Outlining a History Paper--such as your California Native People paper

Outlining is easy if you did your research in an organized way! It's very important that you 1. Understand and keep in mind what the teacher has asked you to include in your paper, and go by that to stay in order, and 2. Keep good notes on note cards of relevant information.

Step One--Organize your note cards according to the topics your teacher has specified. For this paper, the topics are Pre-Contact Life for your group--both material and spiritual, Contact--both initial and ongoing, and Life since Contact. This would look like this:

Introduction
Body
  Pre-Contact
    --Material life
    --Social life
  Contact
    --Initial
    --Ongoing
Life since Contact
  --Changes
  --Continuities
  --Re-discovery
Conclusion

Step Two--organize within each category. Say you have information on Pre-Contact material life about food (3 cards), shelter (2 cards), dress (2 cards), tools (4 cards), and boats (1 card.) Decide which order to present these in--does it make sense to do dress before or after food? Would tools come before or after shelter? This is Topical Organization, and it should read smoothly and make some sense as it moves from big topic to big topic. Do the same for Pre-Contact social life. For Contact you may wish to organize your materials Chronologically. For Life Since Contact, Topical or Chronological organization, or a mixture, may work.

Step Three--Analyze Gaps. Do you have all material life information on Pre-Contact, and no social? Do you have nothing about what happened to this group between 1850 and 1890? Do you have only current information about how this nation's life has changed, and nothing about continuing traditions or re-discoveries? Doing a draft outline will help you see what other research you may want to do.

Step Four--Research to fill Gaps.

Step Five--Add new materials to outline. See over for sample.
The Wiyot of California--Tragedy and Renewal

I. Introduction

II. Body
   A. Pre-Contact life for the Wiyot (no more than 20 percent of outline)
      Material Life
         Sub-topic One
         Sub-topic Two
         Sub-topic Three
         Sub-topic Four
         Sub-topic Five
      Social Life
         Sub-topic One
         Sub-topic Two
         Sub-topic Three
         Sub-topic Four
         Sub-topic Five
   B. Contact (at least 50 percent of outline)
      Initial Contact
         Description
         Gains
            Subtopics--up to five
         Losses
            Sub-topics--up to five
      Demographics
      Contact after that (use whatever periods make sense)
         1840s-1880s and more gains/losses
         1880s-1920s and more gains/losses
         1960s-present and more gains/losses
   C. Life Since Contact (at least 30 percent of outline)
      Changes in traditional life
         Should have sub-topics--up to five
      Continuities in traditional life
         Should have sub-topics--up to five
         May include re-discoveries of culture here
      Current organization and practices
         Should have sub-topics--up to five