

# WORKING ON NISENAN ANCESTRAL HOMELANDS



## KNOW THESE THINGS BEFORE YOU START PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

**BURIAL PRACTICES:** The Nisenan lived in towns scattered throughout the foothills within their territorial boundaries. Thus, thousands of years of interring the dead exist all over the landscape. These graveyards are rarely documented, and their locations have been mostly lost to the memory of surviving Tribal members. Each town site had a common burning and burial place. The sizes of these sites vary upon the population of the town, location and age of the site.

Cremation practices make it unlikely full bones would be encountered and if one is not familiar with identifying cremations visible in soil striations, a site can be inadvertently desecrated, disturbed, and/or destroyed.

Most of the time burning and burial grounds are in the same location and can be identified by the presence of charcoal, shells, intact hand tools, beads, or purposefully broken bowls and/or fishing/hunting items that were buried with the dead. These items are indicators of burial.

**IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES:** Nature is sacred. Presence of unique or rare geographic happenings are indicative of importance to the Nisenan. Springs, meadows, large trees, headwaters, places with a view scape, caves, etc. all have a place in ancient tradition and are important to remain intact.

Burning grounds and burials are usually located below a town site. Sometimes all that visibly remains of Nisenan existence here are grinding stones which by their presence alone can indicate a town location and assumed associated graveyard.

The population explosion that fell upon the Nisenan during the Gold Rush along with widespread environmental destruction that accompanied mining enterprises was such that little to no documentation exists of pre-immigration Nisenan life. Project areas may yield negative results from the usual sources like the Native American Heritage Commission's Sacred Lands File and the California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS). It is common that no cultural surveys have ever been done in a specific project area thus revealing negative impacts on Nisenan cultural resources or sacred sites of importance. Therefore, knowing the burning and burial practices of the Nisenan can help save time and accidental disturbances of graveyards and their associated cultural resources.

**IMPORTANT BOTANICAL SPECIES:** There are countless Native species that are important to Nisenan people today as in the past. Some plants can indicate the existence of other important sites such as burning grounds and burials, and other cultural resources. Species of importance include elderberry, redbud, wormwood, mugwort, many species of native lily.

**IMPORTANT WILDLIFE SPECIES:** All animals are important especially species that are endangered or those who have habitats that are continuously being invaded by development and extraction. Species of particular importance include wolves, grizzly bear, condor, salmon, mountain lion, ringtail cat, elk, antelope, all raptors, fox, bats, woodpeckers, flicker, lamprey, glow bug, and firefly.

## INCLUDE THESE COSTS IN YOUR PROJECT BUDGET

Tribal members should be included in project budgets so that their expertise is integrated in planning and implementation actions early and often. Holders of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) are experts and should be compensated accordingly.

CULTURAL EXPERT FEE STRUCTURE				
	Unit	Number of Tribal Members	Rate	TOTAL
Elder Review of Project (Hours)	10	2	\$140	\$2,800
Field Visit (Hours)	10	2	\$130	\$2,600
Tribal Site Monitoring (Days)*	3	2	\$500	\$3,000
<b>MINIMUM COST TO INCLUDE IN PROJECT BUDGET</b>				<b>\$8,400</b>
<i>* Actual Total Number of Days is Project Specific</i>				

## RESOURCES

Nevada City Rancheria

<https://nisenan.org/> <https://nevadacityrancheria.org/>

California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project

<https://chirpca.org/>

Cultural Resource Awareness and Sensitivity Primer Presentation

<https://sierrafund.org/workshop-recordings/>

Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Lands File Request

<http://nahc.ca.gov/resources/forms/>

North Central Information Center

[Csus.edu/center/north-central-information/](https://csus.edu/center/north-central-information/)



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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