

PRESS RELEASE  
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## ***Storytelling* Revisits Native People Through Lens of Edward Curtis at SB Museum of Natural History**

- Nov 11 through April 30, 10:00 AM–5:00 PM (Museum closed Tuesdays)
- Photographs from a century ago, revisited in a new context
- Online details at [sbnature.org/storytelling](https://sbnature.org/storytelling)
- Included with Museum admission

**SANTA BARBARA, CA**—From November 11 to April 30, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History will exhibit portraits of Native people, landscapes, and culture by the influential ethnographic photographer Edward S. Curtis. The exhibition situates the artist and the people he photographed in the context of American colonialism, inviting viewers to reconsider pervasive pop-culture beliefs about Native life and history.

Influenced by the pictorialist movement of the early twentieth century, Curtis set out to create a photo and ethnographic record of Indigenous peoples living in Western regions from the Mexican border to Alaskan shores. His motivation was a belief that U.S. government policy and the land grabs of American settlers might wipe away Native lifeways forever. While Curtis's intentions were well-meaning, his methods of staging photos bent reality into imagery that is often more art than fact. 100 years later, Indigenous people still contend with "Indian" stereotypes that are consequences of Edward Curtis's vision.

Although many of the photographer's images are iconic, [\*Storytelling: Native People through the Lens of Edward S. Curtis\*](#) aims to show what has not previously been seen or understood. That was also the goal of the Museum's popular 2007 exhibition of Curtis photographs, curated by Museum Librarian Terri Sheridan. This year, a strong infusion of lesser-seen imagery and new interpretation provide "a broader exhibit for people, in terms of what's on the walls as well as what their takeaways might be," says Sheridan.

The most important takeaway, according to Sheridan, is respect for unique Indigenous cultures. Sheridan wants the selected images and their interpretation to counter the stereotypical presentation of popularized Curtis imagery which depicts cultures as the same. In particular, she hopes to invite greater respect and understanding of the women who agreed to be photographed.

“Because of the patriarchal place Curtis was coming from,” Sheridan explains, “he would usually talk with the men, not realizing that often the women were people of power in particular cultures. He also very rarely named women, so their photographs often are just ‘wife of’ or ‘sister of.’ Although we rarely know their names, these women should be seen.” A conundrum of breathtaking beauty and an iconography of contradictory emotions, *Storytelling* is planned to run through April.

Sponsored by Knight Real Estate Group of Village Properties, First Republic Bank, Kathleen Kalp and Jim Balsitis, Kelly and Tory Milazzo.

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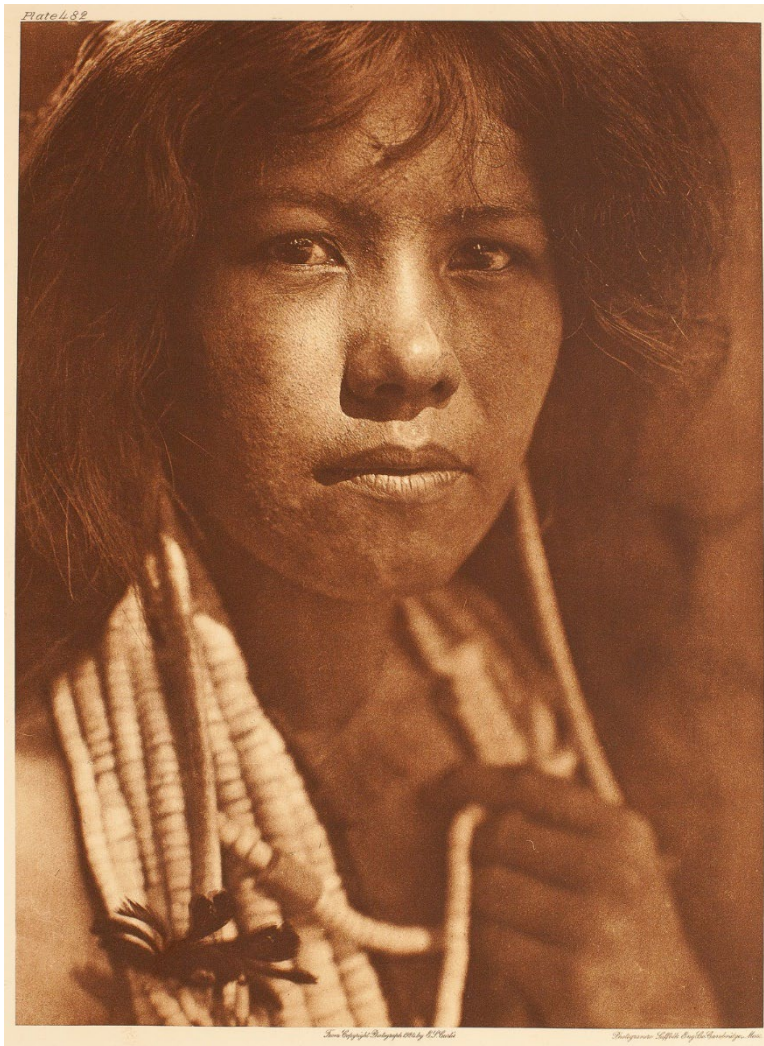
## About the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

*Powered by Science. Inspired by Nature.* Founded in 1916, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History inspires a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world. The Museum seeks to connect people to nature for the betterment of both, and prides itself on being *naturally different*. For more information, visit [sbnature.org](http://sbnature.org).



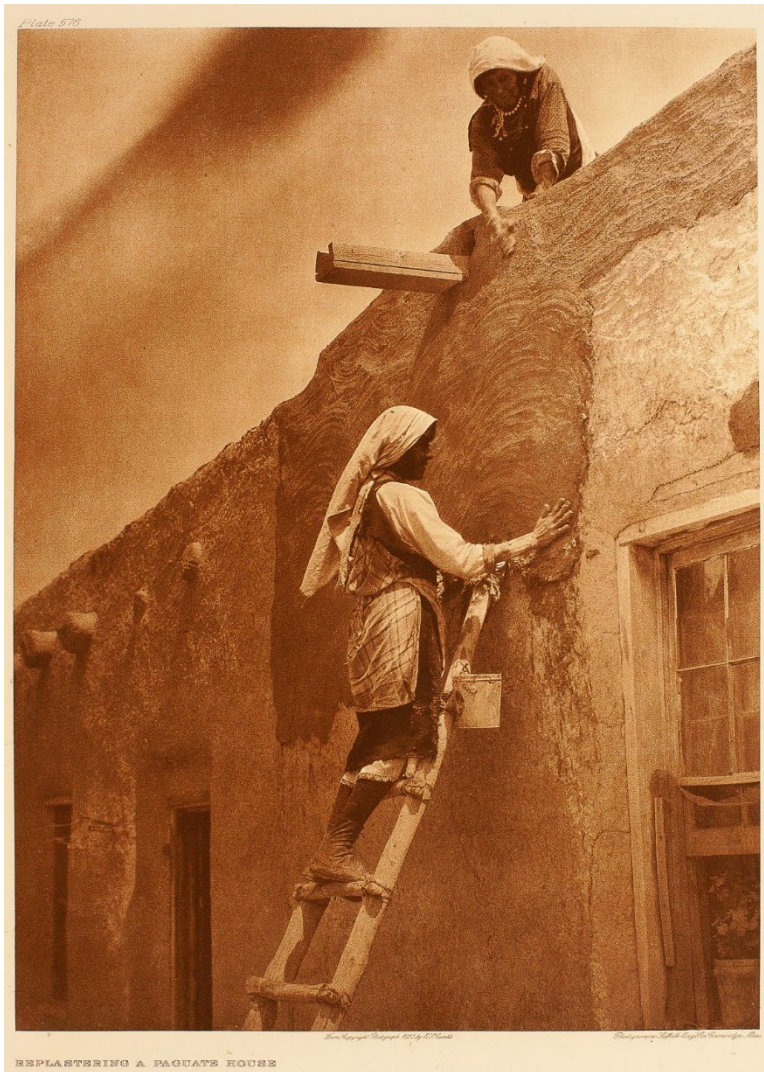
Detail of “East Mesa Girls,” 1921 photograph by Edward S. Curtis

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"A Pomo Girl," 1924 photogravure by Edward S. Curtis

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"Replastering a Pagate house," 1925 photogravure by Edward S. Curtis



"Principal female shaman of the Hupa," 1923 photogravure by Edward S. Curtis