MODULE 3 Curriculum

After viewing our film based on interviews with five California Indian people, discussion leaders may draw on some of the curriculum content found herein. The Curriculum is intended for students and professors after viewing "Carrying Our Ancestors Home." The questions are intended as possible guides for students and professors to begin discussions within classes about issues of Indigenous rights, Native American health, the politics of NAGPRA and AB-2836 and ways of thinking about repatriation of human remains, grave items, and sacred material items.

Interviewees

Ernest Siva (Serrano/Cahuilla) Interview

Ernest Siva is Serrano and Cahuilla. He lives on a ranch in the traditional homelands of the Pass Cahuilla and Serrano people near Banning, California. Desert Serrano believe they came from a far-off place called Mara, and when they settled on earth, they inhabited an oasis in the Mojave Desert they called Mara. The Desert Serrano called themselves Maarrenga'vam, and they settled at the Oasis of Mara, today known at Twentynine Palms. The first inhabitants put the earth and their world into motion, and they named the places of importance to them. The elders and holy ones of Maarrenga'yam people often spoke of their "Little Brothers," or the people who would one day enter their lands in need of help understanding the human relationship with other humans, animals, plants, and places. The "Little Brothers" mentioned in Siva's interview refers to settlers who came to Southern California many years after Serrano people and their neighbors inhabited the region. In his interview, Ernest Siva still speaks of the "Little Brothers." Long before settlers arrived, Serrano people lived and died at villages located in a huge geographical area from the Mojave Desert to the San Bernardino Mountains and valleys below. Originally, the people cremated their dead but as years passed, they also buried their dead. Over the course of many years, archaeologists have exhumed burials and cremations, placing the dead into boxes, and storing human remains for generations.

Additional information on Ernest Siva: Raised on and near Banning, California, and the Morongo Indian Reservation, Professor Ernest Siva is Serrano and Cahuilla, a noted elder and teacher who lives on the Morongo Indian Reservation and works as the Director of the Dorothy Ramon Learning Center in Banning, California. Trained in classical music at the University of Southern California, Siva taught music for many years at the University of California, Los Angeles. Now in his 80s, Ernest is the most accomplished singer of Bird Songs and Mountain Sheep Songs, musical traditions he has passed on to younger singers. He and his wife, June Siva, are Directors of the Pass Chorale, and accomplished musical and choir group of enthusiasts. His presentation for our video, "Carrying Our Ancestors Home," focuses on traditional Serrano beliefs about the arrival of new people called Younger Brothers who needed to be taught Native ways, which included the Indigenous ways of death and treatment of the dead. We recently edited Siva's interview and tightened the presentation.

Questions:

Where did the *Maarrenga'yam* originate? When the first Serrano people came to earth, where did they inhabit? What did Desert Serrano call their new home? Why would the *Maarrenga'yam* or Serrano people today want archaeologists and pothunters to return the remains of their Ancestors for reburial?

Sean Milanovich (Cahuilla) Interview

Dr. Sean Milanovich is a Citizen of the Agua Caliente Tribe of the Coachella Valley of Southern California. He is a Cahuilla man known for his voice as a Bird Singer. Sean holds the MA and Ph.D. in American history from the University of California, Riverside, with a specialty in Native American History. During his interview, he emphasized the cultural ways of Cahuilla people and the significance within his culture to care for the dead. For many years, Milanovich worked for his tribe in the field of cultural resources, which includes the proper handling of human remains and sacred objects. He spoke of tribal protocols of and ways of thinking that are uniquely Indigenous. Milanovich capped off his interview with songs that can be shared with others, a way of emphasizing the cultural connection between the temporal world and the spiritual world. He has a BA degree in Anthropology and understands that archaeologists can learn a great deal from the remains of Ancestors. Still, Milanovich also understands his tribal obligations to care for the dead in accordance with the traditions of his people. This is the case for all tribal people who have their own ways of caring for their Ancestors in culturally appropriate ways.

Additional Information about Sean Milanovich: Born in Palm Springs, California, and graduating from Palm Springs High School, Sean Milanovich is Cahuilla from the Agua Caliente Reservation and a leading Bird Singer. In the past, Cahuilla and Serrano did not sing Bird Songs at funerals, but in the last twenty years, Milanovich and others sing these songs at funerals, especially to honor other Bird Singers. Like the other presentations we created in modules, we edited and enhanced the information provided by Milanovich in our module focused on Ancestors, human remains, and repatriation of human remains and sacred items. Sean completed his MA and Ph.D. in History at the University of California, Riverside.

Questions:

Why would Sean Milanovich include songs as part of his interview? What do you think is the spiritual connection between Cahuilla people and their Ancestors? Why would Cahuilla people feel an obligation to protect the remains of their Ancestors? Why do you think it is important of Cahuilla people and other Indigenous people to handle human remains properly and return them to the earth?

Matthew Hanks Leivas (Chemehuevi) Interview

Matthew Hanks Levias is a Chemehuevi tribal leader, historian, and singer. He is a hereditary chief of Chemehuevi from the Lower Colorado River region. He is the leading Salt Singer among the Chemehuevi and other Southern Paiute people of Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and California. Born and raised on the Colorado River Indian Reservation near Parker, Arizona, Leivas moved with his mother, brother, and sisters to the Chemehuevi Reservation located along the west bank of the Colorado River in San Bernardino, County, California. He grew up in his language, and his leadership family have been the keepers of cultural knowledge for many generations. Leivas and his family have been involved in several repatriation and burials. They carry spiritual knowledge about dealing with the dead. As a young adult, Leivas committed himself to learning his tribe's Salt Songs, which are sung at wakes to send souls on a lengthy trail leading to *Nuva Kiav*, the hole in the sky. Near the Spring Mountains of Southern Nevada, Wolf and Coyote opened the sky trail for the spirit of the dead. From this hole in the sky, souls left the earth on their journey to the next world within the Milky Way.

Additional information on Matthew Hanks Leivas: Born on the Colorado River Indian Reservation near Parker, Arizona, and raised at Hank's Village on the reservation, Mathew Hanks Leivas, Chemehuevi, currently lives on the Chemehuevi Indian Reservation located in San Bernardino County along the Colorado River. Leivas is the lead singer of the Salt Songs, an ancient song complex created at the time of creation for *Nuwuvi* people (Southern Paiute) when two women entered *Ting-i-ayy*, a cave located along the Bill Williams River, and received instructions from a spirit to take a journey of 1000 miles to *Nuva Kiav*, the hole in the sky, where souls travel through the hole into the sky and on to the Milky Way. The people sing Salt Songs during a *Yagap* or Wake Ceremonies, to send people into the Spirit World. The songs deal directly with death and rebirth. Once the people conduct a *Yagap* Ceremony and are buried or cremated, the *Nuwuvi* believe the physical bodies should not be moved, removed, or kept outside of their resting places. We tightened our presentation and provided additional information to enhance the teaching module.

Questions:

Why is Mathew Hanks Leivas adamant about asking viewers of the video to listen to him? What is his message? Why is he so demanding that people listen to him? Could he be referring to the disregard of some non-Native people who have taken human remains and graves goods, refusing to return them to the Native families that protect the remains of their ancestors? In the future, what might you do to protect the Ancestors of tribes and families?

Lorene Sisquoc (Fort Sill Apache/Cahuilla) Interview

Lorene Sisquoc is the long-time Curator of the Sherman Indian School Museum and the Cultural Instructor at Sherman Indian High School. She grew up on the campus of Sherman Institute, which is now the high school. The museum is in the oldest part of Sherman today, the site of the old Administration Building. Sisquoc oversees the collections, exhibits, and original documents and photographs of Sherman and the Perris Indian Boarding School. Sisquoc shares her personal connection with the torture and decapitation with the great Apache leader, Mangus Coloradas. In January 1863, Mangus entered Fort McLane in Southern New Mexico under a white flag to talk peace. General Joseph West ordered his men to capture Mangus and ordered his men to murder Mangus. Soldiers tied Mangus to the ground, placed their bayonets into a fire, and tortured the Apache leader. Soldiers killed Mangus, cut off his head, and boiled it. They sent the skull to phrenologist Orson Squire Fowler in New York City to add to his collection. Apaches have tried to repatriate his skull but to no avail. Sisquoc's grandmother, Tomasa Rice Largo, lived on the Soboba Indian Reservation in Southern California. In 1919, she died of flu during the Influenza Pandemic. She was buried on the Soboba Reservation, but five white men dressed in black entered the Indian cemetery, dug up her Tomasa's grave, and cut her head off. Sisquoc's family have never recovered her grandmother's skull. Repatriating these skulls and the remains of other Native Americans is very personal to Lorene Sisquoc.

Additional Information on Lorene Sisquoc: Born in Riverside, California, Sisquoc Lorene Sisquoc is the long-time Curator of the Sherman Indian School Museum and the cultural teacher at Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, California. She is Cahuilla and a member of the Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma. She is from the Gooday family. Her great grandfather, Talbot Gooday, was with Geronimo when he surrendered to Lieutenant Charles Gatewood in 1886 and sent to Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Talbot joined the United States Army and rose to the rank of sergeant. He was stationed at Fort Sill, Indian Territory, which later became the state of Oklahoma. Sisquoc's testimony for "Carrying Our Ancestors Home" focused on the beheading of her relative, Mangas Coloradas. After Mangas entered and encampment of cavalry soldiers with a white flag, the soldiers captured Coloradas, bound him, tortured him, and murdered the leader. The soldiers sent his head to a museum in New York City. Although Fort Sill Apache and his family have tried to repatriate the head of Mangas Coloradas, all efforts to date have been unsuccessful. Sisquoc also presented about the theft of her grandmother's remains. During the 1930s, a group of white men dressed in black entered the cemetery on the Soboba Indian Reservation and exhumed her grandmother. Sisquoc discusses he family's trauma over these desecrations and the inability of the family or tribes to repatriated their Ancestors. Like the subjects in this module, Archuleta and I streamlined the presentation, cleaned up the narrative, and tightened the teaching information for the module. For the past academic year, 2023-2024, Sisquoc has served as Tribal Elder in Residence at UCR.

Questions:

Why do you think non-Indians decapitated Native Americans? What do you think happened to the skulls of Mangus Coloradas and Tomasa Rice Largo? Can you imagine collecting skulls of Native Americans? What would people do with the skulls once they had them? The decapitation of Chief Mangus Coloradas and Tomasa occurred many years ago. Why would Sisquoc and her family want the return of their skulls? How would you feel if strangers decapitated the remains of your ancestor? Would you care? Why do you think the return of human remains for reburial or cremation is so important to Native Americans?

Cindi Alvitre (Gabrielino-Tongva) Interview

Cindi Alvitre is a descendant of the Moompetam or Salt Water Clan among the Tongva-Gabrielino people of the Los Angeles Basin. She is one of the original people of the region, including the Channel Islands. Alvitre earned the MA in History from the University of California, Riverside, and is completing her Ph.D. at UCLA. She is a mother, grandmother, weaver, writer, storyteller, and singer. She is also the author of a marvelous book, Waa'Aka': The Bird Who Fell in Love with the Sun (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2020). Carly Lake painted the colorful illustrations in this unique book. Alvitre is a long-time professor of American Indian Studies and Anthropology at California State University, Long Beach, where she serves as the repatriation of ancestors, grave goods, and patrimony from the university to Native American tribes and communities. She is the coordinator of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), a federal law passed in 1990. Alvitre is a leader of the Ti'at Restoration Project, which allowed her people to return to the ocean in tribally made boats known as Ti'at. In 1985, Alvitre and Sisquoc organized the Mother Earth Clan, which has served to preserve cultural traditions of Southern California tribal people. Since 2006, she has been a member of the California Indian Heritage Foundation, which was instrumental in securing funds to create the California Indian Heritage Center in West Sacramento. Alvitre's interview centers on issues involved with NAGPRA at her home institution and throughout the state of California. She is committed to caring for the ancestors at all costs and ensuring that institutions follow the letter and spirit of state and federal laws involving repatriation.

Additional information on Cindi Alvitre: Raised and living in the Los Angeles Basin, Professor Cindi Alvitre of Long Beach State University offered another interview focused primarily about her work as the Repatriation Coordinator at her university. Alvitre is Gabrieleno and Tongva from the Los Angeles Basin. She has been a leader of her people and an advisor to State Parks. She is involved in the preservation of Ancestors for many years. She spoke about her work preserving the site of *Puvunga*, an ancient village cite and once the home of *Chinigchinix* a man/spiritual leader of her people. The site of *Puvunga* is located on the campus of CSU Long Beach and the focal point of years of contention between non-Native developers (including CSULB) and regional and state Native communities. Alvitre's interview is compelling. During Year 2, we edited her testimony and provided bibliography to our module to help others teach about repatriation issues of non-federally recognized tribes of Los Angeles and Orange Counties of Southern California.

Questions:

How did Cindi Alvitre's heritage help prepare her to deal with issues of repatriation of human remains and sacred objects? Does Alvitre's interview speak to her commitment to follow Native American protocols as well as state and federal laws involving repatriation? Do you think that caring for the remains of ancestors would be an easy task at a university? Do you think all professors, administrators, and staff at universities have a share common goal in returning the remains of the dead to tribes? Why would some professors oppose the return of human remains and sacred items to Indigenous tribes? Do you feel administrators of universities and museums have an obligation to follow state and federal laws regarding the return of human remains to tribes? Why or why not?