

*They come from a proud culture of people,
the first to be here
and the stewards of the land for millennia.*

***Listening to
Native American Students***

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**Listening to
Native American Students...**

“I feel pretty normal. I don’t feel that I am different, or discluded in a bad way at all. I’ve had a great learning experience so far. All of the teachers have been great.”
—Female Native American First Year

“Pretty normal. I just really get surprised when I meet another Native American student. I really like the diversity here on campus. It is really awesome because it gives students a chance to become friends and possibly educate themselves about different cultures.”
—23, Male, Native American

“My demographic faces many challenges, but also, it has advantages. Challenges: Relating to most college-aged students who are not parents. Many of the younger students don’t have a grasp of how important education is. Pro: I’m rarely surprised and overwhelmed by obstacles.”

—Vet, Parent, Male, Native American, Older, Straight (Hetero)

“I try to teach through example how to be kind to all, regardless of race or culture.”
—Native American

“I feel pretty great as a student here at Sac State. I wish more Native Americans attended, it is sometimes hard to know you are just about the only one of your people in a place.

I have enjoyed the Native American events and celebrations, especially the last year.

My studies can be difficult. It can be a lonely path, but I know I am doing the right thing”
—Nisenan and Maidu

Native American Students

The term “Native American” typically is seen to encompass broadly indigenous peoples of North to South America, while the term “American Indian” solely those in the lower 48 continental United States, and the term “Alaska Native” reserved for those whose ancestry or origin is the indigenous tribes and villages of our most Northern state. In California, either Native American or American Indian would generally be appropriate, but individuals may well have their preference, including the use of the more specific tribe or band name.

According to U.S. 2010 Census data, there are 2.9 million people who are American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) in the nation (0.9%), and another 2.3 million people reported they were AI and AN in combination with one or more race (0.7%), totaling 5.2 million people (1.7% of the American population). Of this number, 78% live off tribal lands or reservations. The largest tribes nationally are the Cherokee, Navajo, Choctaw, Mexican American Indians, Chippewa, Sioux, Apache, Blackfeet, Creek, and Iroquois. California has the largest population of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) people in the nation at 723,225, and ranks the highest for all census respondents who self-identified as AIAN alone or in combination with another race (13.9%).

There are over 100 federally recognized tribes in California, as well as close to 100 tribes in the state seeking this designation from the government, and still more tribes neither having nor seeking such designation at this time.

Tribal lands include nearly 100 reservations or rancherias from the northern to southern regions of the state. The surrounding greater Sacramento area and central California tribes and bands include the Nisenan, Maidu, Miwok, Paiute, Washoe, Yokuts, Patwin, and Konkow. Native American residents of California, however, may also be members of tribes that are not based in the state.

Native American identification or citizenship is determined tribally, as well as federally, and there is no single definition or standard that exists. Different tribal nations have different criteria that may include an individual's: mother's lineage, father's lineage, blood quantum, family history, residency/location, self-identification and tribal allegiance, practice and knowledge of tribal language, history, and customs, and a host of other factors. Some people may be Native American, but not hold citizenship in a tribal nation.

Native Americans may vary widely in their cultural affiliation, ancestry, and place of residence. Some Native Americans may have grown up on a reservation and come directly from there, while others may have moved off the reservation but return regularly for family gatherings and community events and celebrations. Some Native Americans may be from families in their second or third generation of removal from their tribal homelands. They may come from more urban settings where they may have engaged with tribal communities there and, for this reason, the terms “urban Indians” or the “urban rez” are sometimes used. And some may simply know they are Native American in ancestry, without having been raised in or being fully aware of or active in their tribal culture, and now may want to learn more about their cultural identity.

In Higher Education

In the Nation

The Center for Policy Research and Strategy of the American Council on Education offers the following findings on American Indians and Alaska Native students in undergraduate education:

They start college later than their peers, at 23 years old, on average.

More are female (60%) than male (40%).

Almost half are first generation and low-income (46%).

They expect to graduate with their bachelor's degree (43%) and graduate degree (39%), but while the former number is on the rise, the latter is declining these past years.

The Postsecondary National Policy Institute, in reviewing data from a variety of sources, notes:

Just one percent of the nation's undergraduate college student population is Native American (American Indian or Alaska Native) and less than one percent at the graduate level.

College enrollment rates for Native American students aged 18 to 24 dropped from 23% to 19% in the last two academic years (2015/16 - 2016/17).

Most Native American students attend a public two- or four-year institution.

Only 10% of Native Americans earn a bachelor's degree and only 17% an associate's degree.

Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, co-editor of the *Journal of American Indian Education* and Professor of Indigenous Education and Justice and Director of the Center for Indian Education at Arizona State University, has calculated that:

Of 100 Alaskan or Native Americans entering ninth grade,

48 will graduate from high school,

20 will go on to postsecondary education, and

one will finish a bachelor's degree within six years.

One in 2,500 Natives earn a master's degree, and one in 7,000 earn a PhD.

The Association for the Study of Higher Education, Lumina Foundation, and National Institute for Transformation and Equity, in a report on indigenous students, also notes lower than average college enrollment and completion rates, and offers recommendations for institutions, based on the factors below:

Factors found that hinder these students' success included colonization and racism, and invisibility and hypervisibility.

Factors determined to help indigenous students' success included culturally relevant curricular and co-curricular experiences, a sense of place on campus, and connections to home.

[For further information, please see
the American Council on Education Center for Policy Research and Strategy,
["Higher Ed Spotlight: American Indians and Alaska Natives in Undergraduate Education" \(2015\) \(PDF\)](https://acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Higher-Ed-Spotlight-American-Indians-and-Alaska-Natives-in-Undergraduate-Education.pdf)
acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Higher-Ed-Spotlight-American-Indians-and-Alaska-Natives-in-Undergraduate-Education.pdf
[Postsecondary National Policy Institute, "Fact Sheet: Native American Students" \(2018\)](https://pnpi.org/native-american-students/)
<https://pnpi.org/native-american-students/>

and the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Lumina Foundation, and National Institute for Transformation & Equity,
["Bringing Visibility to the Needs and Interests of Indigenous Students" \(2017\) \(PDF\)](https://cece.sitehost.iu.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Bringing-Visibility-to-the-Needs-and-Interests-of-Indigenous-Students-FINAL-2.pdf)
<https://cece.sitehost.iu.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Bringing-Visibility-to-the-Needs-and-Interests-of-Indigenous-Students-FINAL-2.pdf>]

In California

The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center at California State University, San Marcos, reports the following with regard to American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) students in the three state systems of public postsecondary education:

Post-secondary institutions have seen a decrease in AIAN enrollment over the past years, with some rebounds—the largest of which occurring at community colleges.

California State Universities (CSU) AIAN transfer student enrollment decreases continuously between 2002-2014 (a 50% decrease), with more students going to the University of California (UC) system beginning 2014 (an increase of 43%).

The overall percentage of student AIAN undergraduate degrees awarded at the CSU declined by 34% (160 degrees less awarded) as shown in data from the past four years, while in roughly this same time period, the number of degrees increased at the UC level by 32%, an awarded 18% more degrees in 2014-2015 than CSU.

At the CSU, for example, AIAN students in the last year reported 310 undergraduate degrees (2014-2015), the lowest number of all of the race and ethnicity groups studied (all of whom have numbers in the thousands, with the exception of Pacific Islanders, the second lowest at 416). UC AIAN students earned 366 degrees.

[For further information, please see
[“The State of American Indian & Alaska Native Education in California” \(2016\) \(PDF\)](https://www.csusm.edu/cicsc/projects/projects_docs_images/2016SAIANEC_FINAL1.pdf)
https://www.csusm.edu/cicsc/projects/projects_docs_images/2016SAIANEC_FINAL1.pdf]

At Sacramento State

With regard to student enrollment, *The Sacramento State University Fact Book Fall 2016* reports the following with regard to American Indian students at this institution:

- 8 American Indian First-Time Freshmen Enrolled
(0.2% of entering First-Time Freshmen)
- 15 American Indian Undergraduate Transfer Students Enrolled
(0.4% of entering Transfer Students)
- 89 American Indian Students Enrolled
(0.3% of all Undergraduate Students enrolled)

Please note that we are losing Native American students in enrollment, as seen when comparing figures to the preceding years:

- In 2015: 15 American Indian First-Time Freshmen Enrolled
(0.4% of entering First-Freshmen)
- 12 American Indian Undergraduate Transfer Students Enrolled
(0.3% of entering Transfer Students)
- 105 American Indian Students Enrolled
(0.4% of all Undergraduate Students enrolled)
- In 2014: 27 American Indian First-Time Freshmen Enrolled
(0.7% of entering First-Time Freshmen)
- 29 American Indian Undergraduate Transfer Students Enrolled
(0.8% of entering Transfer Students)
- 220 American Indian Students enrolled
(0.8% of all Undergraduate Students enrolled)

What They May Face in Pursuing their College Education

Culture Shock

Some Native American students may be coming from a reservation, a place very different than here.

There, the student grew up with family in the largest sense of the word. Immediate and extended family, neighbors, and other tribal members are all considered family and take care of one another. Community is central. The student coming here to a university with thousands of people, most or all complete strangers, will likely find the transition particularly difficult.

There, reservation life has its own system of government, healthcare, tribal practices and societal norms, different than off-reservation. Acclimation may take time and cause added stress and learning curve for the new college student.

There, the student could draw culture, identity, and spirituality from the land of their ancestors and home of their tribe, but may find it much harder to do so in industrialized urban centers full of concrete and traffic. Not being able to connect fully with the land away from home may, in turn, make it harder to connect with the college and people on that land.

There, the student lived free from the prejudice and discrimination against Native peoples experienced in interactions with non-natives, but leaving the reservation exposes them to the ignorance and bias on campus and in the surrounding community.

Stereotypes and Ignorance

The stereotypical Indian warrior image and associations to rain dances and powwows abound in the media, and wide-spread misconceptions about casino revenue and government assistance circulate in society, along with many others. To clear up a few: Most Native Americans are not in any way honored by sports team mascots or names (considered inappropriate or offensive); do not appreciate the American Indian costumes worn each Halloween (regarded as belittling); dislike the word “squaw” (a term seen as deeply disrespectful); and may resent being asked “What fraction are you?” when they share their tribal identity (the use of fractions to determine Native status by the U.S. government may be seen as a centuries-old tool of white supremacy occurring to this day, with the chart on the Bureau of Indian Affairs website). These and other such microaggressions are a frequent occurrence for Native peoples.

This can cause distress and pain at the denigration of a proud and beautiful culture, the people they love, and their sense of self and pride of heritage.

This may result in reluctance for some students to share their Native identity and culture, a need to keep hidden a fundamental part of who they are as human beings, in order to protect themselves from the ignorance of others’ questions and comments.

This may make other students feel tremendous responsibility to represent their Native culture in a society largely ignorant. They may have that continual internal dialogue: *Am I representing my people well in this instance, in this discussion, in this class or institution?* They may feel the pressure to be an activist on campus or in the community, in addition to their studies and all of the other demands of the busy college student.

Struggles with Identity

Native American students may straddle two very different worlds of Native culture and that of the predominantly Eurocentric academia.

Some may find it hard to stay active in their Native customs and traditions, to hold onto their sense of self and heritage in college life. Scholars believe that those who maintain their cultural practices and affiliations in college are more likely to maintain academic confidence, have a more positive educational experience, and persist to graduation—but also face greater risk of others’ ignorance and bias, which takes a psychological and physical toll.

Some may feel pressure to assimilate, to fit in more easily with their peers and/or protect themselves against ignorance. This would run counter to pressure to be tribal, from themselves, families, and communities, especially in relation to the deeply instilled duty of being “keepers of the culture,” of maintaining Native ways of living and being for future generations.

Worry About Maintaining Ties

Native American students may wonder how they’ll be received back home, that being away and being different may come with a cost.

They may face accusations of thinking they are “better than” those back home, because the student went to college, when, statistically, so very few Native Americans do.

They may worry about their ability to hold onto their tribal relationships or standing back home because of their decision to go to college, or wonder if they will still be accepted as much or at all by their tribes or bands.

Pressure to Succeed

Native American students may feel real pressure in their pursuit of a college degree.

They may be the only one, or one of just a few, to go to college, and know they need to succeed for their families and their people.

They may feel the responsibility of “nation building:” To learn the skills of a profession needed in a sovereign tribal nation for it to grow and prosper: leaders, doctors, lawyers, educators, engineers, managers, administrators. They may feel the weight of their tribal nation and its future upon them.

They are frequently driven by the need for “giving back:” To make a better life for their families, improve conditions in their communities, be role models for their peers, and sources of hope and inspiration for all. This, too, may be considered a form of nation building. Research shows that giving back can be a tremendous source of both pressure and motivation to succeed in college for Native American students.

What We Can Do

As faculty and staff, there are things we can do to ensure that each Native student feels a sense of inclusion, value, and support on our campus.

Acknowledge the Native American Land We Are On

We should begin with respectful acknowledgment that Sacramento State University is built on what was tribal land long ago. For thousands of years the Nisenan Maidu tribe had lived in the village of Kadema, which is where the name for Kadema Hall on campus comes from, according to university history.

According to the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center at CSU, San Marcos:

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose homelands you reside on and a recognition of the original people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to realize the longstanding history that has brought you to reside on the lands and to seek to appreciate your place within that history....

The acknowledgement of indigenous lands ultimately provides exposure and a learning opportunity for individuals who may have never heard the names of the tribes that have and continue to live and learn from the land they are standing on.

(For further information on how, when, and why to practice land acknowledgement, please see the [California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center, CSU, San Marcos: *Land Acknowledgement: Toolkit* \(PDF\)](https://www.csusm.edu/ciscsc/land.pdf)
<https://www.csusm.edu/ciscsc/land.pdf>)

Acknowledge Our Responsibility as an Educational Institution

Because Sac State is a public institution, recognition of the federal Indian trust responsibility is important. As stated on the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs website:

The federal Indian trust responsibility is a legal obligation under which the United States “has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust” toward Indian tribes (*Seminole Nation v. United States*, 1942). This obligation was first discussed by Chief Justice John Marshall in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831). Over the years, the trust doctrine has been at the center of numerous other Supreme Court cases, thus making it one of the most important principles in federal Indian law.

The federal Indian trust responsibility is also a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation on the part of the United States to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to American Indian and Alaska native tribes and villages. In several cases discussing the trust responsibility, the Supreme Court has used language suggesting that it entails legal duties, moral obligations, and the fulfillment of understandings and expectations that have arisen over the entire course of the relationship between the United States and federally recognized tribes.

In short, the federal Indian trust responsibility is a longstanding principle for our government and its public institutions to protect and advance tribal nations’ sovereignty and self-sufficiency, and higher education of its citizens is one key means of doing so.

Include Native American Culture in the Classroom and Campus Life

All students need to see themselves in the subject matter they are studying, and perhaps Native peoples especially. They have experienced a history of erasure. Their lands, people, languages, and customs taken, destroyed, and eradicated from before our nation's founding and up through the centuries. In education, our students likely opened history books in grade school that recounted only the dominant narrative, with low to no inclusion of the Native people, those First Americans who inhabited the lands for millennia before the settlers. Some Native American students will tell you that erasure is more painful than bias. In other subjects throughout all levels of education, as well, the students may only see the views, values, knowledge, and perspectives of Eurocentrism.

Consequently, when they encounter references and discussion of Native culture on campus, in ways that are accurate and appropriate, they may feel a greater sense of belonging in academia, excitement in learning, and pride in heritage. This is especially important for a people who have been made invisible—to have their ancestry, history, struggles, and culture shown is a powerful thing. *“They recognize my people,”* is the sense this gives. *“They see me,”* is how some Native students describe how this feels. And while the nation's system of education may be seen as an instrument of colonization for these students, learning about and seeing one's cultural background recognized—history, language, art, culture—may be seen as a decolonizing force, a way of taking back power and knowledge of one's heritage.

As faculty and staff, we can incorporate more Native American history and culture in what we say and do in our various spheres of campus life.

In general, we can include land acknowledgement in our campus classrooms and spaces and weave into what we say and the materials we create compelling facts, quotes, practices and customs, values and beliefs, and accurate, as well as positive, imagery of Native Americans.

In teaching, we can incorporate greater learning about Native peoples in our examples, readings, clips, and information presented and utilize more Native contributors, those authors and scholars of the field we teach. No matter what the subject is, there will be ways to be more culturally inclusive of different groups, including those Native American.

In learning and study, we can utilize and value other ways of knowing, rather than what is sometimes called the “settler cognitive imperialism” of prizing Eurocentric epistemology solely.

In classrooms and campus groups, we can create that space and extend that invitation to all students to offer their own cultural perspective or “take” on the topic at hand. All student voices are important, and Native voices, in particular, need to be heard.

In campus events, we can hold more presentations and celebrations of Native Americans, for all to learn and enjoy.

It's important to include Native culture and history in campus life and coursework for the sake of the student, the preservation of a culture, and the betterment of all.

Remember that the Past Impacts the Present

When the first Europeans came to America and struggled perilously in the unfamiliar terrain, it was the American Indians who taught them how to live off the land and survive. As these earliest settlers over the next century strove for independence and crafted the United States Constitution, it was Native Americans whom they consulted, and, certainly, there are definite parallels between the federal system of government put into place and national symbolism such as the eagle and the Iroquois Confederacy, historically the first democracy in America. As the country grew, it was Native American names that over half the states took as they entered into the Union.

Yet in the 500 years since that first contact, Native peoples endured mass colonization, forced relocation, enslavement, brutality, oppression, deceit, and decimation at the hands of the settlers and government created, through its land expansion and public policies thereof, codified in federal and state legislation. Hundreds of treaties broken, thousands forced miles on the Long Walk and the Trail of Tears away from their homeland, millions of deaths and the destruction of a beautiful people. Only a decade ago, quietly tucked away in an unrelated Congressional spending bill on defense budgeting in 2009, came a resolution of apology by the United States for such atrocities, and without public reading or any other formal acknowledgement.

In this context, it's important to remember that:

Native American students come from a culture of historical distrust and dislike of the U.S. government. They may well view themselves as citizens of sovereign nations first or solely, rather than that of the United States, a government that to this day is still settling repatriation issues in the state and across the country and has never fully formally apologized for its past transgressions. We should understand, then, that not every Native American will wish to be lumped into mainstream U.S. culture with sweeping generalizations or broad "We" statements regarding American ways or beliefs, and may resent assumptions that all living in the U.S. will have complete patriotism for it and its government. Native American students may not hold respect for leaders traditionally celebrated by the larger American culture, such as Christopher Columbus (widely believed to have been the first to bring all of the European diseases that decimated the indigenous peoples, wiping out two-thirds of the population) Abraham Lincoln (for what is considered the largest mass execution by the government in 1862, under his administration) or, more locally, John Sutter (said to have engaged in murder, theft, and human trafficking of Natives).

Native American students also come from a culture of historical trauma arising from centuries of profound loss and violence. The repercussions of that history—grief, anger, hopelessness, and despair—carry through the generations to this day, scholars have noted, manifesting in myriad physiological, psychological, and socioeconomic ways. Statistically, Native Americans have higher rates of alcoholism and other forms of addiction, domestic abuse and violence toward Native women, teen pregnancy, poverty and unemployment, health problems such as diabetes and heart disease, and suicide—and young people age 18 to 24 have the highest rates of suicide in the nation in comparison to other races and origin. This is the background of struggles that our students may come from and what they may be experiencing right now, either themselves or witnessed in the people and place they love.

Understand Native Feelings Toward School

American Indian tribes may take a dim view of the system of education under the U.S. government. Since colonial times, education with regard to Native peoples largely consisted of their “civilization” to European ways and Christianity, leaving a legacy of seeing schools as instruments of assimilation—or worse.

As recently in our nation’s history as the 1960s and 70s, Native American children, under federal law, were still being forcibly sent away to boarding schools, where the prevailing sentiment was to “kill the Indian, save the man.” There, their hair was cut, sacred items taken, communication severed with family and tribe, native practices were strictly forbidden, and tribal language was replaced with only English speaking, with many facing bullying and brutality.

While most are too young to have undergone this trauma, Native American students today may have had their own negative experiences in their kindergarten through high school education, in terms of their educators’ teaching counter to Native ways of learning, misinterpretation of cultural differences, and lower expectations, stereotypes, and bias.

In this context, we should keep uppermost in mind that:

Native American students, in coming to Sac State, may be “going it alone” and “going against the grain” back home. Their family or tribal members may have painful memories of those boarding schools or that deep-seated suspicion of education, which, in turn, may adversely impact the level of encouragement and support given to the student in their studies. In some cases, the student’s decision to go to college may be met with resistance or ridicule. This makes it especially important to reach out and help Native American students to connect with the campus, their peers, and you, faculty and staff. Research shows such campus “kinship building” may help to fulfill that tribal need of community in the student’s college life.

Native American students themselves may not always see their college education as the highest of aspirations or a true panacea for themselves or their people. Most students recognize that college is important, but Native American students may not fully trust that pursuing their college degree is the best thing they could do, if they were raised with that cultural distrust of schooling under the federal government or had their own bad experiences in their K-12 schooling. Some will go home knowing that their tribal elders may refuse to look at the resumes or college degrees of their younger, college-educated members who seek positions within the community. The costs of attending college for Native students also may take a real toll, and cause some to question their decision to enroll. This makes it especially important to show the value of higher education and the college degree to the student in terms of greater likelihood of financial stability and prosperity for self and potential nation-building for tribes and role modeling for peers and younger tribal members. The words of activist and scholar on Native American college students, Adrienne Keene of Brown University, member of the Cherokee Nation, also come to mind. She once said in an interview: “Our nations made treaties with the federal government from the earliest days of the formation of the United States and even the colonies. In many of those treaties, they promised education for the tribes. To me, I see college and Native students going off to college as a fulfillment of those treaty rights.”

Be Aware of Cultural Differences

Native American culture is not homogenous. Across the nation, there are close to 600 tribes, nations within a nation, and over 200 tribes in the state of California. Each tribe has its own culture, with different customs, values, and practices, and often its own language spoken. Consequently, it is more appropriate to think of Native American tribes as different cultures within the larger culture of the U.S.

That said, there are broad differences that can be drawn between Native cultures and the American culture—and these are important to understand in order to prevent misinterpretation on our part, minimize obstacles to learning for the student, and better adapt our communication and teaching to Native ways.

Native Ways of Communication and Interaction

Eye Contact: Avoidance of eye contact is a sign of respect, but can sometimes be misinterpreted by members of other cultures taught just the opposite, to “look people in the eyes” to show respect and honesty.

Silence: Silence is greatly prized in Native culture, and used to show respect for others and what they have said or for thoughtful deliberation on the topic at hand. In class discussion or conversation, this means Native perspectives may not be given time and space for voicing, because the silence was filled by others socialized to quick back-and-forth flow of interaction or by faculty/staff members who don’t allow sufficient wait time for a student to respond.

Concise Expression: The succinctness may be seen as the student giving less thought to discussion of the topic in class or less attention to it in written assignments or essay questions, when brevity is simply a cultural norm.

Interruptions: Interjections are considered impolite in Native culture, which stands in contrast to the casual, sometimes frequent interruptions characteristic of the larger American culture. Interjections are also used by the latter to indicate involvement and interest in a conversation and, consequently, a native who shows low or no such signs may be misperceived as disengaged from the interaction.

Humor: Laughter is wonderful, enriches and enlivens social interactions, and may be capitalized in the classroom setting to good effect. Culturally, humor may be used as a coping mechanism, a means of survival, of lowering stress and lifting spirits in, generationally, very difficult times. Sometimes, though, humor may be interpreted as not taking things seriously.

Time: Native American culture sees time as fluid, which means that members are not as tied to punctuality or deadlines as mainstream American culture is, because sometimes the people and relationships at hand matter more.

Social Gatherings: Typically, there is small talk before, and a prayer to begin and/or end meetings, to acknowledge the interconnectedness of each other and the world, and respect for all.

Native Ways of Knowing

Global Thinking:

Native American students tend to strive to connect what they are learning to self, family, tribe, and the larger world. They will want to: Take the material and consider it in the context of time, now and 500 years before and after now. Think holistically in contemplating the application of the material to the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual realm. Strive to understand the parts in relation to the whole. Ask “what is my relationship to this information?” or “How might this knowledge help or hinder my community, the land, our world?” It necessarily takes greater time to process material in this manner, because the student is working hard to relate everything to a larger context, but educators may not always allow the student sufficient time to make those needed connections. The native way of thinking also may run contrary to that used in American schooling, where students typically learn or memorize facts and points, and pedagogy common in higher education, with the practice of beginning with foundational material and then adding in pieces of information over time, that may or may not be well-connected or given an overarching summary or “the bigger picture” look at the end.

Quiet Reflection:

Native American children are taught to watch first and listen, and then do. So in a classroom or other campus setting, they may sit back, observe and listen to others, think and reflect, and then discuss or do whatever the task at hand is—but this is assuming we, faculty and staff, haven’t already moved on. When students don’t engage quickly, this may be interpreted as boredom, laziness, disinterest, or academic unpreparedness or inability. Yet what is really happening is the Native student taking greater time to process and then formulate reasoned responses, in keeping with what they were taught: “Slow down to be better.”

Collaborative Learning:

All learn from all: Students learn from students, students learn from the instructor, the instructor learns from the student. The value is of cooperation, where all work with one another, all help each other. Native American students, consequently, don’t typically want to stand out or call attention to self, and would likely be uncomfortable with public praise from their instructor or contests or debates with their classmates. Class discussions, group projects, student pair work, team presentations, and other collaborative learning opportunities are especially conducive to Native learning needs.

Tribal Knowledge:

Native knowledge is sacred. Tribal songs, dances, art, and customs...ancestral stories passed down with solemnity from generation to generation,...revered elder wisdom, and nature a living, breathing presence...these inform thinking and discussion. Rituals and stories are history lessons, tribal policies, theories, cosmology, ontology, axiology, epistemology, and philosophical doctrines. Experience is valued, and elders, thus, esteemed for their longer, richer life-knowledge. The land, too, teaches us so much, would we but truly listen. In academia, these may not be incorporated or invited into lessons and assignments, but for the Native American, may be the key to the most rich and rewarding learning.

Honor Native Ways

Because Native ways are very different from Eurocentric ones, we all can learn much from those whose ancestry goes back thousands of years on this land.

Native Values and Beliefs

We are one.

We are each connected to each other, to every other creature, and to the land on which we live. We breathe the same air, walk the same earth, drink and eat from a common water and food supply. We are all connected in the web of life.

With this comes the recognition that: What one does impacts another, in any number of ways. That our every action may affect people or nature. How what we teach or learn may benefit someone or something in some way. This makes clear our responsibility to each other. This is why Native Americans, culturally, give generously and without thought of sacrifice or expectation of return reward. There is joy in taking care of one another. We belong to each other.

We are each unique.

Every living thing has special purpose and value. Personal sovereignty holds that the Creator gave each and every one of us a spark of life and our unique gifts, paths, and ways of being in the world.

With this comes the value of respect for all. We each have the right to exist as created, to be appreciated for who we are right now. We each have the right to be supported and encouraged on our individual journeys toward self-actualization to whom we someday will be. With this comes the responsibility to meet each person where they are in this journey, to respect each's unique talents, contributions, and struggles, and to live in harmony as we walk our unique paths.

All life is sacred.

Every drop of water, blade of grass, grain of dirt, pebble from rock, and insect, animal, and reptile is put on earth by the Creator. This is why Native Americans often give prayer of thanks when taking from the land in terms of plants or animals, never take more than they need, and make sure to put to use all of what they take, to show respect. This is also why Native Americans tend to hike in silence and tread carefully, to show reverence.

The earth is our Mother, the Great Spirit whispers through the winds in the trees, the animals are our protectors, connecting humans to the natural and spiritual world. The land is where we are most securely centered in an increasingly fragmented, frenetic technological society, where we are at peace and one with the world, and where we can see the stars our ancestors saw most clearly and feel the stardust in our molecules come alive within us, reaching out to the skies above and beyond. With this understanding comes the recognition: To hurt the land or its creatures is to hurt ourselves. The age-old connection between nature and human nature, humanity and the sanctity of life, is precious.

Campus Resources

Below begins a section listing some of the many campus services specifically geared to Native American students and underrepresented students.

Native Scholars and Transition Program (NSTP)—

Offers a program to support Native scholars through the admissions process, and transitioning into and succeeding in college, through lower-and upper-division learning communities, social and student support gatherings, cultural events, and more.

Location: Lassen Hall 2205

Phone: (916) 278-6183

[NSTP Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/retention-academic-success/native-scholars-transition-program.html) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/retention-academic-success/native-scholars-transition-program.html>

DEGREES Project (Dedicated to Educating, Graduating, and Retaining Educational Equity Students)—

Connects students, with a focus on underrepresented students, with a variety of resources to promote their success in college, including: early intervention, academic advising, graduation support, mentoring, and referral to other valuable campus resources. Students and faculty may look on the website listed below to find DEGREES Project Advisors and Coaches and their contact information for emailing, calling, dropping by, or making an appointment to meet.

Location: Lassen Hall 2302

Phone: (916) 278-7017

[DEGREES Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/degrees-project/>

First Generation Institute (FGI)—

Offers workshops, speakers, and more to increase awareness and skills needed to progress from first generation students to first generation professionals, helping to increase academic success and degree-to-work readiness.

Location: Lassen Hall 2205

Phone: (916) 278-6183

[FGI Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/retention-academic-success/first-generation-institute.html) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/retention-academic-success/first-generation-institute.html>

Student Academic Success and Educational Equity Programs (SASEEP) Office—

Encourages and supports students in persisting toward their educational goals to ensure the success of all students on campus while closing the achievement gap. The office has an “open door” policy—students may come on in or call.

Location: Lassen Hall 2205

Phone: (916) 278-6183

[SASEEP Website](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/retention-academic-success/) <https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/retention-academic-success/>

College of Education Equity Program Office—

Provides advising and resources for those interested in a career in education and who are from specific student groups, such as financial aid and work study candidates, Cal Grant recipients, individuals that are first in family college students, and multilingual/multicultural learners. Services include: academic advising, mentoring, assistance with scholarships and applications, and more.

Location: Eureka Hall 437 (inside the College’s Student Success Center)

[Educational Equity Program Website](https://www.csus.edu/college/education/student-support/equity-office.html) <https://www.csus.edu/college/education/student-support/equity-office.html>

CSU-Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (CSU-LSAMP) at Sacramento State—
Strives to increase participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors and help students to advance their education to a graduate program with services that include: one-on-one advising, research opportunities, graduate school preparation, workshops, guest speakers, and support to attend local, regional, and national conferences. Students who apply must belong to an underrepresented group in STEM fields, including any of the following: African American, Latino, Native American, and South Pacific Islander students, and first generation college students, students with disabilities, and students whose families live below the poverty line.

Phone: (916) 278-6519

[CSU-LSAMP Website](https://www.csus.edu/college/natural-sciences-mathematics/center-science-math-success/louis-stokes-alliance-minority-participation.html) <https://www.csus.edu/college/natural-sciences-mathematics/center-science-math-success/louis-stokes-alliance-minority-participation.html>

MESA Engineering Program (MEP)—

Offers students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds support to increase their success in their engineering or computer science studies, including: counseling, academic advising, tutoring, workshops, mentoring, opportunities for community service, a network of peer support, and a study center.

Location: Santa Clara Hall 1207

Phone: (916) 278-6699

[MEP Website](https://www.csus.edu/college/engineering-computer-science/mesa-engineering-program/) <https://www.csus.edu/college/engineering-computer-science/mesa-engineering-program/>

RISE Program (Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement)—

Offers a research training program designed to cultivate talented undergraduate students interested in pursuing biomedical research careers, and help them become more competent in their scientific disciplines, confident in their laboratory skills, and resilient to adversity in the classroom and lab settings. The program provides support for hands-on research opportunities at Sac State or the UC Davis Medical Center or main campus, and career-enhancement opportunities to help students become competitive for admission to PhD programs in the biomedical fields. Students who apply must belong to an underrepresented group, including any of the following: African American, Latino, Native American, and South Pacific Islander students, and first generation college or educationally disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students whose families live below the poverty line.

Phone: (916) 278-6519

[RISE Website](https://www.csus.edu/college/natural-sciences-mathematics/center-science-math-success/research-initiative-scientific-enhancement.html) <https://www.csus.edu/college/natural-sciences-mathematics/center-science-math-success/research-initiative-scientific-enhancement.html>

Graduate Diversity Program—

Provides assistance in the form of financial, academic, and community support to disadvantaged and underrepresented students who want to pursue graduate level work.

Location: River Front Center 203

Phone: (916) 278-3834

[Graduate Diversity Program Website](https://www.csus.edu/academic-affairs/graduate-diversity/) <https://www.csus.edu/academic-affairs/graduate-diversity/>

McNair Scholars Program—

Offers a two-year program designed to prepare students for doctoral program admission and study. Selected students must be juniors or seniors who are the first in their families to go to college, and who meet federal low-income guidelines or are a member of a traditional underrepresented group in graduate education (African American, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan Native).

Location: River Front Center 203

Phone: (916) 278-5118

[McNair Scholars Website](https://www.csus.edu/academic-affairs/mcnair-scholars-program/index.html) <https://www.csus.edu/academic-affairs/mcnair-scholars-program/index.html>