

What is the California Indian Heritage Center (CIHC)?

The future California Indian Heritage Center is a new institution that will fill a long-standing need in California, serving both Indian and non-Indian citizens. It will be a center for native people from throughout the state to come together, honor and preserve their past, and promote the continuation of their traditions. It will also be a place where California students, teachers, and families can learn about the history and heritage of California's indigenous people and contemporary Indian life. It will be a destination for tourists from around the world to learn about Native American culture in California.

The CIHC will be unique in its integration of both outdoor and indoor facilities. Connection to the land is immeasurably significant to Californians Indians. The outdoor setting of the CIHC will include restored habitats, native plants, and river walkways. Such elements lend themselves to a variety of outdoor activities such as gathering materials for basket making, demonstration of traditional watercraft, and instruction in handling traditional hunting and fishing equipment. There will be ceremonial grounds for use by Indian people, and an outdoor theater where traditions of storytelling, dance, and music may be shared with visitors. The outdoor facilities and surrounding natural resources will be managed and interpreted in a way that is consistent with Indian values.

The indoor facilities for the CIHC will include exhibition galleries, a theater, meeting rooms, and a research library. It will also include housing for the cultural objects that will be managed by the Center in accordance with Indian values and museum standards. Visitor amenities will include a gift shop and food service. Early planning efforts indicated that a structure of approximately 60,000 square feet will be needed. Building design will be environmentally sensitive and consistent with a modern image of California Indians.

The complete vision for the CIHC is for it to serve as the hub of cultural activities throughout the state by networking existing and emerging local, State, and tribal museums through electronic media, training programs, and shared exhibitions. The CIHC will offer many opportunities for multidisciplinary education and partnerships. It will deal with topics related to California Indian life historically and presently, with an eye toward the future of California Indian communities and culture. One focus will be on contemporary arts.

The development of the CIHC is an official project of the State of California and is managed by California State Parks. The CIHC Task Force was created by legislation to advise on siting, design, communication, and governance during the development process. The Center will be operated under a partnership between State Parks and a non-profit organization that can ensure that it will reflect the values of California's Indian people. The State has provided an initial \$5 million to pay for master planning and a modest first phase of development. Subsequent work will be accomplished in stages as money is raised. Additional funding will be sought from public and private sources, including Federal programs, charitable foundations, tribes, and individuals.

The CIHC will be located in the greater Sacramento area. A site along the American River near downtown Sacramento has been identified as the preference of the CIHC Task Force. An alternate site was identified at Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. In-depth studies of both sites to determine if they can accommodate CIHC needs, and public discussion about the compatibility of CIHC with local planning guidelines, are taking place in Winter and Spring of 2005.