", but it did spread power around enough to prevent serious abuses.

Indian legal systems have several major differences from western legal systems:
1. No written language mean no written laws, and that means no consistent laws.
2. There are no conflict-of-interest laws, no check-and-balences, and no seperation between executive, legistlative, and judicial powers.
3. Stone age law is based on witness testimony much more than evidence or investigation.

Weapons, Warfare, and Combat

Common weapons were the club, a short stabbing spear, and the classic bow and arrow. Arrows were commonly stored in a sheaf made from an animal skin, and worn at the waist. (Arrow shiefs were not slung over shoulders by American Indians. That's an English style.)

Death

Most tribes buried their dead. Some creamated them. A few buried

most people, but creamated the most important.   Outside of California, exposing the corpse to the elements on a raised platform was a common form of internment.

Taboos and Social Quirks

In some tribes, people who have died are **never** spoken of. This makes it very hard to talk about things which have happened in the past, because if someone who was there is now dead, they can not be spoken of. In a sense, this makes California Indians a people without a history. (Mythic figures are excepted, of course.)

Society

It is importnat to remember that from the point of view of an american indian, a tribe is a network of people, all interrelated and intertwined in many different ways.

A tribe member starts out with a family. Usually a large and very extended family where first and second cousins are well known and close relatives. There is also the tribe members primary task, and all the people who share it. A fishman, for example, is likely to know and be friendly with the tribe's other fisherman. The same is even more true for hobbies and secondary jobs. The jewlery makers all know each other, etc. There is also the indian's peer group. Most tribes are small enough so that you know everyone who is close to you in age. Finally, once a tribe member marries, his family contacts double, and he can use his spouse's friend and job contacts as well.

On top of all this, many tribes had either "secret societies" or "fraternal organizations". This organizations exist specifically to bring together and bind together tribe members who otherwise would not interact with each other. Secret societies have secret rituals or knowledge which members learn over time. (The existence of the society is not secret, nor is it's membership. It is the core knowledge, pracitces, or cerimonies that are secret.) Franternal orgainzations don't have this core of secrecy, but instead have a shared purpose or lineage.

These societies often exist in many neiboring tribes, and can create links between tribes. They will usually have a standard meeting place, and have an organiziation similar to the tribe's. So a tribe member who is low ranking in the tribe will generally be low ranking in the society, and high ranking in the tribe will generally be high ranking in the society.

Most tribes will have between 0 and 6 such societies. Some divide the entire tribe into 2 or 4 such societies. A farming tribe might have a "corn group" and a "bean group". (This does not refer to the crops they grow, but are just plant mascots.) Other tribes might have "clans" (really just societies) named after animals, with membership inherited maternally, while most other inheritance is done paternally.

People

Highly specialized skills are a feature of industrial society. California Indians were much more generalists. Almost everyone hunted and gathered, etc. More primative tribes had almost no skill specialization at all. More advanced tribes had "craft specialization" meaning that different people specialized in working at what they were good at, but just about everyone spent some time faming, hunting or gathering.

There are a couple of exceptions to this rule (of course). Tribe elders, medicine men, shamens and the war chief (for example) existed even in the more primative tribes as skill specializations.

Common Skills and Dis/Advatages

Almost all California Indian characters will have between 6 and 9 of the central 9 skills in yellow below. Furthermore, almost all will have half of the 12 light-brown skills.

	Hunting	**Gathering**	**Home**
3-4		Herbology	Agronomy?
5	Language (other)	Hiking?	Hairdressing
6	Stealth	Storytelling	Language (trade)
7	Bow	Scrounging	First aid
8	Traps	Area Knowledge	Meteorology
9	Fishing	Suvival (Wilderness)	Stone knapping
10	Spear	Swimming	Flint sparking
11	Spear throwing or Harpoon	Sailor?2 Boating?2	Basket making
12	Spear thrower	Orienteering?1	Shipbuilding
13	Wrestling	Navigation?1	Weaving
14	Politics	Seamanship?2	Savoir-Faire
15-16	Knife	Zoology	Botony
17-18	Club	Ecology	Gardening

There are probably as many was of creating GURPS characters as there are GURPS players. For MAI, I recommend the following method:

1. Choose an animal totem (see the next chapter) for your character, and add in those new attributes, skills, etc.
2. Choose common skills, advantages and disadvantages from the list.
3. Choose a "craft specialization" for your character, and add in those new attributes, skill, etc.
4. Finally, customize your new character in any way you want, but especially by using the personal history ideas (see later chapter).

In the Archaic Period:

You will have between 6 and 9 of the core (yellow) skills in the chart to the left. Depending on where you spend most of your time (hunting, gathering, or at home), you will have 3-4 of the less common (salmon) skills, and 2-6 of the least common (white) skills.

In the Pacific Period:

Choose one column as your main job. Take 2-3 core skills, 1-3 less common and 2-4 least common skills from that column.

In the Archaic ...

There was no craft specialiation to speak of. An archaic character would likely have 8 or all 9 of the core skills, and 9 or more of the secondary skills from the "common skills" table. Obviously, with so many skills, none of them are going to be very high.

Common Advantages

The following is a list of common advantages for american Indian characters. Almost all with have one from the list, and more than half will have two.

Fit
Very Fit
Sharpshooter
Alertness
Breath Holding
Composed (for elders)

Common Disavantages

Lite sleeper

Craft Specialization

Craft Specialization	Skills
Common	
Land Hunter	Hunting, Trapping, Tracking, Bow
Land Gatherer	Botony
Fisherman	Fishing, Boating, Spear fishing
Aquadic Gatherer	Boating
Tribal Elder	Storytelling
Basket Weaver	Basketry
Medicine Maker	Botony, Herbology, Astronomy
Shaman	Astrology, Performance Ritual, Lucid Dreaming, Dreaming?, Dreamland Lore?, Fortune telling?, Excorcism?

Craft Specialization	Skills
Priest	Performance Ritual, Lucid Dreaming, Dreaming?, Dreamland Lore?, Fortune telling?, Excorcism?
Uncommon	
Armorer	Stone Knapping
Traveling Trader	Storytelling, Language talent
Gambler	Storytelling
Story Teller	Storytelling, persuade
Rare	
Artist	Artist, Poetry, Jewler
Miner	Mining, Prostpecting
Warrior or Bodyguard	Bow, spear, spear thrower club, brawling
Witch	Hypnotism, Astrology, Performance Ritual, Lucid Dreaming, Dreaming?, Dreamland Lore?

Knifestory Telling

This is an Eskimo skill of telling a story with your mouth at the same time you are illustrating it (iconicly) by drawing figures in the mud, sand or dirt. Usually wood or bone knives are used, not actual cutting tools.

For more on knifestory telling, read the book **The XXX** by YYY and ZZZ. It tells the same story with words, illustrations, and knifestory icons.

As a GURPS skill, Knifestory Telling is just like Story Telling ...

For example, if you choose to be an aquadic gatherer (meaning your favorite way of getting food is to collect stuff from streams, the bay, or the ocean), then you might choose boating as your highest primary skill, and swimming as a medium high skill.

Below is a list of other skills you can use to flesh out characters. Skills not listed below are available (within the limits of Tech Level 1), but the skills below are the most common ones:

1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

Other Notes on Skills: Shipbuilding defaults to basketweaving -3.

More Information

For more information, try to find **THE OHLONE WAY** by Malcolm Margolin, published by Heyday Book: Berkeley, CA or **CALIFORNIA INDIANS** by George Emanuels, published by Diablo Books, Walnut Creek, CA.

Other Settings

Although animal totems are described in terms of creating characters for a Mythic American Indian setting, they can be used in any setting. Because they unify personality with the other attributes, they can be used in any setting. For example, in a fanticy world, you could still have bear fighter type person. They would not have the mystical parts of the bear totem, but would have the personality, attributes, skills, advantages, disadvantages, and quirks of a bear.

There is not just one totem for each animals. Each animal can have several different totems, this can happen for a couple of different reasons. The most common is different cultural views of the same animal, but another is how people view an animal vs. the real animal.

Animal Totems

Introduction

This section describes an alternate method for creating characters. It is designed to be used with the standard GURPS point system, not in place of it. Characters made with this system are compatible with characters made without it, at all point levels.

The basic idea is a library of animal archtypes or templates (called "totems"). Choosing one of these totems gives your character a coordinated set of skills, advantages, disadvantages, quirks, and personality traits. You can then build up the rest of the character around this core.

Why does this system work well? Four reasons. First, organizes your character. You no longer start out with a random collection of skills, advantages and disavantages. You start out with a group that makes sense together. (But you can then add random ones if you want.) Second, personality aspects of your character are coordinated with the abilities aspects of your character (the skills advantages and disadvantages). Third, it elimenates "blank page" syndrome. This is where the player is staring at a blank character sheet, and doesn't know where to start. Choosing a totem is an easy way to start a character, and once a character is started it is much easier to extend, customize, and personalize a character, than it is to start a character. Forth (finally), it eliminates a common problem, which I call "personality as an afterthought". Some players, when faced with an empty character sheet, spend a lot of time figuring out advantages, skills, background, disadvantages, and so on, but little time finding a personality. So their character starts out bland, and a personality develops slowly while gaming. Using the totem system, a character starts off with some personality. So their not as bland to begin with.

Different Totems, Same Animal

A simple example of different cultural views, would be a coyote. An Indian coyote would be a wily trickster, living by it's wits. A rancher coyote would be a lazy killer. Same animal, different totems. ...

Examples of different totems caused by the difference between perceptions and realities of animals would be bald eagles, lions, or beavers. People think of bald eagles and also lions as these magestic hunters. In fact, they are thieving scavengers. Lions often steal animals hunted and killed by hyeans! Therefore, you could have a 'Perceved Lion' totem, which would be a powerver,

magestic, hunter. Or, you could have a 'real lion' totem, which would be a lazy, thieving, bully. The situation with the bald eagle is much the same. Beavers are a little different. They are commonly thought to be "nature's engineers" building complex dam and home constructions. The are the animal mascot of both Cal Tech and MIT. Yet, in real life, they don't really understand what they are doing, and build their dams by ...., much as a bird builds a nest. Again, you could have a totem representing the way people think of a beaver, or one representing the way a beaver really is, or both.

Totems The Character Does not Know

If you are creating general characters, there is no reason why the character needs to know the totem animal. It is enough for the player to know the animal's strengths, weaknesses, and personality. After all, the big advantage of using totems is to create a consistent character. A character with a integrated set of skills, advantages, personality quirks, and so on. It really doesn't matter if the character doesn't know what a ferret is, as long as the player can role play one, that is enough.

However, there is a good reason to limit the totems in use to animals the character knows about, for certain mystical settings. For example, in an American Indian setting, the characters may have spirit guides (or similar). It would work well to have a character's spirit guide be his totem animal, but that can only work if the animal is known to the character. The same is true of shamans and witches, who often have a connection to certain animals. Using totems can help integrate this into their characters, but only if the characters know the totems.

If you are using this system to generage

If you are using this system to generate characters for a Mythic American Indian type world, should you allow animal totems like Lions or Tigers, which are not found in north american, and which the character would know nothing about?

The answer is "maybe".

I don't. A big part of why I like using animal totems is that it gives the setting for the game, and helps people get into character. This is lost of the animal totem is a foriegn animal that the character would not like.

The Basics

Below is a table containing a few dozen animal totem to get you started. They are mostly totems that I have used in my GURPS: Mythic American Indian setting, but a few come from elsewhere.

Do not feel that you must use every aspect of the totem! That is a serious mistake, because it makes all your "bear" character the same. All bears are not the same, and all bear characters should not be the same, either. Each totem should be customized for use in two ways (at least):

1. Choose some of the abilities or traits to be the stronger ones. For example, all bears are sleepy, but your bear might be very sleepy.
2. Eliminate a couple of abilities or traits. Most wolves have Acute smell, discriminatory smell, and dark vision? Nope. Maybe yours missed out on the dark vision.

Need More Totems?

There are dozens of good sources for animal totems.

1. Animal personality books, such as **The Animal in You** by Roy Feinson.
2. TV documentries
3. Cartoons.
4. Stories, mythology, and children's fables.

Totem Summary Table

Totem	Personality / Quirks	Advantages	Disadvantages	Skills
Lion ST +1	Currage, nobility, prosperity. Not subtle, fair, attacks only when hungrey. imposing physical presence. condescending and impatient. energetic and strong.	Acute vision Dark vision Discriminatory smell, acute smell, Descriminatory smell, Ally group	Proud, self centered laziness, sleepy	Leadership, Intimidation, Camouflage
Bat IQ +1	Great hearing but bad eye sight. Leaves to avoid confruntation. Comes alive at night. Intelligent, spiritual, active. Unassertive, aloof.	Acute hearing, Disease resistence, Descriminatory smell		Blind fighting
Wolf IQ +1	Intelligent, courageous, loyalty, social order strength endurance, athletic and energetic, likes to chase	Acute smell, discriminatory smell Dark vision, Descriminatory smell, Ally group		Detect lies
Bear ST+2 HT+1	Aggressive when threatened. strong physical presence gruff, burly natural confidence and swagger. Needs lots of personal space.	Discriminatory smell, acute smell, deep sleeper	Truthfulness, easy to read, deep sleeper, gullability	Wrestling, boxing, brawling, mental strength, immovable stance, Diagnosis
"Pooh" Bear IQ -2	Rolly-Polly. Eats a lot. Needs friends. Likes to hum and make up simple songs.	Discriminatory smell, acute smell	Pacifism	
Beaver IQ+1	Workaholic, hardworker, industriuous. Committed, dependable. organized, structured. Forsight plan for future. Determined.			Swimming, Architecture

Totem	Personality / Quirks	Advantages	Disadvantages	Skills
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Peacock IQ-2	Beautiful, vain, irreverant. Not smart. Focused on self beaurty. Lieks to strut and show off and drab company. Lies superficial stuff in others (ex: money over character). Jack Sparrow from the move **Pirates of the Carabean**.		Cowardice	
Owl	Quiet wisdom, sometimes preachy. Very spiritual, solitary. Night, insight, servene, observer. Fight for survival or honor, big eyes. Dapper, wellgroomed, but not flashy or ostentatious.	Acute vision, Common sense		Displomacy
Raccoon	Curiosity. Skilled investigation Playful energy.	Manual dexterity, Descriminatory smell	Curious	
Little Bird	Short attention span. Talkitive, gossipy. Exploror, interested in suroundings.	3D spacial sense	Cowardice	
Squirrel	Planning ahead playfulness, friendlyness, trust, absentmindedness	Hyperactive	Short attention span, Distractable, Absent mindedness	
Otter		Amphibious	Workaholic, Sense of duty	Swimming, Economics
Swan		360 degree vision, Appeerence	Self-centered	Swimming, Courtesan, Appreciate beauty

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Dolphin		3D spacial sense, Ally group	Sense of duty, Bad smell, Caritable	Navigation, Swimming, First aid, Boating?2, Appreciate beauty
Snake		Light hangover, Longevity, High pain threshold	Loner, Gluttony, Callus	Intimidation, Hypnotism
Weasel		Acute vision	Edgy, Bloodlust	Interrogation, Disguise, Blind fighting
Rabbit		Acute vision, Ally group, 360 degree vision	Trickster, Pacifism, Cowardice	Disguise, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Acting
Coyote		Acute vision	Trickster	Disguise, Fast-Talk, Filtch, Acting
Fox		Acute vision	Trickster,Edgy	Dancing, Acting
Wildcat		Catfall, Acute hearing	Overconfidance, Loner, Distractable	
Ant		Ally group	Hive mentality	
Hyena		Ally group	Kleptomania	
Shark			Bloodlust	
Rat (LH)				Carming, fussy about details.
Ox (LH)				Quiet agile with hands, mentally alert

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Tiger (LH)				Short tempered, great affection for those they love.
Hare (LH)				Financially lucky, ambitious and talented.
Dragon (LH)				Self confident and powerful.
Snake (LH)				Great wisdom, fortunate with money.
Horse (LH)				Cheerful and popular and talks a little too much.
Ram (LH)				Imaginative and lover of beauty.
Monkey (LH)				Clever, skilled, inventive and mischievous. Good at whatever he/she decies is worthwhile.
Rooster (LH)				Dedicated to work, always seem busy.
Dog (LH)				Hardworking, loyal, and sympathetic to those in need.

Totem	Personality / Quirks	Advantages	Disadvantages	Skills
Lion *ST +1*	Currage, nobility, prosperity. Not subtle, fair, attacks only when hungrey. imposing physical presence. condescending and impatient. energetic and strong.	Acute vision Dark vision Discriminatory smell, acute smell, Descriminatory smell, Ally group	Proud, self centered laziness, sleepy	Leadership, Intimidation, Camouflage
Boar *(LH)*				Inner strength.

LH stands for Lunar Horoscope. These totems are from the oriental 12 year progression.

Personal History

There are two was to customize using these tables. The first is the easiest: Don't roll randomly: select your answers! Especially for NPCs, this can make for very interesting characters. Even for PCs, if your GM approves your selections, and they make sense, this can be a great way to create a coherent character. The second way is to roll only on table 100 and the 200 series tables, but not the 1xx series tables. This is is much quicker, but it creates more generic, less detailied, characters.

There are lots of ways to use these tables, but the way I've found that works the best, is for each new PC, the player chooses 2-3 incidents, the GM chooses 2-3 incidents, and 2-3 incidents are rolled randomly. This gives players a chance to put some cool things into their characters, it gives the GM a chance to put future hooks or useful background into the characters, and it gives some random imput to give the characters some extra dimention.

Player Characters: Unless the GM tells you otherwise, roll once on Table 100 for each year starting at 12 years old. Roll on all the follow up tables as directed.

Non Player Characters: For simple NPCs, just roll once or twice on table 100 and whatever 200 series tables you are directed two. This gives your characters a little depth, and is quick. If you want more depth, then roll on the more detailed 100 series tables, also, and roll more often.

> **There are lots of ways to use these tables, but the way I've found that works the best, is for each new PC, the player chooses 2-3 incidents, the GM chooses 2-3 incidents, and 2-3 incidents are rolled randomly.**

This chapter contains a flexable system for generating backgrounds for characters and NPCs. It owes a lot in it's design and implementation to *Cyberpunk's* Lifepath system, also to *Central Casting's* table driven personal history system, and the many insightful discussions on *Role Playing Tips*.

Table Numbering

100: Basic Incidents
1xx: Detailed Incidents
2xx: Results of Incidents
21x: Tables about Things
22x: Tables about People

3xx: Tables about gaining things.

4xx: Tables about vision questions, dreams, and spirutal answers to questions.

Childhood and Teenager Incidents (Table 100)

Roll (d20)	Result
1	Hurt while playing. Optionally, roll on table 101 for details, Roll on table 201 to see where and how.
2	Involved in fighting. Optionally, roll on table 102 for details. 1-4 Roll on table 201 (wounds). 5 Roll on tables 201 (wounds) and 210 (spoils). 6 Roll on table 210 (spoils)
3	Relative dies. Optionally, roll on table 103 for details. 1-4 Distant relative: Roll once on Table 210 (Stuff) 5 Medium relative: Roll two or three times on table 210 (stuff) 6 Close relative: Roll more than three times on table 210 (stuff).
4	Brother, sister or first cousin marries. Optionally, roll on table 104 for details. 1-6 Develop a contact. 7-9 Make an enimy 10 Get a contact and an enimy!
5	Go on a spirit quest or mystical retreat. Optionally, roll on table 105 for details. Develop a contact. Make an enimy Get a contact and an enimy!
6	Learn something from your parents or grandparents. Optionally, roll on table 106 for details. Develop a contact. Make an enimy Get a contact and an enimy!
7	Go out exploring, trading, or talking to people who do. Optionally, roll on table 107 for details. Develop a contact. Make an enimy Get a contact and an enimy!

Roll (d20)	Result
8	Fall in love. Optionally, roll on table 108 for details. Stay on good terms, develop a contact see table 220.. End on bad terms, develop an enemy see table 220 Get a contact and an enimy!
9	Get very sick with a childhood disease. Optionally, roll on table 109 for details.
10	Your family does something. Optionally, roll on table 110 for details.
11	Something is done to Your family. Optionally, roll on table 111 for details.
12	You are caught commiting a crime. Optionally, roll on table 112 for details.
last	Something rare/unusual happened. Roll on table 1x for details.

Details on Hurt While Playing (Table 101)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Details on Involved in Fighting (Table 102)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Details on Relative Dies (Table 103)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Details on Brother, sister or first cousin marries (Table 104)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Details on Go on a spirit quest or mystical retreat (Table 105)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Details on Learn something from your parents or grandparents (Table 106)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Details on Go out exploring, trading, or talking to people who do (Table 107)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Details on a Rare or Unusual Event (Table 1x)

D6	Result
1	Find buried or hidden treasure. Roll on table 210 to find out what.
2	Child prodigy
3	Attacked by animal
4	Religious Experience
5	Religious Conversion

Wounds and Injuries (Table 201)

Roll d20 for body part.
Roll d6 for lasting effects.
Roll d6 for type of damage.

D6	Result
1-3	Blunt Force type damage.
4-5	Cutting type damage.
6	Thrusting type damage.

Severity (d6)	1-3: Nice Scar!	4-5: Imparment	6: Crippled
1-3: R. Hand		-1 DX	-3 DX
4-6: L. Hand		-1 DX	-3 DX
7: R. Arm		-1 ST	-3 ST
8: L. Arm		-1 ST	-3 ST
9-10: R. Foot		-1 DX	-3 DX
11-12: L. Foot		-1 DX	-3 DX
13: R. Leg		-1 ST	-3 ST
14: L. Leg		-1 ST	-3 ST
15: Guts		-1 HT	-3 HT
16-17: Torso		-1 HT	-3 HT
18-20: Head		-1 IQ	-3 IQ

Family Background (Table 205)

D20	Result
1 - 3	Chief
4	Elder
5 - 6	Wealthy
7 - 8	Mystical
7 - 8	Artisan
9 - 11	Poor
12 - 14	Tribeless
15 - 16	Witches
17	Tribesman

Stuff (Table 210)

D20	Result
1-3	Single tree
4	Group of trees
5-6	Hunting Area
7-8	Fishing spot
9-11	Money
12-14	Weapon
15-16	Mystical object. Roll on table 211 for details.
17	Exceptional clothing
18	Dog
19	Exceptional basket
20	Trade goods

Magical Items (Table 211)

Objects which are commonly magical.

1-3	Eye stone
4	Gem
5-6	Other stone
7-8	Unique shell

1-3	Eye stone
9-11	Petroglyph
12-14	Polished wood
15-16	Basket
17	Seed acorn or pine cone
18	Breast plate
19	Weapon
20	Boat
20	Stick
20	Animal
20	Feather
20	Other animal part

Magical Powers (Table 211)

1-3	Eye stone
4	Gem
5-6	Other stone
7-8	Unique shell
9-10	Petroglyph
11-12	Polished wood
15-16	Basket
17	Seed acorn or pine cone
18	Breast plate
19	Weapon
20	Boat
20	Stick
20	Animal
20	Feather
20	Other animal part

Other People (Table 220)

This history table has not been written yet, so you should make something up or ignore this result.

Magical Powers (Table 230)

D20	Result
1-3	Eye stone
4	Gem
5-6	Other stone
7-8	Unique shell
9-11	Petroglyph
12-14	Polished wood
15-16	Basket
17	Seed acorn or pine cone
18	Breast plate
19	Weapon
20	Boat
20	Stick
20	Animal
20	Feather
20	Other animal part

Tribes

Location, location, location

Tribe locations can be described as Seashore, bayshore, riverside, lakeside, or springside and also as low plains, high plains, or mountainous. The first descriptor describes where the tribe is in regard to water (always an important consideration); the second, hunting and gathering terrain.

Size Does Matter

Unique Features

Governance

Spiritualism

The terminology gets a little complicated here. In the rest of North America, there are tribes which are sometimes organized into confederations. But in California, the groupings were smaller, and sometimes called "bands" or "tribelets". Several of these groups (who spoke the same language) might be called a tribe or a people.

I have used the more generic North American terminology. So a group that lives together is called a tribe. All the tribes who speak the same language (and generally have the same culture) are called a people.

Tribe Movement

The most important fact about a tribe, was how much it moved. In California, tribes were usually semi-nomadic. That means they moved several times a year; usually going from seasonal camp to seasonal camp.

A few tribes lived in areas so fertle, that they did not need to move, so the were non-nomatic. Even fewer tribes (in California) were farmers, and therefore non-nomadic.

Tribal Description Page

			Name:			
			Envrionment: /			
				Nomadic:		Size:
Chief:	Governance:					
Elders:						
Clans:						
Priest:	Spirituality:					
Shaman:						

Magic and the Supernatural

There are several different types of indian shamans which characters can be. They are described briefly in the next table, and then in more detail below.

Simple Shamans	Complex Shamans	Priests	Herbalists
Sorcerers	Wizards	Frenzy Witches	Witches

Sorcers, Wizards, Frenzy witches, and Witches are discussed in much more depth in K..'s book **Navajo Witchcraft**. These types are also featured in many of the mysteries written by ..., including some which have been made into PBS television movies, such as **Skinwalkers**.

Spirit Shamans

These are

Spirit Shamans are fully described in **GURPS: Spirits** on pages 68, 13-14, and 23. .

Simple Shamans

These characters have the "very blessed advantage", which gives them divination at IQ+5, but have no other requirements

Complex Shamans

These characters have magery and must have divination as their best skill. They can have any other knowledge spell, but no other spells. However, all their spells take 10 times as long to cast as described in the standard GURPS rules.

Priests

These characters have two different facets, both are required. On the one hand, they have magery, and get spells. However, their spells are almost always big ritual type affairs, and are designed to do very powerful, but general things. For example: improving crops, strengthening an army, or helping tribal elders make a key

decision. On the other hand, they have clerican investment at 15 points, and this gives them two important abilities. First, they have all the trappings and behaviors of a priest; second, they have a network of fellow priests in every village, who will help them. The first ability helps them work with the people who know them, the second with the people who don't (yet).

Witches

These characters (or more likely, NPCs) are created like classic GURPS magic users. Except that Indians considered all these people evil. Therefore, these characters should all have either a 10 or 30 point disadvantage. The 10 point version would be for a 'tolerated' witch. This is a person who is known to make love potions and other useful things, but otherwise stay out of trouble. Such a person might be a necissary evil, but they will not be liked, and will be one of the "usual suspects" to be accused whenever something bad happens. The 30 point disadvantage is for most witches. These people need to hide their witchery powers, and yet they are still hated, feared, and gossiped about.

Advantages:

Oracle, Natural spellcasting, Magical aptitude, Magical resistence, Limited magery, Knacks, Inherent Magic, Intuition, Healing, Gardian spirit, Faith healing, Familiar, Divination talent, Clerical magic, Blessed, Animal Empathy, Blessed, Animal Fom

Medicine Men and Women (Herbalists)

Text here.

Using Herbs

Different cultures use herbs differently, even the same plant can be applied differently on different tribes.

Smudging: Using a plant as incense. ...

Smoking:Smoke a plant, as a cigarette or cigar.

Drinking:Drinking a tea made from the plant.

Eating:Eating the plant or a food made from the plant

Describing Herbs

Name	The name(s) of the herb.
Effects / Notes	The effect(s) of the herb, and any notes covering its uses, storage, transportation, etc.
Habitat	Where the herb is found.
Botony	Adustments or minimums to the Botony skill roll to find this herb.
Herbary	Adustments or minimums to the Herbary skill roll to prepare this herb.

Controling Herbalists

Summary

The rules covering Medicine People are taken from the Herbalist rules of **GURPS: Bunnies and Burrows**. If you don't have that book, here is a summary:

1. Plants are found using the Botony skill. ...
2. Plants are prepared using the Herbology skill. ...
3. Characters only know about a limited number of plants.
4. Not all plants can be found in all areas.
5. The GM needs to create a list of herbs available in the world.
6. The player needs to create a list of herbs known by the character.
7. Herbalists become more powerful by improving their botany skill, their herbology skill, or by learning about more plants that they can use.

An interesting source for herbs which are used as incents is **Sacred Smoke** "The Ancient Art of Smudging for Modern Times" by Harvest McCampbell. It includes a large herbary, but also lots of discussion of the mystical work in collecting herbs.

Roll	Name	Effects / Notes	Habitat	Botony	Herbary

List of Known Plants for _____

Qty	Name	Effect / Notes	Mode	Clarity	Prep

The Bestiary

...

The ?things? listed here are part of the mythos of the indians who lived in what is now the United States. (Not just Californians, but all over the US.)   12   Big Owl   14   Cactus Eel   21   Dajeji

The ?things? listed here are part of the mythos of central american, south american, carribean and escamo peoples.   6   Ahuizotl   7   Amarok   10   Atdli

List of Trade Goods

Salt	Basketry
Hides and Pelts	Shell Beads
Beads	Acorns
Obsidian	Marine Fish
Bows	Marine Shells
Pigments and Paints	Clam Disk
Vegtables	Pine nuts
Sinue Bows	Molluscs
Arrows	Rabbit Skin
Blakets	Seeds / Nuts
Seaweed / Kelp	Stone Arrowheads, blades, etc.
Beads	Meat
Tobacco	Steatite
Woodpecker scalps	Fruits / Berries
Moccasins	Magnesite beads
Animal skin robes	Editable Insects
Raw Materials	Dugout canoes
Drills	Eagle / Hawk Featuers
Fibers (Raw Material) for Basketry	Horn for Spoons
Pottery	Asphaltm

Special Topics

Trade

Although trade goods moved over long distances, this was almost always done by trading between neiboring tribes, rather than by having one trader carry the goods through the territory of many tribes. Only the most warlike and feared tribes (the Codom in the north and the Evahom in the south commonly moved through other tribe's territories.

Most of the trails in California were single track. And not just single track, but thin single track. Remember, there were no horses or donkeys, so a trail only had to be wide enough for a single person to walk on it.

Burdens were carried in a large basket which was about 3 foot tall, and shaped like an upside down pine cone. They were held in place with a strap around the forhead.

Mining

California Indians knew about, and mined, several mineral deposits. Generally, minerals were used in arrow and spear heads, body paint pigments, mortars, pestles, and other tools, and magical or 'good luck' charms.

Generally mines were worked either by picking up or chipping off exposed mineral deposits, or by digging pits where minerals were seen on the surface, or (in one or two cases) with short tunnels, dug using stone or animal bone tools. (Shoulder blades of large animals made good shuvels.)

Mines were not worked year around. Mine sites were not even populated year round. Instead, when a tribe needed more arrow heads, or face paint or whatever the mine produced, they would visit the mine, work it, and leave.

Mines were either located in a tribe's territory, or at the border of two or three tribes. Mines were never owned or controled by an individual or family: they were owned by a tribe as a community resource. For mines located within one tribe's territory, they would generally allow other tribes to work the mine in exchange for acknologement of ownership, and (usually) some gifts. Fights broke out if the 'visiting' tribe did not acknologe the other tribe's ownership, and tried to work the mine without permission.

Mines located on the border between several tribes were usually treated as neutral space where any of the neiboring tribes could come and work the mine. Often there were specific traditions of

truce operating which covered these areas. A few mines located near territorial bounderies were the subject of repeated fights over ownership.

Some minerals had mystical traditions associated with them. For example, at one flint mine, a person could only harvest as much as they could break off with one swing of their rock-hammer, and had to leave the mine crawling backwards. Another tribe harvested obsidean from a mine in a neiboring tribe's territory. Once a year, two or three men of the tribe would make the 3 day trip to the mine, carrying presents out and obsidian back. They would fast during the entire trip, as it was a sort of holy pilgramage for them. Flint mines were commonly thought to be inhabited by supernatural owners.

Tribes that practiced mining might have afew members with miner skills and maybe even one or two with the prospector skill.

Games and Sports

Lacrosse

Platters

Usually a small disk of wood, white on one side, dark on the other, is put on the ground by one player, who covers it with his hand or foot. The other character wins if he can guess which side is up. Rationally, this game is like flipping a coin; but that is not the way indians played it.

This game can be simulated as follows: each players rolls three dice. Bonuses are added in, and the higher number wins. Bonuses include:

+1 for each level of the luck advantage the character has.

+1 or +2 if one side has more supporters than the other side. For example, if a lone person is competing against a group of friends, the player with the friends would have a +1. If the same lone person is playing against someone and the whole village has shown up to support him, then he has +2.

+1 if both sides agree that one side is "better" than the other. For example, if the village elder was playing against the "youngest" elder, then both would agree that the older man was wiser, so he would have +1. However, if a young warrior was playing an old wise man, he might not agree that the old man was "better", so no advantage.

Straw

Like platters, but slightly more complex. A bunch of straight, similar sticks (odd in number) is divided into two piles, by one player. The other player must guess which bundle has the odd number of sticks.

Games of straw were generally much bigger deals (socially more important) than games of platters. Often a whole village would come out to watch. In a match agaist someone from another village, the whole village may support it's player. There were also "cheerleading squads" made up of women who chanted to the beat of a drum while the bundle was being divided.

This game can be resolved just as Platters is.

"Olympic" Type Sports

In addition, many Indians competed a sports like swimming, running, jumping, weight lifting, etc.

In general, these can be resolved as a quick contest, using the applicable skill or attribute.

Other Mythic Aspects

Giants

Stats for a Giant

Evil creatures, the giants of American Indian Mythos are huge, 100 or 200 feet tall. They are far more powerful than European Giants.
Particularly evil ones eat babies.

Evil Spirits of the deep

If you look in certain clear, fresh water lakes, you will see things on the bottom that look much like people. They are immobile, because they the the spirits of evil people trapped by the lake.

Earthquakes

Earthquakes are relatively common in California, and are often encorporated into mythology. Certain lakes or streams or caves are said to have been created by a particular earthquake. Earthquakes often serve to confuse the evil or allow good to triumph.

Creating A World

You do not need to create a world, if you don't want to, because you can use the world we've got. Just get a map of California, and go with it. Of course, if you want to create a mythic world from scatch, you can do that, too:

1. Start with a map of the physical world's major parts: oceans, mountains, rivers, swamps, etc.
2. Over this, create a map with the different biotopes: seashore, woodland, desert, high, dry plains, etc.
3. Over this, create a map of tribal language regions, and then break these down into triblet's areas.
4. Go back to the physical world's layout, and add the smaller features (especially those with mystical overtones): spings, gysers, various mines, meteor strikes, river rapids, spawing locations for trout or other animals, etc.

Sacred Places

WofMAI: World of Mythic American Indian

The second reason you don't need to create a whole world, is that I've created one for you. Or at least parts of one. This is "World of Mythic American Indian" which is a companion work to this. WofMAI is unique as a GURPS world book, because it is ...

Other GURPS Books

Aztec

Use the bestary.

You can use the rest of the book, either as foriegners in Aztec territory, or by having the Aztecs arrive in California.

Bestiary

Beasts you should use: Creaters of the Wild (p5-38) and Vermin.

Beasts you shouldn't use: domestic animals (except Dogs and Ducks), prehistoric animals.

Beasts you can pick and choose from:

Mythical and Legendary, but I like the Gumberoo, Jackalope, Sasquatch, and Tripodero.

Speculative Creaters, but I like Giant Rats, Ants, Venus Flytrap, Spiders and Swap Ghosts.

Fantasy Bestiary

Spirits

The key chaper here is Chapter 6: Magic