

SAN MANUEL BAND OF MISSION INDIANS

Native American Educators Dedicate School Program to National Native American Holiday

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians commemorated Native American heritage with Inland Empire elementary schools



Traditional arts teacher Raymond Marcus (Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians) hands a student from Mentone Elementary of Redlands Calif. a net weaved from yucca fiber

CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE, Yucaipa Calif. (Nov. 19, 2013) — More than 250 students and teachers from Redlands, Yucaipa and other area schools learned about the unique culture and history of Native Americans at the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians' annual California First Cultures: A Celebration at Crafton Hills (Waa't).

This two-day educational celebration held at Crafton Hills College Nov. 14 and 15 was in commemoration of National Native American Heritage Month and Native American Heritage Day, both of which have been proclaimed by American presidents since 1990, including President Obama this year. The proclamation calls on Americans to commemorate the month of November with programs and activities that recognize indigenous people and provide opportunities to learn about and honor Native American culture and heritage.

“San Manuel is committed to educating the local community on our traditions and culture to gain a greater understanding of what it means to be Native American,” said Carla Rodriguez, chairperson of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. “Our annual Celebration at Crafton Hills offers students a glimpse into our history in hopes that they can go home and learn more about their own cultures.”

Tribal members, elders and academics from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians, Morongo Band of Mission Indians and San Manuel Education Department Serrano Linguists hosted hands-on lessons for students, educating them on aspects of Native American culture including basketry, pottery, music, the Serrano Indian language and history of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

To immerse students in Native Californian culture, groups of fourth graders from Mariposa Elementary School, Kimberly Elementary School, Noli Indian School, Mentone Elementary School and Yucaipa Christian School represented different tribes and commenced at the traditional “village”— a central hub where students learned firsthand from tribal members and elders about a variety of Native American traditions.

Students rotated throughout the celebration, learning from San Manuel tribal member Paakuma’ “Shorty” Tawinat about the history and language of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. For example, children learned that in the Serrano Indian language “Waa’t,” or Juniper, is associated with the Juniper trees located in the Crafton Hills area of Yucaipa.

San Manuel tribal member James Ramos, Morongo Band of Mission Indians tribal elder Ernest Siva and Santa Rosa Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians tribal members Kim and Raymond Marcus led the celebration’s workshop on traditional Native American music and dance.

David Largo, member of the Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians, taught children how traditional Native American pots were made and are still made today. Students also learned from Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians’ basket weaver Roseanne Hamilton how intricate baskets are made.

This year’s celebration was made possible by the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians; Crafton Hills College; Yucaipa Historical Society and Dorothy Ramon Learning Center.

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