

Review of *California's Lost Tribes*

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When it comes to American Indians, media portrayals have focused on stereotypical portrayals or footnoted mentions. *California's Lost Tribes* brings an honest and moving overview of the unique social, political and economic history of California's First Peoples. *California's Lost Tribes* offers an account of California Indians that facilitates for a factual understanding of the current situation all Californians have to deal with, Tribal government gaming.

The outright hostility towards the California Indian population by settlers of Spanish, Mexican, and American heritage, as well as the neglect and corruption of government agencies charged with ensuring the safety and protection of the remaining Indian population resulted in the political and economic marginalizing of Indians. For over two centuries, tribes in California were repeatedly silenced in determining their own destiny despite their continued efforts to be heard. All this would change at the end of the twentieth century when California Indians would finally reclaim economic and political power over their own futures through the advent of tribal gaming.

Most people are uninformed about the history of California Indians. Although the state is home to the largest number of federally recognized tribes and home to the largest urban Indian population in the country, California Indians

are often overlooked or misunderstood. In fact, non-California American Indians are also often ignorant about California Indians and unacquainted with the unique history of the tribal governments and peoples of native California. In order to understand the political development of California Indian tribal governments today one must first review the history of California Indians. Director Jed Riffe's film does just that. In an effort to discuss the issues surrounding tribal government gaming, his film more importantly offers an often overlooked historical explanation of what happened to California Indians. This question is critical if we are to have an understanding of the current and future state of affairs. *California's Lost Tribes* is a film that provides the viewer with a framework for understanding the current demographic situation of California tribal nations, lands, political, legal, social and economic issues. Director Riffe's inclusion of the voice of California Indians in this film is refreshing and long overdue. This film will be an asset to educators, policy makers, and all Americans as we face current and future challenges.

Providing a visible and authentic account of the evolution of tribal gaming and historical foundation of California nations through the voice of the California Indians such as former Chairwoman Mary Ann Martin Andreas of the Morongo Tribe, whose reservation near Palm Springs is highlighted in the film. She recalls her childhood of poverty and shows the viewer the transformation from epidemic poverty that controlled her reservation to the new found wealth and opportunities that tribal gaming has brought to her tribal nation.

Viejas Tribal Chairman Anthony Pico makes clear the importance of tribal sovereignty and the ability to exercise that right to promote that health, welfare and future of his tribal nation. For many, tribal gaming has created new controversies amongst old friends and allies. For example, the film addresses some of the friction created between the Rumsey Band's Cache Creek Casino and Resort in Capay Valley and the local farming community. This film explores the complexities surrounding tribal government gaming and delves into a variety of issues in order to best understand the dramatic changes which have occurred in the lives of California Indians. The introduction of tribal government gaming in its high stakes form has assisted in those changes but the strength of *California's Lost Tribes* lays with its historical discussion into the series of changes that have affected California Indians historically as told by California Indians.

California Lost Tribes does not pretend that tribal government gaming is the panacea for all tribal nations or that California Indians are merely victims of manifest destiny. Instead, this film provides an opportunity for understanding and discussion that will assist in silencing the uninformed voices that so often drive public opinion and ultimately policy decisions.