

Lesson 1.1: Where Do I Live?

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Time Frame: 2 class periods

Materials:

- Computers for each student
- [“Where Do I Live?” worksheet](#)
- Projector and Screen

The following lesson grounds students in their physical and geographic location. Students explore the indigenous groups in their state and local area, consider the concept and purpose of boundaries, and identify the tribal governments that operate within their own counties.

Teacher Background:

Before exploring California geography it is important to understand the historical relationship between Natives and the California State and US Federal government. The government’s treatment of California tribes is known as the most violent and lawless in the country. But even before California gained statehood, California Natives survived the invasion of Spanish missionaries from the south, and the forced conversion, biological warfare, and slavery that came with it.

In the 19th Century, nine days before The Treaty of Hidalgo was signed in 1849, Gold was discovered in California’s foothills. This event marked a massive migration into California from countries all over the world, and centered California as an economic powerhouse.

After California gained statehood in 1850, the government took control of traditional Native territories in order to use the land for gold extraction and other economic purposes. Because of this, the majority of Native people became landless.

In an original attempt to follow national precedent, the California government developed **18 treaties** with tribal leaders that promised them small parcels of land to serve as reservations, in exchange for protection and resources from the CA state government. However, by the time the treaties were signed and sent to be ratified by the US Senate, CA State leaders changed their

minds, realizing that the state would forfeit economic opportunities by giving ownership of natural resources to tribes.

Supporting California's economic development at the expense of tribal safety, the Senate left the 18 Treaties **unratified**. As a result, the California government took control of the entire territory of California, leaving Natives with no land, no protection, no citizenship, and nowhere to live. A string of stringent laws were passed through the California government ensuring that Natives would have little to no legal rights, and allowing them to be legally coerced into slavery conditions.

This lasted until the years 1906-1910, when the government appropriated money to buy small land parcels to house the landless Natives. Even though Natives lived in California, they did not gain their citizenship until 1924, and so during this time, Natives were not only landless or suffering from housing insecurity, they were also not protected by the government.

In 1934, the **Indian Reorganization Act** supported Natives in developing tribal governments and provided land to Native communities. However in 1958, the **Rancheria Act** was passed, and terminated the existence of **41 California tribes**. Since then, tribes have worked to regain their land and their federal status.

Today, there are still many California tribes who have not regained their **federal recognition**. This deeply impacts their ability to gain funding and build economic security for their people. In California, states may achieve **State recognition**, however this recognition may not grant tribal communities all of the protections as having Federal recognition would. Some tribes have no recognition from either the State or Federal government, some have only State recognition, and some have both State and Federal recognition. Recognition status can have very real economic impacts on the tribal community, along with impacts related to mental and physical health.

It is important to note that with a loss of federal recognition also came an increased pressure for Natives to **assimilate**. Not having a legal connection to traditional land, traditional foods, and left without any government protection, many Native people altered the way they lived in order to protect themselves. Many families relocated into urban centers, changed their traditional names, learned English or Spanish (depending on the time and location), and many publicly rejected their Native identities.

Without access to traditional lands, foods, and family structures, culture was severely strained. Still today, tribes' and Native peoples' connection to culture and **indigeneity** can be impacted by whether or not they receive official legal recognition from state and federal governments.

For more info, read: [Tribes without recognition struggle to protect their heritage](#)

Tribes who do have government recognition have **tribal sovereignty** over their territory. This means that the State and Federal government's ability to interfere in tribal affairs is limited at the discretion of the tribal government. Each tribal government has its own laws and

regulations, as well as its own system of determining membership. Members of tribal communities are **citizens** of the sovereign tribal nation in addition to their citizenship to the United States government. Tribal nations have the ability to set up their own judiciary systems, develop the economies of their nations, and often have health care support systems in place. No tribal community is the same, and it is impossible to make assumptions about the laws, protocols, and systems within a tribal nation without researching the specific tribal nation in question.

The United States government treats Native peoples differently than others in regards to race. Native people are often left off or are miscounted in the census by identifying as mixed race. Native people are also counted by the government's **Bureau of Indian Affairs** based on their amount of Native blood, a measurement that is impossible to accurately measure, for genetic reasons but also due to the historical intermixing of Native and non-Native peoples due to colonialism. This measure, known as "**Blood Quantum**" is inherently racist, and is used as a method for erasing Native peoples from the United States, as it qualifies membership in the Native community through an illegitimate genetic measurement as opposed to cultural and community involvement.

TEACHER NOTE: It is important that educators **never** quantify Native identity through **Blood Quantum** measurements. Teachers may contribute to the erasure of Native communities by simply asking what "percent" Native they are. It is not anyone's place to legitimize Native identity by asking them to prove that they belong to a group by quantifying the amount of Native blood they have. Teachers must avoid projecting their preconceived notions of what it means to be Native, as Native identity is complex and has been deeply impacted by settler actions that have consciously and unconsciously damaged the Native community. These actions and systems of oppression are not just historical, but continue to exist into the present.

ENGAGE

Project the following quote on the board:

"As soon as lines were drawn on maps by European hands, Indigenous place names, which are intricately connected with Indigenous history, stories, and teachings, were replaced with English names, erasing Indigenous presence from the lands."

-Thomas Kind, An Inconvenient Indian

Explain to students that Native communities in California have lived on the land since time immemorial, and that they had names for all the places that they lived, traveled through, etc. When settlers came into California, they ignored the Native names, and

replaced them with names from their own cultures, usually using Spanish words. Some Indigenous names have been preserved, and some have been lost.

In the following lesson, students will learn about some of the Native communities in California, their original languages, and where they traditionally lived before settlers arrived.

Engage students in a conversation using the following questions:

1. **What is the purpose of a map?**
2. **What kinds of information can we gather from maps?**
3. **Who do you think gets to name streets, cities, countries, etc.? What are places normally named after?**
4. **Pretend that you got to build your own city to live in. What would you name that city?**
 - a. **Now, say that I came into your city, and decided to name the city after myself instead. How would you feel?**

EXPLORE

Lead students through a quick writing activity answering the following prompt:

1. **Make a list of all the Native or Indigenous groups you know.**

Once students complete their list, have them underline or circle tribes that they believe to be in the geographic area of California. Hold a class share out, noting students' prior knowledge. Students might know a few famous tribes, but likely will not be familiar with many California tribes.

Introduce students to the [Native-Lands website](#), pointing out the language and territory toggle. As a class, zoom in on the region in which your community is located. Either independently or with a partner, have students answer the questions on the "Where Do I Live" worksheet.

EXPLAIN

Once students are familiar with the traditional location of tribal communities, explain that you are now going to look at the modern locations of tribes and learn about why their location has changed over time.

Map 1: [California Indian Pre-contact Tribal Territories](#)

Map 2: [California Tribal Maps, Modern](#)

Project **Map #1** on the screen.

Explain to students that this map highlights the general areas traditionally occupied by tribes. Note that although tribes had general territory, groups moved throughout one another's territory for trade, celebrations, during specific seasons, etc. Tribal communities usually respected the norms and expectations of other communities when visiting.

Now, project **Map #2** on the screen.

If possible, place it next to **Map #1**. Explain to students that **Map #2** shows the current tribal land territories.

Ask students what they notice about the two maps. They will recognize that the Native territory is significantly smaller, and that some tribes are missing completely.

Explain that the California government, in the year 1851, after California gained statehood, took control of traditional Native territories in order to use the land for gold extraction and other economic purposes. Because of this, the majority of Native people became landless. In addition, Native people did not have any citizenship in the United States, even though they had lived on the land for thousands of years.

Pose the following question:

- 1. When the government does not recognize a person as a citizen, how is their life different from someone who is a citizen?**

This lasted until the years 1906-1910, when the government appropriated money to buy small land parcels to house the landless Natives. Even though Natives lived in California, they did not gain their citizenship until 1924, and so during this time, Natives were not only landless or suffering from housing insecurity, they were also not protected by the government.

Pose the following questions to students:

1. Why do you think the government wanted to house the landless Natives?
2. Why do you think the government wouldn't grant the Natives citizenship?

In 1934, the **Indian Reorganization Act** supported Natives in developing tribal governments, however in 1958, the **Rancheria Act** was passed, and terminated the existence of **41 California tribes**. Since then, tribes have worked to regain their land and their federal status.

Pose the following questions to students:

When the 1958 Rancheria Act terminated the existence of 41 California tribes, those Native people suddenly lost their legal right to their identities.

1. Imagine you were no longer able to practice parts of your culture. How would your life change? Consider language, celebrations, foods, etc.
2. Have you ever felt pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture? In what way?
3. Do you think there are other groups of people in the United States who do not always feel comfortable connecting with their culture? Why might this be?

Today, there are still many tribes in California who are not recognized by the federal government, meaning that legally, the tribes do not exist in the government's eyes.

ELABORATE

Provide students with a copy of the **Sonoma County Map** (or blank map of their county). Allow students to use the links below to color in and mark the geographic features listed on the worksheet.

[Google Maps with Terrain Setting](#)

[County List of Tribal Nations](#)

EVALUATE

Host a classroom discussion reviewing the activity and answering the following questions:

1. What group of people are Indigenous to your area?

2. What are the names of the Native communities in your area today?
3. What are some of the geographic features in your area that could serve as a food source for Native communities?

EXTENSION

In addition to, or in place of the maps provided in the Explain section, Compare & Contrast these two Youtube videos of the evolution of the United States from a Western perspective and a Native perspective.

1. [The Invasion of America](#)
2. [America's Territorial Expansion Mapped](#)

VOCABULARY

Tribe: Any group of people united by ties of descent from a common ancestor, a community of customs and traditions, adherence to the same leaders, etc.

Rancheria: Land provided to Native groups in which tribes practice sovereignty.

Government: The governing body of persons in a state, community, etc.

Federally Recognized: A federally recognized tribe is an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to this designation, and is eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Furthermore, federally recognized tribes are understood to possess certain inherent rights of self-government (i.e., tribal sovereignty) and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections because of their special relationship with the United States. At present, there are 573 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages.

Sovereignty: Supreme and independent power or authority in government as possessed or claimed by a state or community.

Citizenship: A native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection.

Border: The line that separates one country, state, province, etc., from another; frontier line.

Territory: The land and waters belonging to or under the jurisdiction of a state, sovereign, etc.

Treaty: A formal agreement between two or more states in reference to peace, alliance, commerce, or other international relations.

Dialect: A variety of a language that is distinguished from other varieties of the same language by features of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary, and through its use by a group of speakers who are distinct from others geographically or socially.

Time Immemorial: A term used to refer to points in time that occurred so far in the past that it is impossible to identify exactly when they occurred. The events may be so far back in history that no one is able to remember them. This term is used regularly when referring to the amount of time that Native peoples have lived in their traditional homelands.

ex: Since time immemorial, the Pomo people have lived and thrived in Northern California.

Note: This term will be used regularly throughout the following lessons, as opposed to naming specific dates and years.

STANDARDS

Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.

CA Indian Essential Understandings:

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

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

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

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

CA Social Sciences Framework:

HSS-8.4 Students analyze the aspirations and ideals of the people of the new nation.

1. Describe the country's physical landscapes, political divisions, and territorial expansion during the terms of the first four presidents.

HSS-8.6 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced, with emphasis on the Northeast.

1. Discuss the influence of industrialization and technological developments on the region, including human modification of the landscape and how physical geography shaped human actions (e.g., growth of cities, deforestation, farming, mineral extraction).

HSS-8.8 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.

2. Describe the purpose, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny (e.g., the Lewis and Clark expedition, accounts of the removal of Indians, the Cherokees' "Trail of Tears," settlement of the Great Plains) and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades.

HSS-8.12 Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution.

1. Trace patterns of agricultural and industrial development as they relate to climate, use of natural resources, markets, and trade and locate such development on a map.
2. Identify the reasons for the development of federal Indian policy and the wars with American Indians and their relationship to agricultural development and industrialization.

RESOURCES

- [State of California Native American Heritage Commission](#): (scroll down to section on “Treaty Making and Treaty Rejection
- [Unratified Treaties History](#)
- [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)

Sonoma County Tribal Pages:

- [Graton Rancheria](#)
- [Dry Creek Rancheria](#)
- [Cloverdale Rancheria](#)
- [Stewarts Point Rancheria](#)
- [Koi Nation](#)

Wappo News- Fight for Federal Recognition:

- [Press Democrat](#) - *Battle over Wappo tribe’s future*
- [Indianz.com](#) - *Mishewal Wappo Tribe loses appeal in federal recognition lawsuit*
- [US Geological Survey](#)

- [County List of Tribal Nations - CCAP](#)
- [Native-Land interactive map](#)
- [CA Indian Pre-contact Tribal Territories map](#)
- [Map of Tribal Land today](#)
- [Oxford Dictionary](#)
- [Dictionary.com](#)