



JESUS VALLE

Wilma Mankiller Memorial Award

The late Native American Cherokee Nation activist Wilma Mankiller is legendary as a fearless advocate for Indigenous children to achieve educational excellence.

Professor Jesus Valle is a more than worthy recipient of the award that bears her name, and equally fearless in his quest to maintain Native history and culture.

As a tenured professor of Native American Studies at Sacramento's American River College, Mr. Valle brings his personal, and a people's legacy and purpose to the forefront of higher education. He's an enrolled citizen of the Texas band of Yaqui Indians, and he has instilled in young people how embracing tradition and knowledge of origin can impact one's future.

Mr. Valle's developed initiatives that have given Northern California Indigenous youth a stronger sense of community; establishing a Native Resource Center, giving support to students who needs are often not acknowledged in higher or public education. He has created professional development programs and workshops to help enlighten the community at large.

Mr. Valle's most life-affirming initiative is his American Indian Summer Institute. This five-day retreat has transformed lives, putting college-bound students in the mix of area universities, within the context of demonstrating these institutions have an appreciation of Indigenous culture.

Through this free program, AISI participants can interface with Native American mentors, and share experiences with Native youth throughout the region they otherwise might never meet. Mr. Valle's vision for AISI was that eclectic combination of athletic activities, forums to strategize meeting financial needs for college, and entertainment, all steeped in American Indian culture, would be inspiring and impactful.

Professor Valle has dedicated three decades of educational experience to advocate for inclusivity, pride and dignity amongst Native communities. He serves as a co-chair and founding member of the Sacramento Native American Higher Education Collaborative. Through the efforts of SNAHEC), Valle successfully lobbied for \$30 million in state funding for the Native American Student Support and Success Program (NASSSP).

Through his diligent work, Native youth have been given hope, a sense of direction, and can now imagine a bright future of opportunity previously, and sadly, too often denied.

Professor Jesus Valle's mentorship, role modeling, and just plain "keeping it 100", has made him, like Wilma Mankiller before him, an education superhero for Indigenous Nations.