

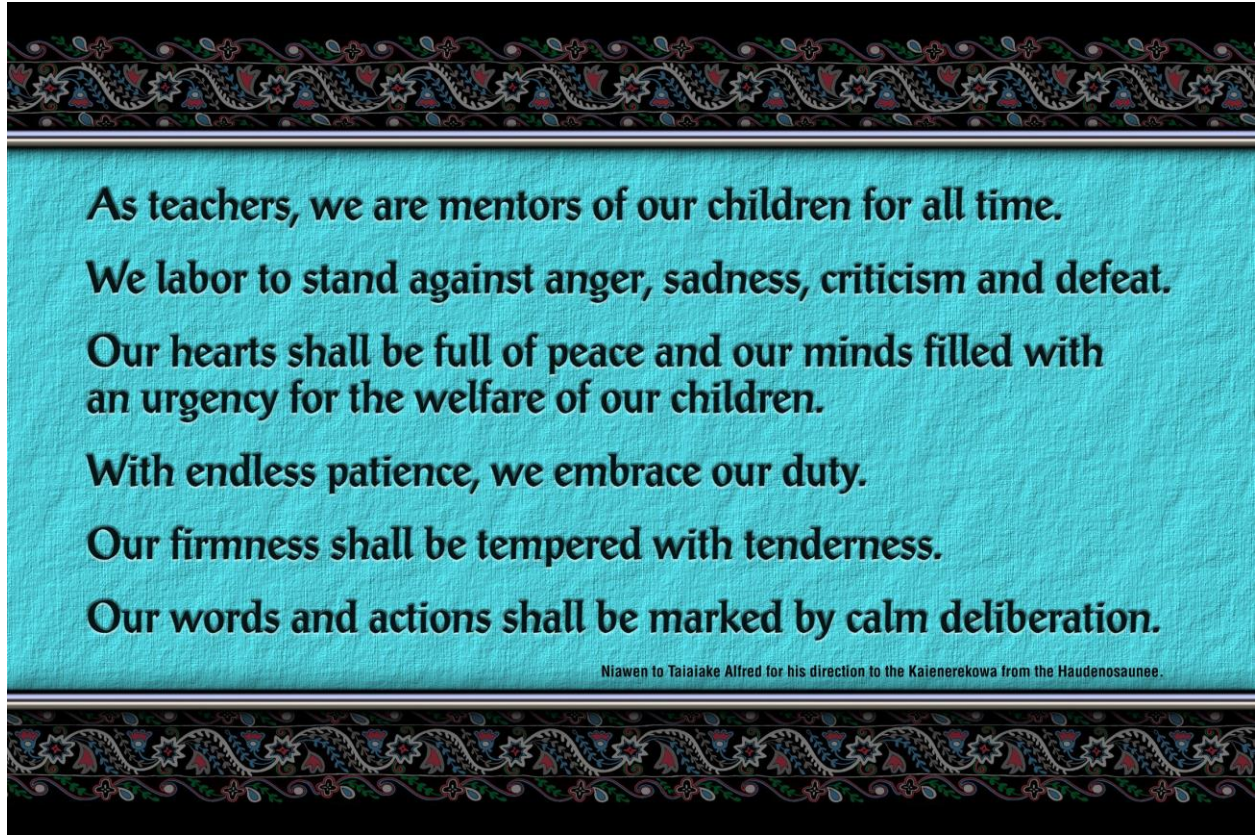
# *California Indian Culture & Sovereignty Center*

## *California Indian Essential Understandings*

**AUGMENTED FROM CALIFORNIA INDIAN MUSEUM & CULTURAL CENTER (MYERS-LIM)  
AND ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING MONTANA INDIANS**

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**As teachers, we are mentors of our children for all time.  
We labor to stand against anger, sadness, criticism and defeat.  
Our hearts shall be full of peace and our minds filled with  
an urgency for the welfare of our children.  
With endless patience, we embrace our duty.  
Our firmness shall be tempered with tenderness.  
Our words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation.**

Niawen to Taiaiake Alfred for his direction to the Kaienerekowa from the Haudenosaunee.

# California Indian Culture & Sovereignty Center

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## *California Indian Essential Understandings*

The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center's four values link the work of the The Center to the 110 tribes in California and the 567 tribes in the United States. The values—Responsibility, Relationships, Reciprocity, and Respect—reinforce the sovereign status of these tribes.

### **Responsibility**

1. Develop partnerships for sustainability
2. Maintain core AIS expertise in research and scholarship
3. Develop and maintain collaborations between AIAN community organizations and the Center
4. Institutionalize AIS as a value-added major/department

### **Relationships**

1. Facilitate ongoing communication between tribes and scholars
2. Provide access for culturally-relevant and respectful learning experiences
3. Support cultural preservation of California Indian heritage, language, and knowledge
4. Honor traditional wisdomkeepers' input

### **Reciprocity**

1. Foster collaborative, place-based and indigenous research using Native Ways of Knowing
2. Advance knowledge through innovative, high impact research and instruction
3. Create a positive environment with culturally appropriate reward systems
4. Share opportunities and experiences for lifelong learning

### **Respect**

1. Provide community support
2. Value diverse perspectives and integrate
3. Support multiple opportunities to create and present work of excellence
4. Strengthen each individual's abilities to realize his/her goals

## *Introduction to the California Indian Essential Understandings*

The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center (CICSC) was established in May 2009. The Center is the first of its kind in the state of California and focuses on serving the unique needs of American Indian/Alaska Native students by conducting original research and preserving the cultural heritage and languages of tribal communities. The CICSC facilitates a sense of community and belonging among the native population both on and off campus. It prepares students to give back to their tribal communities upon graduation.

The California Indian Essential Understandings were developed initially by Nicole Myers-Lim for use at the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center. Executive Director Myers-Lim serves on the advisory board for the CICSC and works closely with Center staff on numerous projects. The 7 Essential Understandings were modified for use in California but were based, in part, on the work of the Montana Office of Public Instruction in response to Indian Education for All (2001, 2010, 2012). A summary of the essential understandings is provided, each linked to a CICSC core value.

### ***Respect***

**Essential Understanding 1: California is home to the largest number of culturally diverse American Indian tribes in the country; each with distinct language and cultural heritage and histories.**

### ***Reciprocity***

**Essential Understanding 2: California Indian identity is individual and the range of tribal identity from assimilated to traditional is unique to each individual. The diversity of identity means there is no standard or cookie cutter appearance or behavior. There is no generic American Indian, in California, or in the United States.**

### ***Respect***

**Essential Understanding 3: Tribal traditional beliefs and practices, including links to spirituality, are practiced in communities where the culture, traditions and languages are vibrant parts of daily life. Additionally, each tribe has an oral history that pre-dates contact with non-Indians.**

### ***Relationships***

**Essential Understanding 4: California Indian peoples' histories and cultures have been and continue to be impacted by foreign, state, and federal policies. Policies developed during the Mission Period, the Gold Rush Allotment, the Boarding School Period, termination policies, and self-determination policies are integral parts of the history of tribes in California.**

## ***Relationships***

**Essential Understanding 5:** Land and place are unique and inextricably tied to tribal cultures. Reservations were established in treaties, essentially a contract between two sovereign governments. Land was never “given” to American Indians. The principle that land should be acquired through treaties involved three assumptions:

- I. That both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.
- II. That Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.
- III. That the acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter and not to be left to the individual colonist.

## ***Responsibility***

**Essential Understanding 6:** Written histories are most often codified through the subjective experience of the historian. Tribal histories are being rediscovered and revisited. Tribal perspectives of historical events often conflict with textbook histories.

## ***Relationships***

**Essential Understanding 7:** Tribal sovereignty is not equal for each tribe. The extent and breadth of tribal sovereignty is linked to varying levels of resources and infrastructures.

## *Respect*

**Essential Understanding 1: California is home to the largest number of culturally diverse American Indian tribes in the country; each with distinct language and cultural heritage and histories.**

The State of California has the most federally recognized tribes of any state; currently the U.S. government recognizes as sovereign governments 110 California tribes. In addition, there are 78 groups petitioning for recognition. The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center was created to respond to the needs of these diverse communities. The Center is in San Diego County, home to the largest number of tribes in any one county in the United States. The location of the Center, on the campus of The California State University San Marcos (CSUSM), original Luiseño land, provides the nexus for a community/campus collaboration that is unique to post-secondary education. The CSUSM campus administrators feel “It’s crucial we recognize the people who came before us. (San Diego Union-Tribune, <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-csusm-names-tukwut-courtyard-2007mar02-story.html> Retrieved October 7, 2017).

As home to the largest number of tribally culturally diverse nations, teachers in California are well-positioned to engage students in dialogue and reflection on media portrayals which represent American Indians/Alaska Natives as caricatures or stereotypes. Debunking myths about historical events, using oral tradition and accurate research, will enable students to recognize overgeneralizations. Debunking myths about modern American Indian/Alaska will allow educators to enable students to draw on their own understandings, through investigation and experience, to portray contemporary roles with culturally specific knowledge rather than stereotypes.

Educators should be familiar with their students’ tribe and tribal history. Educators should learn the correct pronunciation of personal names. Educators should participate in traditional recreational activities, as appropriate. By preparing activities about specific tribes, rather than “American Indians” or “Native Americans”, teachers will model the understanding that these nations are unique and diverse. Additionally, it is imperative that educators include contemporary contexts linked to culturally authentic historical representations of American Indians/Alaska Natives to ensure that students do not believe in the “Vanishing American” causing them to feel that traditions, dress, and language can be appropriated or modified at their whim. It is imperative that educators support the incorporation of accurate tribal histories for all youth. As noted by the first female Chief of the Cherokee nation:

*The battle for Indian children will be won in the classroom not on the streets or on horses. The students today are our warriors of tomorrow.*

*Wilma P. Mankiller, Cherokee*

## Reciprocity

**Essential Understanding 2: California Indian identity is individual and the range of tribal identity from assimilated to traditional is unique to each individual. The diversity of identity means there is no standard appearance or behavior. There is no generic American Indian, in California, or in the United States.**

The simplistic use of pow wow cultures to define American Indians can be found throughout the United States. The regalia, customs, and protocols sometimes reinforce the perspective that pow wow organization is somehow inductive of American Indian culture and often non-Indians infuse more of an historical meaning to pow wows than is historically accurate.

Pow wows are, in fact, a relatively recent social activity and have become more predominate with the individual inter-cultural relationships developed across cultures. For example, American Indian individuals often adopt the regalia of plains tribes for contests, even if their tribal identity is not linked to a plains tribe. Pow wow songs also cross tribal cultural boundaries and pow wow drums often concentrate on a particular style of dance. Cultural reciprocity can also be found in languages and in the use of heritage foods. These examples reflect the effects of such historical events/processes as boarding schools and relocation.

Many non-Indian individuals believe that they have a genetic link to a tribe through an ancestor and some share this identification. Family histories and photographs may also lend convincing arguments to the identification of an American Indian/Alaska Native ancestor; however, federally recognized tribes maintain membership roles that specifically define membership for each tribe. The federal government recognizes these membership rolls, as well as, descendency from the rolls for federal program identification. The following is a summary of the definition of “Indian” by U.S. Department of Education.

- a member of an Indian tribe or band, as membership is defined by the Indian tribe or band, including any tribe or band terminated since 1940, and any tribe or band recognized by the state in which the tribe or band resides;
- a descendant of a parent or grandparent who meets the requirements described in the previous bullet;
- considered by the Secretary of the Interior to be an Indian for any purpose;
- an Eskimo, Aleut, or other Alaska Native; or
- a member of an organized Indian group that received a grant under the Indian Education Act of 1988 as it was in effect on October 19, 1994.

California is home to thousands of American Indians who were relocated to California urban areas from other regions in the United States in the 1950s; these tribal members contribute to the large number of American Indians/Alaska Natives in census reporting.

## ***Respect***

**Essential Understanding 3: Tribal traditional beliefs and practices, including links to spirituality, are practiced in communities where the culture, traditions and languages are vibrant parts of daily life. Additionally, each tribe has an oral history that pre-dates contact with non-Indians.**

Cultural appropriation and misappropriation are the result of misunderstandings and deliberate abuse of tribal traditional beliefs and practices. The commercialization of American Indian/Alaska Native spiritual practices has continued to grow since the New Age movement began in the 1980s.

The romanization of “authentic” American Indian practices translate into mainstream capitalistic practices through the commodification of that which New Agers seek to escape.

***“...their fetishization of Native American spirituality not only masks the social oppression of real Indian peoples, but also perpetuates it.”***

***Lisa Aldred***

Integral to the preservation of tribal traditional beliefs and practices is the revitalization of tribal languages. Linguists debate the current number of language families evident in The United States; it is estimated that 175 American Indian/Alaska Native languages are spoken with some level of fluency. Policies now protect and preserve American Indian languages but 90% of the languages that existed at first contact are moribund or endangered. The U.S. Census Bureau’s 2006-2010 report reflects that of the 2.4 million people who self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native report that over 70% speak English only.

Language revitalization efforts in California vary across tribal groups. Some tribes have opened immersion schools; others teach tribal language on site. The language revitalization efforts reflect the resilience and persistence of California tribal nations. California’s recent legislation enacting the American Indian Language-Culture Credential is a testament to this persistence. This legislation allows teachers to obtain certification to teach a heritage language or to instruct American Indian culture classes in California public schools. Standards are determined by the tribe for these specific credentials. The tribe has input on assessment and criteria of dialect, literacy assessment, and baseline fluency.

Tribal traditional beliefs, culture, and language existed and flourished prior to White contact. Efforts to reintroduce the languages will support sustaining the cultures and traditions that have existed for centuries in California. These efforts include battling the misappropriation of those cultures and traditions.



## *Relationships*

**Essential Understanding 4: California Indian peoples' histories and cultures have been and continue to be impacted by foreign, state, and federal policies. Policies developed during the Mission Period, the Gold Rush Allotment, the Boarding School Period, termination policies, and self-determination policies are integral parts of the history of tribes in California.**

The history of American Indian/Alaska Naïve peoples in California has been impacted by the same policies, laws, and court decisions that impact other tribal nations. However, California Indians have been impacted by the tyranny and abuse of multiple groups and governments (missions, Mexican period, California period, American period, Gold Rush period termination/land grab period). It is important to note that California Indians were the only American Indians in the United States formally made slaves through an act of the government with the Protection of Indian Acts of 1850. It is a testament to American Indian resiliency that tribes are now thriving. These policies reflect specific historical events and teachers and students should understand the implications for future practices. By understanding the impact of federal policies on education, educators will be better prepared to engage tribal communities in dialogues about best practices.

*Education is the pathway to self-determination.*

*Joely Proudfit, Luiseño*

Extinction Phase (1492-1870s). Fuelled by federal policies, articulated as Manifest Destiny after the West was opened by Lewis and Clark, research was historical and anthropological in nature and designed without regard for the need to understand the cultural context. All Indians/indigenous peoples were considered the same.

The Mission Phase (1769-1833). The California Mission period began with the arrival of the Spanish. Established along the California coast primarily, twenty-three missions were established. The missionaries proposed to spread the Christian doctrine and Spain proposed to subjugate, control and civilize native peoples.

The California Gold Rush Phase (1848-1855). The discovery of Gold at Sutter's Mill brought some 300,000 people to California and resulted in Statehood. The effects of the Gold Rush on tribal peoples in California were disastrous, bringing disease and starvation, as well as land theft.

Dependency Phase (1870-1920s). This period is marked by the move of American Indians to reservations, as well as early attempts to "civilize" tribes. The period ends with a Supreme Court ruling that establishes American Indians as citizens of the United States.

Assimilationist Phase (1930-1950s). Assimilationist research dominated the periods of federal Indian boarding schools and was dictated by government policy. In an effort to 'educate'

American Indians, it was believed that if children were removed from their cultural influences, then the customs, including the language, would be replaced by non-Indian practices.

Termination Phase (1960-1970s). This decade brought renewed attempts to abrogate treaty obligations to American Indian tribes and continued through the removal of several tribes, most notably, the Menominee Nation in Northern Wisconsin.

Self-Determination Phase (1970-1990). During the 1970s and well into the 1990s, American Indians continued to be researched but this era marked an emergence of American Indian research scholarship in academic publications. American Indian scholars surfaced in mainstream institutions and began to write and to publish in refereed academic journals. Indigenous voices sounded but were deafened in journals controlled through editorial processes by generations of academics schooled in the inflexibility of Western research.

Native Ways of Knowing (1990-2004). Indigenous researchers and scholars began to establish their own academic venues, including the publication of their own journals. *The Journal of American Indian Education* and the *American Indian Quarterly* have the longest continuous publication history in the United States for articles focusing on American Indians. American Indian researchers and scholars gained readership and credibility in mainstream academia to assert their voices. Prior to being accepted as academically plausible or relevant, American Indian researchers and scholars worked to unite their strengths for a combined defense in collaborative relationships.

Incorporating **California Indian Essential Understandings** in public school curricula will institutionalize native ways of knowing. This change will impact all children.

## *Relationships*

**Essential Understanding 5: Land and place are unique and inextricably tied to tribal cultures. Reservations were established in treaties, essentially a contract between two sovereign governments. Land was never “given” to American Indians. The principle that land should be acquired through treaties involved three assumptions:**

- I. That both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.**
- II. That Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.**
- III. That the acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter and not to be left to the individual colonist.**

According to the most recent census data, California is home to more people of American Indian/Alaska Native heritage than any other state in the United States. There are currently 109 federally recognized Indian tribes in California; an additional 78 groups are petitioning for recognition. Tribes in California currently have nearly 100 separate reservations or Rancherias. There are also several individual Indian trust allotments. These lands are designated as “Indian Country” resulting in the application of separate jurisdictional authority. With this large population of American Indians, it is unusual that no California tribes have a treaty with the U.S. Government.

Native ways of knowing is grounded in place-based pedagogy. Native ways of knowing centers on the life long learning potential of all students. The principles of native ways of knowing are centuries old; the pedagogy includes components of community-based education, including service learning. It also includes education for sustainability; educational practices that teach students tribal core values through hands-on, experiential activities. These activities are tied to the culture and traditions of the tribes through the geographic place that is the tribe’s historical and contemporary residence. Because native ways of knowing are linked to the land, it includes components of environmental education.

There are four primary relationships for tribal peoples; these are illustrated in the graphic below.



The first relationship an individual has is with self, represented by the logo of the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center in this graphic. The next relationship that tribal people have is with their community, which includes their family. The third relationship tribal people have is with their environment; the fourth relationship is represented by the cosmos and reflects our relationship with god.

## Responsibility

**Essential Understanding 6: Written histories are most often codified through the subjective experience of the historian. Tribal histories are being rediscovered and revisited. Tribal perspectives of historical events often conflict with textbook histories.**

The preservation of tribal histories builds tribal identity and encourages tribal communities to support individuals and families as they strive to strengthen a community's culture. Formal structures, such as schools, provide a limited forum for tribes, even in tribally-operated schools. Tribal histories begin with an understanding of tribal cultural values supported by elders who share stories that are documented and preserved. **The best reference for tribal histories is the individual tribal museum, tribal cultural centers, or a designated tribal cultural representative.** While not all tribal communities in California have a tribal museum, there are several that have extensive collections of artifacts, including oral history projects. For those that do not maintain a specific tribal museum, there are resources, such as the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center (Santa Rosa, CA <https://cimcc.org/>)

American Indian histories are grounded in specific places, in lands that are historically homes of tribes and in lands where tribes have been relocated. Knowledge about California American Indian histories is essential for understanding the State's history, U.S. history, and world history for educated global citizens.

Tribal histories, art, stories, literature, religion and language are rarely covered with any depth in textbooks—the first formal learning experience most Americans have with tribal communities. Content analyses of textbooks indicate that most summaries reflecting American Indian/Alaska Native historical events are sparse, generic, and continue to reflect the language of Manifest Destiny. Historical perspectives of events reflecting tribal community viewpoints, supported by stories, oral histories, recorded interviews, or tribal newspapers should be used to incorporate a more realistic portrayal of events.

Research on tribal histories is made easier and more complicated with the advent of the Internet.

**Who is expert? What websites are credible? Whose perspectives do they reflect?  
And who has the right to use and interpret Native images?**

**Patty Loew, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe**

Traditional cultures remain grounded in oral histories, even as contemporary events fade into history. Supporting and creating classroom activities that reflect tribal histories found in local tribal museums or cultural centers assures educators that tribal communities have vetted the information and perspectives.

Additional resources can be found at the National Museum of the American Indian (<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/education/>), the National Archives (<https://www.archives.gov/research/aic/reference/native-americans.html>) and, the Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/american-indian.php>).

## Relationships

### **Essential Understanding 7: Tribal sovereignty is not equal for each tribe. The extent and breadth of tribal sovereignty is linked to varying levels of resources and infrastructures.**

The sovereign rights of American Indian nations are defined by the Marshall Trilogy of court cases; the cumulative effect of these decisions limited American Indian tribes in just two specific areas. They are limited in the right to transfer land and the right to deal with foreign nations. Ultimately, Congress has the power to limit or even abolish tribal governments; however, until that legislation becomes law, tribal governments retain the right to self-government including the determination of tribal membership, law and order, taxation, and regulation of commerce and trade.

An additional caveat in the interpretation of American Indian/federal relations is “the reserved rights doctrine.” This doctrine holds that any rights not specifically address in a treaty are reserved to the tribe. Treaties outlined specific rights the tribes relinquished to maintain their cultures and way of life; treaties do not outline or delineate those rights that American Indians retained.

The most commonly cited source of federal power over American Indian tribes is the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution. This clause is the foundation of Congress’s “plenary power” over Indian affairs.

The “trust relationship” between the U.S. government and American Indian tribes refers to the language in treaties to protect the safety and well-being of American Indians. The “trust relationship” is found in the language of the Marshall Trilogy where Chief Justice Marshall describes American Indian tribes as “domestic dependent nations” with a relationship analogous of a ward to a guardian. The use of this practice is unfettered by Congress and allows federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to justify actions that do not always represent the best interests of American Indian tribes. Because this “trust relationship” is a moral responsibility and is not considered a legal policy, tribes have little recourse in the enforcement of promises or obligations outlined in original treaties. Sovereignty has been limited by Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court resulting in litigation to decide on specific limits.

*Repatriation is the most potent political metaphor for cultural revival that is going on at this time. Political sovereignty and culture sovereignty are inextricably linked, because the ultimate goal of political sovereignty is protecting a way of life.*

*W. Richard West (Cheyenne-Arapaho)*

States and the federal government have a history of eroding the tribal sovereignty accorded by the Marshall Trilogy; in the years following these decisions, the Supreme Court applied basic laws of federalism, as the overarching policy of the federal government was to assimilate American Indians. By 1871, Congress had unilaterally abolished the making of treaties with Indian tribes. There are no treaties with American Indian tribes indigenous to California; all reservations were created by federal statute or executive order.

## Additional Resources

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