

# **Tonkawa Intertribal Council of Elders**

## **Learning Tribal Ways Part 2**

### ***Greeting from the Elders in the San Diego Community!!***

This series of tips were put together to help you feel connected to our intertribal community in San Diego. Our goal is to ensure you maintain connection to an active tribal community that supports your tribal identity, dignity and culture. Our community has seen suicide, substance abuse, addiction, diabetes, heart disease, and many challenges difficult for the community. We are also the survivors with the most resilience, and this gives us hope. We are especially concerned that our community stays connected during this time of social distancing. Now more than ever each of us needs to take precautions to protect ourselves and our families.

### **Do things in a “good way.”**

As indigenous descendants our elders would always remind us to do things in a “good way”. We have seen many individuals and families come to the community and not had the benefit of learning their culture or traditions. So, we created these tips to help you feel comfortable in the community. Doing things in a good way means being respectful, honest, humble, with prayer and forethought. Doing things in a good way means being mindful of what you say, how you say it, and how you act. It means to be a good relation with our elders, friends, family, children, and all beings. We are told to leave things better than we found them.

### **Attend and support community gatherings.**

When you come to an event or gathering take some time to observe how things are being done and who is helping. Offer to help before, during, and after the gathering. When you hear that a pow wow or gathering is being planned, see what you can do to help make it a success. You can help set up, bring a dish (if appropriate), help clean up and assist by doing whatever may be needed. If you model and encourage a sense of belonging, you help others enjoy the event.

### **Learn about local tribes and their histories.**

Continue to learn about other tribes, their histories and cultures. Be sure to learn about the local tribes, the reservations, and their unique histories. Be open to sharing what you know of your own tribe. Today there is so much information available on the internet.

## **Tribal practices and traditions**

There may be an elder who you really want to get to know. Find a time to introduce yourself and ask how to do things in a good way. Learning from our elders has always been better than learning from a book, a movie, or a video. This is a good time to get to know the elders in our community and appreciate their strengths and teachings. It may be impolite to directly ask about one's practices and traditions. You will find some things are spoken of openly and others are not.

## **Listen More**

The old adage "We have two ears and one mouth for a reason" is good to remember. When you're with an elder try to listen more than you speak. Sometimes there is meaning in what was not said. Many elders can convey things with few words, but one needs to listen.

## **Ask about the Early Days**

What do you know about the history of Native Americans in San Diego? Some elders really enjoy sharing certain stories in public. When they get to know you and feel comfortable, they may share some stories that are meant for you to help you grow or understand things better.

## **Ask for Advice**

Our elders are living examples of resilience and perseverance. Take some time out of your day to seek counsel of an elder, their advice may be better than you think. Be grateful and honor the time. Find ways to thank them beyond saying the words.

## **Stay Connected and Give Them a Call**

It is always good manners to let someone know you are thinking of them. In our busy lives it's easy to forget the importance of maintaining connection, especially with those who've worked hard in the community for a long time. This may seem simple, but it will mean a lot, especially when you let an elder know they have been a positive force in your life.

*Doing things in a good way means knowing that everyone and everything has a place in the circle of life.* We encourage our community members to stay connected to each other, look after one another, and feel comfortable to participate in our community gatherings. We understand that every family has a unique history and relationship to their tribal heritage. We believe every Native descendant has the right to claim their tribal heritage, whether you are from an urban or reservation area. The Tonkawa Council of Elders was founded in 1969 by a consortium of American Indian individuals. For more information contact Vickie Gambala at [vgambala@gmail.com](mailto:vgambala@gmail.com) or 619-306-7318.