Suggested Classroom Activities

Start a KWL Chart: Make a chart with three sections, labeled Know, Want to Know, Learned. Have the students brainstorm and discuss items for the first two sections.

Use Enclosed Vocabulary Words: They can be used for spelling or in any language arts lessons.

Post Test Evaluation: Deliver and discuss the Post Test after your outreach program.

Write a Story: Have your students write a story of a day in the life of a California Native boy or girl.

Research Plants/Animals: Have students research a plant and/or animal that the California Natives used for food or medicine.

Suggested Reading

For Students:


For Teachers:


California Indian Life and Culture
Vocabulary Words

Burden Basket –
large woven container carried on the back; used for transporting acorns and a wide variety of other items

Chia Seeds -
nutritious, tiny black and white seeds used for food and beverage-making

Clapper Stick –
an instrument, often made of elderberry wood, used to provide rhythm

Deertoe Rattle –
ceremonial instrument made from the bone, hide, and hooves of a deer

Dentalium –
long, tooth-like shells used for money by people on the northwest coast of California

Gourd Rattle –
a musical instrument made by filling a dried gourd with beans, stones, or other materials

Mortar –
bowl-shaped rock for grinding acorns, nuts & seeds; used with a pestle

Obsidian –
shiny, black volcanic glass used to make arrowheads and other tools

Pestle –
hand-held stone used to grind acorns or other foods in the mortar

Regalia –
special clothing used in ceremonies

Soaproot –
plant used for making brushes, glue, and suds for washing; also used for treating specific ailments

Tule –
reed-like plant found in or near water; used for making houses, boats, and many other items

Yucca –
a desert-dwelling plant with strong fibers used to make sandals and other items
California Indian Life and Culture
Post-Presentation Test

1. _______________ ________________ were often used as diapers because they were soft and easily washed.

2. In hunting, the _______________ was used to make a spear go farther and faster.

3. The Cahuilla people of the desert call their dome-shaped, thatched house a _________________.

4. Two musical instruments used by the Indians of California were the _______________ and the _______________.

5. The peoples of the Sacramento and Central Valleys used _____________ to make houses, boats, rope, mats, clothing, and toys.

6. Most California Native people did not used pots to cook in; instead they used _________________.

7. ________________ was used to make plank-houses and dugout canoes by the Indians of the Northwest Coast.

8. The main plant food of the Maidu and other peoples in many parts of California was the _________________.

9. People who lived on the coast in the North used ________________ shells for money (a long-thin striated shell).

10. The shiny, hard, volcanic glass used to make arrowheads is called _________________.

11. Symbols carved into rocks are called _________________.

12. A bone tool, like that taken from the backbone of a deer, was used to pry ________________ off rocks in the ocean.
1. rabbit skins
2. atlatl
3. kish (pronounced keesh)
4. clapstick or clapperstick & gourd rattles, (drum – limited use/ North only)
5. tule
6. baskets
7. redwood
8. acorn
9. dentalium
10. obsidian
11. petroglyphs
12. abalone