

2017 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

## ◆ Marty Meeden ◆

### Leo Reano Memorial Award



Marty Meeden has been an educator for 33 years. He has worked for equal educational opportunity and rights for all marginalized students and educators throughout his life.

"I have had the sincere privilege of knowing Marty since I began my membership in the NEA American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus. Our native culture survives today because of individuals like Marty who are willing to stand up and be an advocate for our sovereignty and tribal rights. Today we have few heroes left within our native tribes and even fewer who are educators. Marty is one of those heroes," says Ron "Duff" Martin, Wisconsin Education Association Council President.

Meeden first embraced his activism in college when he led the Native American Student Alliance to promote higher education for Native American students in California. The Alliance provided a haven for Native American students to gain support in their education, and it promoted the education of non-Native American students on issues Native Americans face. This is work he continues throughout his life.

As chair of the NEA American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus, Meeden advocated for equal educational opportunity for American Indian/Alaska Native Children. Even after his term, he continued as an active Caucus member and a role model for leaders and members. He is serving his third three-year term on the California Teachers Association (CTA) Board. His strong record of advocacy includes serving as co-chair of the CTA State Council of Education Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, chair of the Council's American Indian/Alaskan Native Caucus, and chair of the CTA Early Ethnic Identification Minority Development Program.

One of the reasons Meeden champions appropriate Native representation in history is because he understands the power of storytelling. What people are taught about who they are and where they come from directly impacts their perception of themselves. That is one of the reasons he has been a leader in the fight to eliminate Native mascots, correct inaccurate curricula and debunk other misrepresentations of Native Americans and Alaska Natives in our academic culture. Marty's impact in schools is widespread throughout the state of California and the nation. His workshop presentations and trainings have been instrumental in preparing many educators and their students.

Meeden has advocated on behalf of Native Americans whenever and wherever there is a need, from the classroom to the state capital to the nation's capital. When federal education laws and funding changes threatened to close many American Indian Centers, Meeden teamed up with the California tribal leaders and legislators to create and pass legislation that guarantees separate funds for Native students.

"We must always be proud of our heritage, our people and our stories. Marty not only talks the talk, but he walks the walk as well," says Duff Martin.