



The Klamath from 1822 to 2002 © Jackie Fawn

California Law Impact to Native Peoples



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Grade Level: 11

Subjects: English Language Arts and History Social Science

Time Frame: Three 55 minute sessions

Links:

 **Slides: California Law: Impacts to Native Peoples**

 **Script/Facilitation Support: California Law Impact to Native Peoples**

 **Student Handouts: California Law: Impacts to Native Peoples**

 **Answer Key: California Law: Impacts to Native Peoples**

Materials Needed:

- Projector, Screen, Speaker for videos
- Pencils
- One-to-One Devices
- Poster making supplies (or digital poster is optional)
 - Large poster paper (if available)
 - Colored pencils or markers

Curriculum Themes

- ☒ History
- ☐ Cultural Strengths
- ☒ Law/Government
- ☐ Relationship to Place
- ☒ Cross Curricular Integration

Unit Overview

This unit offers students a powerful and honest exploration of California's early statehood through the lens of Native history, ethics, and civic responsibility. Instead of glorifying westward expansion or the Gold Rush, students investigate the devastating impacts of colonization,



state-sanctioned violence, and the legal infrastructure that enabled the genocide and enslavement of Native Californians. Through engaging activities like simulated journalist interviews, primary source analysis (including videos), law critiques, and reflective writing, students deepen their understanding of justice, historical truth, and ethical governance. They are encouraged to question traditional narratives and examine how white supremacy shaped California's earliest laws and leadership. The culminating task, imagining a more ethical approach to colonization, empowers students to creatively apply their learning, while also identifying real ways to support Native communities today. This unit is not only rooted in critical thinking and empathy, but also fosters meaningful dialogue about history, power, and civic responsibility. It's a timely and impactful resource for any teacher committed to teaching truthfully and equitably.

Learning Goals

- Evaluate early California lawmakers and settlers' relationships with Indigenous groups established since time immemorial
- Consider how colonization of California has lasting and ongoing impacts to the health and opportunities of Native populations.

Background for Educators

Teaching the true history of California's founding, particularly the violence and systemic oppression faced by Native peoples, requires a careful balance of honesty, compassion, and integrity. For generations, Californians have been taught a sanitized version of history that omits or minimizes the state-sponsored genocide, legal enslavement, and forced displacement of Indigenous communities. When we introduce these difficult truths, we are not only correcting historical inaccuracies, we are offering students an opportunity to understand injustice, develop empathy, and begin to heal from a legacy of misinformation.

It is essential to approach this content with a commitment to truth-telling. The violence against Native Californians was not accidental as it was codified in laws and carried out with government support. Avoiding euphemisms and naming white supremacy, settler colonialism, and systemic racism clearly helps students understand the root causes of this violence. At the same time, we must center Native voices and perspectives by incorporating resources created by tribal communities and Native scholars. These voices provide insight, resilience, and lived experience that textbooks often exclude.

Because of the emotional weight of this history, educators must create a classroom environment that is trauma-informed and emotionally supportive. Students may experience strong feelings, such as anger, sadness, grief, confusion, even betrayal, especially if they are encountering this information for the first time. It's important to validate those emotions and offer space for



reflection, whether through journaling, discussion, or creative expression. Native and other students from historically excluded/systematically oppressed/communities impacted by injustice may feel these lessons deeply. Be prepared to check in with them individually, offer alternative ways to participate, and never place them in the position of having to speak for their community.

Creating a safe and inclusive classroom requires setting norms based on empathy. Establishing community agreements around respect, listening, and curiosity can help support dialogue without placing blame or guilt. Restorative questions such as, “Who was impacted?” or “What can we learn from this?” help frame conversations around understanding and accountability, rather than defensiveness.

Finally, students need opportunities for hope and action. Many will leave these lessons asking, “What now?” Provide pathways for students to engage in healing and advocacy in activities such as developing relationships/engagement with local tribes, supporting Native-led organizations, or designing ethical alternatives to historical injustice. Encouraging students to imagine what ethical colonization could have looked like, or to envision justice-centered solutions today, empowers them to turn difficult knowledge into meaningful change.

Teaching hard history with integrity, compassion, and cultural awareness is transformative. It helps students see Tribal Nations as future partners in shared land tenure, economic development and community members. This lesson helps students grow as thinkers and ethical people capable of shaping a more just future.

Curriculum Standards

History and Social Science:

- HSS-11.1 Students analyze the significant events in the founding of the nation and its attempts to realize the philosophy of government described in the Declaration of Independence.

English Language Arts:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12-10.2.b
 - Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12-10.2.c
 - Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12-10.2.d
 - Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12-10.2.e



- Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12-10.2.f
 - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12-10.4
 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12-10.8
 - Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-12-10.4
 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

Teacher Directions

Before the lesson, print Student handouts (linked above) and have Lesson Slides (linked above) projected on the classroom screen for student view. If a classroom projector and/or screen is not available, the slides could be linked to a google classroom or online student platform (use of slides are required for this lesson). Lesson slides are created to facilitate the lesson. Lesson Slides are animated to gradually provide information, so make sure to present using “slideshow” mode. Content will appear on click. Follow the Facilitation/Script Support Tool linked above for directions by slide.

- ❖ Engage: Vocabulary & Introduction to American History of California (Approximately 25 minutes)
 - Slides 1-9 and handout 1
- ❖ Explore: Reading for Reading and Writing (Approximately 30 minutes)
 - Slide 10 and handout pages 2-5
- ❖ Explain: Gold Rush Settlement (Approximately 20 minutes)
 - Slides 12-14
- ❖ Elaborate: Early California Policies and Leaders (Approximately 35 minutes)
 - Slides 15-19 and handout page 6
- ❖ Evaluate: Class Slideshow Assignment (Approximately 55 minutes)
 - Slide 20 and handout pages 7-8



Scaffolding

Universal Design for Learning:

Engagement: Consider the following method to support with lesson engagement:

- Create cooperative learning groups
- Provide feedback that is frequent, timely, and specific
- Provide feedback that encourages perseverance, focuses on development of efficacy and self-awareness, and encourages the use of specific supports and strategies in the face of challenge

Representation: Consider the following method to support with multiple means of representation:

- Offer alternatives for auditory or visual information
- Pre-teach vocabulary and symbols, especially in ways that promote connection to the learners' experience and prior knowledge
- Allow the use of Text-to-Speech and screen readers
- Embed visual, non-linguistic supports for vocabulary clarification (pictures, videos, etc.)
- "Chunk" information into smaller elements

Action and Expression: Consider the following method to support in presenting their learning in multiple ways:

- Provide options for Physical Action
- Provide spell checkers, grammar checkers, word prediction software
- Provide sentence starters or sentence strips

For additional ideas to support your students, check out the resources below:

- UDL Guidelines at CAST (2018) <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Oakland University ENGAGEMENT: Universal Design for Learning Principle [ENGAGEMENT: Universal Design for Learning Principle TEACHING STRATEGIES](#)
- Oakland University REPRESENTATION: Universal Design for Learning Principle [REPRESENTATION: Universal Design for Learning Principle TEACHING STRATEGIES](#)
- Oakland University ACTION AND EXPRESSION: Universal Design for Learning Principle [ACTION & EXPRESSION: Universal Design for Learning Principle TEACHING STRATEGIES](#)

Multilingual Learner Supports:

Emerging: Consider the following method to support with emerging students:

- Use group work and peer learning to allow students to learn from each other.
- Repeatedly model how to say or write a new word or phrase, and give students many opportunities to practice.

Expanding: Consider the following method to support with expanding students:



- Encourage students to practice using new vocabulary in conversation or group discussions, guided by structured prompts or pair work.
- Use context to help explain new vocabulary.

Bridging: Consider the following method to support with bridging students:

- Incorporate reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities around a single topic, allowing students to see the language in multiple forms.
- Gradually introduce more complex texts (e.g., short stories, informational texts) with supports like glossaries or simplified summaries to aid comprehension.
- Extended Writing Tasks: Allow students to engage in longer writing assignments, such as paragraphs or essays, but provide graphic organizers or outlines to help with structure

Reaching: Consider the following method to support with bridging students:

- Encourage students to review and give feedback on each other's writing or projects.
- Reinforce academic vocabulary across content areas. Provide opportunities for students to use this language in writing and speaking.
- Peer Review: Encourage students to review and give feedback on each other's writing or projects. This helps them develop a deeper understanding of grammar and structure while applying higher-level language skills

For additional guidance around scaffolding for multilingual learners, please consult the following resources:

- English Learner Toolkit of Strategies
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/ujkdc2xp1dqjzrlq55czph50c3sq1ngu>
- Providing Appropriate Scaffolding
<https://www.sdcoe.net/educators/multilingual-education-and-global-achievement/oracy-to-olkit/providing-appropriate-scaffolding#scaffolding>
- Strategies for ELD <https://ucdavis.box.com/s/dcp15ymah51uwizpmmt2vys5zr2r5reu>
- ELA/ELDFramework
<https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/resources/6537/ela-eld-frameworkHMONGHISTANDCULTSTUDIESMODELCURRICULUM> 9
- California ELD Standards
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/vqn43cd632z22p8mfzn2h7pntc71kb02>

Additional Resources/References for Teachers

- [Why The Gold Rush Is One Of The Darkest Moments In US History | Whitewashed](#)
- [The Infamous Law That Enslaved California Indians #history #nativeamerica](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-azcPugmKQ>
- [Our People. Our Culture. Our History.](#)
- [Racial Conflict | California History \[ep.7\]](#)



- [Peter Hardeman Burnett - Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California | ACLU NorCal](#)
- [Governors of California - Peter Burnett. Executive Orders.](#)

California Native American Studies Model Curriculum

The California Native American Studies Model Curriculum (NASMC) will support the design and development of open-source lesson plans, primary source documents, planning resources, teaching strategies, and professional development activities to assist California K-12 educators in teaching about California Native American Studies. Per AB 167, the NASMC is defined as lesson plans, primary source documents, planning resources, teaching strategies, and professional development activities to assist educators in teaching about Native American Studies. The traditional cultural knowledge within lessons, including Native language, art, media and stories, are owned by the respective Tribal nations, Native knowledge keepers, artists, producers and authors of the curriculum as indicated in each lesson.

