Tribal Education Agency advocates for schools to add more Native American curriculum; provides teachers with lesson plan paired with Native novel locally authored

We currently have a number of teachers that we are working with. This is one important step to get more Native American lesson plans, that are accurate and told from a Native perspective, in classrooms
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To bring more culturally responsive curriculum into public schools that accurately represents the rich Native American population and culture on the North Coast, an education program called Pathmakers is working with Humboldt County public schools to add a novel to classroom curriculum that accurately depicts the WWI experience from the viewpoint of Native soldiers. Pathmakers, developed by the Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe, Humboldt County Office of Education, and Northern Humboldt Union High School District, funding to help build a culturally responsive curriculum that focuses on the book 'Soldiers Unknown. The local author, Mr. Chag Lowry, will discuss the native viewpoints in the novel with classroom through virtual classrooms platforms.

"A number of teachers have expressed interest in including the novel in their class curriculum this year, and having the opportunity to include the perspective of war from the Yurok people, culture and community," Karen Skoglund, Indian Education Director for Northern Humboldt Union High School District, said. Skoglund believes this is one important step to get more Native American lesson plans, that are accurate and told from a native perspective, in classrooms.

The culturally and historically accurate graphic novel is intended to reduce Eurocentrism and broaden the perspectives taught in the classroom to include local Native American history and viewpoints. "While the characters and details in the story are fictionalized, the context is not, and that decades of research went into this novel that centers around World War I," Alison Robbins, Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe's education director, said. Often, textbooks have inaccuracies when describing indigenous history - Pathmakers is advocating for more books in classrooms told from a native viewpoint to help correct the narrative.

The book will be paired with a virtual curriculum that covers Native American history, and the social affects Native soldiers experienced, going to a war for a country that committed genocide against its people a generation prior. Curriculum topics include how Native people responded to colonization, as well as the causes and consequences of WWI. Discussions will center around when North Coast tribes first had contact with European immigrants, and how it affected the Yurok people and their environment, and what it was like for Native Americans to be granted U.S. citizenship.

The lesson plan will follow a maker activity that will focus on storytelling. Students will get to create their graphic novel storytelling from images that can be drawn, painted, or collaged together with photographs. Students will have the opportunity to discuss how to create a comic

book story from local author, Mr. Chag Lowry. "I'll share how I worked with the artist to create our comic in the modules, and then students can ask me questions if their teachers would like to set up a Zoom call with me afterward," says Mr. Lowry.

Soliders Unknown is a wartime narrative based on true life experiences of Yurok men in the military during WWI. The graphics encompass the Native American experience during war, with native culture and spirituality interwoven into the storyline and graphics. Also, cultural items are incorporated into the graphics such as baskets, traditional foods such as acorns, and spiritual ways of living during the times of war.

The novel is based on extensive military research and on oral interviews of family members of Yurok WWI veterans from throughout Humboldt and Del Norte counties. The author Chag Lowry is of Yurok, Maidu, and Achumawi ancestry, and the illustrator Rahsan Ekedal was raised in southern Humboldt. Soldiers Unknown takes place during the battle of the Meuse-Argonne in France in 1918, which is the largest battle in American Army history. The book was peer-reviewed and endorsed by the World War One Centennial Commission, for historical accuracy and compelling format in the telling of World War One history.

“We are honored to work with our community partners who have a common goal to enrich schools with more culturally responsive education that accurately represents the many tribes in the region,” Jason Ramos, council member for the Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe, said. “We would like to see this novel become part of school’s curriculum planning every year, for social studies and history classes, to further educate students about Native American history and ways of life, which are important to this region.”

Pathmakers is actively working with the Humboldt County Office of Education, providing culturally responsive lesson plans and curriculum that has a makerspace component. Due to COVID-19, all of the content will be taught virtually, with video demonstrations – kits and supplies will be made available to teachers.

The Pathmakers project team is working with K-12 students, college students, parents, teachers, tribal members, and regional native cultural and education experts to develop the programming. Pathmakers activities will help all students, native and non-native, learn about the history, culture, and technologies of the tribes in the region, from pre-colonization to today. Pathmakers curriculum strives to bridge the gap between traditional Native technologies and maker activities using today’s technologies. Traditional Native technologies employed sophisticated techniques that are still in use today.