

Lesson Idea #3: Tongva Concept of Nature's Gifts

Objectives:

- An understanding of relationship to nature as relatives, not resources
- Explore the deep knowledge that the Tongva have about nature.
- Relationship to materials the Tongva used.
- Inter-relationality of nature for the non-human and human.

Background:

The elderberry is a plant which feeds the deer, provides musical instruments, and provides food and medicine for our bodies. It also makes you sick so warn the students not to eat it. Do not stick them in your mouth. It also provides food for other animals and all of that around us.

Explanation of the gifts needed here, located on the chart will help enhance the previous lessons of reciprocity. What does gifting and sharing mean to us? Maxaa is Tongva for sharing all different types of knowledge and reciprocal relationships. Humans are responsible for maintaining balance in your family. What does family mean? How do we take care of them? What if family means more than your moms, dads, brothers, sisters or even Aunts, Uncles, and cousins? How do you take care of your more-than-human relationships?



Resources to use:

[Mapping Indigenous LA: mila.ss.ucla.edu](http://mila.ss.ucla.edu)

[Ranchos Alamitos Tevaaxa'nga \(Te-vaah-ha-nga\) to Today: Stories of the Tongva People](#)

Tongva Perspectives map

The Gifts of Hukaat Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)

Yucca plant or white sage plant for the students to see growth and responsibility

The importance of the Oak Tree

Exercises

- 1) Ask kids where do you get your medicine? Where do you get your food?
- 2) Start with an image. What could you make with your item? How could you share them with others? How would more-than-humans use them?
- 3) Don't let strangulation occur. Have one person be the elderberry tree. Use the images of the items (Clappersticks, flutes, container tubes, medicine, berries themselves, blossoms) and have the students attach strings to each other's items. This presents a network of relationships.
- 4) Here is a gift of song from the Tongva. In this song they bring the canoe home. Listen. Play [MOOMAT AHIKO](#) video on VIMEO. What do you hear? In this song you hear the elderberry bringing Ahmoot Ahiko in. End with the question: what if a canoe is your relative? (This is a segway to the next exercise).
- 5) Later you can bring in an appropriate plant for students to watch and think about, perhaps asking students to share caring during holidays and long weekends. You could take measurements on growth and incorporate into a science experience as well.

Assessment:

Writing: Take the ideas above. What is the most important gift to you that elderberry provided? What gifts do you have to offer someone?