



The Tolowa live on the Smith River and Elk Valley Rancherias in Del Norte County. (Eargle: 1986)
From an excavation of an abandoned village site, Point St. George, it was learned that before white people came there, the Tolowa made villages with separate locations for living,

working and cemeteries to bury their dead

They made square-shaped semi-subterranean houses of redwood planks set into the earth along the sides, with earth, clay, flat beach stone or wood plank floors, and plank roofs meeting at a single central peak with a smoke hole in the center and a rounded entrance hole at one end, similar to the dwellings of the Yurok, their near neighbors. A ledge all the way around the inside of the house was used to store baskets full of dried food. In the working area, they worked. flint harpoons and arrowheads, and knives for butchering animals, and made stone adzes to hollow out redwood logs for canoes.

Obsidian did not naturally occur in the area, and would trade for it. Some obsidian actually came from as far away as Bend, in east-central Oregon. The Tolowa hunted seals and sea-lions, using redwood dugouts, going as far as Seal Rocks, about 6 miles offshore, and they fished for smelt, perch and cod from the beach and gathered shellfish, and got salmon, and eel from the rivers. They also hunted deer and elk, but this was not as important a supply of food for them as the rivers and sea provided. They would travel inland to gather acorns Like most of the people in the area, they prized the dentalia shell, and large shells were reserved for their elite people, and shaman. Strings of dentalia were used as money in trade. (Gould: 1966)

The Tolowa gave the Karok smelt and dentalia, and got from them soap root and pine nut beads. They gave the Rogue River Athabaskans women's basketry caps, eating baskets and trinket baskets.