



## TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT, PART 1 HIGHLIGHTS

*The California Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Pala Band of Mission Indians delivered this training on October 29, 2025*

### **Why is learning about Tribal engagement important?**

Tribal Communities are situated differently than other communities due to the impacts of colonization and, in the case of Tribes – due to their status as sovereign nations.

Having a working knowledge of tribal engagement is critical to successful government-to-government partnerships and in the demonstration of cultural humility – which are key in rebuilding relationships with Tribal Communities.

Through the rebuilding of relationships with Tribal Communities, we strengthen our collective actions to address homelessness for all Californians.

### **Key Terminology**

Indigenous refers to those peoples with pre-existing sovereignty who were living together as a community prior to contact with settler populations – throughout the world.

California Tribes often identify as Native American and/or as members of their nation.

American Indian or Indian is a legal term, with its origins from settlers who inaccurately identified the nation's Indigenous as “Indians.”

Tribes are not “BIPOC;” they are sovereign nations with self-determination.

### **Native Americans in California**

California has the largest number of Tribes, with 109 Federally Recognized Tribes and at least 81 petitioning the federal government for recognition.

California also has a large Native American population from out-of-state, most of which reside in urban centers such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and Oakland.

California Tribes are sovereign nations with their own ordinances and priorities.

In the State of California, entities under the Governor's executive authority are required to consult with Tribes regarding endeavors that may impact their communities.

**Resource:** [CA Tribal Homelessness Policy Brief](#).

### **Land Dispossession: A Journey Through Policies that Have Created Tribal Homelessness**

"Homelessness" did not exist in Tribal Communities prior to colonization. Over a century of federal, state, and local policies and actions have repeatedly forced their communities into homelessness.

Funding sources and opportunities that expect Tribes to fit "in boxes" meant for local jurisdictions or nonprofits are often inaccessible to Tribes, even if Tribes are cited as eligible for funding.

**Resource:** [Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians](#).

### **Native Americans, Data, and Homelessness**

California Tribes experience the most severe disparities of homelessness.

There are currently no accurate sources of California Tribal Homelessness Data; however, Tribes report that up to 40% of their communities are unhoused or experiencing homelessness. This is contrasted with about 5% of California population experiencing homelessness overall.

Partnerships between local jurisdictions and Tribes for purposes of including Tribes in Point-in-Time counts are a promising practice of inclusion and data equity.

**Resource:** [Tribal & CoC Partnership to Count the Homeless Webinar](#)

### **Reflections & Implications**

We have the opportunity to turn the page on centuries of policies that have harmed California Tribal Communities. We cannot do this without good relationship, partnership, and the upliftment of Tribal expertise.

***For Part 2 of this training  
and other Tribal homelessness resources:***  
[https://www.bcsb.ca.gov/calich/tribal\\_resources.html](https://www.bcsb.ca.gov/calich/tribal_resources.html)