



## CALIFORNIA INDIANS: THE FIRST PEOPLE

### ORAL HISTORY ACTIVITY: LANGUAGE REVIVAL

A free [Online Learning](#) activity aligned with  
Common Core & State Content standards for 5th-12th grades

**OVERVIEW:**

In this activity, learners will watch Wesley Leonard, Rose Ann Abrahamson and Vincent Medina talk about their ancestral languages and their work in reclaiming Indigenous languages in their communities.

**APPROPRIATE FOR:**

5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade

**OBJECTIVES:**

In this activity, learners will:

- Learn about different language revival movements
- Identify misconceptions about Indigenous languages and explain counterpoints
- Analyze the relationship between language and culture
- Research Indigenous languages around California

**DIRECTIONS:**

Watch the video and answer the related questions.

**TIME:**

30 minutes

**MATERIALS:**

- [Video](#) from the Museum's California Indians oral history series

**STANDARDS:*****Common Core******Reading - Key Ideas and Details***

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|-----|---|
| 5   | Refer to details and examples in a source when explaining what the source says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the source |
| 6-8 | Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary documents   |

***Reading - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas***

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|------|--|
| 6-12 | Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats, both primary and secondary. |
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***California History Social Science Content Standards******Historical Interpretation***

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|-----|--|
| 6-8 | Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place. |
| 6-8 | Students recognize that interpretations of history are subject to change as new information is uncovered.                |

*Grade Level Content Area Connections*

- 5.3 Students describe the cooperation and conflict that existed among the American Indians and between the Indian nations and the new settlers.
- 5.3.4 Discuss the role of broken treaties and massacres and the factors that led to the Indians' defeat, including the resistance of Indian nations to encroachments and assimilation (e.g., the story of the Trail of Tears).
- 8.3 Students understand the foundation of the American political system and the ways in which citizens participate in it.
- 8.8 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.
- 8.12.2 Identify the reasons for the development of federal Indian policy and the wars with American Indians and their relationship to agricultural development and industrialization.
- 11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.
- 12.1 Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.
- 12.7 Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments.

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## PART 1: VIDEO ANALYSIS

### DIRECTIONS:

View the [video](#) on language revival and answer the questions below.



### QUESTIONS:

1. Why is California a “hotbed” of Indigenous language revival?
2. Wesley Leonard calls the work he does “language reclamation.” What do you think that means?
3. Wesley Leonard asks the question, “What does it tell you that so many people are putting so much effort into learning and maintaining their languages?” What do you think?

4. Wesley Leonard lists four misconceptions of Indigenous language revival. What are the realities? Use the table below to answer:

Misconception	Reality
<i>Indigenous people are only from the past</i>	
<i>Indigenous languages are all the same</i>	
<i>Languages are not that important to culture</i>	
<i>Indigenous languages are frozen in time, do not change</i>	

5. How are the different Ohlone languages being revitalized?

6. How does Vincent Medina use his language in his daily life?

7. What is Vincent Medina's vision for the future of his language?

## PART 2: FURTHER EXPLORATION

### DIRECTIONS:

If you would like to know more about this topic, explore the resources listed below.

- To learn more about Ohlone language revival, and to see some of the primary documents used in language revival, visit the [official website](#) of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Listen to Vincent Medina speak Chochenyo in this [welcome address](#) filmed as part of Aikuma Project, a storytelling event in Oakland.
- Find more about indigenous languages near you using [this map](#) from U.C. Berkeley.