

**A non-Native's Guide to cultural sensitivity – Karuk Tribe
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The Karuk Tribe's Department of Natural Resources applauds your desire to act appropriately and responsibly when working with the indigenous peoples of the Klamath River, and your wish to behave respectfully when in their homeland. In order to help non-Natives understand how they can achieve these goals, it is important to understand that the Karuk People may have an entirely different world-view from your own. To quote from a contractor working with the US Forest Service, "As a white and well-educated archaeologist," she has learned that when working with the various tribes in our region, "... never *assume* anything."

The ancestors of the Karuk People are the spirit people, the *ikxaréeyav*, some of whom were transformed into humans, animals and natural features at an early turning point in the history of creation. Our oral traditions recount the formation of plants, aquatic species, land formations and other resources created and given to us to utilize and manage. These gifts are given with conditions: we understand the reciprocal responsibilities that are attached to this act of largesse, and the traditional laws given to us by the *ikxaréeyav* remain the basis for management techniques and the ceremonies that frame them. These practices must be and are kept alive and perpetuated through our legal bind and moral obligations to our benefactors.

Understanding our relationship to the natural world is integral to behaving sensitively to the Karuk culture and landscape: the water, rocks, trees, animals, fish – the sun, the moon and the stars – are our relations. Treating the natural world respectfully is our – and your – responsibility. This is also true of interacting with the people indigenous to the landscape.

It is important to recognize when working with and listening to Karuk people that there is diversity of community perspectives and variations in Karuk cultural knowledge. We are careful not to frame any one perspective as being representative of the whole Tribe. This is very much in keeping with our history: in fact, to speak of the Tribe as having been one political unit is incorrect. The indigenous peoples that populated the area now known as California lived in villages that were linked by language and cultural similarities and were otherwise quite independent from one another in pre- and post-contact times.

In general, one should keep in mind that Karuk people are brought up to be respectful when others speak. Conversations and story-telling do not follow a typically linear pattern found in the Euro-American culture, and it may be difficult for non-Natives to refrain from breaking what may be perceived as "uncomfortable periods of silence." Story-telling features largely in the upbringing of traditional Natives, and the etiquette for listening is taught to the very youngest: once the story begins with the invocation "*uknîi*," listeners must be silent until the story is completed, signaled by the word "*kupánakanakana*." With this in mind, non-Natives may try to wait longer to ask questions of cultural practitioners and be very careful to ask only those questions to which they are truly interested in hearing the answer.

Yôotva – thank you.