



SURVIVING THE STORM: 15th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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Where It All Began

On October 23rd in 2011, a Tribal youth fell from a tree at a ceremonial ground and broke his arm. The injury was not life threatening, but the nearest hospital was a two-hour drive away. For the people gathered there, the distance made a difficult moment more uncertain. It also revealed how much could happen before outside help was available.

The Elders began asking a question: What could the community do to help prevent or lessen the harm from future incidents at the ceremonial ground?

It was a practical question rooted in care for the people who came together there. Children played, families gathered, and ceremonies brought generations into a shared space. An injury could happen on any ordinary day. The community needed people nearby who knew what to do first, how to help safely, and when to seek additional care.

M.K. Youngblood was asked to start something. The first step was CPR and first aid training. These skills gave participants a way to respond to a medical emergency while professional help was on its way. Training also opened a larger conversation about the risks people might face and how they could prepare together.

Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT, training followed. CERT widened the focus from helping one injured person

to organizing neighbors during a larger emergency. Participants learned that preparedness depends on communication, assigned roles, practice, and an understanding of what volunteers can safely do.

Those early classes became the foundation of CAL TERRA. The work began with a specific need at a specific place, then grew as people saw how the same approach could serve other communities and situations. A trained person could help at a ceremony, at home, at work, or during a disaster that affected many families at once.

Eventually, Homeland Security learned about CAL TERRA and invited us to take part in training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama. It was an opportunity to learn alongside others in emergency response and bring that knowledge back to the communities we served. We accepted the invitation, kept learning, and never looked back.

Fifteen years later, CAL TERRA's work reaches far beyond its first CPR and first aid class. Yet the question the Elders asked in 2011 still guides us: What can we do now to better care for our people when something happens?

The answer continues to begin with listening, training, and taking action together, with our Elders, families, responders, and neighbors guiding every step.

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Growing Together, Training with Purpose

Walk into a CAL TERRA training and you see more than people working toward a certificate. You see neighbors introducing themselves, instructors sharing what they have learned in the field, and participants asking how a lesson applies where they live. Someone wants to know how to help during a medical emergency. Someone else is thinking about a job in response or environmental work. Both belong in the room.

CAL TERRA is growing through those conversations. Our work brings Tribal communities, training partners, responders, educators, and local organizations together around a practical question: What skills do people need, and how can training be made accessible and useful to them?

The answer looks different from one community to another. It can mean CPR and first aid for someone who wants to help a family member. It can mean CERT or incident command training for people who support community response. It can mean HAZWOPER instruction for workers who need to recognize hazards and protect themselves on a job site. Each course has its own requirements, but each also gives participants a chance to see where they

Our partnerships make that work stronger. A local organization understands who is looking for an opportunity and what makes participation difficult. A responder can describe what happens on the ground. An instructor can turn that experience into a lesson people can practice. Tribal leaders and community members help ensure the training respects the places, responsibilities, and relationships it is meant to serve. CAL TERRA's role is to bring those perspectives into the same conversation and help turn them into meaningful learning.

We are also developing training pathways that connect classroom learning with field experience and work. Programs such as DisasterCorps and CarbonCorps reflect the range of needs communities are identifying, from emergency readiness to care for the land.

There is energy in this stage of CAL TERRA's work. Partnerships are taking shape, programs are being developed, and people are bringing their knowledge to the table. What matters most is what happens when they meet: a participant gains confidence, an instructor learns from the community, and a connection forms between people who can help one another. Each connection helps turn training into something the whole

The Road Ahead

Anniversaries invite us to look back, but they also ask us to consider what comes next. For CAL TERRA, the story begins in October 2011, when a Tribal youth fell from a tree at a ceremonial ground and broke his arm. His injury was not life threatening, yet reaching the nearest hospital required a two hour drive. The Elders saw that distance as a reason to prepare. They asked what the community could do to prevent future incidents and help when someone was hurt.

They asked M.K. Youngblood to start something. CPR and first aid training came first, giving people practical skills they could use while waiting for professional care. Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT, training followed. It helped participants think beyond one injury and consider how neighbors could organize and support one another during a larger emergency.

Then Homeland Security learned about CAL TERRA and invited us to participate in training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama. That invitation opened another opportunity to learn, build relationships, and bring new knowledge home. Each step grew from the Elders' original question. We went to Anniston, and we never looked back.

That pattern continues to shape CAL TERRA. We listen when a community identifies a need. We bring together people with knowledge and responsibility. Training gives participants a place to begin, and practice shows what works and what needs to improve. As new people take part, they bring their own experience and strengthen the work.

Over 15 years, CAL TERRA has expanded its training and emergency readiness efforts. We have seen why the first minutes of an incident matter, especially where medical care or other



We have also learned that a certificate alone cannot make a community prepared. People need opportunities to use their skills, understand their plans, and know whom they can call when conditions change.

We are grateful to the Elders whose question set this work in motion. We thank the people who attended those first classes, the instructors who have shared their knowledge, and the volunteers and partners who have helped carry the work forward. Every participant has added to CAL TERRA's story.

The next chapter will bring challenges we can anticipate and others we cannot. Communities will continue to face injuries, disasters, and changing risks, often with limited time to decide what to do. Our responsibility is to keep listening, keep learning, and make training useful in the places people gather, live, and work. That means learning from each experience, and making sure the next generation has a place in this work.

Fifteen years ago, a community took its first step toward answering a question. This anniversary honors that beginning and everyone who has taken the next step; there is more to learn and teach. As we move forward, we are guided by the commitment to care for our people that gave rise to CAL TERRA in 2011.

GET CERTS...!

**Train with Purpose.
Lead with Impact. Build
Your Future.**

Ready to step into something bigger than a job? CAL TERRA's training programs are designed to turn everyday people into skilled responders, environmental stewards, and community leaders. Whether you're looking to launch a new career, gain real-world certifications, or strengthen your community's emergency readiness, this is where it starts.

Our hands-on training blends classroom learning with field experience, giving you the confidence to respond when it matters most. From HAZWOPER and emergency response to environmental restoration and workforce development, every course is built for real-world impact, not just theory.

You won't just learn, you'll do. You'll train alongside professionals, gain recognized certifications, and become part of a growing network focused on resilience, safety, and opportunity.

This is more than training. It's a pathway.

Step up. Get trained. Make a difference.

Be part of something that matters. For more information about our training programs, contact us at:
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