Saying
Our Share:
Surviving the
Missions

With special
Art Editor,
James Luna
editor's notes

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE of News, “Saying Our Share: Surviving the Missions,” was inspired by artist James Luna (Puyoukitcum/Ipi/Mexican), who has done us the great honor of serving as our art editor, as well as co-conspirator and friend. It’s a thrill to hand this over to James to share his vision.

—Lindsie Bear, Editor

HMMM…

Anyone who has gotten to know me over the years won’t call me Mr. Opto-mystic (sp)… I know because I have this “I’ve got it” air that does not speak to that. But let me remind you all that I do have dreams of the future and have lived a greater part of my life under the influence… of a dream!

The Big Enchilada dream that I have maneuvered through is that ART CAN CHANGE THINGS; CAN HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ON WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE PRESENT AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE. Oh yes I really do believe this and I witnessed this many a time, how contemporary art puts a spin on things for people to understand what is happening and what has happened to us as Native peoples.

I was invited with a few other Native artists to speak to the three-hundred-year commemoration of the life of Junipero Serra held at the Huntington Library in January 2014. I was appalled of course, as he was the architect and general of our holocaust here in the state of California, and if I may quote Ms. Lindsie Bear, “It is not what they said but what they didn’t.” It was not our show. It aimed to highlight the man historically and it did—the time, his culture, and a survey of what happened. This is when it hit me that this man was going to be canonized as a saint and forever honored for his deeds of bringing Gawd to the heathens!

I am so happy that News From Native California heard my plea and called upon artists to have a say in how we have or have not survived the historical period of the missions. This event has touched us all in some shape or form and continues today with “English only,” the US of A as a white Christian nation, and the fallacies go on and on.

Enough said. I hope this “dream” issue of News makes you smile, reflect, and create a surge of positive anger energy! Thank you to the artists and writers for their hearts and visions.

—James Luna

Thank you to the Native Arts and Cultures Fund for supporting this project to explore the legacy of the mission system in depth and with honesty.

ON THE COVER: James Luna photographed by Will Guilette.
editor’s notes

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**GUEST EDITOR**

James Luna (Puyoukitcum/Ipi/Mexican) lives on the La Jolla Indian Reservation, San Diego County. An installation/performance artist, he transforms gallery spaces into battlefields, where the audience is confronted with the nature of cultural identity, and the dangers of cultural misinterpretation—all from a Native perspective. *Family Matters & The 80,000 Names Project*, p. 8

**AUTHORS & ARTISTS**

Gregg Castro (T’rowt’raahl Salinan/Rumsien Ohlone) has served as the tribal chair for the Salinan Nation and has been involved in cultural revival and language preservation for over twenty years. *Mission Accomplice (But NOT Accomplished)*, p. 59

Gerald Clarke Jr. (Cahuilla) is a sculptor, painter, installation and conceptual artist, teacher, singer, and rancher who lives on the Cahuilla Band of Indians Reservation. *#14 Cahuilla Sign Installation*, p. 4

Jonathan Cordero (Ohlone/Chumash) is Assistant Professor of Sociology at California Lutheran University and Chairperson of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone. *Missionized California Indian Futures*, p. 63

Ed Drew is an Bay Area artist of Puerto Rican and African American descent whose work is currently focused on creating tintype portraits exploring the loss of identity and continued humanity of Indigenous peoples. *Portrait of Anthony Sul*, p. 5

Lewis deSoto (Cahuilla) is an internationally exhibited artist and professor at San Francisco State University who works primarily in the medias of sculpture, installation, and photography. His pieces are in the permanent collections of many museums including the L.A. County Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. *CAHUILLA*, p. 7

L. Frank (Tongva/Raramuri/Ajachemem) is an artist, painter, photographer, decolonizer, educator, language revivalist, activist and boat builder. *no, please, take my wife*, p. 16

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is a performance artist and writer whose pioneering work in video, installation, poetry, journalism, photography, and cultural theory explores cross-cultural issues and the politics of language and the body. He is a MacArthur Fellow and an American Book Award winner, a regular contributor to NPR, and artistic director of San Francisco’s La Pocha Nostra. *Rewriting Marcos in 2012*, p. 14–15

Steven Hackel is an author and associate professor of history at the University of California, Riverside. He co-curated the Huntington Library’s recent exhibition, *Junipero Serra and the California Missions*. *Family Matters & The 80,000 Names Project*, p. 8

Annelia Hillman (Yurok) is an artist and mentor, formerly known as AN, who lives in Karuk territory. She received her BFA from the University of Oregon, where she was given the Jan Bach Memorial Award. *Ten Little Indians in a Cupboard*, p. 10

Gordon Lee Johnson (Cahuilla/Cupeño) is a journalist from the Pala Reservation in San Diego County and author of the books *Fast Cars and Fry Bread* and *Rez Dogs Eat Beans*. *A Rez Take on Mission Foods*, p. 27

Raymond Lafferty (Kumeyaay) is an experimental filmmaker and abstract expressionist painter from the Mesa Grande Indian Reservation whose...
works have travelled widely to the Venice Biennale, the Getty Center for the Arts, and the New York Museum of Art and Design. *New Culture, online*

**Nicole Meyers-Lim** (Pomo) is the Executive Director of the Californian Indian Museum and Cultural Center, and former staff attorney for the National Indian Justice Center. *Educating Elementary School Children, p. 42*

**Valentin Lopez** (Amah Mustun) is the Tribal Chairman for the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. *Healing from Historical Trauma, p. 65*

**Judith Lowry** (Mountain Maidu/Pit River) is a figurative painter and artist whose work has been exhibited widely and is in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian. *Mission Family Values, p. 11*

**Vincent Medina** (Chochenyo Ohlone) is a member of the News staff, as well as an assistant curator at Mission Dolores in San Francisco and a board member for the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. *The Truth Shall Set Us Free, p. 48*

**Deborah A. Miranda** (Esselen/Chumash) is a poet, professor of English at Washington and Lee University in Virginia and the author of several books, including most recently, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*. *Interviews with California Missions, p. 21*

**Catherine Nelson-Rodriguez** (Luiseno/Choctaw) is a self-taught artist living and working on the La Jolla reservation who has been painting for more than thirty years. Her work revolves around Native American social commentary and portraiture. *Fred, Betty Jean, Willie, Mason, and Butch, p. 9*

**Jacque Tahuka Nunez** (Ajachemem) is a renowned storyteller, teacher, singer, and cultural consultant whose work has been featured on PBS. For more information, visit journeystothepast.com. *Journeys, p. 46*

**Sheila Tishmil Skinner** is a Visayan American performance artist whose work questions the moral structures of Catholicism. *Manifesto, p. 12*

**Deborah Small** is a Professor of Visual Arts at CSU San Marcos as well as an ethnobotanist, artist, and photographer who frequently collaborates with Kumeyaay, Cahuilla, Luiseno, and Ajachemem basketweavers. *Yerba Mansa, p. 70*

**Terria Smith** (Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla) is a member of the Native American Journalists Association. She received a master’s degree from the University of California, Berkeley, School of Journalism and is owner of Xaltiska Multimedia. In addition to her professional career, she is an advocate against domestic violence and a contributing editor to *News*. *Under Lock and Key, p. 17*

**Analisa Tripp** (Karuk) is a recent graduate of UC Berkeley, a visual artist, and author of the forthcoming children’s book *A is for Acorn*. *Book Review, p. 72*

**Brian Tripp** (Karuk) is a musician, poet, deer dancer, and culture bearer, as well as a widely exhibited mixed media artist and sculptor. *Gripe, back cover*
SURVIVING THE MISSIONS

Gerald Clarke Jr.

#14 Cahuilla Sign
Originally displayed
along roads on the
Cahuilla Reservation.
Lewis deSoto

_CAHUILLA TRUCK_, sculpture with customized Chevrolet truck, tapestry, lights, and audio, 2006. This sculpture marks the victory of the Cahuilla over the federal government in 1981, ending an injunction against Native gaming on sovereign lands. This victory allowed a locus of financial activity for the tribe and a climb in wealth and influence of Native groups all over the United States. The sculpture represents a cross-cultural world where new affluence and old cultures meet: the “Indian blanket” is a combination of traditional basket symbols that intersect with a craps gaming table, the truck emblems mix gambling and traditional symbols, while the interior reflects the pattern of U.S. currency. The lights below the truck pulsate to the sound of gambling calls, automated gambling machines, and ancient Native songs.

Ed Drew

Tintype portrait of Anthony Sul (Ohlone), 2014. For more of Ed’s work see p. 75.
James Luna and Steven Hackel

Family Matters and The 80,000 Names Project. These video works were created independently as part of the extensive exhibit Junipero Serra and the Legacies of the California Missions, which was on display at the Huntington Library from August 2013 through January 2014. They both strike at the number of Indian families and individuals affected by the invasion of Spaniards into what is now called California. The Hackel work puts into perspective the numbers and the Luna video personalizes this historical period of American history.


Below: Luna’s Osuna grandparents with his mom, aunts, and uncles.

The 80,000 Names Project documents the names, baptism dates, and burial dates (if known) of some 81,087 Indians baptized in California missions between 1771 and 1834. The project was a collaboration between Steven Hackel and Catherine Gudis from UC Riverside and Victor Solomon and Eder Cetina of the Los Angeles Art Collective. The project was created from data in the Early California Population Project in support of the exhibition.
Catherine Nelson-Rodriguez

Clockwise from top left: Fred, Betty Jean, Willie, Mason, and Butch, oil on canvas portraits, 2014.
Annelia Hillman

Ten Little Indians in A Cupboard. This piece is a representation of a continual struggle with identity and self-preservation, for Indigenous people in America and more specifically California peoples.

The cupboard itself represents the structures, specifically the missions or churches, that physically enslaved and incarcerated indigenous peoples.

The figure on the front of the cupboard represents the entrapment of our inherent spiritual understanding, which has been confined and skewed by religious colonization. This unfortunate reality has further opened doors to our internal struggle with identity.

Inside of the cupboard, we find it filled with stereotypical Native American figures. These figures represent the images that have influenced our identity crisis thorough the manipulative mainstream media. The figures in no way represent California cultures, but we are constantly driven to embrace the idea that Indians are all the same, that all indigenous beliefs can be confined and packaged into a single box.
Mission Family Values, 2014. The remolding of the American Indian lifestyle through the indoctrination of the mission network and the further institutionalization of the government boarding school system, which was based heavily upon the mission model, was purported to be an attempt at humane acculturation of the indigenous savage, when in fact it was a campaign of total cultural assimilation that began with the youngest and most impressionable. Assimilation is partly defined as consumption or digesting, the act of absorbing something. But like stubborn lumps in gravy or troublesome knots in tangled hair, the humorous core of the native soul persisted through the many decades and kept the spirit alive.

I was privileged to participate in NMAI’s Indian Humor. I see other programs throughout the country based on the “laugh until you heal” message. It’s a good one.

With the help of my computer collaborator, David McKay, we placed the comical visage of grinning Chief Wahoo, of Cleveland Indians fame, on the faces of models dressed in fringed Nubuck, plastic pony beads, and Tandy craft moccasins, who are supposed to represent the Indian family unit. In both products, sports brand and sewing costume pattern, we see the American Indian as commodity, as trademark, as goods to be stereotyped, trivialized and ready for consumption. “Mission” complete.

Yet, there stand the NDNs, grinning through it all.
Sheila Tishla Skinner

Excerpts from Manifesto.

“It is important to know the land that you live on, to know its history and how life was lived. Learn how to be resourceful and to communicate with the earth. Nature has the answers. It grows and sees new generations thrive and decay.”

Clothesline installation. Artist Sheila Tishla Skinner hangs out the “laundry” of what many women of our Western society are led to believe about beauty and what our too-fast-moving culture misses and takes for granted.
Guillermo Gómez-Peña, James Luna, with Sheila Tishla Skinner

Identity Theft: Performance Art and Activism in Two Parts performed at the Litquake Festival in San Francisco in October 2014. Guillermo Gómez-Peña performs from The Living Archive and James Luna with Sheila Tishla Skinner perform Native Stories: For Fun, Profit & Guilt.
Guillermo Gomez-Peña

Rewriting Marcos in 2012

In the early 1990s, I wrote a poem as part of my trilogy *The Re-discovery of America by the Warrior for Gringostraika*, which five years later would inspire Subcomandante Marcos to write his famous poem “Marcos is.” Fifteen years later, I have taken Marcos’s text, re-written it, and made it my own again. In other words, this is my voice, developed by Marcos and re-appropriated by my older self as an attempt to re-map my consciousness in the new century.

*With all my humility and admiration for “El Sub” who is currently fighting his last battle with a terminal disease as vicious as the government. Marcos, we will miss you badly.*

Dear X, querida Muerte

You ask me with your characteristic candor who am I or rather who I have become and what I stand for in this time and place? And I beware you: It is a complicated answer to fit in a Saturday morning revisionist poem but, because I love you and I embrace formidable challenges, I’ll give it a try, fully aware of the dangers of overusing the rhetorical statement “I am”:

In Mexico, I am an activist against violence; in the US, I am always against amnesia, but to be more geographically specific, in the Sonora desert, I am a Yaqui elder who remembers the way things were before the Spaniards & the Anglos arrived; and in Oaxaca, I am a Zapotec teen who has chosen to forget. It’s a survival strategy & if you want me to elaborate, I can stretch my identity even more across borders and continents and state...

I am a homeless Vato in Wall Street
a Mexican janitor In Los Angeles
a Pakistani cab driver In London
a Palestinian punk in Tel Aviv
an anarchist Goth in Athens...

I am NOT really
but strategically speaking...I can be
a dandy lost in the Arab Spring
a queer activist In San Francisco,
a defiant low-rider in Southern Texas,
a poetry book banned in Arizona;
I am, que soy, performing, anger & imagination
Performing fluctuating cartographies & identities
Performing real & fictional memories
& I just can’t stop being “others”...
Verbi gratia:
a transvestite in Tijuana
with infected implants & a foul mouth
a Turkish graffiti artist in Berlin
risking his life at 3 in the morning,
an Algerian DJ In Paris or Madrid
making his oblivious enemies dance,
a Russian sex worker in Amsterdam
giving pleasure to those who hate immigrants
a neo-Nuyorrican poet in Manhattan,
double exile; 3rd generation; 4” world
I am que fui, que soy,
a permanent border crossing gypsy, alien, wetback, ghost,
sudaca, indignado, ocupa, sin tierra, el 132 del otro 99%
& yes, y por supuesto,
I haven’t forgotten,
I am still a Zapatista in Chiapas,
cuarta region del planeta Poesia
poque todos somos Marcos, Evo, Antanas,
y todas somos Tawakkol Karman,
Rigoberta Menchu & Arundati Roy,
folded into one humungous dream
“We are.”
or rather I am
all of us but no one in particular, nadie,
an orphan of all nation states,
But always an artist, a writer,
an artisan of images and words
obsessed with crossing borders on stage
at street level & in my dreams
defying all nationalisms and fates
contesting organized religion & the capital Art World
aciaro estimado público/ lector:
I don’t pretend to speak for you
I just acknowledge our parallel experiences
& multiple desires
& act upon them,
like an adolescent rebel
who happens to be 56
it’s called “performance art.”
(I howl)
but, to tell you the truth,
tonight, when the performance is over
I’ll be merely myself again,
un emigrante mas
un mexicano menos
solito,
inseguro
sin tierra
ni chamba
joder!
L. Frank

no, really, please take my wife, acrylic on board, 2012. “I am the art janitor. My art is cultural maintenance”—L. Frank

Visit newsfronnativecalifornia.com/blog to see the companion digital art exhibition featuring audio, video, and new media works, including New Culture by Raymond Lafferty.
When I was coming of age in my reservation community, it seemed like I had a lot to say but not many people who would listen. Instead, I believed that it was the words of elders and those in leadership that were given the most value. (This is actually how I got involved in journalism. I noticed that when I wrote something people paid attention, so it was a natural career path.)

Now as an adult who has lived a life with many trials, I realize that the meekness of my voice had nothing to do with my age. Instead it has everything to do with the fact that I am a woman.

Growing up, I received guidance from two women of iconic strength. My mother, Mary Belardo, was taken away from our homeland on Torres Martinez reservation and grew up in a non-Native foster home more than eighty miles away. She returned as an adult to become our tribal chairwoman. The rest of my feminine foundation came from the woman who found my mother and brought her back to our people—her only sister, my late auntie Lucille Torro, a fluent Cahuilla speaker and a leader who served on the Agua Caliente tribal council.

I witnessed their trials in being women in leadership, and these trials have become my own: being consistently interrupted in meetings, or drowned out with loud double-talk; male colleagues attempting to strong-arm ideas or take credit away—and when all else fails, physical intimidation.
But one has to wonder how this type of regard for our tribal women originated. Was this type of patriarchy always a part of our tribal societies? History says no. Instead it points to an outside culprit.

In 1769, Junipero Serra’s establishment of Mission San Diego de Alcala brought far more than a new religious system to the original peoples of California. It introduced a new social system—one that was both violent and male-dominated. There are documented accounts of rape, physical abuse, and imprisonment, as well as other forms of oppression, perpetrated against Native people during Spanish colonization.

James A. Sandos sums this up in his 2004 book *Converting California*: “Priests taught Indians patriarchy and, in the process, lowered the status of Indian women within Indian culture. Such devaluation was further compounded by the shameful raping of Indian women by Spanish soldiers and settlers. Angry Indian men were killed for their opposition to the rape of tribal women. Partly to protect them from soldiers, priests in missions had unmarried Indian females over the age of seven locked together at night in the monjerio to preserve their Spanish-valued chastity.”

In other words, rather than adamantly demanding and enforcing the rule that under no circumstances should any man violate a Native woman, the solution was to take away women’s freedom. Sexualized violence was especially prevalent among soldiers in the Spanish military. One of the most historically referenced accounts of rape of Native women comes from Serra’s own writings:

> At one of these Indian villages near this mission of San Diego, which said village is very large, and which is on the road to Monterey, the gentiles therein many times have been on the point of coming here to kill us all, the reason for this is that some soldiers went there and raped their women, and other soldiers who were carrying the mail to Monterey turned their animals into their fields and there ate their crops. Three other Indian villages have reported the same thing to me several times.

> In the morning, six or more soldiers would set out together, with or without the permission of their corporal, on horseback, and go to the distant rancherias, even many leagues away. When both men and women at the sight of them took to their heels—and this account comes from the father, who learned of it from many declarations and complaints of the gentiles—the soldiers, clever as they are at lassoing cows and mules, would catch Indian women with their lassos to become prey for their unbridled lust. At times some Indian men would try to defend their wives, only to be shot down with bullets.

These occurrences undoubtedly fostered the development of a sense of emasculation among Native men. These foreign men were coming into our homelands, attacking Native women, and there was nothing that Native men could do about it. Furthermore, Native women were not the only ones on the receiving end of the sexual abuse that was being handed out by the Spanish. Sandos addressed this as well, writing, “[Serra] had reports of soldiers molesting Indian boys when they came to visit the mission San Gabriel and also learned that a soldier had sexually assaulted an Indian man there.”

What is especially disturbing about these rapes is the fact that there was often very little punishment for these soldiers’ actions. Sandos writes, ”In San Diego, a soldier named Camacho had killed an Indian girl in the course of
raping her, and so terrible was his reputation among the Indians that when the priests passed through their territory their first question was whether Camacho accompanied them. Although he and another man judged equally bad by the priests had been punished by banishment to Baja California, the troop scarcity in Alta California meant that they were going to return."

This type of violence against our tribal community’s sacred life-givers was apparently something new. Prior to Spanish colonization, Native women were revered as powerful healers and leaders in many tribal societies. For example, Tongva medicine woman Toypurina wielded great leadership power during the revolt at Mission San Gabriel. In her twenties, she had already garnered so much respect and influence among her tribal people that she was instrumental in the plot to overthrow the mission and restore their way of life.

In his article “Sources of Rebellion: Indian Testimony and the Mission San Gabriel Uprising of 1785,” Steven Hackel wrote, “On the night of the attack, the Indians came to the mission armed with bows and arrows. Toypurina came to the mission unarmed but with the intent of encouraging the men to have the will to fight.” When the plan was foiled by converted Natives at the mission, Toypurina was apprehended along with three other revolt leaders. She was interrogated and eventually exiled to Monterey, away from her people, after agreeing to convert to Christianity.

During the Christian conversion process, Native women were distanced from their traditional roles and relationship with plants and medicine. Robert H. Jackson and Edward Castillo elaborate on this in their 1995 book *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians*: “Whereas previously women had been responsible for collecting and processing plant foods, men now provided the bulk of the work in the mission grainfields and the mills that processed the grain.”

While being used for manual labor in the missions, Natives were often abused for what was perceived by the Spanish colonizers as immoral behavior. Deborah A. Miranda referenced this in her book *Bad Indians*. She quotes Steven Hackel’s book *Children of Coyote* to describe how the *corma* device was used: “The apparatus, which closed around the prisoners’ feet, was formed of two pieces of wood hinged together, twenty-four inches long and about ten inches wide. Rags were placed around the prisoner’s feet to prevent permanent injury…the *corma* could be used to punish Indians and allow them to perform simple tasks, such as cleaning wheat or grinding corn…. [a visitor to the mission] thought the *corma* especially appropriate to chastise Indian women who were guilty of adultery or other serious faults.” Miranda concludes with the observation that this was “no doubt because the *corma* forced the wearer to keep his/her legs together.” Being basically imprisoned and deprived of an opportunity to have any significant power and influence among their people, young women at the missions had little choice but to succumb to the patriarchal Spanish system.

Jackson and Castillo quoted German naturalist Gregory Langsdorff’s 1806 account of the San Francisco mission, including the provisions made for widows and single girls: “All the girls and widows are in separate houses, and are kept at work under lock and key; they are only sometimes permitted, by their superiors, to go out in the day, but never at night. As soon, however, as a girl is married she is free, and lives with her husband in one of the villages of Indians belonging to the mission.” This separation of young Native women from the
rest of the community is thought to have been done for their own protection (from sexual abuse and/or murder).

More than a century and a half has gone by since the end of the mission era. Throughout that time Native people survived the Mexican era, the California Gold Rush, the establishment of California as a state (and a government policy aimed at killing off the indigenous people of the land), the residential boarding school system, and countless other impositions on our ways of life.

Sometimes I find myself feeling so grateful that we as Native people no longer have to endure that type of suffering. But that notion is not entirely true. The fact is, we are still going through a lot of these hardships. Now, in the year 2014, we’re at a point where very few Native people have been able to go through life unscathed by some sort of violence or abuse. According to the United States Department of Justice, “American Indians are 2.5 times more likely to experience sexual assault crimes compared to all other races, and one in three Indian women reports having been raped during her lifetime.” The department’s Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women, published in 2000, further stated that 61.4 percent of Native women have experienced physical assault in their lifetime.

Nationally, violence prevention campaign slogans aimed at Native people declare that violence against women is not part of our traditions. But if sexualized and domestic violence—which are so rampant in our communities—are not part of our tribal traditions, then one can only wonder where these practices actually came from. A peek through the history books reveals that one of these sources, at least for California’s Native people, was Junipero Serra’s mission system.

This legacy is far more than statistics and history. For California Native women like myself who are survivors of violence, it’s our existence. When I think of what happened to the ancestors, I directly relate their suffering to my own. Like those ancestors, I know what it is to be a little girl living in fear of violation. I experienced what it is to be a young woman who was terrorized, beaten, and imprisoned in my own home by someone focused on controlling me.

Above all, I imagine what it would be like to have my own daughters’ freedom taken away, and it is my responsibility to fight for them and ensure that this doesn’t happen. I will stand for them, the same way my mother and auntie stood as an example for me. Today we are not helpless.

‘To be clear, this reflection is not meant to wallow in the nightmare of what was perpetrated by the Spanish missionaries and soldiers. Nevertheless, I believe an essential part of the healing process in our communities involves understanding what our ancestors went through and who was responsible for that suffering. This particular component of colonization has become so ingrained within our tribal societies that it is still very common for outsiders to violate our tribal women. Furthermore, some of our tribal people have become violent perpetrators as well. But this does not have to continue. After all, we are all descendants of survivors—women, children, and men—and that makes us powerful. I personally believe our people are powerful enough to rise out of this cycle of violence and restore ourselves to the irreproachability of our ancestors. ▼
In the summer of 2014, I traveled to eight of the twenty-one California missions established by Franciscan priests from Spain during what is now called the Mission Era, 1769–1823. My purpose was to interview these venerable establishments in order to listen and scrupulously record for posterity their side of the historical controversy concerning their alleged roles in the murder of tens of thousands of California Indians. Were these missions complicit in war crimes? Or were they, too, victims of Spanish colonial greed and conquest? What secrets did they tuck away in those adobe walls? My extensive research had not prepared me for the raw truth of these mission voices; not only was I fortunate enough to learn each mission’s secret name, never before revealed, but my sources seemed relieved to give their testimonies at last.

Poems by Deborah A. Miranda
First, hands made me out of wood and tule, cut raw. Then came mud and sweat and straw and grief.

I rose out of the earth brick by brick like an obedient monster.

I became church and prison, shelter and cage. I served as vessel for prayers by priest, soldier, Indian.

I learned how to count the lashes of a flogging. I held tight to stocks that held wrists tighter.

I drank wine and blood without distinction. I was created to devour people made from the same clay as me. There! On that spot marked with a white cross—

their knives spilt the priest’s blood. I swallowed it. I liked it. Is that my curse?

Next, the people burned down my walls, my tule roof, my timbers from the mountains;

torched the friar’s beds and bright books. They re-fashioned me a funeral pyre, cleansed me.

I burnt to the ground. I was dead. I was glad. But you wouldn’t let me stay dead. You made me rise from the ashes. New walls. Fire-proof clay tiles. A new bell.


Even years later when my untended bones began to melt, you wouldn’t let me die my clay seeped back into the ground, my bells all stolen or lost;

even with no Mass, no penance, no priest or Indian left to protest, you brought me back.

Now you say tourist you say docent you say legacy you say education

and you remake me, remake me, you mix adobe and cement, cut new tile, add signage, dig up bones, re-glue shards of pottery thrown out generations ago, you put my trash on display like saint’s relics, desecrate the bones of the history.

I keep trying to die. You keep resuscitating my poor white stucco’d body, haul me staggering back for another round—force the hearts of children into my mouth and I eat them, insatiable, adobe set like teeth around my threshold. Have pity on me!

Undead, immune to decay, I live and live past reason:

My pepper tree swells with memories, but won’t talk. Drunk on lavish watering and lawn fertilizers, he leans, silent, on iron crutches. Two hundred-plus years! It’s all he can do to hold up fattened arms, keep that bulbous torso from splitting open. The Friars keep him protected inside an iron fence, our elderly patriarch of the Mythical Era.

Take your inquisition to my arches, my church, ask and ask, wait and wait, cock your ear toward brick or bell tower as if to the mouth of history. Listen: my fountain of sacred water sprinkles clean, peace, reflect. My lush rose garden petals the air with soft, rest, renew. Even my sanctuary mumbles words like outreach, youth, community, program.

No one remembers this word lash. No one knows small pox, syphilis, rape, hunger. What is this word, murder? Go into the cemetery early, before sunrise—you will find no ghosts. Please, take a glossy brochure, examine your options: comprehensive package, affordable financing, burial plots, wall niches, The Assumption of Mary Ossuary.

I assure you, my cemetery has no recollection of unmarked mass graves, scattered bone fragments; that skull and cross-bones over the gate? Added by Disney—leftover prop from Zorro. Adds a little romance.

—Pardon? You want to interrogate the parties yourself? Don’t raise your voice, admonish my adobe bricks. Forgotten what? We just got here a few decades ago—historical restoration. The timbers titter, Don’t look at us; we’re just filling in, replacements of the replacements of ... well, replacements.

How would I know? intones Mater Dolorosa, I was cracked and re-cast, reborn, you might say.

Oh yes, the clay roof tiles harbor a creation story: fiery arrows, ancestors bearing handprints of failed rebellion, but they admit that’s rather... hazy. We embody ‘Mission style,’ they boast, we don’t need to remember anything—they ripple smoothly in the sun, flex heated, machine-extruded curves; visitors ooh and awe. You see? No repressed memories. Just a simple story: martyrs, courage, progress, civilization.

Whitewashed walls tell no tales, my friend.
I was created to be a sacred body, constructed with stone carved out from the sacred womb of this earth, shaped by the labor of my sacred human relatives. I rose from the work of their hands: domed sanctuary, left transept, right transept, my nave a long torso.

But I was too heavy for this world, clumsy in my breathing, out of balance with the dance. Maybe it was the crystal or obsidian slipped into my mortared veins; something in me ached for home. When the earth shifted deep below, called my bones back, I could not say no; released my walls and arches.

Now some say I am the shattered remains of a tomb, a ragged coffin made to hold those who came for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, met death instead. It’s true, my dear relatives spilled out of their bodies like wine. But I caught them, cradled them close to my breast.

Others whisper that they see me sprawled like the outline of a murdered soul, left behind at the scene of an ancient, unsolved crime.

Over these long years, I have wondered myself: am I a broken egg, cracked in the teeth of a predator, all the future licked out? A fossilized clam shell, preserved from a savage time?

But the earth rocks my brokenness gently, reshapes me. She tells me I am chrysalis, made to burst from the inside out, made to know the secret of fragile wings—made to let them go.
If you are looking for San Francisco de Asís, you’re too late. That kind soul—gentle protector of animals and children—gave up, departed long ago; I take my name from the creek nearby, Arroyo de los Dolores, the haunted place where La Llorona slit her children’s throats, threw their dear bodies into a river rather than give them up to Spaniards. At night, docents tidy the cash register, lock up rosaries, turn out lights. Set the alarm, go home still mumbling, All that history. Such a legacy. Our amazing heritage, as if their inner workings haven’t completely unwound yet.

I’m accustomed to the darkness of this sanctuary, the secret sounds made by shifting foundations, unspoken testimonies. I listen hard, I hear the tiny wordless shouts of brown plastic Indians rise from the glassed-in diorama just outside in the courtyard: children in painted-on white shirts laugh with exhaustion, play eternal tag on #10 sandpaper “earth,” while men in loincloths curse at yoked oxen, still plow the same plywood furrow after all these years. The Padre mumbles benevolent blessings, his grip tight on a black bag full of mysteries as he strides forever beneath the precarious sugar-cube archway. I want to gather my dusty skirts up in hands cracked with time, shake loose these tired walls, but docents long ago shackled my body to adobe with iron clasps and screws—for my own safety, they said. So I endure the dull thud of paper mache bells over the entrance, frayed twine ropes pulled by boys naked as monkeys. I recognize the chrome rattle of the soldado de cuero’s sword, his horse’s paperclip bridle and stirrups, the cries of Indian women forced behind bushes made of discarded Easter basket grass, followed by a Latin chant or shivering plainsong pater noster or salve regina from ten obedient Indians, kneeling, hot-glued to the burlap floor of the small church sanctuary. Nothing ever changes inside this glass tomb, no weather penetrates, a coffin as perfect as any Sleeping Beauty’s in a Grimm European tale. How hard it must be for the women to grind corn by hand for decades without ever revealing a proud brown breast to innocent school children! How painful, to always prepare food but never eat. What agony to endure the hungry howls of limbless babies encased in matchstick cradleboards but never suckle them to sleep, never know their soft, satiated silence.

Near dawn the racket finally dies down, drowned out by streetcars and buses. The docents open up, take donations, tell their stories. All that history.

Such a legacy. Our amazing heritage. They show off the diorama’s details. A good example, visiting parents tell their fourth graders, see what you can do with fingernail polish and toilet paper tubes, scrap fabric, glue, recycled junk? Mom chuckles, My project wasn’t this good, but we didn’t have mail-order Indians back then. Dad admonishes giggling nine-year-olds, It’s your inheritance, a California rite of passage! Someday your kids will be part of this tradition too.

I sigh, hold in the screams for another long day. Desperate to scratch at the termites beneath my rotting redwood ribs.
Erasure Poem

The tract through which we passed is generally very good land, with plenty of water; and there, as well as here, the country is neither rocky nor overrun with brush-wood. There are, however, many hills, but they are composed of earth. The road has been good in some places, but the greater part bad. About half-way, the valleys and banks of rivulets began to be delightful. We found vines of a large size, and in some cases quite loaded with grapes; we also found an abundance of roses, which appeared to be like those of Castile.

We have seen Indians in immense numbers, and all those on this coast of the Pacific contrive to make a good subsistence on various seeds, and by fishing. The latter they carry on by means of rafts or canoes, made of tule (bullrush) with which they go a great way to sea. They are very civil. All the males, old and young, go naked; the women, however, and the female children, are decently covered from their breasts downward. We found on our journey, as well as in the place where we stopped, that they treated us with as much confidence and good-will as if they had known us all their lives. But when we offered them any of our victuals, they always refused them. All they cared for was cloth, and only for something of this sort would they exchange their fish or whatever else they had. During the whole march we found hares, rabbits, some deer, and a multitude of berendos (a kind of wild goat).

I pray God may preserve your health and life many years.

From this port and intended Mission of San Diego, in North California, third July, 1769.

FRIAR MIGUEL JOSE JUNIPERO SERRA

A Poem

We here
are composed of earth
valleys and rivulets
vines loaded with grapes
an abundance of roses
We Indians on this coast
carry on
very civil, old and young
decent on our journey
we treat with confidence and good-will
all lives
the whole
multitude
a kind of wild
God

song of

11‘UR’

* one of the Kumeyaay words for Juniperus californica
A Rez Take on Mission Foods

Written by Gordon Lee Johnson
MUCH OF LIFE is a search for home; a desire to belong. For me, there is no better expression of home than the foods of my childhood—tacos, burritos, enchiladas, tamales, empanadas, palillis, and the rest—all foods that got passed from the missions through the Indian generations to me.

So, as others debate the damages missions have wrought on California Indian culture, allow me to sink my teeth into a greasy taco, juices from tomatoes, salsa, fried hamburger oozing from the bottom, running down my arm, dripping onto my shirt.

It’s partly why you see so many Indians with stains on their ribbon shirts.

Would there be tacos here without the missions? Sure. But for those of us who grew up in the shade of mission campaniles, tacos and other mission foods have become our destiny.

On the Pala Indian Reservation where I live, home to Mission San Antonio de Pala, an asistencia of Mission San Luis Rey, many locals don’t attend the mission’s Sunday Mass. Nearly all, however, crave the modern-day offspring of mission foods.

Mission foods nourish our bellies and as well as our souls. True, mission padres and Spanish soldiers often dealt cruelly, sometimes unmercifully, with California Indians. But there is no denying missions and ranchos left a lasting imprint on our culinary selves.

Before the missions, we Indians led confined culinary lives. Coastal natives hunted and gathered. They shot deer, speared fish, collected wild greens, ground acorns into flour.

Before the missions, acorns were a staple. Up and down the coast, where great oaks flourished, Indians picked acorns to make a kind of gruel.

Each tribe had a different name for it. On the Pala Indian Reservation, the Cupeño and Luiseño Indians who live here call the acorn pudding weewish.

In the fall, when acorns dropped from the trees, the people bent to pluck them from the ground. The deer liked acorns too, so it was an annual contest to see who got the most.

Pre-mission Indians stored the acorns in big, twig-woven granaries. I’m sure it was some kid’s job to run to the kuullish, the granary, and fetch a basketful of acorns for his mother so she could grind the meats into flour.

The flour had to be thoroughly washed to leach it of residual tannins, the same tannins the padres found useful for tanning hides. After leaching, the flour was boiled into a pudding-like dish, resembling a thick Hawaiian poi.

While weewish is nutritious, packed with proteins, vitamins, and other nutrients, it’s not what you’d call bursting with flavor.

Don’t get me wrong. I like weewish. But I like it best when it’s sopping up bean juice, nicely salted, and topped with good, hot salsa.

On its own, it’s bland. Some newbies liken it to mud. Few kids these days like it. And I’m guessing, in the olden days, after eating it day after day, no kid, when mom told him there was weewish for dinner, jumped with glee singing, “Weewish, weewish, we all wish for weewish.”

Man doesn’t live by weewish alone.

Enter Mission San Diego de Alcala, the first mission, founded by Fr. Junipero Serra in 1769. In addition to Catholic guilt, the mission introduced local Indians to a sacred vegetable—the chili pepper. Indian life was forever changed.
The missionaries brought with them some twenty-five chili varieties, including piquin, ancho, pico, serrano, huero, poblano, and chipotle, each offering a slightly different taste explosion.

I wasn’t there at the time, but I gotta think an Indian subsisting on plain venison—boiled or roasted—all his life must have experienced a transcendental awakening at the first taste of beef slowly simmered in a thick, spicy red chili sauce—a moment of pure incendiary pleasure.

Red Chili Sauce

¼ cup fat (shortening or lard)  
2 cups red chili pulp  
1 medium onion  
1 clove of garlic  
¼ teaspoon oregano  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 tablespoon flour  
¼ cup water

Before I was born, my grandmother Delfreda Trujillo Magee went every Saturday with her mother, Esperanza Trujillo, to clean the mission in preparation for Sunday Mass. On Sunday they would go to Mass. Later in life, my grandmother went to Mass every day, and wore out her prayer books and rosary beads at home. My grandmother was thoroughly missionized.

Before I was born, she cooked on a wood-burning stove in a two-room shack. But shortly after World War II, she and my grandfather Paul Magee, a Cahuilla from the Pechanga Indian Reservation, commenced building a small adobe house, making the bricks from scratch, friends and relatives supplying labor.

The house sported a butane stove, my grandmother’s first modern appliance. There was always a box of wooden kitchen matches handy to light the burners. Early morning kitchen sounds included my grandmother scratching the match head on the matchbox striker. Then a slow twist of the handle, the soft whoosh of the ignited burner, the clank of cast iron onto the burner grill.

My grandmother cooked primarily with cast iron.

In photos of restored mission kitchens, the white-plastered walls are festooned with cast iron pots and pans used some two hundred years ago. Makes sense that Indians would get the cast-iron habit. And why not. Cast iron retains heat well and, if properly cured, is as non-stick as Teflon, but unlike Teflon, it lasts forever. I have a couple of my grandmother’s frying pans and they’re still usable after more than eighty years of frying eggs and bacon.

In fact, most Pala women of my grandmother’s generation cooked with cast iron on cast-iron cookstoves.

In the 1950s, however, many women, like my mother, Barbara Magee Johnson, strayed from cast iron for time. As a wedding gift, she received a set of copper-bottomed Revere Ware pots and pans. And she cooked with them, thinking that’s what the modern 1950s housewife was supposed to do. But the eggs stuck to the bottom, they required Brillo pads and elbow grease to clean, they didn’t distribute heat evenly.

Eventually, she reverted to cast iron, like her mamma taught her.

Tacos

1-½ pounds ground beef  
2 fresh tomatoes  
1 medium onion  
1 clove of garlic  
¼ teaspoon thyme  
salt and pepper

My grandmother had a small cast-iron frying pan she used for deep frying corn taco tortillas in oil. In another cast-iron frying pan she fried the hamburger and onions and other taco ingredients.

My grandmother had never heard of Taco Tuesday. Just about any night was a good taco night. She heated oil, usually just Wesson oil or Rex lard, until it almost, but not quite, smoked. With the oil hot, she’d slip in a corn tortilla and let
it bubble. It didn’t take long. She preferred her tacos softer, not too crispy. But enough resistance in the bite to offer a little crunch.

She liked to drink a little beer when she cooked, and there was often a tall can of Lucky Lager next to the stove for sipping on between the stories she’d tell if you happened to be in the kitchen with her.

When I was much younger guy, I hung out in her kitchen as she cooked, my fingers perched above the keys of a small typewriter on her Formica kitchen table. As I worked on short stories, I got to smell the garlic mingling with the onions in the frying hamburger. The smell of hamburger frying in onion and garlic not only makes me salivate, it’s a time machine transporting me back to my grandmother’s kitchen.

To spice up her tacos, she liked to make a hot chili salsa in a molcajete, a small stone grinding bowl used with a pestle. Somewhere along the line, she lost her pestle and used a river rock about the right size instead. She ground dried red peppers into flakes, adding cloves of garlic and tomato sauce. She left in the seeds because they provided heat. The chilies plus the tomato sauce would turn a rich, almost mahogany, red.

She’d cut some lettuce, dice some tomatoes, and grate some cheese, usually from a block of commodity cheese, the blocks of government cheese that have achieved almost cult status on Indian reservations. It got so I liked commodity cheese on my tacos.

Back in the mission days, neophytes—the Indians who worked at the missions and learned the religion—would do all the cooking. Back then, corn tortillas were made from nixtamal, a way of processing dried corn into masa learned from Indians at missions in Mexico. They’d take a gallon of water, two quarts of dry corn, and one-quarter cup of unslaked lime, and let it simmer for half an hour until the hulls could be removed. Then they would wash the corn to remove all traces of lime, and grind it into masa, a kind of corn dough. The masa was then flattened into tortillas.

My grandmother was more modern. She’d just send me to the Pala Store to buy corn tortillas.

She didn’t really make her own chili sauce either, although she could have. Instead, she usually just used canned Las Palmas or El Pato sauce and added Gebhardt’s chili powder to bump up the heat.

She didn’t make her own masa either. I’d drive her to a little Mexican market in Escondido where she’d buy fresh masa from their refrigerated section. Before I could drive, someone else would drive her. My grandmother never got behind the wheel of anything that I know of.

The Pala Reservation had many expert tamale makers, my grandmother among them. I preferred my grandmother’s tamales above all others, but then I had a bias.

Tamales weren’t just a Christmas treat; she made them on occasion throughout the year. But tamales were labor intensive so they were more often reserved for special days.

Tamales were a big part of Christmas cheer. She’d trim a chuck roast or pork butt of fat, brown it, then braise it with

Left to right: My grandfather, Paul Magee; another old shot of the Pala mission; tamales rolled in a bowl.
onions, garlic, maybe a little oregano, salt, and pepper, until the meat was super tender, usually a couple of hours. Then she’d simmer the meat in a chili sauce, usually Las Palmas or El Pato diluted with water. Many people add cumin at this point, but my grandmother never did. Probably why, to this day, I don’t care much for cumin.

She’d set up an assembly line, spooning masa into soaked corn husks, adding the meat filling, and lastly an olive, kind of like the prize in a Cracker Jack box, then roll them into tight cylinders, tying the ends with little strands of corn husk. My grandmother’s tamales were always rolled, never folded.

She had a big tamale pot, a blue enamel pot, with a lid. In it, she’d steam the tamales, adding a little Las Palmas to the water.

On Christmas Eve, the house windows would cloud with condensation from tamale pots on the stove. After Midnight Mass, we’d come home to a warm house, my grandfather’s oak fire glowing in the fireplace, the kitchen warmed by tamale smells, an aromatic blending of chili meat, masa, and corn husks.

Carolers in thick jackets and ankle-length coats would sing out front and my grandmother would invite them in for tamales and hot coffee brewed in a big metal pot, the kind where the coffee percolated into a glass bulb in the lid.

Friends and family and carolers would talk, laugh, and hum over bowls of tamales while wishing each other Merry Christmas.

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**Palillis**

- 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons shortening or lard
- 1 to 1-¼ cups Pet evaporated milk
- 1 quart cooking oil

At contemporary powwows, people line up for Indian tacos made from fry bread. Palillis are a mission/rancho style of fry bread. There are variations on the fry bread theme all over Indian Country, we just happen to call them palillis.

Hot out of the frying pan, topped with a little powdered sugar or honey, they make a three-star dessert. For a savory approach, add meat and beans and cheese, lettuce, tomato, and salsa—voila, an Indian taco.

I loved my grandmother’s palillis, golden and light. When you bit into them, hot grease seemed to squirt from the fried dough. They were good with sugar or honey. Today, you might even spread Nutella on them, but I liked them best with beans refried in bacon grease, a little cheese, and some hot salsa.

In mission country, salsa is better known as sarsa. I don’t know why, but that’s how it’s pronounced. It just kind of evolved that way. And everyone has their own take on how to make it: from mild to melt-your-face hot; fresh tomatoes or canned; some use cilantro, some use cumin, some use garlic.
My grandfather was the sarsa maker in our house. He considered cumin and garlic in sarsa sacrilegious. On hot summer days, he liked to be in the shade of the big ash tree out front, seated at an old kitchen table and chair, listening to his transistor radio, dicing jalapeño and yellow chilies with a funky old kitchen knife.

He took his time dicing the chilies and onions ever so small, careful so no one would get a big, disagreeable bite. The ingredients were simple: chilies and tomatoes and onions from his garden. He often planted a summer garden specifically for sarsa makings.

And we put sarsa on most everything. Eggs and beans at breakfast, the bean tortilla roll at lunch, the piece of round steak and fried potatoes for dinner. We put it on put potato salad, turkey at Thanksgiving, boiled mostaza, the wild mustard greens my grandmother and I would pick after a good rain. At our house, there was nearly always sarsa on the table.

Mission San Antonio de Pala was established in 1816 by Padre Antonio Peyri. It is the only surviving asistencia in the mission system and the only mission-related structure still ministering to an Indian population. Pala continues to be an active church.

Every year, as it has from its inception, the mission hosts a Corpus Christi Fiesta. Traditionally, the fiesta features a pit barbecue dinner.

In the 1970s, Sam Powvall of the Pauma Reservation and Dennis Subish of the La Jolla Indian Reservation would take charge of the barbecue. It was an all-night thing. A big pit was dug in the ground behind the mission and filled with sawn oak. The oak would burn down to leaving glowing coals, perfect for long, slow barbecuing.

The beef, usually from one of Subish’s steers, would be rubbed with garlic, chili powder, salt, and pepper. The spiced meat would be wrapped in muslin and placed inside potato sacks soaked in water. The sacks would be dropped into the pit, which the men covered, usually with tin. Then they shoveled dirt on top to make it airtight. You had to check it with a flashlight to be sure no smoke escaped. You wanted it airtight.

After eight hours, in time for the afternoon barbecue, the meat would be removed, sliced and served. Meat for parties is still cooked that way on the rez. I have a pit in my backyard. Nothing better than meat, still hot from the pit, with beans, potato salad, and sarsa.

So many local foods had mission origins. Tortillas, both corn and flour, are still highly prized. Even today, a girl who can make flour tortillas, thin and round with the right texture, is considered good marriage material.

Yes, the missions did much wrong to us. But they did one right thing. They introduced us to foods and a way of cooking them as good as any God put on this earth.

For those who want to learn more about mission/rancher style cooking, I highly recommend California Rancho Cooking by Jacqueline Higuera McMahan and California Mission Recipes by Bess A. Cleveland. Recipes in this essay were extracted from these books.

Left to right: Palillis still hot from the oil; Tamales simmering in the pot; Delfreda Trujillo Magee.
NATIVE VOICES ON TEACHING
California Indian History and the Missions

a special supplement to
news from native california
The BLESSING

Or, Ten Reasons Why this Issue of News from Native California is Necessary

Written by Deborah A. Miranda

Why do we need to write about the missions? Why do we need to tell stories of unspeakable pain, suffering, loss, and grief? What good does it do? How does this help contemporary California Indians embroiled in battles over water rights, mineral rights, right-of-way, unratified treaties, federal recognition, repatriation or honorable treatment of sacred remains, health care, language preservation? How can stories and art about the missions—closed down in 1834!—make this world a better place for our children, grandchildren? Doesn’t this kind of recitation of injustice simply tear off the scabs? Shouldn’t we focus on the future? How can writing and creating artwork about the missions change anything?

SOVEREIGNTY.
Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Lakota) tells us that, “Art and literature and storytelling are at the epicenter of all that an individual or a nation intends to be…and a nation which does not tell its own stories cannot be said to be a nation at all.” If California Indians don’t tell our own stories—in images, music, stories, literature, sculpture, performance—we know all too well that someone else will gladly do it for us—their way.

CREATIVITY.
Words—written and spoken—are tools of a craft in the same way that artists use color, form, shape, texture—all the mediums and resources at their command. This is the language of storytelling. Professor Lisbeth Haas tells us there are deep connections between pre-contact Chumash rock paintings and Chumash paintings within mission walls. Native writers and artists in this issue continue to use art not just to overturn or expose the traditional narratives of exploitation and miseducation, but in fact to bring us closer to understanding our responsibilities, to make certain that words and images, plants, our very bodies, are used carefully, intentionally, and creatively rather than destructively.

HISTORY.
The effect of the typical fourth grade mission project has been not just to implant racial stereotypes about Native Californians in children’s minds, but also to assert that those racial stereotypes are, in fact, okay—sanctioned by all of the authorities in a child’s life, from parents right on up the chain of school administration and into government. The result of that, of course, is a general public which then grows up without questioning laws that discriminate against Native people, and which doesn’t even know how to have a civil
conversation about historic wrongs, responsibility for justice, or compassion for communities suffering from historical trauma. The problem with the typical mission project is that it ignores the complexity of colonization and missionization in favor of a myth that allows people to pretend historical events do not affect our contemporary lives. If we want change, we must know history inside and out. “The past isn’t over,” says writer William Faulkner. “The past isn’t even past.” (I think Faulkner must have been Indian.)

**MEDICINE.**
Linda Hogan (Chickasaw) says, “History is our illness.” Think of the legacies that missionization and colonization have left us: diabetes, substance abuse, obesity, depression, domestic violence, racism, self-hatred, shame. Who needs a colonizer anymore—we can do ourselves quite a bit of damage without outside help! Bonnie Duran and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart call this postcolonial stress disorder, or historical trauma. Our personal histories are shorter versions of the tribal histories we have endured. It’s all there, in both timelines. If history is the illness infecting our communities, then we must act as community to find or make the cure: bring our stories, our knowledges, our strengths, to a meeting space like this, and share. We cannot afford to isolate ourselves, to limit ourselves, to let anything or anyone go to waste because of personal differences; we are fighting for our lives.

**MEMORY.**
Our bodies contain both the blessings and the genocide—and our bodies will not let us claim amnesia. Quite literally, we carry the memory of genocide in our cells. Ruth Hopkins (Sisseton-Wahpeton/Mdewakanton/Hunkpapa), a science professor, writes, “The bottom line is this: your grandparents’ and parents’ behaviors, and any toxins or trauma they were exposed to, affects your health directly. Likewise, your behaviors and any toxins or trauma you’re exposed to could affect the health of your children and grandchildren. Epigenetics may provide hard scientific evidence of intergenerational trauma among American Indians and link it directly to diseases that currently afflict us, like cancer and diabetes.” No, we cannot “opt out” or maintain an “objective” distance from what we remember. But this collective memory is also the source of our power, our potential, our inheritance.

**STORY.**
Sociologists Robert Russell and Paul Van Den Broek state, “People organize, comprehend, store, and relate important experiences in their lives through schematic representations that take narrative form”—or as we say in Indian Country, story. Storytelling has long been known to help survivors heal from traumatic events. Psychiatrist M.J. Horowitz notes that failure to resolve traumatic events may result in continued depression and inability to think clearly. By contrast, active confrontation with the trauma improves overall mood and boosts immune functioning. “Active confrontation” may be defined as taking control of the narrative, owning our stories. Nick Thompson (Western Apache) says that his people have a way of “stalking with stories” or “shooting with stories” those who need instruction or correction. We must aim our stories precisely.
Truth is not bound by a calendar, a timeline; it is not contained by decades or centuries. The truth about California missions exists whether ten years or ten centuries have passed: there is no expiration date by which we must pull that truth off the shelf.

TRUTH.
Ernestine Saankalaxt’ Hayes (Tlingit) tells us, “There is a chronology to the truth; a truth chronology which transcends temporal chronology.” Truth is not bound by a calendar, a timeline; it is not contained by decades or centuries. The truth about California missions exists whether ten years or ten centuries have passed: there is no expiration date by which we must pull that truth off the shelf. But buried truths give off a terrible stink. The stink of dysfunction and self-harm and unresolved grief emanates from buried truths. Learning to accept and internalize these truths is one of our hardest tasks as Indigenous people. A Cahuilla woman once told me that in her culture, potters are obligated to reuse the broken shards of pots to make new pots. Obligated. That’s good guidance as we encounter the many shards of our tribal truths: obligated to honor and re-integrate them, the good, bad, and ugly.

LAND.
Our poor battered Mother. She is still so beautiful. Colonization keeps us fenced off from her, separates us with pavement, iron, concrete, laws. Yet we continue to find ways to return to her embrace, continue to battle for the right to harvest sacred foods and basket-weaving materials, leave offerings, or simply to meet on our own homelands to celebrate who we are. We carry the elements of this California earth in our teeth, our bones, our blood, no matter where we go. I once wrote, “Where we are from is who we are. Our bodies, like compasses, find the way home.” This is our manifesto, our right, as California Indians. Beneath all of our work, words, art, and sweat runs the land, our heart, still beating.

ALLIES.
News from Native California and Heyday were born from the mind of a hippy from a working class neighborhood in Boston; like Malcolm, many of our strongest allies have been non-natives whose hearts and souls (and frequently wallets) are fiercely, lovingly engaged in the struggles and joys of California Indians. Linguists, botanists, editors, book designers, anthropologists, journalists, librarians, museum curators, bookstore owners, archivists...although California Indians are understandably wary of appropriation or outright theft of cultural items and concepts, we also remember, honor, and work with many talented people who devote huge chunks of their lives to working for justice in a state with a terrible history of injustice. We are not alone.

RAGE.
Author and environmental activist Terry Tempest Williams asks, “How do we take our anger and transform it into sacred rage? How do we create a language that opens the heart instead of closing it, a language that creates community rather than divides it? To bear witness is not a passive act. It’s an act of consequence that leads to consciousness.” There is such a thing as good anger, sacred rage: from this, perhaps, we come to a place of awe. We sometimes do not know what we are capable of accomplishing until that sacred rage fills us, spreads to others through clarifying words and images. We are opening our hearts to one another. Come in. Go in.
DEAR SONORA

Writing to a Fourth Grader about Her Project

Written by Deborah A. Miranda

RECENTLY, THE OHLONE Costanoan Esselen Nation received a request from a sharp fourth-grader asking about the Native experience in California missions. Here is that letter and our response.

Dear Ms. Ramirez,
I am a fourth grader and I am doing my report on Mission Nuestra Senora Dolorosissima de la Soledad. I discovered that Coastanoan and Esselen are some of the names of the tribes that went to the Soledad mission, and I was searching for some info on them when I stumbled across your email address on www.ohlonecostanoaneselennation.org. Me and my mom decided that maybe you could help us/me. Anyway, what I was searching for was the opinion of the Coastanoan and Esselen Native Americans. I want to know if the Native Americans liked the mission, which priests were their favorites...stuff like that, and I'm hoping you can help me. If you can help me, or even if you can't, thanks a ton!

Sincerely, Sonora

Dear Sonora (what a great name!),
My sister Louise passed your message on to me; she’s very busy as Chair, and since I read about and study California missions in my job, she thought I might be able to help you out. I can tell you right away that writing to California tribes on your own is a smart move—many people don’t think to ask us, or they think we are all dead. Still here!

You wanted to know the Ohlone-Eselen-Costanoan opinion of the missions. That’s a tough question. Some Indian people will tell you that the missions were great, and brought us Catholicism and agriculture; others will tell you that anything that kills about 80 percent of your people can’t be good.

California Indians were actually doing fine before the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans arrived. Our Ancestors had everything they needed, including Indian religions, leaders, music, languages, jobs, and education. But because our
Ancestors’ traditions were different from the way Europeans did those things, lots of Spanish people thought Indians needed “civilizing.” Of course, Indians were curious about the Spanish, and about their religion, and often helped the Spaniards find food and water, or exchanged things in trade with them, but that did not mean our Ancestors wanted to become Spanish. People should be allowed to decide for themselves how they want to live.

Instead, the missionaries made that decision for our Ancestors. Sometimes the Spanish priests would “baptize” women and children who came to visit, and then refuse to let them go. The husbands and fathers would come to get them, and were told that they could not see their families unless they, too, allowed themselves to be baptized. Of course, none of the Indians knew what baptism really meant, and when the priests then told them that, once baptized, they could not leave the mission, it was a big surprise. Remember, missionaries and soldiers thought of themselves as “civilized” so they figured THEY must be right, and the

I think everyone, historians and Indians alike, agree that missionization was a disaster for the Indians: our estimated population numbers went from about one million to fifteen thousand in just under two hundred years. We lost almost all of our land, all of our natural resources (which provided food and shelter); many of us lost our language, religion, and communities.

Indians were wrong. Civilized people don’t hurt other people for being different, though. Many Indians today do not think the Spanish were very civilized.

The missionaries did a lot of things that hurt Indian people and families. For example, all little girls over the age of seven had to go sleep in the 

\textit{monejerio}, a small building with no bathroom and small windows way up taller than anyone could reach. These rooms were dark, smelly, and dirty, and the young women and girls kept in there got sick from germs and lack of fresh air. They were also very homesick for their families. They didn’t see their parents much, since during the day the parents were forced to work for the missionaries, doing all the work to build, maintain, and farm for the mission. Our Ancestors were also forced to attend the Catholic church, learn prayers in a new language, and take new names in Spanish. None of the Indian ways of living—religions, leaders, music, languages, jobs, and education—were allowed by the Spaniards.

Also, I’m sorry to say, Indians at the mission were whipped with a very heavy, painful leather whip if they broke any of the priest’s rules—and since Indians didn’t know Spanish, and missionaries didn’t know Indian languages, there were a lot of misunderstandings about what the rules were. Plus, of course, sometimes the Indians (who had taken very good care of themselves for thousands of years) didn’t think Spanish rules made sense in the first place, so they would do things that were against the rules like gather wild food, go hunting, leave the mission to visit their families elsewhere, marry who they wanted to marry, or other things they considered part of their rights as human beings. Spaniards punished Indians for doing these simple things with whippings or time in the stocks.

Over time, the European livestock and plants that the Spanish had brought with them to California took over the land, and many basic foods that Indians depended on were destroyed, so our Ancestors became very dependent on the European foods from the missions. Our bodies sometimes could not handle this change in diet, which made it harder for us to get over small illnesses like colds and flu, and big illnesses like European smallpox, measles, and tuberculosis. So many Indians died in the missions that the padres had to keep sending Spanish soldiers out to capture more Indians to do the work of running cattle, farming, building, weaving, cooking, and all the chores a big mission requires.

You might be wondering, why would the Indians put up with all this? I suggest you look up things like “California mission rebellion” or “California mission revolt” on the internet (a better phrase would be “California Mission Wars,” but you probably won’t find anything using that search term—can you guess why?).

I think everyone, historians and Indians alike, agree that missionization was a disaster for the Indians: our estimated population numbers went from about one million to fifteen thousand in just under two hundred years. We lost almost all of our land, all of our natural resources (which provided food and shelter); many of us lost our language, religion, and
communities. Can you imagine if eight out of every ten people you know died when another group of people showed up and took over your town?

So mostly, the missions were not that much fun for Indians. An Indian baby born in a California mission only lived to be seven or eight years old; some disease or other would kill them before they could grow up. Also, because of a European strain of a disease called syphilis, many Indian men and women could no longer have babies, so there were no new kids to replace the people who died. Every time an old person died, it was like an entire library of knowledge, history, and stories burned down. That's tough to survive!

There were many bad consequences from the California missions for California Indians. Those bad consequences continued on through the Mexican Era and into the American Era. The hardest consequence was losing our homelands. The Spaniards made us move into the missions, but sixty-five years later when the missions closed down, all of our land had been taken by other non-Indian people. We had nowhere to go, no way to feed ourselves, no food, shelter, or clothing. Mexicans, who governed California after the Spanish, used Indians as free labor on their large ranches. For a meal and a place to sleep, Indians worked almost like slaves for the Mexicans, just to stay alive. Most mission Indian communities were broken up and it was even harder for tribal members to stay connected than in the missions.

But as bad as that was, after the Mexican government came the American government, with laws that were even worse—American laws prevented Indians from owning land, voting, or taking a white person to court for even the worst crimes against Indians. The U.S. Congress passed a law giving millions of dollars to Americans to round up and kill Indians who were “in the way.” In my family, we have stories about Ancestors who answered a knock at the door, opened the door, and were shot for the bounty money! As late as 1866, Indians could be bought and sold just like slaves in the American South—and thousands were, especially women and children. Even Indians like my great-great-great-great-great grandfather, Fructuoso Cholom Real, who received land in a Mexican land grant after the missions were closed down, ended up losing their land to Americans.

But some of us did survive, and in California our communities are slowly growing and working to recover from those bad consequences. It's hard when many of us, like the Esselen, don't have any land (no reservation, no place to meet). Whenever we have our annual gathering, for example, we have to pay someone to use their land. So we don't have too many gatherings. This is one of the many consequences of the missions that continue into our lives today.

Like several other California tribes, the Esselen are petitioning the U.S. government for recognition—that means we would be eligible to get back a small piece of government “surplus” land in our homeland that we could use as a center, apply for educational scholarships that are only available to federally recognized tribes, and receive some basic health benefits.

It's funny, but even though I can prove my family history was Indian all the way back to 1770, when the Spaniards started keeping paper records, the government still considers me “non-Indian”!

I hope you research hard and learn a lot about the missions and the California Indians who had to live there. It was a crazy time, a hard time, and a sad time. It's a miracle anyone survived at all. California Indians want our Ancestors to be proud of us. We know we are only here because a few of them managed to survive, and used up all of their strength so we could live.

Oh—I realize that I didn’t actually answer your question about favorite priests. The Spanish priests, and later the Mexican priests, were human beings with the same gifts and flaws as anyone else. So like most people, some priests were considered “kind” and others were considered “mean.” Father Serra, for instance, wrote in his letters about how much he loved the Indians, and how badly he felt when the Spanish soldiers hurt or killed Indians. But as kind as he seemed, Father Serra never questioned whether the missions should be built or maintained. He never thought to ask, as you did Sonora, what Indians thought of the missions or the priests. He believed that the Spaniard’s way of living was the ONLY way of living. So Indians, who lived differently, must be made to change—even if it meant killing them, or spreading disease, or denying them human rights.

This way of thinking is called “colonization.” Colonization, or in California what we call “missionization,” is a cruel and unkind way to treat other people. It means, basically, that a colonizer doesn’t think Indians or Native people are really human beings. It is a very strange, selfish way of seeing the world.

Good luck with your report,

Deborah A. Miranda
In Our Languages

What Do Missions Represent for You?

’akkwet horše k-hinnan, kiś
sohyen k-hinnan ‘aa ‘e hemme mákkin  Chochenyo Ohlone  Vincent Medina
In Our Languages is an ongoing series published only in Native California languages. For translations, please visit newsfromnativecalifornia.com/blog
Educating Elementary School Children About California Missions and the Perpetuation Of Genocide

Written by Nichole Meyers-Lim

MY DAUGHTER ENTERED the fourth grade four years ago. I remember feeling anxious about how her educators might present California mission history to her and her classmates. When the assignments began coming home, I soon realized that the angst I had felt was justified, as the materials hadn’t progressed much since I was in school. The traumas that I experienced as a fourth grade student came rushing back, and the realization set in that during the last thirty years nothing had changed. For many individuals this issue seems inconsequential. Often natives who complain are labeled as overly sensitive and preoccupied with a history that is no longer relevant to our modern lives. How often have we heard, “Can’t we just all get along?” However, these issues are much more than an unfortunate experience for Native Americans, a small percentage of the general U.S. population. These issues are integral to a cycle of genocide that continues to be perpetrated towards indigenous peoples across the globe.

The representation of native perspectives in the teaching of our histories is a matter of civil rights. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than a sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.” Specifically in reference to the treatment of Native Americans, he went on to say, “Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shores, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles of racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or to feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it.”

Dr. King was referring to a cycle of genocide that is implemented in eight stages: classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation,
extermination, and denial. When viewed alongside California Indian historical experiences the stages become very clear. Stage one, classification, begins by distinguishing the perpetrator and the victim. It can be as simple as “us” versus “them.” Stage two is symbolization, clearly evidenced by the labeling of native peoples as savage, uncivilized, diggers, and redskins. This is followed by stage three, dehumanization, where the victims of genocide are equated with animals, insects, and diseases. California is rich in the history of stage four (organization), as seen in years of sanctioned violence, beginning with Spanish soldiers and continuing through statehood with militia organizations sent out to hunt “unruly” Indians.

Stage five is polarization; here the two groups are driven further apart through propaganda, laws, and social interaction. Examples of this can be highlighted throughout the mission system and well into the twentieth century. We can look from physical segregation in mission quarters to indentured servitude in the 1860s to demonstrate this phase. Stage six is preparation. During this stage the victims are segregated. Boarding schools, reservations, and rancherias clearly evidence this stage. Stage seven is extermination. While a more than 90 percent reduction of the California Indian population after the mission and gold rush eras clearly demonstrates extermination, we can also argue that this stage reaches further. The stereotype of the “vanishing redman” has been a longstanding ideal in the dominant society. During the mission era, the padres often sought to label native people as “the last full blood,” as evidenced by the story of Old Gabriel, who is honored in the Vatican as the “oldest living full blood Indian of the New World.” In 1911, Ishi became famous as “the last of his tribe.” While it is true that in order to survive in post–gold rush California Ishi lived in hiding for thirty years, today there are at least five tribes that claim him as their ancestor.

The eighth and final stage of genocide is denial. In this stage the perpetrators of genocide do not admit that they committed any crimes. Moreover the victims are often blamed for what happened. When we continue to present history in the light most favorable to the victors we are continuing the stage of denial. Thus the framework of genocide remains in full effect. History is subjective and for Americans it is often told in a romantic, optimistic, and patriotic fashion. To overcome denial we must revise the record to reflect a native voice. This voice will conflict with those that are commonly accepted, but it will challenge the “sincere
ignorance and conscientious stupidity” that Dr. King warns us is a danger.

We can begin examining denial through five common myths and misconceptions presented about California mission history.

**Myth #1: California history began with missions**

There are physical evidence and written accounts of California Indians over a hundred years before the Spanish arrived. Evidence of tools dating back centuries before European contact has been found in various parts of California. There are also accounts by European explorers and pirates like Sir Francis Drake, who made contact with Indians before the first mission was established. California Indian oral history dates back much further than European contact.

We do not have any census data that indicates the exact number of Indians living in California during this era. Missionaries only documented how many Indians were in the missions and speculated about how many more lived in the villages surrounding the missions. Many tribes in the north or interior regions of California were less impacted by the missions. Thus the missionaries did not factor these populations into their calculations. The people who settled in those regions during the gold rush did not keep accurate records of the native populations that they decimated in search of gold. Some scientists estimate that there were over three hundred thousand Indians living in California before the missions were established. Other scientists argue that figure is low and it was more likely closer to one million people. Regardless, we know that California was a place rich in cultures and resources. Native populations thrived prior to contact. California history began with California Indians, who remain connected to their lands since time immemorial.

**Myth #2: California Indian people were welcoming and did not resist the arrival of the missionaries**

Some accounts by Spanish missionaries suggest that Indians were welcoming and willingly entered the missions; however, these accounts were highly biased and usually false. In letters to their superiors or to each other, missionaries would have been inclined to make each other believe that Indians had willingly come to the missions in order to make their missions appear to be running smoothly. Missionaries may have also tried to cover up the atrocities that occurred in the missions. By contrast, the personal diaries and private accounts of the missionaries suggest that Indians were resistant to mission authorities. Missionaries forbade California Indians from practicing their religions, speaking their traditional languages, and eating their traditional foods. Many Indians forced into the missions did attempt to keep their cultures alive and were punished for it. The accounts of Indians being punished by the missionaries tell us that Indians resisted Spanish rule.

The Spanish and others had been coming and going in California for over 150 years before the missions were founded. From the accounts of some European explorers, we know that Indians traded with Europeans, but we do not know how much communication occurred or whether Indians were informed of their plans. When the Spanish established the first mission in San Diego, the surrounding tribal villages organized a defensive raid on the encampment within one month of their arrival. This event was not a revolt or an uprising, it was a defense to drive the Spanish out of Kumeyaay territory.

**Myth #3: California Indians were docile and happily accepted mission life**

Most accounts of Indian life in the missions suggest that Indians were unhappy in the missions because they were mistreated by the priests, restricted from practicing their religious ceremonies, and separated from their families. In addition to the early Kumeyaay attacks on Mission San Diego, the padres did not record a baptism for two years. This demonstrates that the Spanish were not very successful in getting the natives to “accept” mission life.

Records reflect very few baptisms during the first years of the missions. The low number of baptisms during the first few years of many missions can be understood as defiance from the tribes around the missions. Many tribes refused to live in the missions and resisted Spanish attempts to force them there. The small number of baptisms performed during this time may have generated an increased effort by the
soldiers who came with the missionaries to round up Indians and take them captive. Without Indians, the missions would not have been able to function. This information serves to debunk the idea that Indians willingly joined the missions or were curious about them.

**Myth #4: California Indians were uncivilized**

In the eyes of the padres, California Indians were considered uncivilized because they looked different, had different religious beliefs and languages, and did not appear to have building structures, governing authorities, and agricultural practices. Many of these elements were part of California Indian societies, but in forms unfamiliar to Europeans, and so the Europeans failed to recognize or acknowledge existing native practices as “civilization.” California Indians did build permanent dwellings, practiced (and continue to practice) their own religions, spoke unique languages, cultivated and harvested foods and medicines from their environments, and governed themselves through political organizations. California Indians were far from uncivilized.

Europeans had a specific motive in labeling native people “uncivilized.” Under European laws “uncivilized natives” and “uncultivated lands” satisfied the elements of the Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine empowered European explorers to claim “newly discovered” lands for their crowns. As early as 1095, when Pope Urban II issued the *Papal Bull Terra Nullius* (which translates to “empty land”), the Vatican had sanctioned European powers to seize lands in all non-Christian parts of the world. Thus the practices of war and conquest were justified by the labeling of indigenous people as “uncivilized and less than human” in contrast to the European powers, who were depicted as entrepreneurs engaged in setting forth a “God-ordained” purpose.

**Myth #5: Indians “wandered” to or “joined” the missions**

Unfortunately the two words most commonly used to describe Indian contact with the missions are misleading. The term “wander” implies that the Indians casually arrived at the missions without purpose. Furthermore, it also implies that California Indians existed without purpose prior to the creation of the missions. This was not the case. Indians lived in societies and cultures where every day had purpose, providing for families and community members. They knew the intricate natures of their homelands and did not get lost or wander around. The second term, “joined,” implies that Indians became members of, or enlisted in, the mission system. This suggests that it was a voluntary process. The mission was created under a “feudal manorial labor system,” and Indians were intended to be “absorbed into Spanish colonial society at the lowest level.” They were forced to labor for Spain for “the good of the Spanish crown and its citizens.”

This idea of “wandering” is often used in romanticized accounts of mission life, or to avoid talking about kidnapping and forced labor, which were tactics used by the padres to bring Indians into the missions as laborers. Missionaries banned Indians from using their traditional languages, practicing religious ceremonies, and eating traditional foods; these were a few reasons why Indians did not want to be forced into the missions. Although it is often ignored, California Indians traded with tribes across vast regions and passed on stories about the poor treatment they were subjected to in the missions. Indians were beaten for small crimes within the missions, they experienced excessive punishment and cruelty by the padres. Even if Indians had come willingly to the missions, they would not have stayed, nor wanted to stay, because of these harsh practices.

When presented with a complete picture of California Mission history, many fourth grade teachers face the challenge of how to present massacres, abuses, and sexual crimes to a classroom of nine year olds. Keeping this unit under the requirement of fourth grade social studies standards is an inherent problem. A full analysis of this period is likely more suited for upper school students. However, continuing to perpetuate myths and romantic fantasies is a dual injustice. I often struggle with developing a strategy for overhauling the system. How can we initiate the most effective change? The answer is simple: tell the truth to anyone who will listen. It is time we all shared in the responsibility of correcting the record. We owe it to our ancestors and our children. For more information visit californiamissionsnativehistory.org.
My name is Jacque Tahuka Nunez. I am a ninth-generation descendant of the Rios family. My great-great-grandfather was Feliciano Rios, a leather-jacket soldier who came to California with Father Junipero Serra. I grew up in the Rios Adobe in San Juan Capistrano, considered the oldest home in California still occupied by the same family, which has lived in it for over two hundred years. As a young woman, I never realized the significance of my history. As I began to research my story to share the history of my people, our lifestyle, and our contributions, a strong, resonating clarity emerged in my heart. I am a Native woman, and I descend from a very old tribal family. I was inspired to create the program when my own children were teased at school for being natives with their Indian features and long hair.

My aunt, Juanita Rios, was the matriarch for the city of San Juan Capistrano, and my mother, Mona Sherrill, and many other elders paved the way for my program to begin in the local schools and at Mission San Juan Capistrano. As I realized that no other an educator knew or shared the Juaneno/Acjachemen history, the seed for teaching was planted. I began to tell my Journeys to the Past story, “A Day in the Life of Our People.”

With baskets and clappers, a few songs, and the heart to teach respect and appreciation of all cultures, I began sharing the beauty of our people in school after school. Then the demand grew…and grew…and grew.

I am the first Acjachemen tribal member to negotiate a contract with Mission San Juan Capistrano to be paid a fee for my storytelling program, Journeys to the Past. My program was designed for fourth graders and intended just for our people. However, it expanded to apply to many other California tribes.

Journeys to the Past is a one-hour storytelling program. It complements the presentation given by the Mission San Juan Capistrano docents. They tell the history of the mission from the viewpoint of the Europeans who arrived in California as conquerors. However, that is only part of the story. Sometimes I’d hear them say things like, “The Indians never bathed. Their lives had value once they learned the lessons of the Spaniards.” Those kinds of statements hurt my heart.

My question was this: Why don’t they tell how our families were separated from each other? Why don’t they disclose how our ways were disrespected and forbidden? Why wasn’t our awareness of Mother Earth praised? Why didn’t they admit our intelligence? After all, we were able to learn another language, another lifestyle, and survive the plagues that the arrival of the Spanish brought. The Europeans
contributed much of value, but where was the acknowledgement of our abilities and our pain?

My story came from my heart. I wanted to show the value of our history from the prospective of our people rather than that of the European colonizers. So dressed in full regalia—grass skirt, shell necklaces, and a basket hat—and surrounded by hand-woven baskets and other artifacts, I began to tell our story, "A Day in the Life of an Acjachemen Child." The program started in 1995, and I am still at the mission today.

When I am finished, it isn’t uncommon to hear a question from students: "Are you really an Indian?"

My answer is this: "Yes I am, but I live in a house. I wash clothes. I stop at Starbucks for coffee and make dinner for my family. I’m your neighbor, but I care about my past and know the history of my people."

"Hmm, really?"
"Yes, really."

I find it interesting that students believe we are gone—just images in their history books. My presence and my voice are extremely important to emphasize that we are still here.

I have been telling my version of Juafeno history for twenty-two years at Mission San Juan Capistrano. Hundreds of schools have found value in my program. I also held an Indian summer camp for nineteen years. I was interviewed by Huell Howser on his PBS series California’s Gold when he focused on the missions. I was also selected to represent our Native community on a children’s program on PBS.

I am honored to tell our history, teach our ways, and share how resilient we were and still are today. Our voices are important. Working with others, collaborating on our efforts, is having an impact. Nikki Myers-Lim at the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center and I have created a website for teachers to see our story as told by our people, californiamissionsnativehistory.org.

When I go to the mission, I feel joy and peace knowing my ancestors helped build it. But it is important for visitors to understand how the Europeans affected our culture. So when I share my people’s story, I sometimes ask, "How would you like to go home today and find someone in your bedroom, taking over your X-box, sitting on your bed, claiming everything in your bedroom was now theirs? What about you? Well, you can use your things once in a while—maybe, and if you object, you’ll be put in timeout.”

The students always say, "No way."

"Oh, but that’s what happened to my ancestors. The Europeans took everything that belonged to us and used it for their own purposes. We couldn’t object without being severely punished."

Through storytelling, the children seem to understand for the first time how unfair the European influx was to the native peoples they found here. I am grateful the mission administration embraces our story and allows us to share our history.

I hope that fifty years from now, the history books will say, "Indigenous people began to unearth their story, buried two hundred years earlier. From the 1980s through the beginning of the twenty-first century, they married their education to their culture and began to share the significance of their lineages. Communities began to look for ways to respect native contributions: never taking more than they needed, recycling, giving back. Teachers integrated cultural activities in classrooms, and indigenous peoples’ pride grew to inspire future generations. Because of this time, all cultures are now honored."

My small table of artifacts grew into a full theatrical production seen at various venues, including Segerstrom Performing Arts Center, Kavli Performing Arts Center, Wells Fargo Performing Arts Center, La Mirada Performing Arts Center, and Cerritos Performing Arts Center. After seven continuous years, Cerritos submitted my play to the Kennedy Center for consideration. If chosen, it will be the first California Native production there. Our play, including a fourteen-member tribal cast, is produced by my husband, Ed Nunez. My family members, including grandchildren, children, and various other relatives, have participated, and I love and appreciate their support of my vision.

As an educator, I believe my work today is important and will continue to be valued in years to come. Mission San Juan Capistrano was built by my ancestors and preserved by many different cultures. Today, our Acjachemen voice is respected and heard. My heart says, “Thank you, Creator. Om’paloov. Thank you.”
THE TRUTH SHALL SET US FREE

Pomo dancers at Mission San Francisco de Solano, 2013. Photos by Nikki Lim.
It is our obligation as educators that when visiting the California missions and teaching about California Indian cultures, we ensure that the experiences of Native students are not delegitimized and that the sometimes-painful history of the missions is portrayed with visibility, accuracy, and fairness. This is not solely an issue of teaching students the truth, but also an issue of social justice.
Why is it important to empower children with the truth?

Historically, little has been done in public schools and at the California missions to accurately present Native perspectives. Teaching California Indian children inaccurate lessons about their history can have deep psychological impacts on Native communities, such as:

- Perpetuating hurtful stereotype that California Indian people are extinct or vestiges of the past;

- Affecting the self-esteem and confidence of thousands of California Indian school children who are mandated to go on tours of the missions and study the missionized Indian communities;

- Increasing the anger and lack of trust many Indian communities feel towards California’s public schools and missions;

- Perpetuating inaccurate information and lies to the general public about the history of California Indians and missions.

Concepts, and practices to avoid when teaching about California’s diverse Indian peoples and the missions include:

- Don’t ignore California Indian communities, both contemporary and ancient, in your school’s lesson plans. Kindly refrain from promoting the hurtful myth that we are extinct as a race. Remember that contemporary California Indian people number in the thousands, speak over sixty different languages, and have their own religious traditions and political and economic sovereignty. We have adapted to a changing world, but have found ways to keep our Indian identities alive and are thriving in the twenty-first century.

- It is inappropriate to use grave goods—material objects from archaeological sites—for classroom displays unless you have direct consent from the appropriate modern tribal communities.

- Please do not continue a pattern of portraying California Indians in minimalist, unflattering ways—remember that most of our material culture was made from organic materials! Our culture is richer than mortars, pestles, and arrowheads. Native California is one of the most geographically, linguistically, and culturally rich areas of the world.
Words can hurt!

Teachers and parents who discuss Native Americans, past and present, should be aware of their language. To start with, when teaching about Indians, what shall we call them: Native Americans or Indians? Some people prefer to be called Native Americans, since the term Indian came from the early belief that the European visitors had reached India. Some people don’t care. Find out the tribal name for the people you’re discussing and use that. Or just call them people. The best way to find out what a child wants to be called is by asking how they would like to be identified.

Additionally, our American vocabulary is full of stereotypes of Indians, and while we may not even be aware of many of them, they can plant erroneous images and prejudicial biases in non-Indian children and contribute to the difficulties Indian children face in and out of the classroom. We can help by being aware of our own use of stereotypes, and by avoiding those words. Here are some words and terms to avoid when describing Native youth, or telling the history of American Indian people:

**Sitting Indian style** and **walking Indian file.** Present day Indians sit in chairs and walk with their friends and family just as everyone else does, but young children don’t make the distinction between past and present. And we don’t describe people as sitting or walking in the way of any other ethnic groups.

**Running around like wild Indians.** There are better ways to describe inappropriate behavior. This is hurtful, whether heard by a Native child or not.

**Indian giver.** Meaning someone who gives and then takes back. There are better descriptions than this stereotype.

**Digger.** No matter what those before you might have said, digger is a pejorative term comparable to the N-word.

**Braves and warriors.** These terms continue the idea of Indians as fierce and dangerous.

**Squaw.** This is inappropriate in all circumstances, as the word has sexual connotations in some cultures.

**Papoose.** This word means child in only one (non-California) language; why not say baby or child?

**Indian princesses and sons of chiefs.** A disproportionate number of Indians are described this way in stories. That’s like characterizing present day people as daughters of the governor and sons of the mayor, something very few of us actually are.

**Medicine men and shamans.** Say doctors or religious leaders instead. In the past and present, Indian doctors treated—successfully—a variety of physical, psychological, and emotional ailments. It is imperative to understand these are our holy people, akin to priests, rabbis, or imams, and their titles should be as respected as such.

**Team names.** Teams use names like Braves, Warriors, Redskins, Indians, and so forth to imply ferocity and unrestrained violence in the same way other teams choose names like Sharks and Eagles.

**Teepees, wickiups, wigwams, tule houses, and hogans.** These words mean specific kinds of houses in specific languages, and they aren’t interchangeable. Take the time to find out the appropriate word in the language of the people you are studying, or just say house (not hut).

**War-whooping.** Please flatly discourage this activity. If it was used, it was in warlike situations. We tell kids, “Do you know what kind of Indians make that noise? Indians who watch too much television!”
**Indian myths and legends.** If you refer to the creation and morality stories of your own religion as myths and legends, then go ahead and use them when referring to Native religions as well! It’s not appropriate to have children make up their own Indian myths and legends, unless you have them making up Bible stories as well.

**Indian names.** Occasionally teachers have children select “Indian” names as a part of a history study unit. In contemporary American culture, naming remains a formal religious ceremony or a permanent decision involving registration with a government entity. It was the same in Indian cultures. No individual named him or herself without outside help.

**Indian superstitions.** It’s always the other guy who is superstitious. Don’t call individual beliefs superstitions even if you don’t believe them yourself.

**Language.** Some people think all Indians speak “Indian.” There are 120 major languages in California alone and many Native people continue to speak these languages today. Neighboring groups might speak languages as different as Chinese and English. Many people were bi- and trilingual.

**Smoke signals and sign language.** These were used by some tribes but there seems to be no evidence of them in California.

**Wandering and roaming.** These terms suggest animal behaviors. Human beings travel to see relatives, hunt, get food (as at the grocery store), or admire the scenery. Indian peoples in California lived, and continue to live, settled lives.

**War bonnets and war paint.** War bonnets, in the American vernacular, are feathered headdresses that were worn under some circumstances by some Plains Indians. Many tribes wore other kinds of feather headdresses, which looked very different and had a different (often ceremonial) significance. Face paint was also used for many reasons besides war, including for dance ornamentation, and the patterns of the paint were specific to the activity. No one went around all the time with a painted face.

**Tomahawks and spears.** Spears were used for hunting animals and perhaps warfare before the bow and arrow were invented, about 500 AD in California. Styles of bows and arrows were very different in different places. Making bows and arrows was time consuming and demanding. Children didn’t make their own bows; an adult relative made them. Children—boys—hunted small game when they were old enough, usually with wood-tipped arrows.

Now, it may seem like there are a lot of things NOT to do when teaching about the culture of American Indians, but there are also a lot of positive things that can be shared. The cultures of California are complex, varied, and dynamic, as represented by the variety of languages spoken here even today. Here are some ways that different Native California people say hello:

- The Chochenyo Ohlone people of the East Bay say “Hórše Túuxi” (which actually means “good day”);
- The Northern Chumash people of the Central Coast say “Hatyu”,
- The Karuk people of far northwest California say “Ayukii”;
- The Mono people of the Central Valley say “Manihu.”

Notice how different these words are? Keep in mind they are all spoken in this place that today we call California. Perhaps you can ask your students if they can imagine how it might be to live in a place where for thousands of years so many different languages were spoken, even if they were very geographically close to one another.
Is this a New World? Did the Spanish discover California?

Teaching history and culture, especially to children, can be full of daunting and loaded words. The terms New World and discovery of California can be condescending and even hurtful. But what do we replace them with? Here are a couple of ideas.

New World is a very Eurocentric term that has been used since Europeans arrived in North and South America. There is documented proof that Native peoples have been living in California for at least fourteen thousand years. In the oral traditions of many Native people, California is where the very world began. Since this part of the world is actually quite ancient and old, perhaps a better term to use would be the Western Hemisphere.

Likewise, it is often said that Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas. When talking about the missions it is sometimes said that Junipero Serra discovered California. When I hear this, I often say "For thousands of years, I don’t think my ancestors were sitting on the shores of the Bay, twiddling their thumbs and saying ‘Hmm, I wish someone would come and discover me today.’" Indigenous people in California were living very good, settled lives for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Instead of saying that the Spanish discovered California, perhaps we can say that the Spanish (or Europeans) and Native Americans interacted. Interaction is a more mutually inclusive term that signifies two cultures coming together.

How do we talk about Spanish colonization and the missions to children? How do we discuss the truth without terrifying the children?

This is a major question that many teachers ask me, and it’s a good one. California Indians who suffered under missionization deserve to have their stories and realities discussed, but that history can be, at times, terrifying and difficult to relate to. I often give this scenario when I discuss the missions and the way Native people first might have encountered the Spanish:

Imagine that one day you walk home after a long day at school. When you get to your house, you realize the front door is already open! Inside your own house are people who look different from anyone you have ever seen before, they speak a language you have never heard, they have different-colored eyes, and they wear different clothes. These strangers sitting in your house tell you, “This is MY house now; all these things in this house belong to me now.” Maybe you feel scared, so you go into your bedroom, but those same people are sitting on your bed. Maybe they are playing with your favorite toys, or your iPad, or your Nintendo—and guess what they say? “All these toys belong to me now, but maybe, just maybe, I will let you use them, but only when I say you can.” Wow, you must be angry and annoyed at this point, huh?! Then you go into your kitchen and those same strange people are sitting at your kitchen table, and they’re eating your food, all your favorite foods that you love, and they say “Now this food is all mine, but maybe you can eat it, only when I say you can.’ How angry you might be! And scared! And confused! Then these strange people tell you that on top of taking your house, now you can’t practice your religion anymore, you can’t wear your favorite clothes anymore, you can’t speak your language anymore—and maybe worst of all, you can’t even call yourself by your real name anymore. They are going to give you a new name, and if you call yourself by your real name or speak your language or practice your religion, you might be punished.
Ask the children how they might feel. Would they be angry? Confused? Scared? Upset? Is this fair? Is it unfair? You can also ask:

- If someone tried to take their house, would they give it up?
- If someone tried to force them to change their language, would they give it up?
- If someone tried to make them change their religion, would they give it up?
- If someone tried to take their names away, would they give them up?

This was the reality of life for missionized California Indians and it’s not often taught. When faced with immense cultural changes and Spanish attempts to change their whole lives, Native peoples found ways to keep their cultures, religions, languages, and identities alive. Our ancestors did not simply relinquish their cultural identities, but found ways to adapt and survive even in these difficult times.

**Are the Spanish all bad? How do we talk about hardships without villainizing a cultural group?**

Not all Spanish people who came to California during the time of the missions were bad. Making sweeping generalizations and labeling an entire cultural group as inherently evil is wrong and unfair. Some priests and soldiers were not so good, and were particularly cruel to Indian people, but it is important to note that there were many Spanish soldiers and missionaries who came with good intentions and wanted to change Indian cultures, not necessarily kill all of the Indians in California.

**Why would Indian people come to the missions if they were so bad?**

Ask the children this question. It’s a complex issue, but Native people came for a variety of reasons, including:

- Some might have wanted to see the families they were separated from;
- Some might have come because Spanish cattle were depleting their food sources and they wanted to survive;
- Some wanted to see new technology, and were genuinely curious about the new arrivals;
- Some might have been genuinely moved by the Catholic religion;
- Some might have wanted to trade with the missions, as their traditional economies were changing;
- Some might have been frightened by the death and disease happening in their villages and looked for a solution from the Europeans who brought them.

As you discuss these reasons, remind the students that no matter what reason the Indians had for coming to the mission, as soon as they were baptized, they were forced to stay in the mission—even if they did not understand the language they were baptized in. And then ask the students: Does that sound very fair? Do you think what happened in the missions equated to slavery? If you want to go home, and try to escape, but are forced back to work at a place you don’t want to be at—is that slavery?
Just because something has been done in a certain way for a long time does not mean that we have to continue the same process. For many Native people, missions are places of disease, death, abuse, and cruelty. As Deborah Miranda (Ohlone/Chumash/Esselen), author of *Bad Indians*, discusses, would it be acceptable to make a model of a plantation complete with enslaved African Americans? Would it be acceptable to make a model of a concentration camp where Jewish people perished? If these cases are not acceptable (and they are not), why is it acceptable to make models of California missions? Here are a couple of ideas for alternatives to building physical models of the mission:

- **Build a California Indian village** that represents the way the tribe near a particular mission lived. Would there be redwood bark houses or tule houses? Would there be a roundhouse? What might the people wear? Would they have boats from tules like the Ohlone and Miwok, or plank canoes like the Chumash and Tongva?
- **Build a mission** that shows resistance from California Indian tribes. Did you know many missions were attacked as a result of Spanish cruelty and abuse towards the Indians? What would that resistance look like?
- **Build a changed landscape** showing how an area of California looked before and after contact with Europeans. What agriculture might be different? What about the natural environment? How might villages look different? How might clothing have changed?
- **Avoid building any mission** and instead focus on the natural beauty of California’s unique landscapes, from the Central Valley to the coastal bluffs of Marin, from the expansive, endless ocean views of Santa Barbara and the Channel Islands to the immense and grand San Francisco Bay. How did this look before any Europeans arrived?

Many Native American parents and educators have argued that having students build scale models of missions has little-to-no educational value. It is also a harmful exercise to require of California Native students, given that many of them have ancestors that are connected to these institutions. In protest, many California Indian students and their families have staged revolts in their mission model projects.

More often than not, creating the structure of a mission does not teach kids about the people in the mission or how they were treated. Students would benefit more from hearing and exploring stories of mission life passed down from tribes or doing a report on how mission policies destroyed tribes and their resources. Here are some suggested project-based learning activities that can provide students with a better understanding of what happened to the California native people who populated these missions.

**Disease, Death, and Devastation.** The Spanish attempted to force Indians to assimilate into Spanish culture and engage in forced labor in the missions. As a result, most missions have memorials dedicated to the California Indians that did not survive this era. There were many factors that contributed to the loss of lives. Sanctioned violence, weakened immunities, changes in diet and nutrition, changes in child-rearing practices, and organized resistance efforts made the mission period a dangerous time for California Indians.

Select a mission and create a map that illustrates dangers, historic events, disease, nutrition, daily routines and practices, accessibility of surrounding cultural resources, and other factors that presented dangers to California Indians at this time. What practices established by the Spanish impacted the native ecosystem, what diseases decimated native populations, what dangers were present for Native people inside and outside of the mission? Illustrate these visually on your map or poster board and provide captions explaining your conclusions.

**Build a Sustainable Secularization Plan.** It is 1821, and you are working to ensure Native Americans are granted rights as control of California is transferred from Spain to
Mexico. The Mexican government is making a series of laws to secularize or close the missions. Research the facts of what happened when the missions were secularized in 1834. What was supposed to happen to the mission lands and the Native people who remained there? How did what actually happened differ from the secularization plan? Why is this period referred to as “the sacking of the missions”? What options did Native people have during secularization? Revise the secularization laws to prevent “the sacking of the missions” and protect the rights of Native people. How could Mexican officials and soldiers have been held accountable during this period? Present your fact-finding and secularization plan to the class.

**Defending Our Homelands.** First, form a team and assign each member a research topic focusing on the strategies the Spanish soldiers and padres used to establish the California missions. How were geographic locations selected and what purpose did they serve? What were the responses of the Native peoples where the missions were established and what happened to them over time? What natural resources were important to the lives, cultures, and traditions of the Native populations surrounding the missions, and how did the mission impact these resources and practices? What contemporary issues are important to these tribes today?

Then use your research to create a presentation that tells the story of the mission, how and why it was established, the impact it had on the surrounding Native communities, and the natural resources that pre-existed the mission. Collect historical and contemporary photos of tribal communities that illustrate the Native people who lived at the mission. Highlight events that illustrated resistance by these tribal communities and their efforts to protect their peoples, lands, and cultures. Highlight an historic or contemporary California Native leader who has contributed to the contributed to political or military resistance, the protection of cultural resources, or the health and welfare of a tribal community associated with your mission. End your presentation with a section that describes these tribal communities today.
Native Heroes

We all need heroes. What heroes can we show children to replace, contrast, or add to the Spanish, Mexican, and American heroes they are so often presented with in California’s schools?

Pablo Tac

Pablo Tac was born in the early 1820s at Mission San Luis Rey. His parents were both Luiseño and his grandparents contributed to the construction of the mission. Tac is one of the few California Indians to write about his experiences in the missions. The priest in the mission was fond of Tac, who helped him in his daily routines, and took him and another Luiseño boy with him to Rome to study at the Vatican. Tac lived in a politically complicated time, during the fall of the Spanish empire and the secularization of the missions. Knowing that the missions were doomed to fail or be secularized after the Mexican government took control, the priest at San Luis Rey fled to Mexico City with Tac and the other Luiseño boy. Tac may have been influenced by the debates going on in Mexico at that time about the rights and equality of indigenous people.

After living in Mexico City for two years, the trio sailed to Barcelona and then Rome. At the Vatican, Tac studied linguistics and created a Luiseño dictionary based on the language forms he learned in studying Latin and Spanish. Tac also wrote about his experiences in the mission and argued for the equality of indigenous people. Since he wrote with the instruction of other priests and had his work edited and republished, the accuracy of Tac’s writing remains questionable. Tac also recorded many of the customs he learned while living in the missions and the stories that his parents and grandparents shared with him. Tac’s parents experienced the harsh conditions of the mission and watched their children succumb to the deadly diseases brought by the Spaniards. Tac is one of the few Native scholars to be trained at the Vatican; his class consisted of three other Native people, including two from the Midwest and one from the Carolinas. He died in 1841.

The Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island or Juana Maria

The people indigenous to the island of San Nicolas, which is about fifty miles off of the coast of Los Angeles, were sailors who often traded with the mainland. Their abundance of otters drew Russian hunters looking for otter pelts down from their settlements in Alaska. One group of these hunters clashed with the Indians living on the island and devastated the small tribe. Their population steadily declined after this confrontation. Eventually, the missionaries on the mainland sent a ship to remove the Indians from the island and bring them to the mission. The accounts of sailors report that a woman left the ship just before its departure in order to find her missing son. Eighteen years later, in 1853, otter hunters found a woman living on the island who was the same age as the woman who was left behind would have been by that time. The hunters took her to the mainland, where she lived with the ship’s captain for seven weeks before she passed away from disease. Some of her tools and her dress were given to the California Academy of Sciences as a gift, but they were destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

Father Horra

Father Horra was one of the two original priests at Mission San Miguel Arcángel. Although he was not an Indian, he stood up for the rights of California Indians in the missions. Father Horra filed a complaint against his partner for mistreating the Indians in the mission, claiming that they were being excessively beaten and in some cases starved. Along with these accusations, he claimed that his partner was not following the model that had been established for running the missions because he let Indians live in their villages after they’d been baptized and did not teach all of them Spanish. The latter claims suggest that Father Horra was not against the mission system, only the people who were running it. Father Horra served only two months at the mission before the church declared him insane and sent him back to Mexico.

Chief Solano

Chief Solano was a Suisun Indian who lived during the early nineteenth century. His story serves as an important example of the romanticized legends behind the mission era. For over one hundred years, the legend of Chief Solano spread
throughout the region, although many of the facts in the story are not plausible. Mariano Vallejo, who was given command of the northern frontier of California by the Mexican government in the early nineteenth century, spread the tale of an Indian who negotiated peace with neighboring tribes or led his troops into battle against other Indians. Vallejo claimed to have met Solano in 1834 with an army of forty thousand warriors, but the Suisun were not known warriors and most of their population had been destroyed in an 1810 raid near Mission Dolores. As the surviving villagers either fled to the interior of California or were taken to the missions, Solano was most likely raised in Mission Dolores. He would have had trouble learning his traditional language and communicating with tribal leaders outside of the mission, and so would not have been able to put together a large army. The various explanations debunking the myth suggest that the tale of Chief Solano and his actual life are different stories.

**Yozcolo**

The resistance leader Yozcolo led a revolt and several raids in and around Mission Santa Clara in the nineteenth century. Yozcolo freed dozens of young women being held at the mission and fled into the interior of California. After his escape from the mission, Yozcolo gathered several followers and led raids on the pueblos and ranchos around the mission. His resistance was ended by the Mexican government in 1834.

**Pomponio**

Pomponio led raids and revolts from San Francisco down to San Luis Obispo and as far as San Diego in the early nineteenth century. He stole weapons, food, and horses from missions and ranchos across the state. Many of the Indians living in the missions sympathized with Pomponio and snuck him food and provisions when he was camped nearby. The military attempted to apprehend Pomponio several times but were unsuccessful for years. During a raid, however, Pomponio killed a soldier, sparking a manhunt and allowing the Mexican forces to marshal more troops to help catch him. Pomponio was caught in the early 1820s and sentenced to death by a council of judges. His death inspired several revolts against missions in southern California, including a rebellion in Santa Barbara consisting of two thousand Indians.

**Chief Marin**

Chief Marin, also known by his native name Huicmuse, was a Coast Miwok Indian from what is now southern Marin County. Huicmuse was born around 1780 in a traditional native community enriched by colorful ceremonies, the daily activities of hunting and fishing, and the nightly sharing of tribal lore. Huicmuse first encountered the Spanish missionaries at Mission Dolores in his early twenties. It was at this time Huicmuse was baptized and given the name Marino. Marino experienced a different world inside the mission: new languages, new rules and regulations based on assigned chores, a strict time schedule, new codes of behavior, punishment, and a new faith forced upon his people.

During his time in the missions Marino was very smart and used his roles as a boatman, guide, and interpreter to his advantage. He was granted freedoms that others were not. Marino fled the mission in 1822, after Father Amoros grew angry with him. Marino lived in hiding, using his skills to outwit the Mexican military. In his memoirs of the time, Mariano Vallejo wrote about Marino hiding out on the "Marin Islands" near San Rafael, which were thereafter named “in honor of that chieftain. Who, while maintaining his savage dignity, was a terrible and greatly feared enemy of the whites.” There are various accounts of Chief Marin, as he became known, harassing the Spanish soldiers, attacking the missions, and evading capture.

Like many accounts of Indians during the mission era, Chief Marin’s story comes from a variety of different sources that may or may not have told the truth. Missionaries recorded accounts of raiding Indians because they were a threat to the missions and pueblos, but newspapers in the mid- and late-nineteenth centuries often dramatized these accounts. Vallejo’s accounts have been debunked by historians because his timeline does not fit with accounts of other military actions or what we know about the cultures of the tribes in northern California.

**Estanislao**

Estanislao was a Yokuts-speaking Lacquisamne tribe member living at Mission San Jose. At the mission he worked as a cowhand and mule tamer and was eventually appointed one of the alcaldes over his people. Estanislao was an intelligent, talented man and he didn’t approve of the way he and his people were treated. Stories of other revolutionaries inspired him to take action.

In 1828 Estanislao escaped Mission San Jose and fled toward the mountains. Estanislao wrote to the mission father and told him that he and his people would not return to the mission and would fight if soldiers were sent to capture them. Estanislao and his allies twice defeated military groups sent to recapture him, but the mission leaders would not give up. They were determined to bring back all the baptized Indians and punish the resistance leaders as well as any group or person who harbored the escaped Indians. The missionaries requested the Mexican government’s help to end this resistance. The Mexican government sent over 150 men led by Mariano Vallejo. This time they brought more powerful weapons, including one cannon, and captured Estanislao, but not before he became a hero to his people.
I stood there in an anguished fog of confusion, staring at the wall: how could this be?

It was yet another evening with doubt and growing despair creeping into my awareness, on an evening of long ago, that humanity could be so cruel to each other. I tried desperately to comprehend the madness that was displayed before me. My very young mind did not yet grasp the concept that humans did not always view other humans as such; that at times they thought of some of them as less than, as diminished, as only partially human—if human at all. And when done with them, they could stack their bodies like so much firewood, to be consumed by the earth.

Written by Gregg Castro
Such was the vision of that old adobe brick wall that assaulted my young heart as I gazed at the old, dilapidated cemetery of my much older relatives at Mission San Antonio. Even now, a half century later, the disgust at how our ancestors were treated has not faded; indeed, it has grown. A similar spectacle awaited me when, years ago, I visited my mom’s ancestors’ mission at Carmel, the headquarters for this seeming madness. A Spanish ancestor is buried inside the church in a state of great honor; his very young wife, a rumšien girl, is buried outside in a barely marked and ignored ground hole. These sights say so much that words can’t convey—or soothe.

My late mom was a rumšien Ohlone (with some Salinan) woman who possessed a deep faith, expressed through Catholicism (twenty-plus years as a Catechism teacher), but she was also a fierce proponent of truth, fairness, and justice. She taught me the history of our ancestors and other Native peoples affected by the missions they built for the Spanish Empire all along the coast. She separated so-called faith from worldly actions; that what some said they believed could be separate from how they acted, by the choices they made and the actions they took.

My late dad, a t’rowt’raahl “Jolon” Salinan Indian man, was quite different. He was a simple and direct man who didn’t want anything to do with the church—period. There was never any discussion about it, he simply did not participate in any of the activities that the rest of the family was involved in regarding the church. His only involvement was when there was a funeral of a family member or friend, with the very rare visit for a baptism. He did attend when my two older brothers and I celebrated various Catholic milestones like communion, but those were very quick, perfunctory appearances that passed like a momentary breeze, not to be talked about or even remembered. His church was somewhere else.

He went “home” to “church” as often as he could. Home was the Salinan homeland in coastal central California, the places in the Santa Lucia Mountains where he grew up as a very young child. Raised by his Salinan grandmother, he would roam the hills and valleys of his home with his grandfather and uncles, working cattle, watching horses being broken by his Grandpa Tony (a consultant to J.P. Harrington) or making his famous ropes, often from horse hair. Not far away, the edifice of Mission San Antonio stood as a brooding reminder of an unsettled past. He never really spoke of that place, but we did go there on many occasions. By the time I came along and was old enough to accompany him, he took me with him on hunting trips in the homeland.

Much of our homeland is now public land of one sort or another (county, state, federal). Few Salinans have sizable land holdings. Most that still live out in the country, away from towns, own relatively small lots. A very large portion is federally controlled: Los Padres National Forest (where we often camped and where we still hold community meetings nearly every month) and neighboring Fort Hunter Liggett (sometimes seen in movies as-is, sometimes disguised as some other place). The base, formerly part of the vast Hearst Ranch holdings, surrounds Mission San Antonio now. Besides the usual military activities, they allow hunting and fishing (under very tight controls) through the auspices of the state Fish and Game agency. When I was very young, the hunting permit building was a small shack and parking area across the road from the mission. My dad, being a very practical man, knew the hunting was far better on the
base than in Los Padres, and didn’t always want to drive the long distance back and forth every day to hunt. He often took advantage of one of the very few places to camp on the base: at the back of the mission. So Mission San Antonio was a frequent destination and I got to know it well as a child. Of course, being with my dad meant I didn’t attend Sunday morning Mass, but that was excused as I was often already far out into the hills with a canteen, and later with a rifle in my hand, during the services. But I was able to explore the grounds in the lunch times at camp or in the evenings. Early on in my self-introduction, I found “the wall.”

“The wall” was an adobe brick barrier, square in shape, about 150 feet by 125 feet, which was off to the side of the main mission buildings. I was drawn to it when very young, and at some point, I recall that I read the sign nearby, indicating this was the Indian cemetery. I knew what a cemetery was—or at least I thought I did, but this one was unlike any other I was aware of. Part of the sign at that time stated a number, “about 1800,” that seemed to be referring to the number of people within the walls, and not a year. That specific sign is no longer there; for some time there was nothing, then years ago they put up one that simply said Indian Cemetery. No matter, I knew that lots of our people were buried here, which didn’t seem right to my young mind, because so many were crammed into such a small place. As I know now, the number is closer to four thousand of my Salinan ancestors being placed there, many directly related to my family.

How could this be? To my young mind, it was a very disturbing, irrational, ludicrous notion: that the bodies must have been stacked like firewood in order to put eighteen hundred people in that place (in fact, we now believe that is not far from the truth, which is how they fit nearly four thousand bodies in the cemetery).

Then, as now, I was deeply connected to our homeland and all the creatures that were part of it. I also now understand that this connection transcends time. Our ancestors had a very different sense of time: it was fluid and flexible; it could even bend around and touch us from behind. What happened eons ago was yesterday; they were all close relatives, and what happened to them happened to me as well. It touched me in the most intimate ways and eventually fueled the fire that moved me to action later in life. In the nearly quarter century since my father’s passing, I’ve been on a path to save what is left of both of my cultures—and I found the lie to the tale that it was all gone. There is so much left, and to my delight, there were others on this path as well who discovered the same truth: it is still here. We just need to look.

In front of it all is that old adobe brick wall that I stared at for so long. It is staring back at me. What is it saying? Is it asking something of me? What do I say in return? What can I say?

As I write this, I seem to be inundated with waves of factoids, figures—and emotion. I have just returned from a symposium at UC Riverside about the “Gold Rush Genocide.” Up ahead in a few days: a panel discussion at CSU Monterey Bay on historical trauma (there is nothing historical about what happened to our people; it is happening right this moment) and its effects on our community. It became obvious in the discussions that for the coastal people, the missions played a crucial role in that terrible legacy. The Spanish system set us up for an overwhelming blow—the missions devastated our communities to the point where we had no chance against the genocidal greed of the newcomer
Americans. Unlike the Spaniards, who desired to keep us as a convenient work force, the Americans wanted us eradicated from the face of the earth in order to have no impediment to possessing the land we had been caretaking for thousands of years. At UCR, in discussions with an audience of mainly California Native people, there was hardly any distinction between the Spanish, Mexican, and American invasions in terms of intent and effects. One flowed into the other, seemingly as if by design, so that the missions are thought of as having a critical role in the near-total destruction of our ancestors as part of a master plan.

Academics may squirm at this statement. Let them squirm. Our communities do far more than squirm at the thought: we cry, wail, emote; we feel for these relatives that modern society consigns to an arbitrary distant past as a convenient way to diminish—if not totally dismiss—any connection or association to those times and events. Denial is rampant, even though there is no hesitation in reaping the present-day benefits of such events, even while denying their effects and sometimes their veracity. There is a largely academic argument over those effects and even the application of the term genocide. Our part as the survivors of that academic event is to keep alive the emotional context of such heady debates. These were Real People—Our People—with Real Lives and Real Pain, pain that continues and is fed by the denial of this real history.

Time heals—that is what they say. “They” are mostly the people who use time as a denial mechanism, a way of disassociating the past from the present-day society that enjoys immense benefits from in. Let us as California Indigenous Genocide Survivors keep a constant reminder on the table, that we are still in “First Contact” times: it has been only a scant five hundred–plus years out of more than fifteen thousand years of “pre-history” (according to their science; they keep trying to desperately catch up while simultaneously using that time stick to beat on us that we are not truly “native”; we arrived here at some point before them, it’s just a matter of time). To us, as I said before, that day when Chris Columbus stumbled lost off his ship “sailing to India” is but yesterday. That makes the Spanish expeditions of the late 1700s just hours ago, and the missions a morning event. Fresh in our minds and our hearts.

Of course, what is even more difficult (perhaps impossible) for modern society to admit is that it is still happening. Genocide and the racism that fueled it are still alive today. The battlefields have changed, the tactics modified, the goals shifted, but the Indian Wars never ended. The conflict is now one of cultural genocide rather than the previous physical genocide (to many native people, not much difference), starting with the denial of what really happened. And what continues to happen, given the present laws built with the bricks and tools of past racism and bigotry. These laws deny us our places, our ceremonies, our religions, our cultures, our languages, our ancestors’ bones—but freely allow the theft of all the above. Just ask the Washington, D.C., NFL team. Perhaps time is flexible for modern society as well, just in a different way, but still with the same intent; perhaps to reinforce the claim that “This is ours now; you lost, so suck it up and get over it.” They want us to join the American Way, a way that consists of keeping up with Kardashians, dancing with stars, tweeting and Facebooking our lives as an open sore, keeping the head stuck in that sand hole. Sorry, but no thanks. We lost so many to the beginning of the Indian Wars; we are losing more today during the current skirmishes on the electronic battlefield.

That old adobe cemetery wall really is speaking to me. It is saying, “Don’t put up another wall, tear down the ones that are being put up around your mind, heart and soul—and be free.” Just the way we were for thousands of years before the recent immigrants showed up and we had to save them from starving in the midst of plenty. Pretty ingenious for a bunch of savages, don’t you think? We must apply that “indigenuity” to the modern battlefields in the war of survival that we still struggle with today.

Mission NOT accomplished: the Spaniards did not succeed; the missions did not succeed; the Mexicans did not succeed; the “’Mericans” did not succeed. Yet. We who claim connection to an ancient people must pray constantly, then work every day, every moment to make sure they still do not succeed.

Yaxap
Missionized California Indian Futures

Written by Jonathan Cordero

WHEN LOOKING AT a map of the federally recognized tribes in California, one immediately notices that fewer than five are located on lands once within the reach of the Spanish missions. Within that stretch of land from Sonoma to San Diego, approximately eighty-five thousand Indians were baptized at the missions, but by the time the missions were secularized in 1834 only fifteen thousand remained. By 1910 less than 1 percent of the missionized Indians remained in most areas.

The near complete destruction of the missionized California Indians was in part the result of the abrupt and drastic changes the Spanish imposed on Indian life. An unfamiliar diet, unsanitary and overcrowded housing, and rigorous labor routines, among many other changes, contributed to a radical decline in Indian populations. So poor were the living conditions at the missions that incredibly high death rates were already a reality prior to any major epidemics. Average life expectancy after baptism was less than five years at many missions.

In spite of the destructive living and working conditions at the missions, tribes maintained social, cultural, and political continuity in neighboring neophyte villages. The Indians could not, however, escape the high rates of death that inevitably destroyed families and tribes. Survivors banded together when possible to form pan-tribal families and groups.

The Secularization Act of 1833 granted mission Indians land, livestock, tools, and, most importantly, a greater but still limited freedom. The Indians who chose to remain at the mission essentially became wards of the state and lived under the control of civil administrators. Those who chose to leave entered towns or worked on the many Spanish ranchos. While missionization destroyed populations and dismantled families and tribes, secularization dispersed the remaining Indians across the state.

The destruction, dismantling, and dispersion of the missionized California Indians was further exacerbated by the genocide, kidnapping, and legalized servitude of Indians by European Americans. White settlers drove the remaining Indians onto less desirable lands, and the American government failed to honor its treaty obligations. Still, many lineages, families, and tribes did survive to the present, but many faced problems associated with extreme poverty—poor health care, substandard education, and unemployment.

Unfortunately, in establishing its criteria for federal recognition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs did not consider the unique history of California Indians, especially the near impossibility of maintaining historical continuity over time. Individual federal recognition, based on Indian censuses, presents a further impossibility for many missionized California Indians. Missionized Indians not fortunate enough to have an ancestor on a federal census are not eligible to receive a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood and benefits from the federal government. As a result, many missionized California Indians remain out of luck in regards to both tribal and individual federal recognition, yet are as biologically and culturally Indian as members of federally recognized tribes.

Had missionized California Indian tribes remained intact during Spanish colonization, the obstacles posed by European Americans might have been less devastating and then the chances of benefitting from individual or tribal federal recognition might be possible today. Nonetheless, missionization began the process of the destruction of Indian populations and of the dismantling and dispersion of families and tribes that severely limited historical continuity and therefore federal recognition. As a result, missionized California Indian futures continue to suffer from a long and ruinous history.
This special issue of *News from Native California* is made possible by the support of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation.

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[NATIVE ARTS & CULTURES FOUNDATION](http://www.nativeartsandcultures.org)
In 2009, UC Santa Cruz and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band began hosting the twice-a-year Amah Mutsun Speaker Series (AMSS). The goal of this speaker series is to address issues that affect our Tribe as well as the native campus community and issues in the larger American Indian population. We agreed that our first focus would be on Native American mental health. Our first speaker was Maria Yellow-horse Brave Heart, who presented on historic trauma. Dr. Brave Heart talked about how unresolved historic grief results in cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over a lifespan and across generations.

Healing from Historical Trauma

The Journey of the Ahmah Mutsun

Written by Valentin Lopez
Photos by Scott Braley, Cipactzin, David Romero, and Wayne Powers

Left to right: Mutsun tribal member Adrian Luna sprinkling water from the Pajaro River as part of the Mass of Reconciliation at Mission San Juan Bautista, 2013; statue depicting friar and neophyte on the Mission San Juan Bautista grounds in the Mutsun homeland.
As she spoke, I thought of how this emotional and psychological wounding continues to devastate so many of our Tribe’s members today. Since this first speaker, we’ve hosted other presentations on the topic of wellness, including “Tribal Mental Health Research/Bridging Academy and Community,” “Effective Treatments for American Indian Families,” and “Restoring Balance/Traditional California Native Approaches to Wellness.”

Prior to the start of the AMSS I had been caring for my son, who has a serious mental illness. After his first episode, it seemed all I could do was cry and pray. I was unable to help him in any other way. But I was determined to learn as much about mental illness as I could. First, I started reading on mental illness and this was very painful. I was looking for a cure for his illness, but it soon became apparent that there would be no cure. However, I learned that with certain steps he could have some degree of recovery. Understanding this, I went about trying to learn how to support and advocate on my son’s behalf to give him the best quality of life possible. I also began learning how to incorporate our traditional Native American beliefs and ceremony into his care and recovery.

Because of my experience and training I eventually became a Native American Advisor to the National Alliance on Mental Illness and to Sacramento County Mental Health. Soon I began to get calls regarding mental health issues from our Tribal members. I remember getting four calls in one week; two were from young mothers who were at risk of losing their children due to drugs and alcohol; another was a call from the spouse of a sixty-seven-year-old elder who said her husband wanted to talk to a spiritual leader near his home about a serious issue that was greatly affecting his life. I started giving a lot of thought to why so many of our members seem to hurt themselves and their families due to depression or by using alcohol and drugs, abusing their children and spouses, living lifestyles that often lead to imprisonment or worse. As the Tribal Chair I felt a responsibility to our members and I wanted to help them find spiritual and psychological balance in their life.

In 2012, our Tribe applied for and received a wellness grant from the Northern California Indian Development Council. With this grant we held a number of wellness meetings, and to our amazement we often had sixty to seventy-five or more members in attendance. At these meetings we talked about our Tribal history, genealogy, traditional culture and knowledge, identity, using our culture to find balance in our lives, and more. These meetings were important as many of our members had information that they could contribute to the conversation while at the same time they learned from other members.

Our Tribal Council has continued to hold these wellness meetings to address issues of Native identity, parenting, good decision making, respect for girls, women, and elders, the importance of finding the right mate, and much more….These healing circles are recognized as being one of the most important activities for our Tribe.

On December 11th, 2012, the bishop of the Monterey Diocese, Richard Garcia, offered a Mass of Reconciliation to our Tribe. This mass ended our wellness meetings for 2012. The mass was very important to our Tribe, as it acknowledged for the first time a lot of the brutal truths that our ancestors experienced during mission times. As Bishop Garcia read the apology, I remember looking at our elders and noticing that many of them had tears rolling down their cheeks. I remembered wishing my mother was alive to be with us.

Because of our members’ interest in these meetings, our Tribal Council has continued to hold these wellness meetings to address issues of Native identity, parenting, good decision making, respect for girls, women, and elders, the importance of finding the right mate, and much more. We meet on the first Saturday of every other month. These healing circles are recognized as being one of the most important activities for our Tribe. In December 2013 I received a call from Donna Schindler, who was interested in finding out how our Mass of Reconciliation came about. Dr. Schindler is a psychiatrist who lived on the Navajo reservation for three years and worked primarily in the area of historic trauma. She now lives in Auburn and works with several Northern California tribes, and continues to work with the Navajo via telepsychiatry. When we initially met I talked to her about the Mass of Reconciliation, our Tribal history, and our ongoing wellness meetings. I invited Dr. Schindler to attend our next wellness meeting and she accepted. On the day of the meeting, we met at my house and drove to the meeting together. The three-hour drive gave us time to talk on a lot of subjects, most importantly the historic trauma of the Amah Mutsun.

As I drove I explained to Donna how it is our Tribal belief that the way we love, fear, hate, deal with and solve problems, are optimistic or pessimistic, is given to us by the seven generations before us. I then talked about our past
seven generations, how our ancestors lived at the mission where they were enslaved, beaten, raped, denied the ability to leave the mission grounds or practice their traditional ceremonies, and much more. For our Tribe, the mission period lasted over forty years, and was followed by the Mexican period, where privileged individuals were given huge tracts of land. Landowners needed a labor force to manage this land and as a consequence most Indians were once again enslaved and not allowed to return to their villages or practice their traditions. How could our ancestors teach their children to have love, strong identities, or pride within themselves during these times? How could parents and grandparents pass on the indigenous knowledge that allowed them to keep balance in their life and to fulfill their obligation to the Creator to take care of Mother Earth and all living things?

I then explained how the Mexican period was followed by the American period, where the Native people lived with laws of extermination, indentured servitude, kidnapping, and unratified Indian treaties. Our ancestors lived under constant fear and their only goal was to survive, as they lived every day of their lives in despair and poverty. For these three or four generations, they could not teach their children how to fulfill the obligations given to them in our creation story, they could not teach them our ceremonies or tell them of our sacred locations. The traditional Mutsun knowledge needed to maintain balance and order in our world and our universe was quickly being lost. Sadly, after signing the 1851 treaty in Fremont, our ancestors waited for the day they would have land. They believed they could return to the life that their Ancestors prepared for them. No one ever told them the treaties that our members signed in good faith were never ratified.

At another meeting, we talked about the Indian Field Service (now Bureau of Indian Affairs) report of 1927, which was written by Superintendent L.A. Dorrington. This report was supposed to be a comprehensive study to determine the land needs of the landless California Indians. In the Dorrington report, our Tribe was identified as the San Juan Band in San Benito County. For our Tribe, Dorrington wrote a two sentence report that said, “In San Benito County we find the San Juan Baptista [sic] Band, which reside in the vicinity of the Mission San Juan Baptista [sic], which is located near the town of Hollister. These Indians have been well cared for by Catholic priests and no land is required.”

The most curious thing to us is that a review of the eighteen boxes held at the National Archives in San Bruno, California, show that Dorrington never visited the area between San Francisco and San Luis Obispo. If he did, he would have discovered that as many as fifteen of our Tribal families were living together along rivers and streams in Gilroy and Hollister in their efforts to stay together as a tribe. There is also no record of Dorrington ever corresponding or communicating with local governmental or church officials. Most egregiously, Dorrington never provided any evidence or substantiation for the claims he made in his report, which resulted in approximately 180 tribes being illegally terminated in the 1930s. For our Tribe, it seems that the federal government attempted to delegate their responsibility to us to the Catholic Church without telling them. We have letters from both the Monterey Diocese archives and the San Juan Bautista
church saying they have no record of ever corresponding with Dorrington. Finally, the Indian Field Service never notified our Tribe or any tribe of this change in recognition status or their decision not to provide land.

These events and many more that persist to this day exacerbate our historic trauma and the impact it has on our members. For example, being an unrecognized Tribe means that we receive no assistance from local, state, or federal governments. Very few recognized tribes help unrecognized tribes; it is rare that they return our phone calls, emails, or letters. We wish they would help the unrecognized tribes who are struggling to keep their culture alive. In 2009, I asked for help from Senator Steinberg’s office. I wanted the senator to request that the California State Library Research Bureau conduct research into the Dorrington report to see how it could have been accepted without evidence. The Senator’s staff person told me, “That’s a federal issue, you need to contact them.” Several times I asked to meet with Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom, believing he may be willing to help unrecognized tribes. To my disappointment I never received a response. Our Tribe does not trust the BIA; their mandate is to work for the federally recognized tribes, they have no interest or obligation to help unrecognized tribes. If they were to help unrecognized tribes that would only dilute their already underfunded resources. For years I have argued that having the federal recognition process under the BIA is a conflict of interest. We believe the federal recognition process should be under the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

When President Obama signs laws that are reported to be of benefit to Native Americans, all unrecognized tribes are excluded. In 2013, President Obama signed a proclamation naming November National Native American Month. One would think this would bring great joy to all Native Americans. However, when one reads the proclamation it’s clear that it applies only to federally recognized tribes. We’re left to wonder, will we ever be noticed, will anyone ever hear our voice, will anyone ever care about our plight?

In spite of our history and these continuing injustices, our Tribe is determined to find a path that will allow us to fulfill our mandate from the Creator and follow the path of our Ancestors. We believe this is the path that will allow our members and our Tribe to find balance within our life and our world. Restoring our lost ceremonies, language, songs, and other traditional practices will allow healing for our Tribe. Our work is also designed to ensure our Tribe’s existence until the last sunrise.

These are the goals of our wellness meetings. We say to find balance we must have healthy relationships with all things. We tell our youth and young adults that in order for them to be in a healthy relationship, both people need to be healthy. A relationship will never work when one person is healthy and the other person isn’t. Too many times our members are involved in unhealthy relationships.

The theme of healthy relationships is important in everything we do. Our Tribe is actively working to restore a healthy relationship with the Creator. We do this by restoring our ceremonies, songs, and prayers. We do this by honoring the directive from the Creator to take care of Mother Earth and all living things. In 2005, elders told our Tribal Council that the Creator never rescinded his mandate that we take care of Mother Earth and all living things. They told us, “We must find a way to fulfill this obligation.” Among ourselves we thought, “We are an unrecognized tribe and most of our members live at or below the poverty line, we own no property, how are we going to do this?”
As a result of this request we began a very deliberate effort to develop relationships with Pinnacles National Park, California State Parks, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, and local land trusts. We signed tending and gathering permits and memorandums of understanding to allow us to consult on the management of their lands. At the same time we also began an effort to restore our traditional land stewardship knowledge. We entered into partnerships with UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, and other educational institutions that could help us. This led to a fifty-five acre Mutsun garden at UCSC that is designed to help us restore our indigenous knowledge of plants and to use the plants to help restore landscapes.

Eventually we created our Amah Mutsun Land Trust to conserve and protect our sacred and sensitive sites. The emphasis of our Land Trust is to relearn our indigenous knowledge so we can return to the path of our ancestors. To help our youth learn and understand this path, we created a two-year Mutsun Stewardship Corp; we envision this paralleling the Peace Corp, which many people join to help others and to learn about their own identities. It is our hope that our youth will learn traditional land stewardship knowledge so they can develop a healthy relationship with Mother Earth. We are also teaching them our ethnobotany and traditional ways so they can understand how to tend and gather our food, medicine, and basketry plants. Our stewards are also learning to speak our Mutsun language, make tools, and hunt. During this two-year period, they attend dances and ceremonies, most of them outside our territory as we seek to restore these ceremonies and bring them back. It is our hope that at the end of this two-year program they will want to continue to work for our Amah Mutsun Land Trust or return to colleges and universities to obtain degrees in the natural sciences.

We believe all relationships must begin with honesty. If our Tribe is ever to have a healthy relationship with the local, state, or federal governments or the Catholic Church, both the Tribe and the government or religious entity must be healthy. When our history is denied or ignored, when we are treated disparately compared to other Tribes, when our cultural sites are destroyed for monetary gain, it is impossible to have a healthy relationship.

Our members also pray for the perpetrators, for they too must heal. The perpetrators unleashed upon us bad spirits that have visited our members for generations. These bad spirits work to remove our Native soul and replace it with addiction, violence, depression, suicidal thoughts, and much more. We believe that these bad spirits will leave only when the perpetrators are healed.

Our Tribe has a long way to go if we are ever to achieve balance. But it feels good to know that we have identified our path and are working to fulfill our obligation to Creator. At our October 2014 wellness meeting, a six-year-old member accepted the eagle feather during our healing circle and said in a strong voice, “My name is Angelo and I’m here because I’m Mutsun,” and then he proudly passed the feather. I immediately thought to myself, “He knows who he is and why he’s here, what more could we ask?”

HO!
Yerba Mansa

**Anemopsis Californica**

YERBA MANSA, an immune-enhancing perennial, grows in marshes and riparian areas, habitats now ecologically threatened in California.

BARBARA DRAKE: Tongue elder, salvages yerba mansa in areas slated for development. She removes the first plant with a digging stick to honor the traditional manner of harvesting, then uses a trowel as she transfers the plants to pots. She sprinkles a pinch of tobacco in each one to

"**put a prayer in the pot.**"

RICHARD BUGBEE, Luiseño elder, describes his propagation technique:

"I have a yerba mansa farm going under my dripping faucet. I had one potted plant, put pots with dirt around it, and it shot runners into the pots and started new plants."

VERBA MANSA leaves and roots are used for medicine, but the root is considered more powerful, according to Barbara. A root tea is used as a spring tonic and for colds and sinus infections, and the root is chewed to relieve a sore throat. Barbara’s grandmother “boiled the yerba mansa root and then took a feather to paint the liquid on her ulcerated leg.”

MARK MCQUAID, Luiseño teacher, also uses the plant externally. "To make a poultice, I boil the red roots until they change color, then pound the root into a powder to put on a cut or wound to draw out the infection."

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Yerba Mansa is part of a poster series created by Debra Small of native edible and medicinal plants and the Indian plant specialists who have dedicated their lives to sharing their knowledge and promoting the uses of culturally significant plants for the health and wellness of their communities.

The posters were included in two exhibits titled **Native American Cultural Revitalization in San Diego County** and produced in collaboration with Luiseño youth on the La Jolla reservation as part of their Yaywáwish Program, Luiseño basketweaver Lydia Vassar and storyteller Cathleen Chilcote Wallace, and Bryan Endress from the San Diego Institute for Conservation Research. The exhibits helped document the revitalization of cultural practices as the young women learned to tend, gather, and prepare native plant materials for foods, medicine, and basket weaving.
Yerba Mansa

photos by Debra Small
SIMPLY PUT, this book is beautiful. *Tattoo Traditions of Native North America: Ancient and Contemporary Expressions of Identity* is a large book, with nearly three hundred pages filled with photographs, drawings, descriptions, and testimony illustrating the rich and enduring traditions of tattooing present in all areas and nearly every cultural group of Native North America. These are traditions that date back thousands of years; a far cry from the popular “tramp stamps” and co-opted “tribal tattoos” of the non-Native variety. Among those featured are the tattoos of an 1800s Natsilingmiut Inuit woman whose tattooed thighs ensured that her children would be greeted by something of beauty upon their entrance into the world; a Yuki/Concow/Maidu woman who received her traditional chin tattoos in 2004 and lost her job over it; the Cherokee couple with matching Grandmother Spider tattoos symbolizing the restoration of religious ceremonies and women’s power in their community today. These are the stories that are rarely told, about traditions that have been quieted, and by the people who are working to change that.

The author, Lars Krutak, is a non-Native American cultural anthropologist who has been travelling to indigenous communities worldwide for over fifteen years to showcase the traditions of tattooing and other forms of body modification. Given what I know about anthropologists, I am understandably hesitant when presented with books such as this. I have learned to take what anthropologists have to say with a mountain of salt and my most
critical frame of reference. What I appreciate about this particular book, which is distinctly non-academic, engaging, and reader-friendly, is that Krutak strikes a great balance by presenting historical anthropological accounts with the idea that they are neither necessarily right nor wrong, but up for interpretation, along with his own social commentary, and most importantly, the voices of the featured people themselves.

This book makes it a point to shed light on the struggles that Native communities have had to face that led to the lapse in the continuance of such traditions: institutionalized methods for assimilation and homogenization, like the boarding school system, which caused a generational rift communities are to this day working to overcome; and the illegalization of Native languages and religions. Sage LaPena, a Wintu herbalist, ethnobotanist, and teacher, shares her thoughts on this: “I was raised in the 1970s; the American Indian Movement, Alcatraz was taken over, and what came after was our religious freedom. So being raised in that time period was so very different than what my parents’ and grandparents’ generation experienced during those years. Allowing me to get tattooed, they ultimately paved the way.”

I was lucky to have this lovely book on my coffee table for the last month, and any time I had a guest over—young, old, Native and non-Native—they would, without fail, reach for it, flip through its pages, marvel at the beauty and diversity, and remark on how little they knew about it, just as I had. This book presents these traditions with levity, generosity, and respect, and most importantly, not as a dying or vanishing art form but one which is re-emerging, giving voice to the people to whom these traditions belong.
SPECIAL EVENTS

January 15–18
Project 562, Independent Project Press, Bishop. A three-day art, photography, and bookmaking workshop. Project 562 is a national documentary project dedicated to photographing contemporary Native America. For more information, call (760) 873-5600.

January 23–25
29th Annual Southwest Arts Festival, Empire Polo Club, Indio. A three-day art show featuring over 250 acclaimed artists and various local performers. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. $8 admission, $5 parking. For more information, call (760) 347-0676 or visit www.southwestartsfest.com.

January 24
California Indian and Pacific Islander Spoken Word, Exploratorium, Pier 15, San Francisco. Powerful prayers, chants, songs, stories, poems, and words from the California Indian and Pacific Islander communities. 4:30 to 6 p.m. For more information, visit www.exploratorium.com.

January 28
Bird Singing: Perspectives on Indian Social Song & Dance, Hilton Hotel, 400 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs. A panel of distinguished bird singers and dancers will discuss aspects of traditional bird singing and dancing past and present, and what the future holds for this unique performance practice. 6:30 p.m. Free. For more information, call (760) 833-8169 or email cvictor@accmuseum.org.

January 31
Singing the Birds: Bird Song and Dance Festival, Palm Springs High School Gymnasium, 2401 East Baristo Rd., Palm Springs. Bird singers and dancers from California and Arizona will honor the traditions of the Cahuilla Indian people with their performance of the oral history of Cahuilla life. Sponsored by Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Free admission and parking.

February 1
American Indian Culture Day for Families, The Autry in Griffith Park, 4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles. Learn about American Indian cultures through music, traditional and contemporary games, storytelling, and much more. 1 to 5 p.m. Museum admission rates apply. For more information, visit theautry.org.

February 20–22
31st Annual Marin Art Show of the Americas, Marin Civic Center, 10 Avenue of the Flags, San Rafael. Indigenous arts from across North, Central, and South America, with more than two hundred exhibitors and vendors; Native American, pre-Columbian, Spanish Colonial, Latin American, and Western art and collectibles. Fri. 6:30 to 9 p.m. (opening night preview), Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. $15 admission. For more information, visit www.marinshow.com.

March 3–8
Native FilmFest 2015, Camelot Theaters, 2300 East Baristo Rd., Palm Springs. One of the nation’s most highly regarded festivals, featuring the best films by, about, and starring Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples. For more information, visit www.accmuseum.org.

March 13–14
45th Annual Pow Wow, CSU Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach. Dancing, arts, crafts, and food. Free. For more information call (562) 985-5305 or visit www.csulb.edu/clas/departments/americanindianstudies.

March 17–21
Indigenous People’s Celebration and Yomen Weda, Sierra College, 5000 Rocklin Rd., Rocklin. Educational and uplifting celebration of the Spring Equinox; demonstrations and celebrations of the art, beauty and diversity of California’s native peoples, guest speakers and roundtable discussion, film screenings, art exhibitions, poetry and prose readings, tours of local museums, hands-on culture and art workshops, culminating with a Big Time. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sponsored by the Sierra College Native American Club; for more information, contact Tiffany at yellowhammerdesigns@yahoo.com.

April 4
Malki Museum Agave Harvest, Malki Museum, 11795 Malki Rd., Morongo Reservation, Banning. The Agave Harvest and Roast is an annual event sponsored by the Malki Museum. It is held on two consecutive Saturdays in mid-to late-April, when the Agave plants were traditionally gathered. $10 donation appreciated. For more information visit www.malkimuseum.org or call (951) 849-7289.

April 11
Fresno State First Nations Powwow. For more information, visit www.500nations.com/California_Events.asp.

April 11–12
Chumash Day Pow Wow, Malibu Bluffs Park, Malibu. Intertribal gathering with traditional arena dancing, singing and drums, Native American craft vendors, food, Chumash storytelling, and children’s crafts. For more information call (310) 317-1364.

April 18
Sherman Indian High School Pow Wow, 9010 Magnolia Avenue, Riverside. Intertribal dancers from the Southern California area participate in the grand entries, inter tribes and contests. For more information visit www.shermanindian.org, or call (951) 276-6325.

April 26
Yomen: 12th Annual Spring Celebration and Free Community Event, Maidu Museum, 1970 Johnson Ranch Rd., Roseville. Experience California Indian culture with an opening blessing followed by California Indians, skill demonstrations, tours through the historic site, old ways craft demonstrations, children’s activities, storytelling, and a Native craft fair throughout the day. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, visit www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum.

EXHIBITS

Ongoing
The Albert and Vivien Hailstone Collection, Clarke Historical Museum, 240 E St., Eureka. Baskets made and collected by Vivien Hailstone and her son, Albert, representing primarily revival-era baskets “made for the trade.” Trinket baskets, flour trays, utility baskets, and more. For more information, call (707) 443-1947.

The Kay Key Ya Project: Recreating Traditional Pomo Dance Regalia, Museum of the American Indian, 2200 Novato Blvd, Novato. A new exhibit featuring Native California artist Edward Willie (Pomo/Wailaki/Wintu), who collaborated with the museum to create men’s regalia—distinct, meticulously crafted, nature-based adornments for traditional dancers. For more information, call (415) 897-8064 or visit www.museumoftheamericanindian.org.

Through January 31
Animals Speak: Native American Creation Tales, Museum of the American Indian, 2200 Novato Blvd, Novato. For more information, call (415) 897-8064 or visit www.museumoftheamericanindian.org.

Through April 13
Indians, Irony, and Identity, Maidu Museum, 1970 Johnson Ranch Rd., Roseville. Mon. to Fri. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Sat. 9:00 am to 1:00 p.m. $4.50 adults, $4 child or senior, $16 family of four. Free every third Saturday, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Visit www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum for more information.

CONFERENCES

February 10–12
20th Annual Western Indian Gaming Conference, Harrah’s Resort, 777 Harrah’s Resort Southern California

March 12-15
49th Annual Society for California Archaeology Meeting, Holiday Inn and Red Lion, Redding. For more information, visit www.scahome.org.

March 15–17
38th Annual California Conference on American Indian Education, Renaissance Hotel, Palm Springs. This year’s theme is “Indian Education: Meeting the Challenge.” This is an opportunity to share traditional and academic teaching and learning. For more information, visit www.ncidc.org.

March 22–25
14th Native Women & Men’s Wellness Conference, Town & Country Resort & Convention Center, 500 Hotel Circle North, San Diego. This conference brings together tribal members from American Indian, Alaska Native, and Canadian First Nation communities, tribal health system and IHS employees, public health and social science researchers, social workers, counselors, psychologists, educators, traditional food educators, and health promotion specialists. For more information call (405) 325-4127 or visit aii.ou.edu/conferencestrainings/2015-native-women-mens-wellness.

March 30–April 2
National Indian Gaming Association Trade Show & Convention, San Diego Convention Center, 111 W. Harbor Dr., San Diego. Workshops, networking events, exhibitions of the newest product and service innovations and latest industry trends. Conference tracks include behavioral health, health promotion and disease prevention, and wellness. For more information visit www.indiangaming.org/events/tradeshow.

CLASSES, LECTURES, AND WORKSHOPS
Agua Caliente Cultural Museum

April 1–February 6
Adult-level workshops on soapstone carving, Indian-style beadwork, clapperstick making, hand game instruction, and more. Pre-registration required. Call for schedule of classes.

February 4—A Panel Discussion
About Section 14: The Other Palm Springs

February 14—A Taste of Chocolate
& Other Native Foods

March 28—Indian Toys & Games:
Displays & Activities

Autry National Center
4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles. (323) 667-2000, theautry.org. “Let’s Make History!” events for families with children ages 5 to 12. First and second Saturday and third Sunday of each month, 1 to 2:30 p.m. Visit website for complete listings of upcoming events.

Barona Cultural Center and Museum

California Indian Museum and Cultural Center
5250 Aero Dr., Santa Rosa. (707) 579-3004, www.cimcc.org. Check website or call for class information.

Coyote Hills Regional Park
8000 Patterson Rd., Fremont. (888) 327-2757, option 2, 3; chvisit@ebparks.org. Registration required. Call for class information.

January 18—Ohlone Village Life
January 24—Ohlone Village Site Open House

Maidu Museum

Marin Museum of the American Indian

State Indian Museum

Adult-level workshops on soapstone carving, Indian-style beadwork, clapperstick making, hand game instruction, and more. Pre-registration required. Call for schedule of classes.

UC Riverside Extension
1200 University Ave., Riverside. UC Riverside Extension is providing workshops on various aspects of southern California Indian history and culture. To enroll call (951) 827-4105 or (800) 422-4990. For venues, times, and more information on upcoming classes contact Leanna Mojado at (951) 827-1637 or lmojado@ucx.ucr.edu, or visit www.extension.ucr.edu.

Are you planning a California Indian event that should be in our print or online calendars? Listings are free. Items for the next issue or the website may be submitted to News from Native California, P.O. Box 9145, Berkeley, CA 94709, or via email to vincent@heydaybooks.com, or call (510) 549-3564 ext. 377.

Tribal Prayer

Written by Jacque Tahuka Nunez

Everyday...
RISE WITH A THANKFUL AND GRATEFUL HEART
like our ancestors

WORK WITH YOUR HANDS
like our ancestors

WALK MORE
like our ancestors

EAT WHAT COMES FROM MOTHER EARTH
like our ancestors

TEACH OUR FAMILY, OUR CHILDREN
like our ancestors

SHARE STORIES
like our ancestors

AND AT THE END OF THE DAY
VISIT THE STARS IN THE SKY
WITH WONDERMENT and AWE
like our ancestors

And rise...
to a new place

Look up...
to a new place

Know Creator is with you and
is guiding you. This path and new
place started thousands of years
ago and it is yours to claim today,
to live today! Rising to a new place
of goodness and greatness will touch
your family and significantly ripple an
important change within your community.
A Nation will heal and one person can
and will make a difference!

GOD BLESS you!

Cho’onom Noneshkinum
(We are Family—All my Relations)

"Milky Way" by Kim MyoungSung is licensed under CC BY 2.0.
**YOMEN**

A Spring Celebration

10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 25
Free admission and parking

Celebrate and experience California Indian culture: opening blessing, dance groups, traditional art and craft demonstrations, guided tours, children’s activities and craft fair. Indian tacos and other foods for sale.

Maidu Museum & Historic Site
1970 Johnson Ranch Drive, Roseville, CA 95678
(916) 774–5934 | www.roseville.ca.us/museum

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**News from Native California**

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Registration begins Feb 2, 2015 idyllwildarts.org #iamtheldylwild
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AMERICAN INDIAN CHANGING SPIRITS RECOVERY PROGRAM
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