

## ENDURING TRADITIONS: BASKETS IN NATIVE CALIFORNIA IDEAS FOR EDUCATORS

### ***Importance of Teaching Native American Studies to Children***

Accurate and culturally sensitive information about Native California is a much needed addition to history and social studies curriculums at all levels. The ideas offered here represent some preliminary themes and activities for those teaching Native California, but this is by no means an exhaustive curriculum. It is simply one means of teaching students about some of the issues currently facing Native Americans, and California Natives, in particular.

### ***Why Baskets?***

Their importance and versatility make learning about baskets an important point of entry into wider historical, spiritual, and social aspects of Native California. Appreciating the importance of Native Californian basketry easily translates into a greater understanding and appreciation of larger concepts relating to Native Californians and, by extension, Native Americans.

### ***The Basics***

- Subjects: social studies, science, history, and art.
- Skills: observe, infer, create.
- Strategies: integrate artifacts and documents with the goal of discovering and understanding Native Californians through basketry.
- Grade levels: 3rd – 6<sup>th</sup>

### ***Objectives:***

1. Talk about the historical processes of settlement and colonization as well as examples of contact and its repercussions:
  - loss of land, reservations and boarding schools  
(refer to documents 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, & 14 and artifacts 2, 3, 10, & 12)
  - treaties & legislation  
(refer to documents 12 & 14)
2. Use artifacts and documents to discuss how baskets are used and made. Also discuss the importance of baskets in Native Californian spirituality, healing, cultural revitalization, and cultural continuity:
  - utility  
(refer to documents 10 & 11 and artifacts 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 13)
  - healing  
(refer to document 2 and artifact 11)
  - diversity of materials  
(refer to documents 1 & 8 and artifacts 4, 8, & 9)
  - changing of basketry forms  
(refer to document 6 and artifacts 2, 3, 10, & 12)
  - baskets for sale  
(refer to documents 1, 3, & 12 and artifact 12)

3. Talk about the environmental needs of Native Americans as embodied in basket weaving traditions:
  - Pesticides affect the health of weavers because plant materials are prepared with the mouth.
  - Dams frequently erode areas where the plant materials are harvested.
  - Pollution (run-off, factory waste, etc.) affects the overall health of plant materials.

*-refer to documents 9 & 13*

***Background (for teacher preparation or docent)***

- Use the various portions of the eGuide to familiarize oneself with the role of basket-weaving in California Native American systems: utility, cosmology, representation.
- Annotated bibliographies offer further resources to create additional lesson plans and will help instructors to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Possible Activities

1. Individual: create/draw in-class baskets.
  - Students discuss what their basket is to be used for and what materials would be needed for its production.
  - Have students make up designs to use on their baskets that they feel relate to their families. This would aid in understand the integration between utilitarian and/or decorative objects and cultural world views, as these relate to their home and community.
2. Group: Break the students into groups of 2, 3, or 4 with an assigned artifact(s)/document(s) to present to the class.

This could be further elaborated into a research project. The annotations for children's sources would also be very useful for this exercise.