

Teaching About the Chumash Indians of Southern California

John M. Anderson

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The purpose of this web page is to respond to frequently asked questions on pedagogical and social issues impacting the teaching of classes on the Chumash Indians, a native people of southern California.

My research interests frequently focus on the ethical issues associated with colonialism and religious intolerance. My perspective is not only the moral and spiritual impacts on the victims of colonialism and dogmatism, but also on their impact on the perpetrators of injustice and their descendants.

General Comments on Teaching

"Parents and teachers often contact me to ask for internet information on teaching materials on the Chumash Indians. Many of these correspondents have read one or more of my Chumash web pages. Some express concern about the weakened ethical [read moral, philosophical] component in the Chumash curriculum used by their school district. How, they often ask, can they strengthen this important component of public education?"

When I respond to these inquiries, I find myself suggesting to both teachers and parents that they find creative means to exceed existing curriculum guidelines for their community's classrooms. Too often these guidelines include limited exploration of important ethical issues involving the treatment of native Americans.

In an misguided effort to offend nobody, some elementary and secondary teaching guidelines omit or downplay the 'sensitive' public history issues related to what I describe in my writings as the California Holocaust. This holocaust is well documented, but painful for many Californians to acknowledge. It involved massive death rates among the aboriginal populations of California, fueled by Spanish, Mexican, and American racism, religious dogmatism, and nationalism.

The failure to frankly discuss these topics, not only damages the native peoples of the state but also puts aside important personal growth among the non-native students who will inevitably face these issues as adults. It is my belief that contemporary America will not be able to grow to its fullest potential until a reconciliation of natives and non-natives is realized. This goal will evade us as long as our curriculum materials 'look the other way' on the hard topics and focus on clothing, houses, food, transportation." [John Anderson, November 10, 1999]

Re-envisioning California Society

"I recently published an article on the Chumash Indians in the journal called *Shaman's Drum*. In this fall 1999 edition was an article by Hannah Bell, who works with the Ngarinyin people of Australia and discusses the curriculum of the Bush University. Her article is called "Educating Whiteflas in the Ngarinyin Laws of Relationship." I admire Hannah's work with the Australian natives and her goal of 'reinvisioning' Australian sociey and land rights to include the native peoples (page 39). Nothing less should, I believe, be the goal of all educators in contemporary California society." [John Anderson, December 15, 1999]

Curriculum Information: On the Chumash Indians Of Southern California

John M. Anderson

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I maintain a large number of web sites on the Chumash Indians of southern California. Teachers and student contact me frequently, to ask for information about the Chumash and about on-line curriculum information.

The purpose of this web site is to offer a selection of curriculum sites, to help teachers and parents looking for new classroom materials on the internet. Inclusion in this list is not

necessarily meant as an endorsement but rather to provide ideas for further exploration of the web. And don't forget to contact the many Chumash bands and associations listed at [Chumash](#) for first-hand information from the Chumash themselves [who you will find, have their own network of information on good teachers and curriculum materials in their local communities as well as on broader tribal issues].

Social Issues In the Classroom "A number of parents have contacted me in recent years, expressing concern with some elementary and secondary course offerings which avoid frank discussions of racism and religious intolerance in California's past. Programs under criticism focus exclusively on 'safe' topics such as the clothing, food, housing, boats, and fishing technologies of the Chumash while carefully skirting the more disturbing ethical issues involved in the treatment of California natives who were reduced to only a fraction of their pre-contact populations during the California Holocaust."¹ [John Anderson, November 12, 1999].

Elementary

RAIN An excellent source of information on elementary course offerings on the Chumash is the RAIN Program, which sponsors the non-profit Camp Internet. For information, see [RAIN](#). Or email: rain@rain.org. The main office is located in Buelton, California, which is in Santa Barbara County. Marcy Montgomery is the Director of educational development for this program.

Chumash Day At School Describes events at a Chumash Day for a public school in the Chumash region; third grade. See [Program](#)

Chumash Indians A large web site with many links to pages on general topics of interest to 3rd grade students. See [Pages](#).

Chumash Mission History Another large web site, listing many sources of internet info on the California missions, including the five Chumash facilities. See [Missions](#).

Chumash Trading System This social science lesson plan was developed by Derry Koerbling (student teacher at Pomelo Elementary); 3rd to 5th grades. See [Social Science](#)

1 See [Teach](#) for further discussion of pedagogical and social issues involved in Chumash course development. See [Holocaust](#) for discussion of the genocidal population losses of native peoples of California during the Spanish, Mexican, and early American colonial eras.

Chumash Music Includes an online music sample of an authentic Chumash song, performed by J. Rosen; fourth grade. See [Music](#).

The Santa Barbara Museum This institution offers "The Chumash People: Materials for Teachers and Student Work Book. Write the museum's Education Department at 2559 Puesta Del Sol Rd, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

Student Web Pages " A large number of student written web pages have been entered on the internet over the last few years. Although a number of people have contacted me to complain that this practice tends to 'clog up' the search engines with elementary level listings [thus frustrating web users looking for post-secondary level materials], it remains an excellent idea for teaching social studies and computer skills, with email potential for exchanges of ideas between students"
[John Anderson, November 14, 1999]

Secondary

Biology The Santa Monica Mountain National Recreation Area has developed a biological science guide, featuring the Chumash Indians of this area. This 150 page teaching manual was funded by the Department of the Interior, National Parks Service. It includes information on field trips to regional museums, 1992. See [Bio](#)

College

The best way to locate college courses dealing with the Chumash is to explore the fields of archaeology, anthropology, Native American Studies, and California history.

You should go to individual campus web sites, such as the University of California at Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, California State Universities such as San Luis Obispo and Northridge, private colleges, and even community colleges such as Ventura, Oxnard, etc. Check the same fields of archaeology, anthropology, and California history but also consider the arts and special programs.

Curriculum Centers: General California Native

Humboldt The Indian Teacher and Educational Personnel Program at Humboldt state has many materials, that will be of use in teaching broader issues impacting native Californians. See [ITEPP](#) for further information. You should also check into "Original Voices" at [Voices](#).

Odd Items of Interest

Chumash Challenge Course The Associated Students of Cal Poly State University offer a program called Chumash Challenge. It is an experiential education program, designed to develop individual and team initiative and problem solving skills [not Chumash in content, thus an interesting application of the Chumash name]. See [Challenge](#) for related information.

If in doubt about the content of any course of text, I suggest you contact one or more Chumash association in your county, to discuss specific courses and programs

This web page presents the views of the author, and does not necessarily represent the views of the Chumash Indians, either individually, or in a group.

Email: jandersonlibrary@gmail.com