



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 30, 2017

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PSUSD, Agua Caliente partner to develop school district-wide Native American studies curriculum

Elementary, middle school classroom content to begin 2018-19 school year

PALM SPRINGS — The Palm Springs Unified School District and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians are collaborating on the creation of an elementary and middle school Native American Studies curriculum for launch within the Palm Springs Unified School District in 2018-19.

Following a year-long series of planning sessions, the Tribe, The Foundation for PSUSD and PSUSD's Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding and curriculum plan.

“We expect the curriculum’s content to touch on a wide range of aspects of Native American and Agua Caliente history, culture, traditions, lifestyles, and modern-day government and economics,” said Tribal Chairman Jeff L. Grubbe. “With this project, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians will continue to build on our legacy of a strong commitment to education in the region. We’re very excited to be working with the district.”

The new curriculum will be geared to both elementary (Grades 3-5) and middle-school (Grades 6-8) students in the Palm Springs Unified School District. It will be created and finalized during the 2017-18 school year and will be ready for launch within the district for the 2018-19 school year.

“Native Americans have an important and historic presence in Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley -- yet many of our students are unaware of the rich cultural history of the region’s indigenous people or that they are thriving in the world today,” said Foundation Director Ellen Goodman. “This new curriculum will help establish a real groundwork of familiarity on students’ parts with the importance and impact of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.”

According to the signed MOU, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians will underwrite the costs involved in creating and implementing the curriculum within existing social studies, civics, human geography, and other teaching units.

PSUSD's Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services Mike Swize, and his staff will oversee the project, in close partnership with the Tribal Council, working with a Curriculum Specialist engaged specifically for the project.

The Foundation for the Palm Springs Unified School District will act as fiduciary agent and project liaison. All curriculum content will be jointly developed with the participation of relevant Tribal government representatives.

During the coming school year, crucial tasks will include engaging an expert elementary/middle-school curriculum specialist for the project; writing of all classroom materials and messaging to ensure learning and retention; and careful training of PSUSD teachers, aides, and coordinators.

About the Tribe: The [Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians](http://www.aquacaliente-nsn.gov) is a federally recognized Indian Tribe located in Palm Springs, California, with 31,500 acres of reservation lands that spread across Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, and into the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains. The Tribe currently owns and operates two 18-hole championship golf courses, the Spa Resort Casino in downtown Palm Springs and the Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa in Rancho Mirage. For more information about the Tribe, visit www.aquacaliente-nsn.gov