

The Sacramento Bee and Nehemiah Leaders Programs are celebrating this year's 60 Change Makers. Join them at our gala at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 13 at the Grand Sheraton in downtown Sacramento. Buy tickets at sacramentochangemakers.com.

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Annette Reed inspires Sacramento State Native students. 'All of us have gifts'

By [Emma Hall](#)

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Annette Reed believes everyone has a gift.

For her, it's teaching.

Reed's journey to higher education started when she was 19-years-old. After serving in the last class of the Women's Army Corps, Reed enrolled at San Francisco City College. There, she fell in love with Native American Studies.

Reed later became one of the first Native women to earn a PhD at the University of California, Berkeley, and more broadly in California. She pursued higher education despite discouragement from college counselors.

Reed is a citizen of the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation and serves as the dean for Sacramento State's [Wileety Native American College](#). She taught for more than 20 years as a professor and was the department chair of the ethnic studies department.

In 2025, Reed came out of retirement to lead the Wileety College, the first and only Native-centered institution in the California State University system.

American Indian and Alaska Native students make up 1% of Sacramento State's student population. In 2018, a university climate survey revealed Native students felt the most unsupported on campus, according to Reed.



Annette Reed, inaugural dean of Sacramento State's Wileety Native American College, poses for a portrait after being recognized as one of this year's Change Makers on Thursday, July 9, 2026. JOSE LUIS VILLEGAS jvillegas@sacbee.com

Through her career and Wileety, Reed helps Native American students find their own gifts.

“As a community, we need to encourage people to figure out what their gifts are,” Reed said. “All of us have gifts. The thing about life is knowing what they are and figuring out how to utilize your gifts into something meaningful for ourselves.”

The college focuses on supporting the next generation of Native leaders. Programs at Wileety are crafted by Reed. They include cultural teaching sessions, a monthly class dinner and a speaker series for students featuring Native leaders from various industries.

Her work is to inspire Native students, to show them that they can succeed, she said.

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