

Let's Celebrate California
Native American Day

in Concord!

Welcome!

Welcome to your very own **materials kit** to celebrate California Native American Day in Concord! The information and activities you will find here will help you participate and learn why it is important to know and care about Native American people and their ancestors.

Through your participation in this year's holiday you will have a chance to play sports, write, investigate, paint, blog, tweet, eat acorns ... and so much more. So let's jump in!

Your Introduction to Native America

Let's start with a fun brainteaser:

- **How many Native American people are there in the world today?**
 - A. About 200
 - B. About 10,000
 - C. About 100,000
 - D. More than sixty million
 - E. A hundred trillion

What did you guess? Well, the correct answer is ... D! There are more than *sixty million* Native American people alive today! Some live just south of the U.S. in Mexico, which has about 15 million Native citizens. In Peru there are about 14 million Native Americans, while Bolivia and Guatemala have about 6 million Native American citizens each.

Let's try another one:

- **How many Native American languages are spoken today?**

- A. None
- B. About 100
- C. More than a thousand
- D. About 100,000
- E. A zillion

Here the correct answer is ... C! Over a thousand different Native American languages are spoken today.

More than 8 million people speak **Quechuan** languages in places like Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador. There are nearly three million **Aymara** speakers in Bolivia and Peru near Lake Titicaca – which contains more water than any other lake in South America, even though it is over 12,000 feet up in the mountains!



A photo from the beautiful shores of Lake Titicaca
(courtesy of Anthony Lacoste, tinyurl.com/heocfk7)

More than 5 million people speak **Guaraní**, which is one of the national languages of Paraguay. At least 6 million speak **Mayan** languages in Mexico and Central America.

Did you know that many people in Mexico and elsewhere today *only* speak an Indian language, and don't know a European language such as English or Spanish?

American Indians in the United States

What about the United States, though? Well, there are lots of Indians here, too! Let's try another brainteaser:

- **How many states are there within the borders of the United States of America?**

- A. Ten
- B. Forty-eight
- C. Fifty
- D. Fifty-two
- E. More than 500

Did you guess C, fifty? Or maybe E ... more than 500? Well, if you guessed E ... then you're right! There are *more than 500 states* inside the borders of the United States. That's because there are over 550 federally recognized Indian tribes, and each is a sovereign state under U.S. federal law.

Since 1924, all Native people born in the United States have enjoyed U.S. citizenship regardless of whether they are also members of an Indian tribe. More than 5 million U.S. citizens consider themselves to be Native American. That's about *two people out of every hundred* of us – and that doesn't count the many people who have Native ancestors but who don't think of themselves as American Indians. There may be some Native Americans in your school ... or even in your own class!

You've probably heard of **Indian reservations**. The United States federal government recognizes over 300 reservations inside the borders of the United States. You may also have heard of **rancherias**, which are like reservations but which tend to be smaller. Some American Indians live on reservations or rancherias, but most do not. There are Indian people who spend part of their lives on a reservation or in a rancheria, and part in other places.

Your Turn ...

Sovereign States

Does it surprise you to know how many states there are within U.S. borders? Would you like to learn more about the legal concept of sovereign states to prepare a contest entry, or just to satisfy your curiosity?

One way to start is with the 1831 Supreme Court report from the case between Cherokee people and the state of Georgia. To find this report, google *30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1*, or visit a law library and ask your friendly law librarian to help you.

If you decide to review this report, take a careful look at page 16. What you think about what the Court said?

Have fun with it!



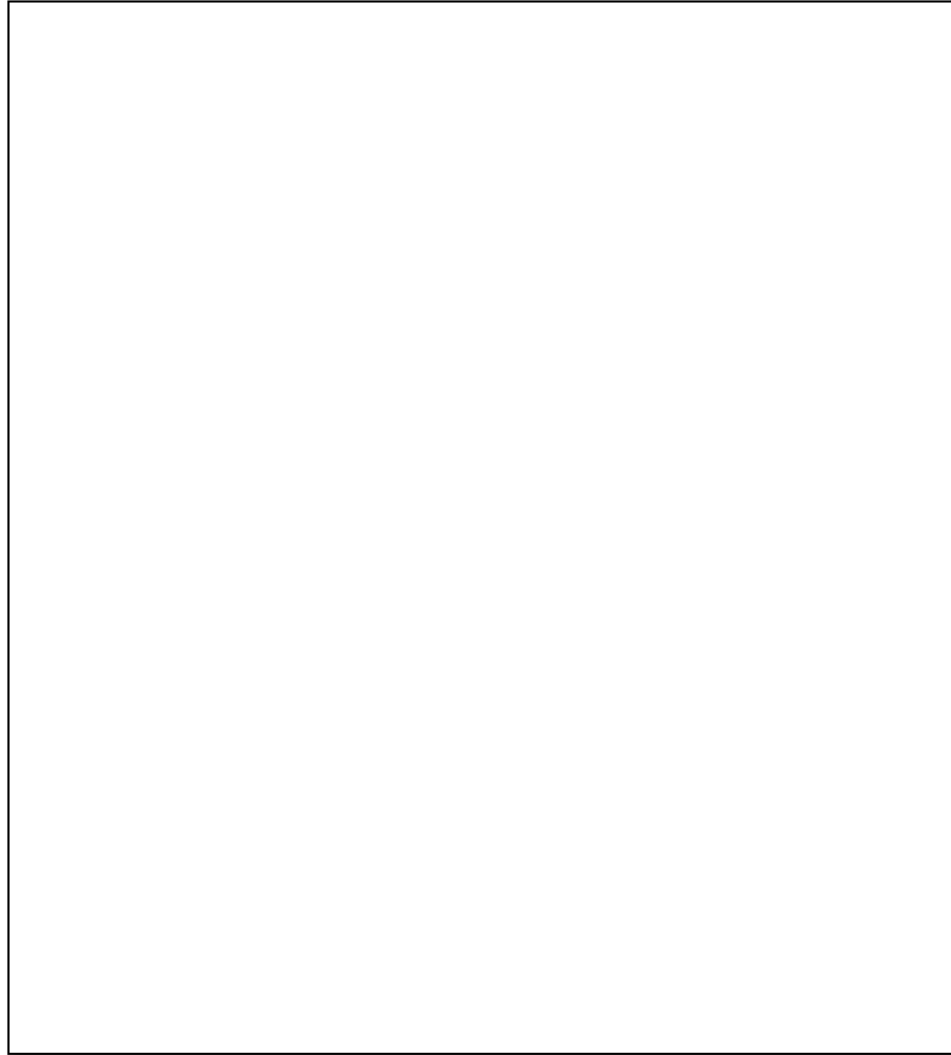
**The United States Supreme Court
In Washington D.C.**
(courtesy of 350z33 at English Wikipedia.)

American Indians in California

Let's try another brainteaser!

- **Which of the following U.S. states has the most Native American people living in it?**
 - A. Oklahoma
 - B. New Mexico
 - C. California
 - D. Arizona
 - E. South Dakota

What do you think? Well, the answer is ... C! There are more Indian people living in your state of California than in any other of the 49 U.S. states. Almost 700,000 Californians consider themselves to be Native American.



You may be aware that in California there are now many large casinos. Only Indian tribes are legally allowed to open such casinos in our state. People who want to open a large casino here must prove to the federal government that they are Indians. Securing this recognition of Indian family heritage from the federal government can be very complicated, difficult, expensive, frustrating, and time-consuming.

Your turn ...

Could You Prove You're Indigenous?

Are you interested in exploring what steps you would have to go through if you wanted to try to prove that you're an Indian person?

To explore the concept of **federal recognition**, in order to prepare a holiday contest entry or to satisfy your own curiosity, take a look at:

tinyurl.com/hq5fdxy



The **U.S. Department of the Interior** administers federal government programs relating to Native American people.

The fact is that most Indian tribes inside the United States do not operate casinos. Of those that do, some have been successful with their enterprises, while many more have had difficulty making a profit. It can be hard for a casino to make money if it's on one of the many Indian reservations or rancherias that are far from large population centers. Those more distant locations have a hard time attracting many visitors.

The large amount of debt needed to start a big casino can also pose a serious challenge. Also, sometimes a U.S. state will require an Indian tribe to enter into an agreement to share a large amount of the casino profits in order to be allowed to open the casino operation.

Native Americans in Contra Costa County

Today about 125,000 people live in Concord. Many of us have come from other states or countries to be here.

Not long ago, though, only Native American people lived here. If you were wandering through California in 1750, you wouldn't hear any English, Spanish, Chinese, or Farsi. You would be able to hear over 80 different California Indian languages, though, many of which were widely spoken.

Today we live in places with names like Concord, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, Brentwood, and Danville. Back then people here lived in places with names like Tatcan, Volvon, Julpin, Chupcan, and Saclan.



What is Your Opinion?

Do you like the new names we have for our communities in Contra Costa County? Do you like the Indian names? Would you support using some of the Indian names on this map to refer to some places in Contra Costa County today? Why, or why not?

(Source: The Bay Miwok of Contra Costa County, Contra Costa County Office of Education, <http://www.cccoe.net/miwokproject/map.html>.)

What are Native Americans like?

Have you ever wondered what Native American people are like? One good way to start thinking about that is to consider people in general.

Do you think people who live in Concord are all the same as people who live in San Mateo? How about whether people who live in Pleasant Hill are all the same as people who live in San Jose? Is your family the same as the family living next door?

Most of us will agree that people who live close to one another are similar to each other in some ways, and different in others. Often, the farther away people live from one another, the more different their cultures are.

Some Famous Indian People



Carrie Underwood,
Muscogee Creek Nation,
Country Music Singer



Jim Thorpe,
Sac and Fox Nation, Athlete



Diane Humetewa,
Hopi Nation,
Federal Judge



Will Rogers, Cherokee Nation,
Comedian and Commentator



John Bennett Herrington,
Chickasaw Nation, Astronaut

That's true of American Indians too. Indian tribes have always had their own traditions. Some of them are similar to those of other tribes nearby, and others are different. Many American Indian people value a sense of community and family, but each Indian person is also an individual.

In the United States generally, many of us are more *individualistic* than most people in other countries. Among Native Americans, on the other hand, many people value **cooperation** over individual achievement.

People in many Native societies appreciate modesty more than individualism. So if you have a friend who has grown up in a Native culture, she might not say much about her achievements, even if she's done a lot of amazing things in her life.

People in the United States are also generally encouraged to *express themselves* and speak out.

In many Native cultures, on the other hand, **listening**, observing, feeling, communicating through behavior, and remaining quiet and still are appreciated more important than personal expression. If you ask a Native friend a question, it is possible that he will think for a long while before he answers you, and he might not be interested in talking just to keep a conversation going.

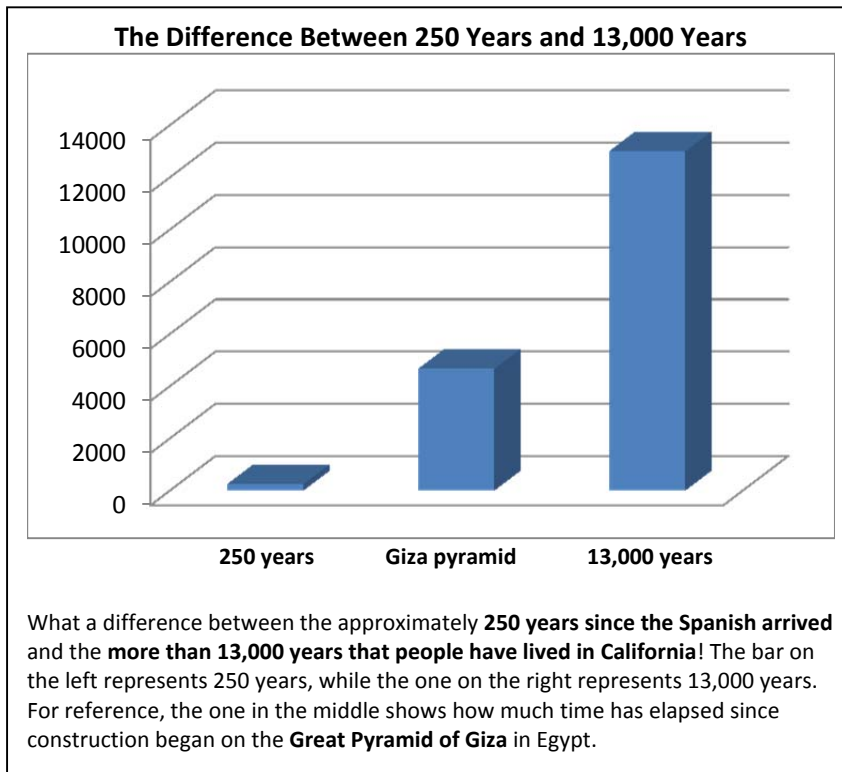
While many non-Native Americans value *direct eye contact* in conversations with others, in many Native cultures **avoiding eye contact** is a way to show respect.

Also, while many people in the United States generally value *youthfulness*, most Native societies value **age** over youth.

In many Native traditions, moreover, the **natural world** is considered more important than seeking scientific or material advancement.

Recent Changes Where We Live

Not long before the American Revolution began on the faraway East Coast, Europeans came from Spain to stay here in California. That was in 1769, which may seem like a really long time ago to you – over two hundred years! – but it is actually a very short time compared with the **more than thirteen-thousand years** that people have been living in California.



Your turn ...

Many Thousands of Years

Are you fascinated by the fact that people have lived in California for so many thousands of years? If you would like to take a closer look at this issue, either to prepare a contest entry or to satisfy your own curiosity, then here's a nice article from the *Los Angeles Times* that you can use to start your very own investigation:

tinyurl.com/hu2zj4

If you think about it, two-hundred years is only a few human lifetimes placed back-to-back. People have lived in California, including our part of California, for *many* more generations than that.

Within the last few centuries, life in California has changed dramatically for people, animals, and plants. Almost everything we use in our daily lives now is very new to the world compared with how long people have been living here. For example, many of the things that we use today come from other continents, or were made based on recent ideas and inventions from far away. These days changes wrought by people moving around the world are coming faster and faster. It seems as if every day it's easier to communicate with people in other states and countries.

Even so, some things remain mostly the same.

Mount Diablo is an example of that. You see it standing today just as people did hundreds and thousands of years ago. That doesn't mean people back then thought about Mount Diablo the same way we do now, though.

The more you learn about Native America, the better an idea you will have of how people saw the world before European people came here.



Life In Contra Costa County Before the Spanish Came¹

Before the Spanish came to California, many of the people who lived in what we now call Contra Costa County shared cultural traditions that have come to be called **Miwok**.

You may already be familiar with the word Miwok. It is used to refer to some of the Native American people from East and Central Contra Costa County, and certain other parts of Northern California.

The name Miwok comes from *miwwyk*, which means “people” in the Central Sierra Miwok language.

Before the Spanish, there were six independent communities in this area whose people spoke the same language. Linguists began calling that language **Bay Miwok** in the 1960s, and they noted that the cultures of the various speakers of Bay Miwok shared many similarities.

Bay Miwok is part of a language group which includes Coast Miwok from Marin county, Lake Miwok from Lake County, Plains Miwok from the Sacramento-San Joaquin delta region, and Sierra Miwok from the Sierra Nevada Mountains and nearby.

Unlike English, Spanish, and most other languages spoken here today, the Miwok languages were born right here in California.

¹ This section relies on content in *Miwok Material Culture* written by S. A. Barrett and E. W. Gifford and published in 1933 in the BULLETIN OF THE PUBLIC MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE, Volume 2, Number 4, pages 117-376, available on the Internet at yosemite.ca.us/library/miwok_material_culture/.

Your turn ...

California's Languages

Are you interested in learning more about the languages that were born right here in California, in order to prepare a contest entry or simply to satisfy your own curiosity?

Here is a great place to begin to take a closer look at Native California languages:

<http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/Survey/>



The **University of California at Berkeley** is home to the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages

Traditional Miwok Houses

Before the Spanish came, Bay Miwok houses didn't cost a lot of money to build. People didn't spend a very long time building their houses and other buildings. They used local resources and their construction techniques didn't require great amounts of materials.



A traditional Miwok house

(courtesy of Contra Costa County Office of Education, The Bay Miwok of Contra Costa County, *available at* www.cccoe.net/miwokproject/Lesson2.html).

On the one hand, that meant people didn't have big dens, garages, or living rooms. On the other hand, they didn't have to pay rent or make any mortgage payments to the bank. The people's buildings didn't burden the environment, and if the family got tired of their house they simply burned it and made a new one.

Just as people in most parts of Europe no longer live in thatched houses, nowadays Miwok people live in the same sorts of houses we see all over California today.

Traditional Miwok Foods

Before the Spanish, Miwok people enjoyed a varied diet which included plenty of nuts, seeds, roots, bulbs, shoots, meat, fowl, fish, and **corms**.

Your turn ...

Wait ... corms?

Do you know what "corms" are? If you would like to look into this question in order to prepare a contest entry or to satisfy your own curiosity, here's a great place to start your own investigation:

tinyurl.com/hpqp8dr

Can you find some examples of corms that are native to California? Which corms did Miwok people like to eat before Spanish people came to live here?



A photo of some corms.

Miwok people who lived here back then had an understanding of which natural plants and animals in our general environment here could be eaten or otherwise be useful. They took what they needed and wanted from the resources that surrounded them.

Miwok people did not cultivate plants and animals on farms and plantations. So they didn't have to worry about preparing, breaking, seeding, or tending soil, or about capturing, corralling, breaking, breeding, herding, or feeding animals.

As people also did elsewhere in California, some Miwok people used fire to manage the growth of plants that they liked to eat, including those “fire loving” plants with tasty seeds that sprouted up soon after wildfires came through.

By moving with the seasons – such as by going into the mountains during warm seasons – people took advantage of the local topography to enhance and vary their food sources.

Some of the foods that people commonly ate here are foods you probably haven’t tried. Examples include **acorns, deer, squirrels, mountain lions, skunks, and clover.**

Other foods that were common and which you may very well have eaten include **salmon, trout, mushrooms, plums, and cherries.** Some people ate bear meat, while others avoided it because to them the bears’ feet seemed too human.

Miwok people ate a wider variety of plants than most of us do today. They boiled or steamed these plants and ate them with acorn soup or acorn porridge. Some of the Miwok plant foods tasted a little like onions. Others were more like vinegar, or had a sour taste, or a sweetish one.

Sometimes people ate their greens salted. Other times they dried them, then added water when they wanted to eat them. On occasion they washed their greens down with sweet manzanita cider. They believed certain fruits were good for the singing voice.

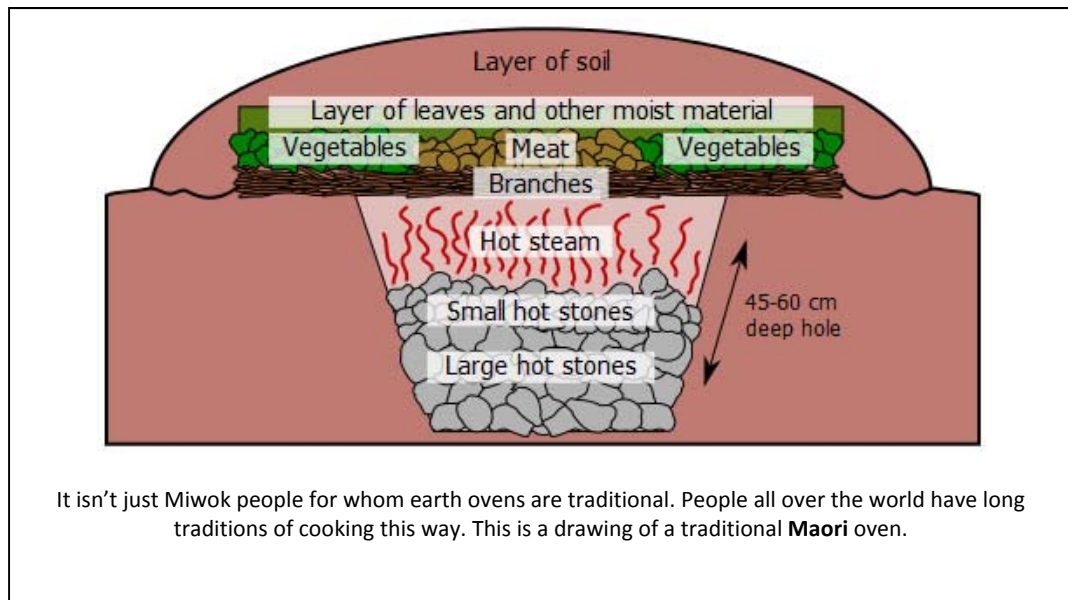
Traditional Miwok Cooking

Miwok people in our area were very clever about cooking, and used techniques many of us wouldn’t think of now.

Sometimes, for example, they stuck hot coals right inside their fish or duck to make sure it was cooked all the way through. Other times they smothered dried fish in acorn porridge and then broiled it, to make a dish of fish and acorn biscuits. One way that people cooked eggs was to set them right in the hot ashes of a fire.

Have you heard of a clambake? That’s a party where people get together to bake or steam seafood and other foods in a pit over heated stones and under a bed of seaweed. People in California used ovens similar to that before the Europeans came.

They made a pit in the ground, then placed hot stones in it. They had to know which stones to use, because some have enough moisture to cause them to explode in fire! The people covered the hot stones with a layer of leaves, then added a thin layer of food. After that they added more leaves, and more hot stones, then even more leaves, and more food, and more stones ... and so on until the pit was completely filled.



Next, they put soil over the pit. Often they then built a fire on top of that. All night long, the food baked in this oven. The layers of stones distributed the heat so that the oven stayed at a good cooking temperature for many hours. Sometimes people poured water around the edges too, to steam the food.

The next day, the food was hot and delicious and ready anytime people wanted to eat. Sometimes people cooked bulbs in these ovens, or greens. Sometimes they even cooked grasshoppers in them!

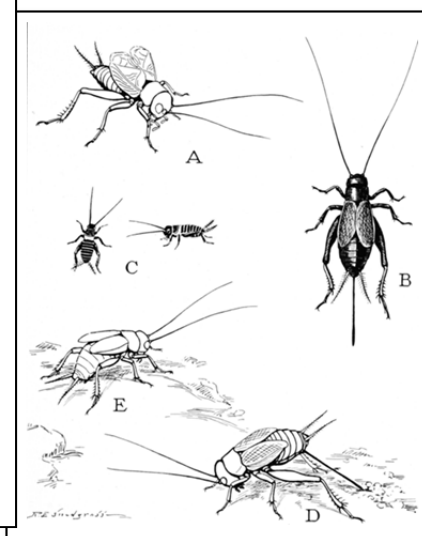
As a rule, people ate breakfast at sunrise, then they ate whenever they felt like it during the rest of the day. They didn't have other fixed meals such as "lunch" or "dinner" as we mostly do today.

Your turn ...

Do people still eat insects in California today?

Why, sure they do! If you are interested in taking a closer look at this interesting question, you can start at typhoon.biz/menus and tinyurl.com/hq3ekef.

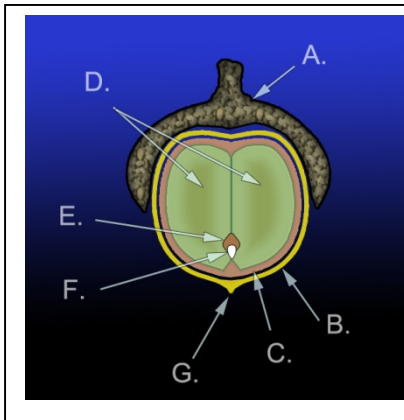
Would you try the insect dishes on this menu? What do you think are the potential advantages or disadvantages of eating insects, and why?



Miwok people were skilled at preserving and storing large amounts of food to eat all year long. They dried meat, fish, greens, quail, and grasshoppers so they could eat them later. They dried deer meat by hanging it in long, thin strips in the sun or over a small fire. They sometimes mixed deer meat with salt so it would keep for weeks. To keep their food good for short whiles between meals, people covered it with earth. There were cold and snowy places back then, but there were no refrigerators yet, anywhere in the world.

Acorns: A Really Big Deal

The main staple food in California before the Europeans came was **acorn nuts**. It's really surprising that even though we see many acorns around us today, and even though acorns were such an important food here for thousands of years, most people who live in Contra Costa County now have never eaten even a single one of them!



Your turn ...

How to Eat Acorns

Do you want to try eating acorns? Then you'll need to go to someone who knows how to prepare them safely.

Most acorns can't be eaten raw, or even after just cooking them. They have to be prepared specially. After that they are not only perfectly safe to eat, but also quite nutritious ... and yummy!

A place that you can visit to enjoy delicious acorn products is at Sue Chin's in Martinez. See her Web site at

buyacornflour.com

Acorns typically fall from oak trees only once every few years. When they do, lots of animals want to collect them for food. So if you want to eat them, you have to get there first.

The traditional Miwok way is to mobilize the whole community as soon as the acorns are ready, to go collect the nuts and bring them home. Then the acorns are dried in the sun, and placed into storage. Working together this way, it is possible for a few dozen or so people to collect as much as a whole ton of acorns in a few weeks.

Dried acorn nuts will keep for years. For many California Indians it is traditional to process them into flour, which is then used to make acorn porridge or acorn soup. Before the Spanish arrived, acorns were part of almost every meal. Some Miwok people added salt made from salt water or seaweed to season their dishes.

Hunting the Traditional Miwok Way

If you're hunting according to Miwok tradition, then you don't just grab a weapon and head out. Hunting was risky business. Before the Spanish arrived, there were grizzly bears living all over California, after all. Anything could happen. Sometimes people didn't even return from a hunting trip.

So if you're hunting traditionally, then you gear up for it – big time!

For days, you meet with your fellow hunters around a fire inside a hot room. There you prepare your weapons and tools, and plan, and guide younger hunters who might be joining you for the first time, and pray for your group's success.



Here is a picture of one type of hot room taken in 1885 near Hemet, California.

(Source: University of Southern California Libraries)

When you're ready to go out and hunt, then you're smart about it. You clean yourself first, and rub yourself with a pungent plant such as bay leaf or mugwort. That way animals are less likely to catch your scent, and you have a better chance to get close to them.

When you come across a deer, you don't just shoot. You're patient, waiting until you are close enough for a really good shot. Maybe you even put on your deer head decoy, and start moving the way deer do. Once you're close enough you can take your shot without even startling the animal.

In a lot of ways, the tools that Miwok people used here to hunt before the Spanish came were like those that many other people around the world were also using. The Miwok made and used traps and snares, nets and decoys, javelins and clubs, and bows and arrows.

They also knew about the soap root plant, though, which they used to paralyze fish so that they floated to the top, and so people could just scoop them out of the water and carry them away.

Among many Native Americans, certain aspects of traditional life have fallen into disuse, while others are alive and well. Many still use hot rooms. You may hear these referred to as sweat lodges or temescals.

The Traditional Miwok Form of Government

By tradition, each Miwok community governed itself independently.

Today, Concord governs itself too, but only in part. Unlike the Miwok communities, Concord is also subject to oversight by central governments, based in Sacramento and Washington D.C.

A Core Skill

There are many ways to help build society. Today one way is through computer programming, which is a core skill that can be applied to accomplish many different purposes. Before the Spanish, a core skill that people applied here to accomplish many different ends was **weaving**.



Source: Kristoferb at English Wikipedia



Source: Pomo Indian Baskets,
tinyurl.com/gnn8pqq

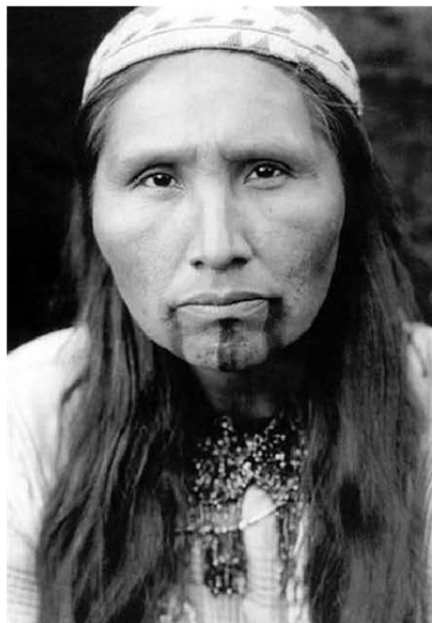
In everyday life, people were surrounded with woven products ranging from hats to plates, nets, traps, belts, ropes, ceremonial garments – even boats and houses incorporated weaving skills. Weaving was used to make hunting tools, fishing tools, and tools for collecting nuts and seeds. Woven products helped people carry and drink water, process food, cook porridge and soup, and move from one place to another. They used woven products to carry their babies as well, in what are now known as cradleboards. Some people still use these cradleboards to carry their babies today.

California Indians also wove baskets for carrying and storage, and elevated basketry to a fine art. Today baskets from California are recognized as some of the finest ever produced anywhere, by anyone.

Tattoos and Piercing

Two things that are common to both Miwok traditional practices and to many people's traditions and practices here today are tattooing and piercing. Traditional Indian designs, such as those formed of straight lines running from the chin to the belly button, aren't as popular as they once were, but there are people who do still wear them.

The traditional way to make a Miwok tattoo involves placing a sharp piece of stone or obsidian at the end of a straight piece of wood that is about the size of a pencil, and then pricking the skin until it bleeds. Next the blood is mixed with black ashes and rubbed into the skin to create permanent designs.



A lady from far northern California wearing a tattoo in the year 1900.

It was the moms and grandmoms who pierced all the kids' ears and noses. Sometimes they did it while the kids were sleeping. Other times they pinched a child's ear until it was numb and then pierced it. When the pierces healed, people put grass stems in them to keep the holes open. Then they put in more and more grass stems to enlarge the holes. Boys had the biggest holes because they wore the biggest jewelry. Both boys and girls wore flowers in their pierced ears.

Jewelry, Makeup, Headdresses, and Haircuts

Just as today, people here before the Spanish came liked to wear earrings, bracelets, and necklaces.

Miwok people made jewelry from shells, pine wood, and certain feathers, and some still do.

Some California Indians wore jewelry through their nose piercings. On special occasions, people also decorated their faces and bodies with red and black makeup.

They also wore special headdresses, but they weren't like the ones you've probably seen on TV and in the movies, which are traditional for some people in the plains states.

Here's a picture of traditional Bay Miwok headdresses:



Before Europeans came to California, Miwok people weren't into haircuts. The only time they used to cut their hair was when someone close to them passed away, in order to mourn that person's passing.

Powers of the Universe

Now, the people looked around them and saw the wind blowing. They saw the sun shining and making its way across the sky all by itself, moving independently like we do.

They saw the plants growing, and the animals moving. They saw the waters flowing on their own without anyone pushing or pulling them.

The world was full of activity, and the people concluded that everything in this world has its own power.

Before the Spanish arrived, it was common for the people who lived in our area to respect that power, or spirit, which they saw in themselves and in everything and everyone around them. They sought to understand and interact with it, in order to make sense of the world and function well and appropriately within it.

Dancing and Stories

Many people think of music as a universal language. Tiny babies respond to songs without ever having to learn what music is. They just seem to know.

Most of us consider listening and moving to music to be a natural part of what it means to be human. We dance and tell many stories today to communicate, and to express our deep emotions and feelings, and to entertain and enjoy ourselves. Many of us also like to get dressed up specially for important events and holidays. (Others don't like to get dressed up, but will do it anyway.)

Before the Spanish, people certainly wrote and performed songs, danced, and crafted and told stories in order to communicate with one another. They also used dance and music to communicate with non-human forces. Many Indians still do this today, as do plenty of non-Native people when they go to church, or to the synagogue, mosque, or temple.

Music

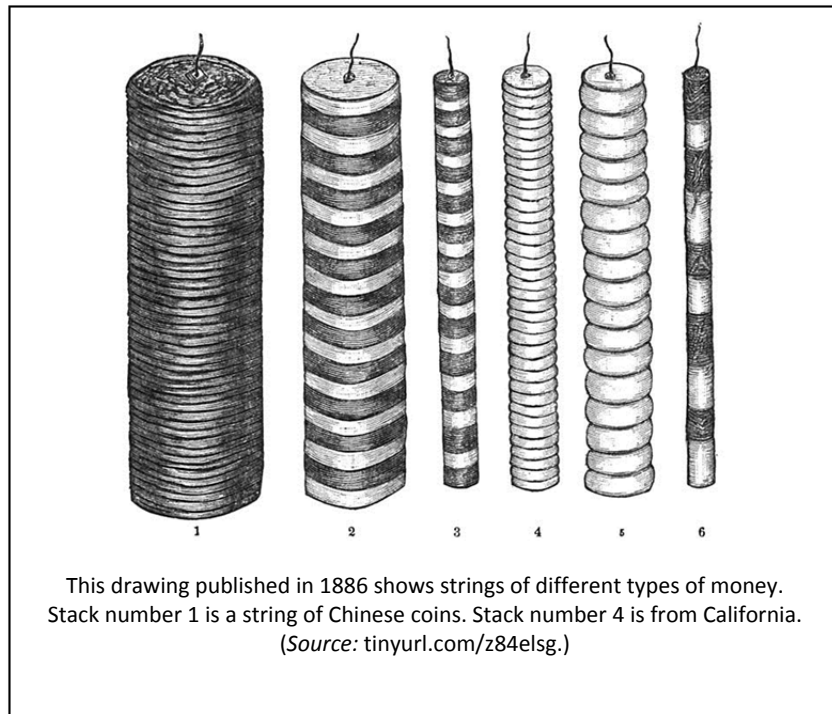
In the Central Miwok language, the word for music is "kowana." This word seems to be related to the word for the musical bow, which is "kowa." If you want to make a Central Miwok musical bow, you will need wood from an elder tree and string made from twisted deer sinew. To play the kowa, you will hold the center or one end of the bow with your teeth while plucking the string with your fingers. Another traditional Miwok instrument is a decorated butterfly cocoon that contains small stones or seeds, and which produces a rushing or rattling sound.

For the glue to make traditional Miwok instruments, you'll need to combine soaproot juice and pine pitch. If you plan to collect seeds the traditional way, you should know that painting your basket with heated soaproot juice will keep the seeds from falling through the sides. Soaproot juice and soaproot plant fibers are also great for making traditional Miwok brushes.

Money

Before the Europeans came here, there was plenty of money in California.

A lot of it wasn't so different from what we're used to today. As in Europe several hundred years ago, most of the money in California came in the form of coins. In California, the coins were made from shells. They were smooth instead of having something printed on the surfaces. That may be because there was no king or queen governing this region. Since the villages were relatively equal, printing something specific to one place or leader on coins meant to circulate everywhere probably wouldn't have made sense.



Miwok communities minted coins rarely, if ever. Instead, they got their clam shell coins from people farther north, and their olive shell coins and tubular money from people down south. Some of the southerners maintained large mints on the Channel Islands which produced millions of shell coins.

Traditional Californian coins are small compared with the kinds of coins we use today. They have holes through the middle so you can put them on a string for easy counting. In addition to using these to buy things, California Indians displayed their strings of shell money as jewelry, including as necklaces, belts, and bandoliers. Some California Indians still wear shell money jewelry, such as on special occasions.

Europeans often used stones rather than shells for money. Like the California Indians, they used their money not only to make purchases, but also to incorporate into jewelry, as “gems” for fashion and to indicate their wealth and status. Today we tend to think of gems as sparkly, but through much of European history they weren’t cut or finished the way they are today, so they were dull by today’s standards.

It was traditional for many California Indians to offer shell money when a person who they cared about passed away, by placing it in the person’s grave at the funeral or tossing it into a fire. Such offerings played an important role in reducing California’s money supply, which kept inflation in check in the regional economy and maintained a steady demand for the production of new shell coins.

Miwok people could also use acorns as money. Baskets were very valuable and could be used to make important purchases. Feather bands were also units of exchange. Mono people from the other side of the Sierra Nevada mountains came into Miwok territories with packages of salt, and gave them to Miwok representatives to start formal trading sessions. The Miwok representatives could give acorns in return or something else that the Mono people liked.

Measurements

So, let’s say you were living near Mount Diablo before the Spanish came here, and you wanted to buy a bow. That might cost you five strings of shell coin. But how long should those strings be?

Around the world, it’s common to use the human body to create units of measurement. So, for example, we use the “foot” as a way to measure many things. The **lua**, a Central Miwok unit of measurement, is also based on the human body. One lua is the distance from the nipple to the thumb and forefinger of the outstretched arm on the opposite side of the body. One lua of olivella shell coin might get you a nice basket. To make the same purchase with clam shell coins, you might need two lua.

Another Central Miwok unit of measurement is the **ana**, which is the distance from the thumb and forefinger, pressed together, of one outstretched arm to the thumb and forefinger of the other. The **motuku ana** (half ana) is half that distance.

The **oyisa yahnya** is a convenient unit to measure the space needed for a building. It is the length of four people lying down to form a straight line.

Doctors and Medicine

Before the Europeans, Miwok doctors used some techniques that most of us would recognize today as medicine. For example, they used plants and plant extracts to cure people or to make them feel better.

Physicians also used some things most doctors today don't use when trying to help someone else. Some of them included music, dance, prayers, encouragement, and smoke. All of these were used to help sick people get better or to protect the well. Some California Indians still incorporate many of them to help people get better today.

Another way in which physicians before the Europeans were different from those most of us know today is that they sometimes used their abilities to try to make people sick, or even kill someone else. That's why ordinary people often mistrusted or feared them.

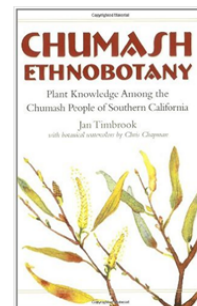
Physicians could also act for the benefit of the whole community rather than just one patient, such as by trying to control or influence the weather, or growing conditions. Other times, physicians acted specifically to acquire more power for themselves rather than to help someone else.

At times physicians also acted spiritually against their people's enemies. They worked to affect spirits, time, weather, and distance in ways you might find similar to the way many European or African physicians of the same time period did.

Your turn ...

Ethnobotany is the study of how particular people use plants. Are you interested in learning more about traditional Native Californian uses for local plants, to prepare a contest entry or simply to satisfy your own curiosity? If so, here's a place to start:

tinyurl.com/zupnva4



Jan Timbrook, a scientist at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, wrote a book about the ethnobotany of the Chumash peoples.

Dreams

How important to you are the dreams that you have at night?

Before the Spanish came, dreams were very important to Californians, and to many California Indians they still are. Dreams have traditionally played a big role in how Native Californian people understand the world and see themselves.

Some believe that dreams influenced many of the paintings that Californians made before the Europeans came. Some of that artwork, produced on rock faces throughout California, has survived to the present day. Should you ever encounter one – or any other Native artifact – it is important to respectfully keep your distance from it and leave it alone. It is quite illegal to disturb Native artifacts in California. You may wish to inform your local tribal and state authorities, though, so they know the artifacts are there and can help protect them.

Resolving Conflict

If you were a community leader in Contra Costa County before the Spanish came, a large part of your duties would have revolved around ensuring a secure food supply for your people. Violent conflicts with others weren't very common, but when they occurred most people would have looked to you to guide them in battle and diplomacy. Leaders also sponsored and organized large, formal community events.

As a leader, you would most likely encourage some or all of your children to marry people from other communities rather than marrying locally. You, too, would probably marry outside your own community. Marrying the family members of leaders to people from other places helped forge strong bonds with neighbors, to foster peace, friendship, and cooperation. That way, if no acorns fell in your groves in a particular year, you could get some from your friendly neighbors.

If you study European history, you'll learn that European royal families also used marriage as a tool to achieve political objectives.

Indian Sports ²

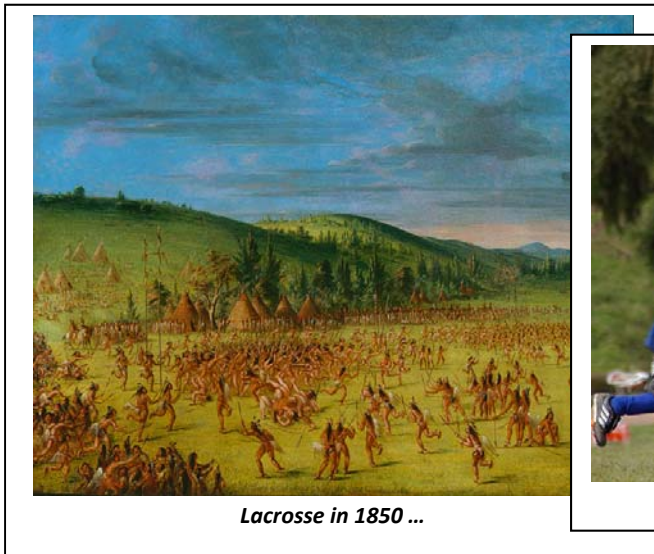
Just as there are many kinds of Native people, there are many kinds of Native sports. Some are local, while others are played across wide regions.

One you may have heard of is **lacrosse**. Another is **field hockey**, which has long been popular with Indians and non-Indians alike, in many parts of the world. Another Indian sport you may be familiar with is target practice with a **rolling hoop**, in which players knock the hoops over or shoot through them to score points.

Traditional field hockey, then



... and now!



² This sub-section draws upon content from *Native American Sports*, encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-2536601260.html.

A Native sport may be popular over a vast region, or even across international borders. Yet the rules for how it is played may vary from one place to the next.

The Dine field hockey pitch, for example, can be over *a mile long*! Just imagine all the exercise you would get playing on *that* field.

Javelin throwing, archery contests, swimming competitions, and running races have long been popular in many Native communities, just as in the Olympics.

Hide-and-seek and **tag** have been part of many Native children's lives for as long as anyone knows, just as elsewhere in the world. Native people have also long made and played with **dice**. In a popular Californian **guessing game**, a player for one side hides a game piece while a player from the other tries to guess what it is. **Tree climbing** has also been popular in many Native communities from time immemorial.

There are plenty of Indian sports that may be new to you. A Miwok sport is **ama'tup**, traditionally for women and girls. The ama'tup playing field is about two hundred yards long. At each end there is an arch of willow wood or two upright posts which serve as the goals.

The ball, or **po'sko**, is about two and a half inches wide and is made of deer leather filled with deer hair, moss, or grass. So it's something like a hackey sack.

Each player gets a pair of **ammutna**, or handled baskets, one large and one small. The **potcukbe**, a man, throws the po'sko down hard in the middle of the field and the players scramble for it from either side. When the po'sko bounces, the players try to catch it, but they can't use their hands. Instead, they have to use the larger ammutna to make their catches. Then they cover it with the smaller ammutna to keep the po'sko from falling out while they run.



In **Ama'tup**, each player gets a pair of **ammutna**, or handled baskets, one of which is larger than the other.

An ama'tup player who is tagged by the hands of an opposing player must give up the po'sko. The aim is for each side to carry or throw the po'sko through its *own* goal. The other side's players defend that goal by trying to tackle the player with the po'sko and then throw it back toward *their* own goal.

Whichever side gets the po'sko into *its own* goal wins. The spectators, who are both women and men, bet on the outcome, as do all of the players. Ama'tup can also be played traditionally by co-ed teams, in which women carry the po'sko in their ammutna while men kick it with their feet.

Sakumship is a Central Miwok game also traditionally for females only. Two players stand about 50 feet apart. One tries to cast a ball beyond her opponent's reach with a strong **shak'num'sia**, or throwing basket. The other player tries to catch the ball in her shak'num'sia. Neither player can touch the ball with her hands. A player who catches the ball preserves her points. A player who allows it to drop loses a point. Whoever still has at least one point remaining when her opponent runs out of all of her points wins the match.

Sawa puchuma is a game of the Southern Miwok in which the player places a three-inch wide ball of stone on top of his right foot. Without shifting his left foot, he has to throw the ball forward as far as he can. His opponent attempts to do the same, and whichever player throws the ball the farthest wins.

In Concord, We're Going to Play ... Miewla!

Miewla is a sport of the Wasama people of the Chowchilla River. It is played with clubs like golf. We will compete in this game to commemorate California Native American Day in Concord.

The club in miewla is called the **muh lauh**, and the balls are called **oloh la**. The goal is about 400 yards away from the start line. There are several stations between the starting line and the goal.

Pairs from the same side take starting positions at each of the different stations between the starting line and the goal. The two players at the starting line stand next to one another. Each of them has a muh lauh and an oloh la. So in this game, there are two balls in play.

Each of the players is paired not only with one another, but also with a player from the same side at the next station. Each of the players at the starting line tries to strike the oloh la with the muh lauh so that it reaches the next station in one shot. A player who does not make it in one shot must strike again until the oloh la has crossed into the area of the second station.

Then the pair of players at station 2 must try to send each of the oloh la to station 3 in one shot. The game continues until the oloh la have been moved to all of the stations and the last pair sends the two oloh la through the goal.

Then the opposing team takes its turn doing the same thing. Whichever team makes its goals with the fewest number of total strokes wins.

Players may not leave their stations. There is an equal number of players on each side. The goals may be two posts set up at the end of the field, or two trees at the end that happen to be situated well.

As in many other Indian sports, it is traditional to gamble on the outcome of miewla. So to add to the fun, we'll be doing that here in Concord too.

Your biggest job in the miewla competition, though, will be to ...

... have fun!!

Conclusion

We hope you have a fantastic time celebrating California Native American Day in Concord this year!