

Date of Hearing: June 26, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, TOURISM, AND  
INTERNET MEDIA

Kansen Chu, Chair

SCR 121 (Anderson) – As Introduced March 21, 2018

**SENATE VOTE:** 38-0

**SUBJECT:** Eagle Staff.

**SUMMARY:** This measure would recognize the Eagle Staff as the first flag of the sovereign Native American tribal nations and renews our commitment to encourage programs promoting cultural education of its significance. Additionally, the Legislature is committed to inclusiveness for all Native Americans and the traditions and symbolism of the Eagle Staff and will encourage state government departments to include these principles in their policies and practices. Specifically, **this Resolution** makes the following findings and declarations:

- 1) The Eagle Staff, considered the first flag of the Americas, represents the stature and honor of a particular Native American tribe or tribes. It commonly looks like a shepherd's staff, wrapped in either otter skin or buffalo skin, and features eagle feathers.
- 2) Predating colonization, the Eagle Staff was the indicator of a tribe's accomplishments in battle and the integrity and honor of its people.
- 3) Today, the Eagle Staff is used to represent tribal communities, Native American and First Nations organizations, or a member of an honor society or a service veteran.
- 4) The Eagle Staff represents tribal sovereignty, unity, and tradition, and reflects the honor bestowed upon an individual, tribal organization, or tribal elder.
- 5) The Eagle Staff is typically carried by Native American veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Native Americans have served in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnicity across all branches of the military.
- 6) The Eagle Staff is a proud legacy of the Native American people. It is the embodiment of the warrior and of enduring fortitude, which together have enabled Native American tribes to survive policies intended to extinguish their race and culture.
- 7) The Eagle Staff is adorned with eagle feathers symbolizing the remembrance of fallen warriors. Because eagles and eagle feathers are highly revered and federally protected, only a few federal agencies and enrolled native people may carry them. The eagle feather is the highest award that can be given by a tribe to its people.
- 8) The Eagle Staff is recognized by all Native American tribes, First Nations, and other Native American organizations. The Eagle Staff is welcomed into all communities, including Native American and First Nations communities, with a flag song or victory song and is always presented ahead of any other flag.

- 9) The Eagle Staff is formally recognized by all branches of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Department of National Defense.
- 10) The Eagle Staff is recognized and honored by the National Congress of American Indians.
- 11) The Eagle Staff is recognized by the Trickster Art Gallery, a Native American art gallery and museum in Schaumburg, Illinois.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** None. This Resolution is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

*Author statement and support:* According to the author's office "California is offering this recognition as symbolic of a commitment to inclusiveness for all Native Americans, to our continued intergovernmental cooperation, and to encourage programs promoting cultural education."

"The Eagle staff is not tribe specific but recognized by all Nations as representative of tribal sovereignty, unity and tradition. Modernly it is used to represent tribal communities, Native American and First Nations organizations, a member of an honor society, or a service veteran."

*Background:* The Pala Band of Mission Indians, sponsor of the measure, state in its letter of support, "The Eagle Staff is considered the first flag of the Americas and represents the stature and honor of the Native American tribe, tribes or its people. The Eagle Staff is adorned with eagle feathers which are highly revered, symbolize the remembrance of fallen warriors and are considered the highest award that can be given by a tribe to its people."

"Each year the Pala Band of Mission Indians sponsors California Native American veterans to attend the National Gathering of American Indian Veterans, a three-day event hosted by the Trickster Art Gallery in Illinois," according to the California Tribal Business Alliance, a key supporter of the measure. "During this event all United States veterans and military personnel are honored in Native American style with speakers, discussion panels, veteran service providers, cultural performers and entertainers who gather to share stories, educate, motivate, spiritually uplift and foster comradery and friendship."

"This year, the delegation sponsored by the Pala Band of Mission Indian will present SCR 121 to the Trickster Art Gallery in recognition and support of its devotion to the well-being of United State Military veterans, native and non-native alike."

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Pala Band of Mission Indians (Sponsor)  
California Tribal Business Alliance

**Opposition**

There is no opposition on file.

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