

# First Peoples Program



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**SANTA CRUZ MUSEUM**  
of natural history

# First Peoples Program Introduction

The First Peoples Program is one of the Museum's oldest and most popular programs. We strive to respectfully and accurately represent local native tribes, their history, and their culture. The key terms and themes of this program have been thoughtfully and intentionally created with input from tribal consultants from the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, as well as feedback from teachers and docents who have participated in this field trip. We continue to regularly update our program and supporting materials to reflect the most up-to-date information available.

## ***A Note on Terminology:***

The terms "**Ohlone**" or "**Ohlone culture**" are applied to artifacts, practices, and knowledge that pertain to the 50 tribes spanning from Big Sur to San Francisco. This is a modern grouping, coined by anthropologists, and members of each group do not necessarily identify as "Ohlone". This term is useful when specific origins are unknown, or to describe widely-used cultural practices shared amongst many groups in this area.

Due to decades of missionization, direct lineage from many of these groups have been lost, along with knowledge and physical evidence of their culture. Whenever possible, we will attribute artifacts and practices to their specific origins, recognizing that Indigenous culture is by no means homogeneous.

**Awasswas** was the language spoken by groups in the Santa Cruz area, and **Mutsun** was the language spoken by groups in the Watsonville/Gilroy area. Descendants of Awasswas and Mutsun speakers taken to Missions Santa Cruz and San Juan Bautista now identify as **Amah Mutsun** and have formed a tribal band, and are working to relearn their culture and heal from historic trauma. For more information, visit [amahmutsun.org](http://amahmutsun.org).

To view a detailed map of the tribes in this area, please visit our [virtual First Peoples exhibit](#).

# First Peoples Program Overview

**Grades:** K - 4th

**Topic:** Students learn about the culture of the original human inhabitants of Santa Cruz. Through exploration in our native plant garden, exhibits, and artifacts, they see different tools and practices used in Indigenous cultures. In the process of learning about Native people's connection to nature, students come to understand that humans are a part of the ecosystem. They also develop cultural awareness and are able to see similarities and differences between cultures, both as they were and as they are.

**Why is this a relevant and interesting topic?** Not only is learning about Native Americans a state standard for all students, it is also important to have a perspective of different cultures. Native people today work to protect and preserve their culture, traditions, and practices, and by teaching children about these things we help them to do so. Even for those who have no Native ancestry, learning about these cultures can be relevant to all our lives. We can benefit from exposure to a diversity of cultures, particularly those that have a different type of connection to the environment. Especially in a time when people are further disconnected from natural processes and from how things that they use daily are made, children are interested to learn about and practice resourcefulness, and begin to truly see the nature that surrounds them, not only as a backdrop, but as a resource and a system of which they are a part.

**Stewardship Goal:** At the conclusion of this program, students will not only have an appreciation for the history of Native people in this area, but also for their connection to nature. *Students will be better prepared to:*

1. Notice plants and animals, and consider their value/use for food, tools, shelter, etc.
2. Make choices that demonstrate an understanding that the health of their environment influences their own health and that of their community.
3. Take action to conserve resources with an understanding that all animals, including humans past and present, need clean food, air, water, and space to survive.

**Objectives:** *By the end of the program, students will:*

1. Relate their own needs to the needs of people in the past and people in different cultures, including the need for food, water, shelter, and community.
2. Identify Ohlone as the culture practiced by Native Americans in this area, and name the tribe that lived where their school is.
3. Empathize with other cultures rather than reducing them to stereotypes and know that Ohlone culture is still practiced.
4. Identify at least one example of a native plant and animal that was used for food, shelter, or tools.
5. Demonstrate gratitude for nature & the resources it provides.

# NGSS Standards

We are actively working on developing our curriculum and helping teachers to identify ways in which our program supports and relates to Common Core, CA History-Social Science Frameworks, and Next Generation Science Standards. [Click here](#) for a more detailed look at the standards and how this program supports them.

| Next Generation Science Standards   |  |  |
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| Performance Expectations<br><b>K-ESS3-1:</b> Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants and animals (including humans) and the places they live.   |  |  |
| <b>Science and Engineering Practices</b><br><br>Engaging in argument from evidence  | <b>Disciplinary Core Ideas</b><br><br><b>LS1.C: Organization for Matter and Energy Flow in Organisms</b><br>All animals need food in order to live and grow. They obtain their food from plants or from other animals. Plants need water and light to live and grow. | <b>Crosscutting Concepts</b><br><br>Stability and Change |
| California Environmental Principles and Concepts  |  |  |
| <b>Principle I:</b> The continuation and health of individual human lives and of human communities and societies depend on the health of the natural systems that provide essential goods and ecosystem services.<br><br><b>Principle II:</b> The long-term functioning and health of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems are influenced by their relationships with human societies.   |  |  |
| History-Social Science Standards  |  |  |
| <b>HSSK.6.3</b> Students understand how people lived in earlier times and how their lives would be different today (e.g., getting water, growing food, making clothing).<br><b>HSS1.2.4</b> Students describe how location, weather, and physical environment affect the way people live, including the effects on their food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and recreation.<br><b>HSS1.4.3</b> Students recognize similarities and differences of earlier generations in such areas as work, dress, manners, stories, games, and festivals.<br><b>HSS1.5.2</b> Understand the ways in which American Indians and immigrants have helped define Californian and American Culture.<br>backgrounds of American citizens and residents in those places.<br><b>HSS2.4.1</b> Describe food production and consumption long ago and today, including the roles of farmers, processors, distributors, weather, and land and water resources.<br><b>HSS3.1.2</b> Students trace the ways in which people have used the resources of the local region and modified the physical environment.<br><b>HSS3.2.2</b> Students discuss the ways in which physical geography, including climate, influenced how the local Indian nations adapted to their natural environment.<br><b>HSS4.2.1</b> Discuss the major nations of California Indians, including their geographic distribution, economic activities, legends, and religious beliefs; and describe how they depended on, adapted to, and modified the physical environment by cultivation of land and use of sea resources. |  |  |

# First Peoples Program Outline

We will do our best to adhere to the following outline. Please let our staff know as soon as possible if your class has specific needs with respect to timing, such as needing to leave early. Late arrivals or early departures may result in the exclusion of some parts of the program. **Total program time: 1.5 hours**

**Greeting/Introduction: 10 minutes**

**Station 1: 25 minutes**

**Station 2: 25 minutes**

**Conclusion: 10 minutes**

**Free Time: Up to 20 minutes**

## Greeting/Introduction

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Entrance to Museum

**Objectives:** Provide an overview of the program and introduce concepts of **culture**, **nature connection**, and **natural resources**. Students will look at a map and learn about the terms **Ohlone**, **Awasswas**, **Uypi**, and **Amah Mutsun**. Students will understand that Native people have been here for a very long time, have a rich culture, and how they use the abundant natural resources of Santa Cruz in their daily life.

**Materials:** Map, timeline rope

**Vocabulary:** Ohlone, Awasswas, Uypi, Aptos, Amah Mutsun, culture, native

## Station 1: Native Plants & Their Uses

**Time:** 25 minutes

**Location:** Begins outside, then inside museum First Peoples room

**Objectives:** Students will learn how to identify a native coast live oak tree. We will discuss the relationship between Native people and oaks, beginning with gratitude and honorable harvest. We will move inside the Museum to the First Peoples exhibit, where students will learn how to process acorns the traditional way, using a mortar and pestle. We will also explore other plants that were useful for daily life including tule and willow. Students will learn about native plants and their many uses as food, shelter, and tools.

**Artifacts/tools:** mural, baskets, mortar and pestle, fire making tools, tule artifacts (baskets, rope, mat, boat, and duck decoy)

**Vocabulary:** oak, acorn, mortar and pestle, gratitude, tule, willow

## Station 2: Animals & Artifacts

**Time:** 25 minutes

**Location:** Animal room in Museum

**Objectives:** Students will explore several artifacts and make inquiries about what they are made out of and what they are used for. We will discuss resourcefulness and honorable harvest, and the many uses of animals by Native people. Students learn about the hunting traditions of the local Native people.

**Artifacts/tools:** animal pelts, antlers, bow, arrow, spear, atlatl, rattle, tule saw, musical instruments

**Vocabulary:** hunting, sustainability, camouflage, native, senses, atlatl

## Conclusion

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Location:** Animal Room

**Objectives:** Students will be introduced to the concept that fire is an important tool for the Native people in this area, and that it was used to benefit plants, animals, and people. We will tell a traditional story, called *How Hummingbird Got Fire*, that was shared with us by the Amah Mutsun. We will end with gratitude and emphasize continued Indigenous presence.

## Free Time

**Time:** Up to 20 minutes

**Location:** Whole Museum

**Objectives:** Students are invited to further explore the artifacts and activities from the program, grind acorns using mortars, attempt to make fire, and explore the rest of the Museum, including the Intertidal Touch Pool with live sea animals.

# First Peoples Classroom Kit

## Why do we provide the First Peoples Kit?

This education kit is designed to familiarize your students with topics presented in the *First Peoples of Santa Cruz* field trip and to provide a depth of experience and opportunity to apply knowledge after the trip. It can also be used within your own unit on the Native people of Central California. The activities within this kit will give your students a better understanding of such topics as **food preparation, the use of native plants and animals, oral tradition, and culture** using unique artifacts, hands-on exploration, engaging activities and writing prompts.

## How does it work?

We recommend that these activities are done in the order that they are presented, for a more comprehensive understanding of relevant concepts. These activities can be adjusted to different age or learning groups by adjusting the level and amount of reading and writing, and choosing appropriate vocabulary.

## First Peoples Kit Contents

1. Supplemental Activity Curriculum Descriptions
2. Visual Aids to support curriculum, including Native plant guide, Mix and Match game cards, and worksheets
3. Artifacts to support exploration including shells, pelts, Stave game, Clapper stick, Tule item, Fire drill, Mortar and Pestle, and Acorns
4. Books including: *Life of the California Coast Nations*, by Bobby Kalman; *Rumsen Ohlone Stories*; told by Linda Yamane; *Little Deer and the First Native American Flute*, by Al Striplen; *When the Mission Bells Rang*, by Judith A. Scott

## List of Activities and Key concepts Covered

1. **Tending Nature** - Students identify the needs of living things and explore the relationship between Ohlone people and nature.
2. **Tule Tools** - Students explore how plants are used beyond food
3. **Painting with Nature** - Students experiment with natural materials to create pigments
4. **Story Reconstruction** - Students practice using oral tradition to preserve information
5. **Tree of Music** - Students learn about traditional Ohlone songs and instruments
6. **Mission Bells** - Students learn about how the Missions affected the Native people and animals
7. **Staves Game** - Students learn how to play a traditional Ohlone game and can make their own

The Educational Kit includes the visual aids and materials for all activities and suggestions for extension activities and writing prompts which encourage deeper understanding.



# Additional Resources

[Website of the Amah Mutsun Tribal band](#) Learn about the history of the Awaswas and Mutsun speaking peoples from their descendants.

[Virtual First Peoples exhibit](#) See the items in our First Peoples exhibit and learn more about them and their history.

[Video: Amah Mutsun Fire relationships](#) Fire is many things to the Amah Mutsun and other California Indian Tribes — it is sacred, it is a tool gifted by Creator, and it is a way to restore balance to Mother Earth. This presentation will share more about how the Amah Mutsun are using fire to restore landscapes and relationships in the Santa Cruz mountains and beyond.

[Video: Ancient Scorched Seeds and Indigenous Land Stewardship](#) Archaeologists can analyze charred seeds and other plant remains to learn about relationships between people and the natural world deep into the past. This talk will describe how a collaborative research project between Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, State Parks, and academic researchers utilized this type of information to explore how Indigenous peoples on the coast of San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties used prescribed burning to steward local landscapes. Guided by these findings, Amah Mutsun Land Trust is working to revitalize Indigenous-based stewardship of open spaces today.

[Activity: Ohlone Matching Game](#) Native people living along the Central California Coast practicing the Ohlone culture understood nature and responsibly stewarded resources for their survival. Do you know what it means to be a steward of nature? To be a steward is to take care of something. To be a steward of nature you first must understand nature and then you can learn how to care for it and preserve it for the future. In the past and today people have depended on natural resources to survive. Today we are going to learn about natural resources that were important to the Ohlone.

[Article: Milling with a Metate](#) On exhibit in the Museum you'll find several large mortars and pestles which were used to pulverize or smash natural materials. They were especially useful in processing larger food substances, like acorns. Here, we expand this picture by showing another type of stone tool that hasn't been on regular display: a metate, or milling stone.

[Article: An Ohlone Basket:](#) At the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, we are fortunate to be able to provide local residents and visitors access to one the few existing historical Ohlone baskets. Many of the remaining historical Ohlone baskets are in museums as far away as Europe and even Russia. Here, so close to its origin, it can better be seen within its historical and cultural context.

[Video: Collections Close up: Interwoven History of Baskets and Museums](#) Unravel the complex ways in which consumer trends and museums influenced early 20th basketry collections and craft in this recording. Collections Manager Kathleen Aston elaborates on these trends and how they relate to our collection. Julie Sidel, Interpreter 1 for Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park, joins the discussion to share how the intersection of museum artifacts and interpretation illuminates daily life at the Santa Cruz Mission.