LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Context: First Peoples of Los Angeles

Prepared for:

LOS ANGELES
CITY PLANNING
Office of Historic Resources

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Purpose and Scope

The First Peoples of Los Angeles historic context is a component of SurveyLA's citywide historic context statement. The intent of the HCS is to establish a structure to identify and evaluate historic places and sites that are associated with the contributions and history of Los Angeles's First Peoples. Expanding the SurveyLA framework to recognize indigenous peoples' history was one of many recommendations of the Garcetti administration's *Past Due: Report and Recommendations from the Los Angeles Mayor's Office Civic Memory Working Group*.[1] The HCS will be a tool to support the identification and recognition of places significant to Los Angeles's First Peoples, similar to the ways in which Angelenos from other cultures and ethnicities have utilized their HCSs to honor and designate places associated with their history. It is important to note that the HCS will not, and cannot, establish eligibility standards for a Tribal Cultural Resource (TCR) or Traditional Cultural Property (TCP); such resources can be determined only in consultation with the tribes.

This context provides a framework for identifying and evaluating sites and/or properties relating to the history of First Peoples of Los Angeles. It is not intended to be a comprehensive history of the communities of First Peoples of Los Angeles; rather, it provides a broad historical overview and narrative stories on the natural world, village life, the effects of settler colonization, genocide, assimilation, and segregation, and the ways in which the identities of First Peoples are retained today. The identified themes focus as much as possible on extant and known resources. As the narrative reveals, extant resources are largely concentrated in the San Fernando Valley and Downtown areas of the City of Los Angeles. First Peoples have been present within the current boundaries of the City of Los Angeles since time immemorial, with villages, trade routes, and sites of importance found in all areas of the city. Some village sites and areas important to First Peoples of Los Angeles expand beyond Los Angeles city limits in areas such as Long Beach, Palos Verdes, and San Gabriel, and as such are not included in the scope of this context. However, they are occasionally mentioned because they are important to the history of First Peoples of Los Angeles which did not begin or end at the current city limits. While focusing on historical themes associated with political, social, and cultural institutions, this context also identifies individuals and organizations that played significant roles in the history of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

First Peoples have lived on the land that is now Los Angeles since time immemorial. Due to colonization, occupation, genocide, erasure, relocation, and slavery before, during, and after the founding of the City of Los Angeles in 1781, the story of First Peoples of Los Angeles has been obscured, distorted, or diluted over time, particularly as a result of others attempting to tell stories that can be told only by First Peoples themselves. As such, this context was written by and with the guidance of First Peoples of Los Angeles: the Gabrieleño Tongva[2] and Fernandeño Tataviam. To preserve and protect sites that continue to remain important to First Peoples of Los Angeles, the identity or location of some extant sites may not be available to the general public. Additionally, within this context, Los Angeles refers explicitly to the City of Los Angeles and its contemporary boundaries unless otherwise stated.

SurveyLA's citywide historic context statement covers the period from about 1781 to 1980, with some exceptions. However, the history of First Peoples of Los Angeles begins well before this period. As such, the First Peoples of Los Angeles Historic Context attempts to encompass the entire timeline of First Peoples within the boundary of the City of Los Angeles from time immemorial, including the Pre-Contact era, the Mission Era, the Mexican Era, and the American Era.

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[1] *Past Due: Report and Recommendations from the Los Angeles Mayor's Office Civic Memory Working Group*, http://civicmemory.la/wp-content/uploads/2021/Report%20PDFs/CivicMemory_PDF_singlepg_for_Media.pdf, accessed May 1, 2023.

[2] The NAHC identifies five tribes associated with the Mission San Gabriel; the majority use the word Tongva to describe their tribal people.

The history of First Peoples of Los Angeles may overlap with other SurveyLA contexts and themes as follows:

- Properties significant for their architectural quality may also be eligible under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- The Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement Context overlaps with the following historic eras and themes:
    - The construction and use of the Mission San Fernando
    - The construction and use of the early adobe buildings and the founding of Los Angeles Plaza
    - The development of ranchos and the history of land grants

Contributors

This document provides historic context for First Peoples of Los Angeles, specifically the Gabrieleño Tongva and Fernandeño Tataviam. The City's Office of Historic Resources (OHR) hired a cultural resource firm, ASM Affiliates, to prepare the context statement. At the outset of this two-phase project, an Advisory Council was established that was instrumental in developing the outline and themes for the historic context. ASM contacted the following tribes identified by the California Native American Heritage Commission to request their participation in the Advisory Council:

- Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians
- San Fernando Band of Mission Indians
- Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
- Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California
- Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians – Kizh Nation
- Gabrielino/Tongva Nation
- Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Chumash Indians
- Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians

Several local tribes accepted the invitation. Advisory Council members include:

Kimberly Morales Johnson of the Gabrieleno/Tongva Band of Mission Indians;
Christina Marsden Conley of the Gabrielino-Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council;
Kimia Fatehi, staff of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians;
Eleanor Fishburn of the Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Chumash Indians;
Bruce Durbin, Supervising Planner for LA County, Regional Planning, Ordinance Studies;
Mark Villasenor, Commissioner of the Los Angeles City-County Native American Indian Commission; and
Amanda Wixon with the Autry Museum of the American West.

During the first half of the project, the Advisory Council met to discuss the purpose and need for the project, and to develop an outline of themes. Key City staff for this project include Ken Bernstein, Principal City Planner; Shannon Ryan, Senior City Planner; and Sara Delgadillo, City Planning Associate. The ASM team included a multi-disciplinary group of archaeologists, ethnographers, and architectural historians, including Tribal Liaison Brian Williams, Ethnographer Molly Molenaar, Director of Archaeology Sherri Andrews, Director of Architectural History Shannon Davis, Architectural Historians Madeline Gonzalez and Laura Voisin George, and Historian Sarah Stringer-Bowsher.

In the second half of the project, ASM collaborated on the preparation of this context with tribal authors from tribes participating on the Advisory Council. Authors included representatives Kimberly Morales, PhD, from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians; Christina Marsden Conley, from the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council; and Kimia Fatehi, Chief of Staff of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Each author met with tribal elders, experts, and other community members to interview and/or collaborate on the development of the narrative history of their people including the themes identified for the HCS.

Conveying and uplifting the voices and knowledge of the most qualified First Peoples subject matter experts remains a top priority for the OHR, even after the publication of the most recent version of the HCS. To this effect, the OHR continues to welcome additional First Peoples narrative content related to the identified themes. The expandable nature of the HCS format ensures the ability to incorporate new content should First Peoples tribes, identified by the NAHC, contribute additional context and information in the future.

Introduction

Terms and Definitions

Terms used in relation to Native Americans have evolved over time. The definition of First Peoples adopted for this context is based on the United Nations definition of Indigenous Peoples. For purposes of the project, First Peoples of Los Angeles is defined as:

> The original inhabitants of the land within the modern-day boundaries of the City of Los Angeles (City) before Europeans arrived. They are "inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live." City boundaries are arbitrary in relation to the ancestral homelands of the Gabrieleño Tongva and Fernandeño Tataviam.[3]

Los Angeles is now home to Native Americans from various tribes across the state, country as well as indigenous peoples from throughout the continent now known as North America. However, this context focuses only on the histories of First Peoples of Los Angeles, those who have lived within the City boundaries since time immemorial, and as such, retain an integral history and point of view that only they can provide. The City recognizes the importance of this history and the importance of highlighting and uplifting the voices of First Peoples of Los Angeles, and therefore provides multiple spaces within this context for First Peoples to tell their own stories and histories in their own words.

The document includes terms defined as follows:

Ahiko: word meaning ocean

Band: A group of Mission Indians that are tied by familial and community bonds and politically autonomous from one another

California Native American Heritage Commission: In 1976, the California state government passed AB 4239, establishing the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) as the primary government agency responsible for identifying and cataloging Native American cultural resources

Chumash: First Peoples who inhabited portions of coastal and inland California from as far south as Malibu to as far north as Estero Bay in lands that form part of modern-day Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara counties, as well as the northern Channel Islands (San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, and Anacapa)

Federally Acknowledged Tribe: A Native American or Alaska Native tribe that the U.S. government acknowledged as an inherent sovereign group of people that continues to exist

Federally Recognized Tribe: A Native American or Alaska Native tribe that the U.S. government recognizes as having a government-to-government relationship with the country

[3] United Nations website, Indigenous Peoples, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html, accessed September 8, 2023.

Fernandeño: Spanish terminology used to refer to First Peoples forced into the Mission System at Mission San Fernando Rey de España ("associated with Mission San Fernando") and originally inhabited portions of Simi, San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys in Los Angeles and Ventura counties

First Nations: A term most often used to refer to indigenous peoples in the Americas

First Peoples: in this HCS, refers to the indigenous people who originated from and have inhabited lands within the boundaries of the area now known as the City of Los Angeles from time immemorial. The NAHC has identified seven tribes that identify as First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Gabrieleño/Gabrieleno/Gabrielino: Variants of Spanish terminology used to refer to First Peoples who were forced into the Mission System at Mission San Gabriel Arcángel ("associated with Mission San Gabriel"); originally inhabited portions of coastal and inland California from Malibu south to Aliso Creek in Los Angeles and Orange counties, as well as portions of San Bernardino County and the southern Channel Islands (San Nicolas, Santa Barbara, San Clemente, and Santa Catalina)

Genocide: Deliberate killing with the intention to destroy a nation or ethnic group

Indigenous Peoples: The descendants of the peoples who inhabited the Americas, the Pacific, and parts of Asia and Africa prior to European colonization – indigenous peoples continue to thrive throughout the world today; in Los Angeles, this includes people whose ancestors did not originate within the boundaries of the City

Kitanemuk: First Peoples who originally inhabited the Tehachapi Mountains and Antelope Valley in Los Angeles and Kern counties

Land Acknowledgement: Used by indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to recognize those who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now live

Landback Movement: a decentralized campaign by Native Americans and their allies to reclaim ancestral lands and regain political and economic control.

Lineage: A line of descent tied to a specific tribal family or family name

Local Tribal Government: Governing organization within a local tribal group that is responsible for community governance as well as the appropriate entity to be involved in government-to-government consultation

Materials: Physical elements (natural and man-made) that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic resource

Native American: Indigenous peoples that inhabit the North American continent

Native American Heritage Commission: an organization in California that maintains a list of all recognized tribes; the Native American Heritage Commission was created in statute in 1976, is a nine-member body appointed by the Governor, designed to assist the public, develop community, local and federal agencies, educational institutions, and aid California Native Americans to better understand problems relating to the protection and preservation of cultural resources

Ochre: A natural clay earth pigment containing a mixture of ferric oxide and varying amounts of clay and sand, ranging in color from yellow to deep orange or brown, used by indigenous peoples for body paint and dye

Ranchos: Large land grants made by Spain and Mexico to private citizens in California

Tataveaveat: Name of the ancestral territory of the Fernandeño Tataviam

Tataviam: Kitanemuk word meaning "People facing the sun", the regional group consisting of the First Peoples who originally inhabited northern Los Angeles County. In this report, the term is used to represent the pre-Mission San Fernando people of the Simi, San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys in Los Angeles and Ventura counties who are now known as *Fernandeño*.

Time Immemorial: A point of time in the past that was so long ago that people have no knowledge or memory of it; First Peoples of Los Angeles trace their presence in the area from time immemorial

Tongva: Name used by many First Peoples of Los Angeles in place of the colonially derived Gabrieleño; this word translates to "people of the Earth" from the Tongva language

Tovangaar: Name of the ancestral territory of the Gabrieleño Tongva

Tribe: A group formed from an organization of families (including clans and lineages) based on social or ideological solidarity. The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) defines a tribe as a California Native American tribe that is on the NAHC's contact list. This includes both federally recognized and non-federally recognized tribes, which is more inclusive than the federal definition of "Indian tribe."

Tribal Council: In California, a Tribal Council is the governing body of a Native American tribe. It is responsible for decision-making and overseeing the administration of the tribe's affairs. The structure and powers of a Tribal Council are typically defined by the tribe's constitution. These councils play a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity, governance, and community well-being within the tribe.[4]

Tribal Nation: A sovereign, federally recognized nation with its own system of government

Waterways: Referring to any naturally occurring water system, including rivers, springs, streams, creeks, oceans, etc.

Yaang'na: A village populated by the First Peoples of Los Angeles that was located adjacent to where the Los Angeles Pueblo, and later the City of Los Angeles, was founded.

Ya'kenar: word meaning "to dance or dancing"

[4] At the federal level, a Tribal Council is similarly the governing body for federally recognized tribes. These councils are often organized under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934, which allowed tribes to adopt constitutions and establish their own governments. A Tribal Council functions as the legislative branch of the tribe, enacting laws, managing resources, and representing the tribe in negotiations with federal, state, and local governments.

Existing Scholarship and Archives

There are a limited number of published or scholarly resources concerning the history of the people who inhabited the land that is now Southern California, particularly the City of Los Angeles. Many twentieth-century literary attempts at reconstructing early life and culture of First Peoples came from the assumption that the local First Peoples were "culturally dead" and have "disappeared" entirely from the land. While this statement could not be any more untrue, it is the framework under which many twentieth-century scholarly resources operate. Thus, most twentieth-century scholarly resources must be reviewed with this in mind, and the final say on the reality of life or past life of First Peoples should come from the First Peoples themselves. Special attention was paid to *O, My Ancestor: Recognition and Renewal for the Gabrieleno-Tongva People of the Los Angeles Area* by Claudia Jermain and William McCawley, which contains interviews of First Peoples of Los Angeles, and *A Coalition of Lineages: The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians* by Duane Champagne and Carole Goldberg.

Several archival sources were consulted from a variety of university catalogs (such as the University of California Library systems), museums (such as the Autry Museum of the American West), and libraries including the history and genealogy department of the Los Angeles Public Library and the American Indian Resource Center at the Huntington Park Library. Archival search engines and research projects consulted include the *Los Angeles Times*' "Mapping the Tongva villages of L.A.'s Past," University of California, Los Angeles's research project "Mapping Indigenous LA," University of Southern California's research project "Mapping Los Angeles Landscape History: The Indigenous Landscape," annotated timelines and archival resources of the history of California's First Peoples, and the Early California Cultural Atlas[5] that provides digital maps. Articles were obtained on newspapers.com and nominations were obtained from the National Register of Historic Places from the National Park Service's searchable database.

Notes on the Resources Used in This Historic Context

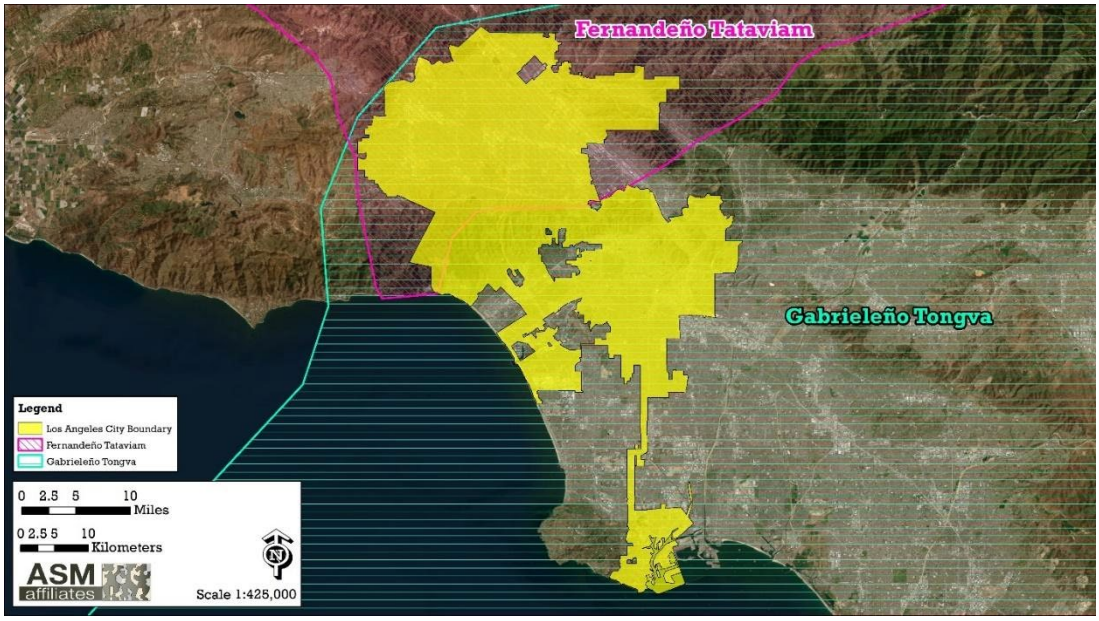
Because of the enormous amount of urbanization that has occurred on the land that once entirely belonged to First Peoples, the sites that remain extant therefore require a greater amount of care and discretion when discussed among the public. As such, not all identified sites and resources referenced in this context document will be accompanied by an address or exact location, the location of some sites will remain entirely confidential. Furthermore, the sites and resources that are included in this document only reflect the sites and resources within the current boundaries of the City of Los Angeles and do not represent the full imprint and presence of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Additionally, although some tribes of First Peoples of Los Angeles are associated with the use of the Missions, including some nineteenth century war buildings and early adobes, these buildings were used by First Peoples under duress and/or enslavement. As such, they do not reflect aspects of First Peoples history that this document desires to highlight and are therefore not discussed in depth. For more information and discussion on Mission-era buildings and adobes, refer to the *Citywide Context Theme: Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement, 1781-1849*.[6]

[5] See *Early California Cultural Atlas* at https://ecai.org//ecca/index.html.
[6] See *Citywide Context Theme: Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement, 1781-1849* https://planning.lacity.gov/odocument/4f3c4825-6bf8-4c72-b8ac-ae4ff0efc2a0/Spanish%20Colonial%20and%20Mexican%20Era%20Settlement%2C%201781-1849.pdf.

Narrative Story of the First Peoples of Los Angeles

First Peoples have lived within the contemporary boundaries of the City Los Angeles since time immemorial, occupying an important place history and representing an important and integral element to the culture of the City of Los Angeles that extends far beyond the founding of the city. The locations of the villages of First Peoples are often dense population centers today; the roads or trading routes that were utilized by First Peoples often mirror some of Los Angeles's major thoroughfares, and the names of some of the city's neighborhoods and landmarks were taken from the names given by First Peoples. Despite the importance that they have historically held and continue to hold for the City of Los Angeles, First Peoples underwent a series of events that disrupted and destroyed their ways of life. Under Spanish colonization, First Peoples were forcibly removed from their villages, forced to conform, or at least appear to conform, to Christianity, and prohibited from expressing their own culture or worship. Under Mexican rule and in the first decades of American statehood, First Peoples of Los Angeles were subjected to unfair laws that promoted genocide and enslavement. Despite the ending of these practices, First Peoples remain excluded from important decisions made by the City of Los Angeles that directly affect their ancestral lands, continue to be subjected to racial profiling, and were for many years were thought to have disappeared entirely, directly affecting their perceived presence within the City for many years and into the present.



Regional scale map of the ancestral territorial boundaries of the First Peoples of Los Angeles indicating where there is overlap with the current city limits

However, despite these negative histories, the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles continues to persevere. As of today, there are no federally recognized tribes within the City of Los Angeles, however the NAHC recognizes seven tribes with ties to the San Fernando and San Gabriel missions. The fact that so much of the history, cultural practices, and language of the First Peoples have survived in the face of genocide to be passed to new generations is a testament to their strength and resilience as a people. The presence of First Peoples is deeply embedded in the City of Los Angeles, from well before its very beginnings.

Due to the sensitive nature of archaeological sites associated with many of the earliest themes, locations of some places have been omitted. Future research may confirm the extent to which the First Peoples of Los Angeles were associated with some of these themes, particularly the twentieth century themes.

Native American and Indigenous peoples begin their existence with a Creation story. Although the stories may vary, almost all stories include natural elements — or "gifts from Mother Earth." Oral histories tell of the First Peoples who lived here at a time when the plants and animals spoke to the people and the people spoke to them.

This section provides narrative stories of the tribes of First Peoples, written by representatives of the Gabrieleño Tongva and Fernandeño Tataviam. These narratives highlight the individual histories and culture of First Peoples as told in their own words. The individual tribes that have contributed narratives in this section are representative of First Peoples of Los Angeles, and describe their original tribal territory, the events that occurred during and after initial contact with Europeans, and the meaning that the land and landscape of Los Angeles continues to hold to each tribe. The use of "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the tribe that provided the narrative.

Dancer at Heritage Park Ceremony, 1999.[7]
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

[7] Heritage Park is located in Santa Fe Springs, California and is a free outdoor museum that features a dwelling, sweat lodge, granary, and a life-size canoe sculpture.

Gabrieleño Tongva[8] [9]

The Tongva people have lived in the Los Angeles area since time immemorial. The birthplace of our world is known to us as Tovangaar.[10] Tovangaar includes the four Southern Channel Islands, most of Los Angeles County, and portions of Orange and San Bernardino counties. Our tribal council remained based in San Gabriel, and we are the descendants of the survivors of three waves of genocide: first the California Mission System, then the Mexican government, lastly the State of California placing a bounty on our heads in 1850. One of the first explorers to California was Juan Cabrillo during the 1500s. Cabrillo documented his stop at the Channel Islands in 1542; he and his crew might have stayed at the Avalon Harbor. He wrote that the people were friendly, offered gifts, and showed no signs of fear. He was followed by Sebastian Vizcaino in 1602 who also documented the warm welcome by Gabrielenos. In the late 1700s, the Portola expedition made its way to Southern California. In his unpublished diary, Father Crespi recorded our ancestral homelands as a "paradise," with three flowing rivers, an abundance of food and friendly people.[11]

Traditional territories of the Gabrieleño Tongva by Samantha M. Johnson-Yang.

As with many Native people across the United States (U.S.), our original feelings toward the explorers were friendly, trying to barter and offering food. We were accustomed to trade and bartering—Russians wanted our sea otter pelts, and our beads and soapstone bowls have been found in Alaska and Hawaii. The next group of explorers included Father Junipero Serra in 1771, who quickly and permanently changed our world, our ways of knowing, and our "paradise."

About 9 miles from downtown Los Angeles, Father Serra and his men set up camp, and our ancestors built his fourth mission next to water in what today is known as Whittier Narrows. After an earthquake (some accounts state flooding), they moved the original mission from the Whittier Narrows area to what today is known as San Gabriel, just east of downtown Los Angeles. At that time, as with the other 20 Catholic missions, Father Serra took away more than our language, our culture, our religion—he also took our ways of knowing, and of living in good relationship with Mother Earth.

As with all California Indians, our story of land dispossession is just that, a storied dispossessory process that has resulted in a fractionation of people, disconnected from their land, their home, their lifeline. The dispossession of native land dispossesses the people of native life, destroying any epistemological

[8] There are multiple variations of the spelling of Gabrieleño/Gabrieleno/Gabrielino which is the Spanish terminology used to refer to First Peoples who were forced into the mission system at Mission San Gabriel Arcángel. This context uses "Gabrieleño" to be consistent with the spelling of Fernandeño.
[9] This portion of the narrative was written by the Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians.
[10] The use of "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño-Tongva.
[11] Brown, Alan K., trans. *A Description of Distant Roads: Original Journals of the First Expedition into California 1769-1770 by Juan Crespi*. San Diego State University, 2001.

significance giving way to the colonized viewpoint and standardizing Western thought.[12] This dispossession of land compounded by the exponential population growth, and development of the capital of the global entertainment industry erased our people from Los Angeles and sent our people into a world of assimilation, despair, disproportionate numbers of military service, and a colonial mindset.

After 1771, the Spaniards took away our food systems and replaced them with cattle and "farms," they took away our language and replaced it with Spanish, they took away our traditional values and our ways of governing, and they tore apart our families. They took away our traditions, ceremonies, our world, and our names. After the invasion, we were only known as Gabrieleno for many decades, and my family remained close to the mission. Maybe it was out of fear, or maybe it was because their village known to them as "Shibang'na" still held emotional ties. What is in a name anyway? For us, Tongva words breathe life back into Mother Earth, our land, or our O'hur. Taking away the word Tongva took away our identity, just as taking away our names to replace them with Spanish baptismal names. What is in language? Language is the spiritual highway that connects us to each other and our Mother Earth, breathing life back into our processing minds, our mouth, our spirit. In the early 1990s, as our people pushed into archives, the J.P. Harrington and Merriam notes refer to our people as Tongva or Tong've. Many Gabrieleno/Tongva people rejected the name Tongva at first but as research has continued, the name Tongva has been well recorded and documented through a variety of sources.

Native Americans are the only American ethnic group who stand the threat of having their cemeteries pillaged. Our ancestors' personal effects and skeletal remains have become a game of "treasure hunt."[13]

Our tribe has sought to protect and save the cultural resource site locations we are discussing in this HCS. The sites identified here represent a mere fraction of Tongva cultural sites in the City of Los Angeles. Many harms arise in reporting these locations due to the disrespect we face in working to protect the land.

The irony in providing this research to the City of Los Angeles is that many of the cultural sites identified were part of what had been previously discussed in consultation with the City on the need for their protection. Despite a commitment and investment into the process of responsible mitigation measures, tribal elders were silenced by non-response from the City. Modern harm for the Tongva began in 1769 with the destruction of our culture and land to erase the Tongva people, and it continues today. Elders have been repeatedly shamed and disrespected by being dismissed by those who are the "modern keepers" of the land. Tribal consultations require commitment and passion and, most of the time, no compensation.

The quest to protect our tribal cultural resources in Tovangaar has caused profound harm, humiliation, and mistrust in our elders. Elders reluctantly participate in projects like this due to the vulnerability they have put themselves in the past and the regrettable outcomes of no change, no protection, and no responsibility. In a reasonable faith effort, they have come forward to give insight; some will remain anonymous.

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[12] Justice, Daniel, and Jean O'Brien. *Allotment Stories: Indigenous Land Relations Under Settler Siege*. U.S.: University of Minnesota, 2021.

[13] This paragraph and the following three were written by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council.

Fernandeño Tataviam[14]

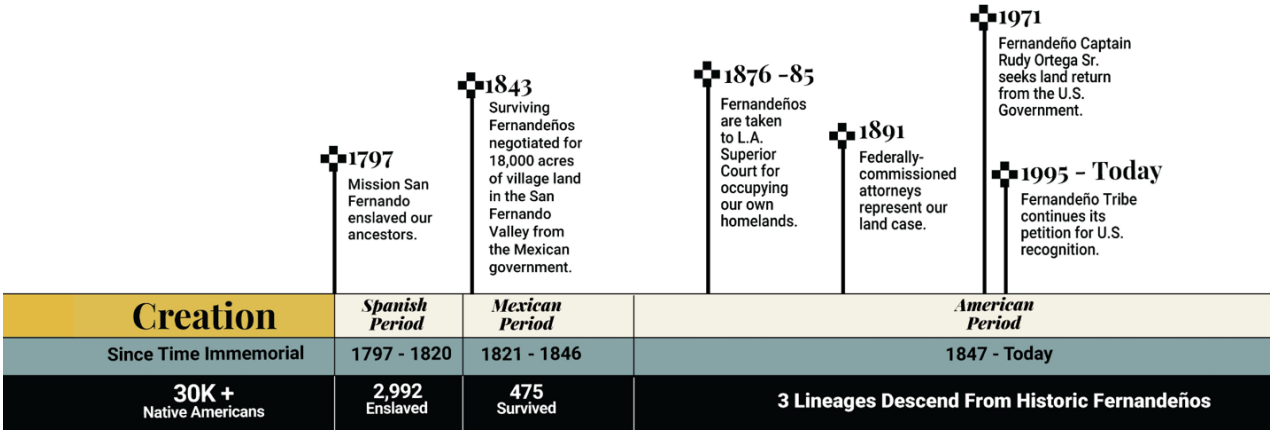
The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians are the First People of northern Los Angeles County, their story stretching back to time immemorial. For thousands of years, their ancestors lived in harmony with the lands of the Simi, San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys. This region, rich in oak groves, flowing rivers, and diverse wildlife, served as a cradle for their thriving communities. Deeply connected to the land, the Fernandeño people were masterful stewards, living in balance with nature and passing down a profound knowledge of sustainable resource management through generations. The villages they established across these fertile valleys formed the heart of a culture grounded in respect for the environment and reverence for their sacred landscapes.

The unique connections between a person and location can be deepened within one's lifetime. For the Fernandeño Tataviam, this experience has been compounded for thousands of generations dating back to time immemorial. Every citizen traces back to a Native American who was forcibly removed from a village originating in the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary within the San Fernando Valley and enslaved at the San Fernando Mission. Neighborhoods within the City of Los Angeles have been developed on land of unfathomable significance to the Fernandeño Tataviam through cultural, lineal, and historic ties beyond what can be covered in this report.

Tribal Territory of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Boundary reflects the recruitment area of Mission San Fernando and encompasses the villages from which registered Tribal Citizens descend.
(Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

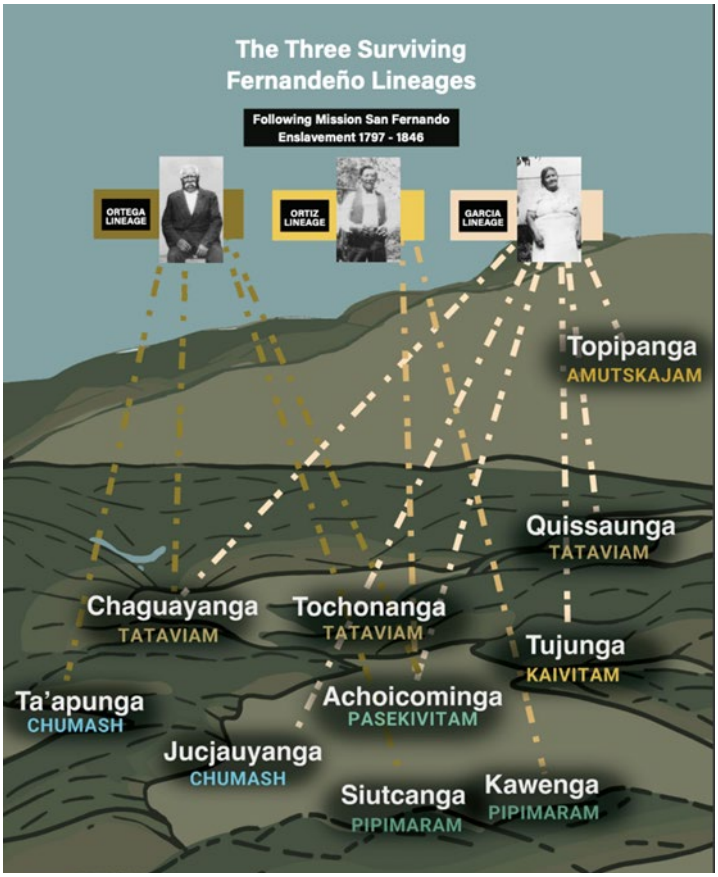
However, the arrival of foreign powers in the late eighteenth century began to unravel the fabric of Fernandeño life. In the 1770s, Spanish colonization of California heralded the arrival of the mission system—a structure that would dramatically reshape the fate of the region's Native Americans. The Fernandeños, along with neighboring tribes, found themselves swept into the Spanish empire's sweeping colonial policies. In 1797, Mission San Fernando was founded in what is now the San Fernando Valley, bringing profound changes to the lives of the Fernandeño people. Forcibly relocated to the mission, the Fernandeños were stripped of their traditional ways of life. They were baptized and reclassified under the name "Fernandeño," their cultural practices were suppressed, and their spiritual beliefs were replaced by Christianity. Families were torn apart, sacred sites desecrated, and the very fabric of their ancestral heritage came under attack. This forced transformation was not just religious, but a systematic attempt to erase their identity and integrate them into a foreign colonial system.

[14] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.



Timeline and population of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, from creation to the twenty-first century.
(Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Despite the immense hardship and cultural destruction imposed by the mission system, the Fernandeños' connection to their land and identity remained unbroken. Though they were subjected to harsh labor, religious indoctrination, and the suppression of their traditions, their resilience endured. Even as the Spanish sought to dominate and reshape the landscape, the Fernandeños adapted and found ways to maintain their ancestral connections. They united as a collective people, and through this unity, the Fernandeños would later survive the transition to Mexican and American rule. While their traditional ways were irrevocably changed by colonization, the bond to their land, their culture, and each other remained steadfast. Today, the descendants of the Fernandeño coalition continue to carry this legacy forward, represented by the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Governed by a strict citizenship enrollment process, the Tribe is a testament to the enduring spirit of a people who have withstood centuries of colonization.



The three surviving Fernandeño lineages. Pictured are the progenitors or their oldest photographed ancestor. Each lineage is tied to the villages (white text) from which they descend with the traditional regional group they're affiliated with beneath the village name. Once enslaved at the Mission San Fernando, they were renamed to "Fernandeño." Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.
(Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Historic Context

First Peoples of Los Angeles [Time Immemorial-1769]

Across California, the native California Indian populations shared similar technologies and materials used to manufacture tools, homes, and storage containers, along with technologies associated with the collection of resources such as hunting, trapping, or fishing. First Peoples who were living in what would become Southern California/Los Angeles lived in an environment that was rich with rabbit, deer, acorn, seeds, and native grasses.[15]

First Peoples of California bear little physical resemblance to the Native Americans of the Great Plains and share little to no language or culture with other American tribes. It is theorized that this is a result of California's topography; mountain ranges and deserts were a physical barrier to communication with tribes to the east. Rather, the tribes in the area known as Southern California traded with each other and other tribes of the North American west coast. Generally, California tribes tended to live in large family groups in relative isolation compared to the interconnectivity of the tribes and nations in other areas of North America.[16]

Because of this relative isolation between family groups, even within the same tribe, it is estimated that there were 135 distinct dialects across California. Additionally, the terrain that divided the groups made warfare impractical, and led to a relatively peaceful life for the California tribes. Coupled with a gentle climate and rich soil, First Peoples of Southern California and Los Angeles concentrated on harvesting wild nuts and berries and catching fish from abundant streams and the Pacific Ocean. As such, with a lack of war and an abundance of resources, the population of the California tribes is believed to have been at about 300,000 when Europeans first arrived to what is now California.[17]

The Two Tribes of Los Angeles

The Gabrieleño Tongva occupied the entirety of the Los Angeles basin and the Santa Catalina, San Nicolas, San Clemente, and Santa Barbara islands, today referred to as the Southern Channel Islands.[18] The Fernandeño Tataviam originally inhabited the Simi, San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys.[19] Both of these tribes once lived in villages in the area that is now the City of Los Angeles, and they recognize the City of Los Angeles and other parts of Los Angeles County (and other surrounding counties) as their ancestral homeland. Because these tribes were identified to have had villages within the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles and retain a history that is intrinsically tied to Los Angeles as a landscape and a historic space and place, the above tribes are referred to as First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles City Hall

While there were many villages located throughout the entirety of the present boundaries of the City of Los Angeles, the Gabrieleño village of Yaang'na retains importance to the city as the location immediately adjacent to what would become the Los Angeles Plaza and future site of the founding of the

[15] State of California Native American Heritage Commission. "Short Overview of California Indian History." *California Indian History.* 2024. https://nahc.ca.gov/cp/tribal-atlas-pages/gabrielino-tongva-nation/.
[16] Library of Congress. "Early California History: An Overview." Article. *California As I Saw It: First Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900* (Collection). 2024.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. "Maps and More." 2024. https://www.gabrieleno-nsn.us/maps.
[19] Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. "Heritage: History." 2024. https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/heritage/history/.

City of Los Angeles. Acts of displacement, disease, rape, kidnapping, imprisonment, enslavement, and slaughter would all but erase the presence of nearby Yaang'na as the Los Angeles Plaza was founded and later the City of Los Angeles itself. However, like many locations throughout Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, and Southern California, a dense population spot like Los Angeles Plaza is usually associated and in close proximity to a once vibrant, populated, and well-known village established by and for the First Peoples.[20] North of Yaang'na was a village referred to as Cahuenga, the second most populated village in the Gabrieleno and Fernandeño territories.

Depiction of Tovangaar/Los Angeles, detailing names and locations of Tongva village sites, created by Tongva artist Adrienne Kinsella. (Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

[20] State of California Native American Heritage Commission. "Short Overview of California Indian History." *California Indian History.* 2024.

Natural World

First Peoples of Los Angeles share a deeply connected, symbiotic relationship with the natural world around them. Every part of the landscape was and continues to be significant. In this context, the term "natural world" is defined as any element of the physical landscape which comes from nature. Because the First Peoples have been present on the landscape since time immemorial, the landscapes associated with the creation of the First Peoples within the City of Los Angeles are therefore the oldest, most historic, and most endangered.

Despite the urban sprawl inherent to the City of Los Angeles, there are locations within the city that have retained visible elements of the natural world, including places such as waterways (Los Angeles River, Pacific Ocean, local creeks) and parks (Griffith Park). This theme largely focuses on the relationship that First Peoples hold with the natural world, and the way that relationship is exemplified through extant natural world resources.

Image from Heritage Park, 1999. (Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Gabrieleño Tongva[21]

The soul of the Tongva culture is the land and all the life it sustains.

The Tongva are the first people of the City of Los Angeles. The Tongva call the City of Los Angeles *Tovaangar*. The land of Tovaangar reaches north to Topanga, south to Crystal Cove, east to San Bernardino, and west to the islands of Santa Catalina, San Nicolas, and San Clemente. The villages in Tovaangar held 50–200 residents. We were anchored to the land, unlike the plains Indians who maintained a nomadic lifestyle for survival.[22]

The Gabrieleño/Tongva people of the Los Angeles basin no longer have many intact sacred spaces, due to overdevelopment, freeway systems, and overuse of concrete. Before the buildings, and unethical removal of our people, our relationship with our land upheld and cared for our people.[23] On our ancestral homelands in the Los Angeles Basin, Mother Earth provided three flowing rivers, sources of fresh spring water (some still exist today), and plenty of food. Our histories tell us that Tovangaar provided pronghorn antelope, jackrabbits, plant medicine, and our *ahiko*, our ocean, our first life source. Underneath the skyscraper buildings, housing developments, and concreted Los Angeles River, Los Angeles County and the city hold the memory of our people.[24]

Since time immemorial, Native and Indigenous people have personified plants (food) and place. For farming tribes, crops are not seen merely as food but as spiritual beings who provide physical, mental, and spiritual nourishment. Foods given by Mother Earth embody a sacred link between the Mother Earth and the spiritual world, enriching both body and soul for the people. For some tribes, small animals or plants are sacred because they were part of Creation stories that shaped Mother Earth and are part of the invisible influence of creative spirits that live in the rivers, rocks, ravines, caves, and other distinct locations. Many Native Americans hold these places sacred to this day. Native American leaders, prophets, medicine people, and individuals have sought out these special sites seeking guidance, healing, and other protections.[25]

Unlike their European counterparts, the Tongva did not need a written calendar to understand the seasons or time. They relied on their understanding of the moon. Moon knowledge gave the Tongva ancestors an acute sense of planting schedules and tidal forecasts, enabling successful journeys to the islands.[26]

Water is our relative. We think of water as a member of our community the same way we respect elders. We believe bodies of water should be regarded with the same respect as non-human persons (as the Maori do in New Zealand) and our hearts hurt at the state of the LA River. We were excellent sea traders, and the ocean is equally respected as fresh water.[27]

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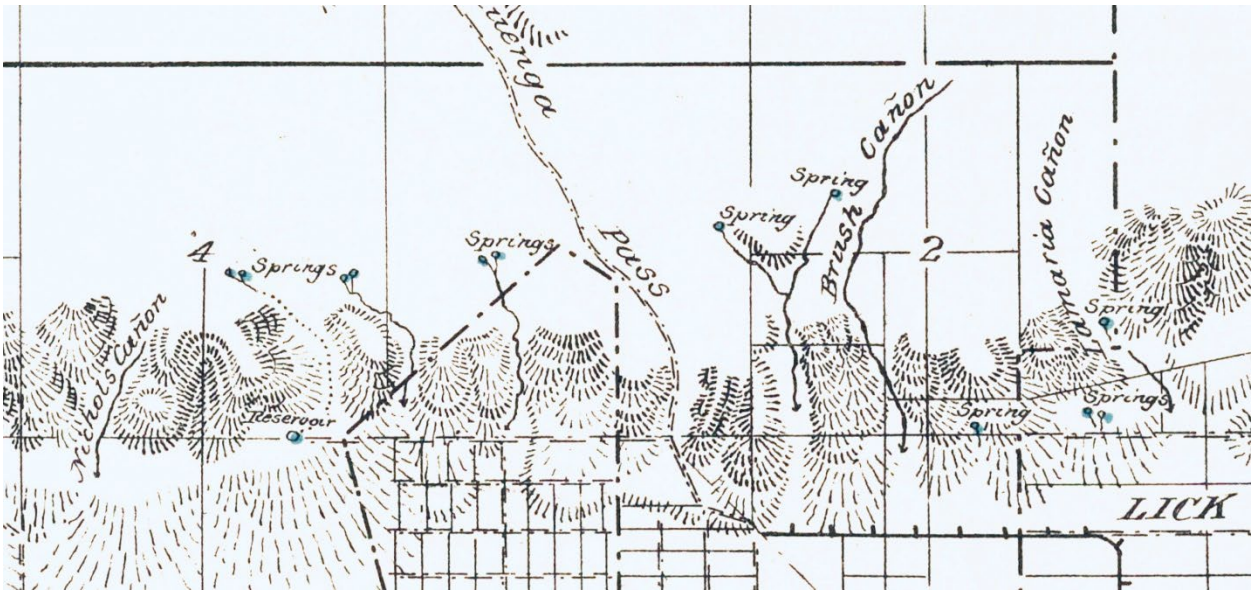
[21] The following narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[22] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[23] The use of "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño Tongva.
[24] Morales, Kimberly. *Native American epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. April 2024.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*.
[27] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.

Almost all of our villages were placed near rivers, estuaries, or the ocean for access to resources. We did not farm in the traditional sense; instead, we took care of native plants where they grew. Access to water meant access to weaving plants like tule, which could be used to make small canoes to carry people and goods up and down waterways. Water is still a respected relative in our religion, but the specifics of how our ancestors practiced religion with water has been lost to cultural erasure.[28]



Survey map (circa 1880) of the streams between Nicholas Canyon and Fern Del area, many have been "capped since." (Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Mastery of the Pacific Ocean expanded the diversity of resources for the Tongva and made them one of the more sophisticated tribes in Southern California. The ti'at is an asphaltum-lined plank canoe used for transportation to the islands (Santa Catalina, San Nicolas, and San Clemente). Trading, gathering of soapstone, and harvesting of abalone were the rewards for developing the mastery of their watercraft and broad understanding of the ocean, the currents, and the sealife required for successful trips. Farming sealife maintained abundant food sources.[29]

Place, geography, landscapes, and worldview are all very intrinsically known to Native Indigenous peoples. Our creation stories start at place, the very territory that we lived on until the invasion of the Europeans. Several non-Native people including Father Boscana, Alfred Kroeber, and J.P. Harrington recorded our creation story, all varying with characters and storyline. One commonality is we, as California Native American Indian people, believe we were set on this specific land for a purpose by the Creator, we did not migrate from another land. Before the buildings, before the unethical removal of our people, our relationship with our land upheld and cared for our people. As development has ripped through our homelands, our tribal leadership is often consulted on our ancestral boundary lines. This is a difficult subject because we must look at colonialism and the goals of the Europeans. Mapping is a powerful form of colonial imaginary lines that allow for certain access to resources and lucrative landscapes.

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[28] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[29] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.

View of the undeveloped landscape of Los Angeles in what would eventually become the Highland Park area, c.1887.
(Los Angeles Public Library)

As Native Feminist author Mishuana Goeman states, "These colonial maps were instrumental in treaty making and creating national boundaries; they are still used to regulate and determine spatial practices."[30] California is uniquely situated north of Mexico, and along the Pacific Coastline. The location of California encompasses national borders. Los Angeles County is over 4,700 square miles, roughly 1,040 miles north to south. The size of the State of California and County of Los Angeles positions California Native American Indians and the Gabrieleno Tongva people in a unique situation that has impacted our tribal identity and existence.[31]

[30] Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words*. University of Minnesota, 2013.
[31] Morales, Kimberly. *Importance of the reconnection of California Native Americans to ancestral homelands*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. December 2022.

Crystal Cove

An example of these lines and methods of colonial power are seen in the history of Crystal Cove, located in Orange County. The Gabrieleno Tongva and Ajachemen[32] lived, used, and fished from this natural cove area. Relics of awls, fish hooks, shell beads, and nets were all found at the site. In 1822, Mexico received its independence from Spain. By 1833, Mexico began "granting" the former mission lands to independent people and farmers to enhance the Californio economic opportunities.

By 1917, the site was found by the motion picture industry, palm trees were planted, and an early version of "Treasure Island" was filmed at the site. Stagehands and film crews loved the site so much, they began to camp and eventually built makeshift structures on site. Local "pot hunters" or to us, grave robbers, scoured the land for any relics, artifacts or remnants of our people; many were successful. By the 1950s, 46 cabins lined the shore of the Pacific Ocean, set aside for the elite people, not for people of color nor the descendants of the original inhabitants. Today, the land is owned by the California State Parks. We have limited access, as does the public. -.[33]

Topanga

Topanga was the first cultural site recorded in Los Angeles (identified as CA-LAN-1). Our ancestors thrived along the Topaa'nga (Topanga) creek with abundant steelhead trout, fresh water, and shelter. Elders remember their parents taking them to the creek to learn to fish. Elders were taught not to take what the ancestors left behind but to appreciate their beauty. Items no longer exist because the pot hunters have stolen what was left.

The mouth of Topanga Canyon, one of the oldest pictures of Topanga. (photo provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California).

The Tongva people buried their deceased in the bluffs of Topaa'nga. In 1910, a Stanford field school instructor and his students discovered 34 bodies in the bluffs of Topaa'nga. Eugenics had jaded the professor as he described the skulls with "horns" and the nose as not "human-like." Reporters cited that the skeletons were either "dwarflike" (*Marion County Progress*) or "gigantic" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). Selling newspapers was more important than the accuracy of the find and the discovery of our interred relatives. Additional remains were discovered but the exact number is unclear. Our ancestors and personal effects were sold to Beloit College and private collectors, significantly violating human dignity. In 1933, to make way for the Pacific Coast Highway, the delta was bulldozed and with it, ancestors' remains and personal effects were smashed along the berm.

Santa Monica

The natural springs at Kuruvungna Village have flowed for millennia, and the Tongva people consider it a significant tribal cultural site for gatherings and ceremonies. Explorer Gaspar Portola's expedition passed through Kuruvungna and their springs were noted in his diary.

In modern times, Kuruvungna Village Springs sat behind the chain-linked fence in the horticulture area at

[32] The Ajachemen (or Juaneño) are Southern California Native Americans whose ancestral lands extend from Aliso Creek in Orange County to the Las Pulgas Canyon of San Diego County, and shared sites as far north as Long Beach.
[33] Ibid.

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) University High School campus in West Los Angeles. As time passed, the aquifers were being forgotten and no longer valued or protected, and the area was being used as a dump for the school.[34]

The site holds significance to all Gabrieleno Tongva people; it is the last remaining Gabrieleno Tongva sacred site. Our Kuruvungna Springs is home to three springs and provides more than 50,000 gallons of fresh spring water in a 24-hour period. Today it is understood that Kuruvungna loosely translates to "Place under the sun".[35]

The written history of the Kuruvungna Springs goes back to the Portola expedition and it was given colonial names such as "Deer Springs Creek" and "Wounded Deer Springs." During the Spanish Rancho period, the Springs provided fresh water to a French sheep herder, and eventually University High School was built on the land in 1923. Many Gabrieleno Tongva tribal members attended University High throughout the years, all of them knowing the historical significance and power of the fresh spring water. In the 1970s, a science teacher, Milt Ainsman, from University High would take his students to the site for amateur archaeological digs.

In the late 1980s, Tribal Chair Robert Dorame noticed that LAUSD had severely neglected the sacred springs area. Chair Dorame alerted the principal that this sacred site needed critical attention. The principal disclosed that LAUSD would sell the land to a developer and suggested Chair Dorame call the district supervisors. Behind the principal, shelves held dozens of artifacts from the Kuruvungna Springs. The Chair made numerous phone calls to LAUSD and other government officials to no avail. Months of advocating for the protection of all responsible parties was exhausting and unrewarding, but the matter was critical.

> "... there was ignorance and complete disrespect for what a culture is and physically what was left behind and not respecting the people and the descendants that are still here today." — Chair Dorame

At this time, Chair Dorame alerted Tribal Chief Fred "Sparky Morales" (San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians) to unite in support of saving the Kuruvungna Village Springs. In conjunction, Chair Dorame contacted local newspapers to see if they would cover the crisis. The *Evening Outlook* took interest. The local community support had gained momentum to protect the springs.[36]

Angie Dorame Behrns, founder of Gabrieleño Tongva Springs Foundation. (Image provided by Gabrieleno/Tongva Band of Mission Indians)

[34] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[35] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[36] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.

> "By the time we gained traction, the school district had closed one of the aquifers without any archaeological resource investigation. There was no notification to the indigenous peoples, the community, and no accountability was taken in the destruction of this sacred natural resource." — Chair Dorame

To ensure long-term protection and preservation of the Springs, Tribal member Angie Dorame Behrns started the Gabrieleno Tongva Springs Foundation. In 1998, Senator Tom Hayden asked the California State Department of Parks and Recreation to designate the springs as a State Cultural Site. Today, the Gabrieleno Tongva Springs Foundation leases the land from LAUSD for a dollar a year. Although the tribe and a tribal member have been credited for saving the site, we have been told by LAUSD we cannot own or have a longer lease because we do not have a fiscal sponsor. It is not run by the Tongva and is open to the public the first Saturday of every month. We are allowed to visit the Springs upon appointment with the LAUSD Board. [37]

Hollywood

Many people believe Los Angeles became Los Angeles because of Hollywood, as if Hollywood "discovered" L.A. There could be nothing further from the truth, as Kuruvungna was one of the largest villages for our people, with an estimated population of 500 Tongva people. I have heard from Tribal Elders and read in some books that our tree known as the healer Toyon Tree grew in abundance in the "Hollywood Hills." Its beautiful red berries that bloom in late fall/early winter coupled with the toothed leaves was mistakenly identified by non-Native city leaders as "Holly." Thus the name, "Hollywood."[38]

Playa Vista, the Village of Guashna

Translating loosely, *Guashna* means "place of the pitch or tar." The area is also known today as the Ballona wetlands and was part of the Rancho Ballona 13,290-acre land grant in 1839. Oral histories tell us that Howard Hughes at one time bulldozed the area to make a runway strip for his plane, "The Spruce Goose." During that time, it was reported that ancestral bones were bulldozed and visible from the side of the embankment. Above this embankment (and sacred site) sits Loyola Marymount University, first built in 1865 as a Catholic school for boys and incorporated into the Loyola College of Los Angeles in 1918.

In 2004, I was serving as a Commissioner for the Los Angeles City County Native American Indian Commission. A tribal monitor came to the meeting to share about an atrocity happening at Ballona Creek in Playa Vista. At the time, he was outraged that 70 ancestors had been removed from the site, and there was no sign of the developer wanting to stop. Over the course of two years, the developer removed more than 800 Tongva ancestors, and archaeologists were quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* as being very happy "to be at the largest excavation on the West Coast." George Mihlsten, an attorney representing the developer, stated in the *Los Angeles Times* that "the company was not legally bound to consider any of the tribe's requests, because they are not a Federally Recognized tribe." Mihlsten continued "in old days, this site would have been bulldozed, now it's done with brushes." We also know that there were many archaeologists who published articles and received their PhDs from their "work" on the site. And, we know that today a two-bedroom, two-bathroom, 1,300-square-foot condominium sells for $1.2 million in the neighborhood now known as Playa Vista.[39]

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[37] Morales, Kimberly. *Importance of the reconnection of California Native Americans to ancestral homelands*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. December 2022.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Morales, Kimberly. *Native American epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. April 2024.

Engaging authentically with Native American tribes demands a respectful understanding of the specific terminologies and perspectives within Indigenous cultures. As Indigenous author Gregory Younging reminded us, we researchers and scholars, it is crucial to move beyond translations written from a colonial perspective. We must work to embrace the narratives expressed from within the communities themselves, including respectful collaborations with tribal members and Elders. There is a need for abandoning colonial research practices and replacing them with Indigenous-led, respectfully conducted research that is shared with tribal communities; this includes archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians.

Historic photo, 1933, of Tongva elder Ricardo Dorame with his son at what was left of Guashna, his ancestral village. (Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

I believe a major connection between Native Americans and well-being is access to Mother Earth and her gifts. As the cofounder of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, it is important to our people to have access to land, a site without restrictions. Further, I believe if our tribal members cannot access Mother Earth that is a barrier to health care. I have witnessed our young tribal members change, learn the songs and offer them to Mother Earth. I have witnessed family tribal squabbles disappear while gathering acorns and working together for a common cause, land access or landback. The interconnectedness between the Native people and ancestral homelands is a pathway to wellbeing. There are multiple peer reviewed research reports that have proven being out in nature is key to better physical and mental health.[40]

There is a unique and varied meaning of the word "sacred" among different tribes, each highlighting the deep connections between Native Indigenous spiritual beliefs and their natural environments. These understandings enrich our knowledge base and honor the complex histories and spiritual beliefs of Native American tribes. The Gabrieleno Tongva tribe continues to face multiple challenges including destruction of our ancestral homelands, systemic erasure of our people, corrupt federal policies, and correcting misguided anthropologists. Through our work as a tribal community and the generosity of surrounding tribes, our connection to our tribal homelands has been strengthened. The Gabrieleno Tongva people have a deep connection in recognizing and respecting the sacredness of our homelands, which continue to be central to our identity, culture, and overall well-being. As we move forward, it is with a deep commitment to honor the legacy of our ancestors and ensure our sacred sites and traditions are preserved for our future generations. *E'qua shem, E'qua shem, E'qua shem*. We are here.

[40] Morales, Kimberly. *Native American epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. April 2024. Zarr, Robert, and Winnie Chan. "Nature: A Key Ingredient for Mental Health." *Pew Trend Magazine*, December 8, 2023. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/trend/archive/fall-2023/nature-a-key-ingredient-for-mental-health.

Fernandeño Tataviam[41]

The Sacred Landscape: A Living, Breathing Entity

For the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, the landscape is not merely a backdrop to their lives—it is a living, breathing entity, a sacred space imbued with centuries of memories, stories, and ancestral lifeways. The lands of *tataveaveat*, which today encompass the San Fernando Valley and its surrounding regions, have been home to their people for thousands of years. These lands are more than just geographic locations; they are the cradle of life, the foundation of family, culture, and history. Every part of the landscape holds significance, from the rivers that wind through the valley to the mountains that rise above it. These natural features were not just places to live, but active participants in the lives of the Fernandeño people, who saw their relationship with the land as sacred and symbiotic.

Water as Kin: A Sacred Relationship

The bond between the Fernandeños and their environment runs deep, stretching back to time immemorial. For generations, their ancestors lived in harmony with the land, practicing sustainable stewardship and ensuring that the natural world—plants, animals, and waterways—could thrive alongside them. Water, in particular, is seen as kin. The Fernandeños' elders taught that water was not just a resource but a sacred relative. They understood that water gives life, sustaining not only the people but all living beings. Rivers like the Los Angeles River and its tributaries were crucial for travel and trade, with the Fernandeños using tule reed canoes to navigate their waterways. For them, water was not an abstract concept; it was a vital, living entity, intimately tied to the health of the land and its people. This sacred relationship with the natural world was rooted in a worldview that saw everything—human, animal, and plant—as interconnected, each part of a greater whole.

Fernandeño Tataviam families gather in Pacoima within the City of Los Angeles, c.1950. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Fernandeño Tataviam youth deepen their connection to their ancestral lands through the Tribe's Education and Cultural Learning Programs, where they are empowered with traditional ecological knowledge, fostering a sense of identity and stewardship for future generations, 2024. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The Clash of Worldviews: Colonization and Displacement

When Spanish settlers arrived in the late eighteenth century, their view of the land was starkly different. To them, the natural world was a commodity to be exploited for profit. This colonial mindset contributed to the disruption and eventual displacement of the Fernandeño people from their ancestral lands. The arrival of the mission system, and the forced relocation of the Fernandeños to Mission San Fernando, marked a dramatic shift in their lives. The missionaries saw the land as something to be controlled, its resources extracted and utilized to serve colonial goals. This extractionist mentality, which viewed

[41] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

nature as a mere tool for human progress, stood in sharp contrast to the Fernandeños' view of the land as a living relative to be cared for. Their ancestral villages, once flourishing with life and ceremony, were dismantled, and sacred sites were destroyed or altered. Even as this displacement unfolded, the Fernandeños' connection to the land endured. The spirit of the land—what they call *tataveaveat*—remained a central part of their identity, a place of ancestral memories and cultural significance that could never be fully taken from them.

Spiritual Resilience: A Worldview in Harmony with the Earth

The Fernandeños' spiritual beliefs, too, stood in stark contrast to the Christian doctrine imposed by the missionaries. While the missionaries taught that salvation lay in an afterlife and a personal relationship with the Creator, the Fernandeños embraced a worldview that saw the earth and all its elements as interconnected. Their belief system recognized multiple immortal spirits and an afterlife, but the focus was on maintaining balance in the present world. Death, in their view, was not an end but a necessary part of the cycle that ensured harmony and prevented overpopulation. The earth itself, rather than an afterlife in heaven, was where spiritual balance was found. They did not see the world as something to escape from, but as something to nurture, respect, and live in harmony with. Even in the face of colonization, the Fernandeños maintained a profound understanding of their place in the world, one that was deeply rooted in the land, its spirits, and its living forces. Despite being forced into a new system that sought to erase their identity, the Fernandeños' connection to the natural world remained a cornerstone of their resilience and survival.

Fernandeño Tataviam Tribal President Rudy Ortega Jr. leading a public Winter Solstice Celebration with Tribal Citizens in Chatsworth (City of Los Angeles), in partnership with Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, 2022. (Image courtesy of LADWP)

A Legacy of Continuity: Honoring the Sacred Bond with the Land

Today, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band continues to honor this sacred bond with the land. The Tribe's connection to the valleys, rivers, and mountains of their ancestral homelands is not merely historical—it is alive and enduring. The sacred spaces of *tataveaveat* continue to be central to their cultural practices and spiritual life, reminding them of the deep, unbroken ties that stretch back through time. Though their lands have been reshaped by colonial forces and modern development, the Fernandeños' relationship with the natural world remains a guiding force in their community. The water, the land, and the sky are still kin—alive with memory, spirit, and the enduring legacy of their people.

Pre-Contact Village Life/Habitation

First Peoples of Los Angeles lived in small familial villages. Before settlers arrived, the village organization structure in Southern California was unique in that each village was an autonomous self-governing entity that had its own structure of leadership, cultural practices, economy, and territory. Village locations of First Peoples of Los Angeles can be found in various places across the entirety of the city, usually adjacent to natural resources such as streams or rivers, and usually in the general location of a present population center in the city.

While the villages of First Peoples of Los Angeles are no longer extant, oral traditions accompanied by archaeological survey have revealed the localities of some of these villages within the city. As such, the types of resources on which this theme focuses are largely village sites and landscapes that were once the location of or integral to the success of villages.

Detail of mural from Indian Alley, River Garza. 2024.
(Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Gabrieleño Tongva[42]

Attracted by the freshwater springs that form Baldwin Lake, native "Gabrieleno" Indians were the earliest known inhabitants of the land, an area now occupied by the Arboretum of Los Angeles County.[43]

The Gabrieleno Tongva slept in what they called "kiys," brush shelters constructed of staked willow poles thatched with layers of dried tule reeds. Rabbit skin mats provided bedding and small fires kept the occupants warm. Hunters and gatherers who lived directly off the land, the Gabrieleno Indians did not practice agriculture, nor did they need more than Stone Age skills and tools. Weapons were of stone and wood, and cooking vessels of soapstone and basketry. Acorns from the plentiful California oaks were the staple of their diet, supplemented by small game and native nuts, seeds, and berries. Numbering more than 5,000 in 1770, today we still exist living throughout the Southern California area. [44]

The Tule Homes "Kies"

The houses of the Gabrieleno Indians were called kies (also spelled kiys or kitz). They were made of a framework of bent willow branches. These branches were buried in the ground in a circle, bent at the top, and then tied together with yucca fiber. A smoke hole at the very top was left open for when cooking or heating occurred inside the kie. Then branches around the outside made a circle frame with the outside covered with tule. The tule was woven thick and tight, keeping it warm and dry during the rainy season and cool during the summer. The doors to enter faced the north opposite of the wind and kept the sunshine from entering the house. The entryway was usually covered in deer skins or mats. When families wanted to host company, they would lift the mats or skins hanging in their doorway to invite guests. When the family was away, the door was covered and staked with whale bones and sticks. Each clan could have up to 500 kies in their village. A kie was burned when it got too dirty, damaged, or if someone important living in the kie died in it. After an old kie was burned, a new one was built.[45]

Heritage Park, 1999.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

The Hunter and Hunting

The hunter got ready for the hunt by stringing himself with the leaves and hairs of a stinging nettle. The hunter rubbed his body, including his eyelids, with the leaves. This was a ceremony, and it caused pain. The hunters believed the pain would make a hunter brave for his hunt. It would also bring him success in killing the animals he was hunting. The hunter thought that rubbing his eyes with nettle would give him clearer eyesight and would make him more watchful. All of the time the hunter was away from his village looking for game, he never ate. This kept him aware but also kept the smell of strange foods and smoke from the hunting area. The hunter kept sights, sounds, and smells away which would frighten game from the hunting ground. Hunters were clever, and imitated grazing deer. He wanted to make a kill with his first arrow. He would wear the head and parts of the deer hide already killed, so he could get close to a

[42] The following narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[43] Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, "Maps and More."
[44] Ibid.; The use of "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño-Tongva.
[45] Ibid.

deer. He would rub two sticks together to imitate the sounds deer make when they rub their antlers, horns, against trees or bushes. When the hunter caught a deer, the hunter would give it to the women to be skinned and prepared for eating. A Gabrieleno Tongva hunter never ate his own kill, believing it would bring him bad luck on his next hunt.[46]

Acorn Gathering and Storage

The hills of California were covered with many varieties of oak trees. These trees produced tons of acorns each year. This huge crop provided the Gabrielenos with one of their most important foods. The acorns were harvested in the fall. The men would climb the trees and shake them for the acorns to fall, and the children and women would gather them and place them in a cone-shaped basket. They were placed out to dry and then put into a granary. Acorns cannot be eaten raw because of the bitter tannins in them. So, they made an acorn meal. They hit the acorn with a stone to remove the shell, then pounded the kernels into a mortar with a stone pestle to make an acorn meal. The ground meal was then placed into a straining basket that held the acorn meal and hot water was poured over the meal over and over; this washed out the bitter tannin. When the meal was cleaned, it turned into a wad of dough. It was brushed off and ready to cook into acorn mush or flat cakes. It was eaten plain or mixed with other foods for better flavor.[47]

Inlaid abalone on the Ti'at Mo'omat'ahiko, in which no nails were used for assembly. (Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

"Ti'at" Plank Canoe

The Gabrielenos and some neighboring tribes made plank canoes called ti'ats. Pine trees and driftwood were the main material of the boat. The logs were split into planks using whalebone, deer antlers, sharp objects, and stones to wedge and cut to size. The more coarse stones were used like sandpaper. To shape the planks, the wood was buried in wet sand, then fires were built on top of the sand to dry them. Rope and plant fibers tied together held the boards in place. Holes and cracks were filled with beach tar. This made them strong and as watertight as possible. But because they were not completely leakproof they would take a young boy with them to bail out the water. Depending on the size, a ti'at could carry from 3 to 20 people. The ti'ats were long and narrow with high sides and between 12 and 16 feet in length. They were rowed with double-bladed paddles attached to 10-foot handles. The rowers paddled together, usually singing and chanting. Today, Gabrieleno Tongva men remember our past by dancing with canoe paddles in a traditional group dance.[48]

Tools

Animal parts, plants, trees, stones, and shells from the area were all used as tools. Each material was used for its strength, sharpness, and flexibility. If it was hard, strong, and fireproof, it could be used for making cooking items. If it was sharp or chipped, it could be used to make tools and weapons. Wood was also carved and specially shaped for handles, paddles, spoons, and arrows. The strong and flexible fiber of plants was used for making rope, baskets, and nets.[49]

[46] Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, "Maps and More."
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

Oral Traditions

The Tongva did not have written language or use of characters for communication. The tribal storytellers were the keepers of folklore and the past. Young boys were trained as storytellers by the chief (*tomyaar*) and memorized the stories word for word. The discipline of repetition kept the stories intact and accurate for centuries. This tribal culture continues today, with parents repeating tribal stories to their children. In the religion of Chinigchinich[50], religious rituals, and communication are found in songs and dances, not text.[51]

One such example is the Tongva Legend of the Torovim. As the legend goes, in the mountain range of Topanga Canyon, a Tongva chieftain was being pursued by an enemy tribe. When he reached the mouth of the canyon, he found himself standing on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Courageously, the chief refused to surrender to his captors and instead dove into the water below. As he fell, he transformed into a dolphin, known as "torovim" in the Tongva language, and became recognized as a "brother of the sea." Now, while he once had the responsibility of protecting his village, he took on a greater duty as the caretaker of the ocean. Today, Torovim glides swiftly through the world's oceans, ensuring safety and security for the Tongva people. However, with the increasing number of seafarers and vessels, the burden on Torovim has grown heavier. If Torovim were to cease to exist, the survival of the Tongva people would be at risk. The image of Torovim, represented by the dolphin, is frequently seen in the jewelry and clothing of the Tongva community as a tribute to this legendary figure.[52]

Dress

The colonist settlers noted the Tongva bathed every morning and used a dry sweathouse often, a practice foreign to the colonists. Men and children were usually unclothed. Women's skirts were made from animal skins and plants depending on the social station. Traveling on rugged terrain would require the usually barefoot to wear a sandal made of plants.[53]

Both men and women wore their long hair parted in the center and below their shoulders with or without a braid. Women wore bangs and embellished their hair with bone, wood, or shell beads. Jewelry made of shells and beads was commonplace.[54]

Our ancestors were barefoot most of the time, but when needed for very long trips or when picking certain fruits and plants they wore footpads or sandals made of yucca fiber. They tattooed themselves with the needle-like point of yucca plants and ash. It was traditional for a woman to tattoo three dots down her chin to signify her coming of age.[55]

Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California tribal member. (Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Adorning the earlobes with shells and feathers was a common practice for women. Men were more practical in their ear piercings and used them to carry tobacco in small tubes. Tattooing and using a mineral known as red ochre for body painting were also standard.

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[50] Prophet and spiritual leader, the creator god who formed the first humans

[51] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. "Maps and More."

Ochre was also used for sunscreen, which would explain Father Fague's description of the Tongva having a lighter complexion.[56]

Medicine
Understanding the medicinal use of plants to treat ailments and injuries kept the Tongva healthy. This extensive knowledge also provided birth control in lean years. Post contact, the ability to manage health using our tribal methods was forbidden. Medical care given to the first peoples was ethically reckless. Tongva women took to the mountains when it came time for child birth as they had seen the horrors of the colonists medical care where women were butchered and babies lost. [57]

Reading the Land
Unlike their European counterparts, the Tongva did not need a written calendar to understand the seasons or time. They relied on their understanding of the moon for an acute sense of planting schedules and tidal forecasts, enabling successful journeys to the islands. The Tongva were adept at conducting controlled burns, which created more forage and increased the size of the hunted deer. The controlled burns also helped maintain open grasslands and sprout seeds.[58.]

Burials
Our ancestors gave personhood to the life we live amongst. Burials would sometimes include other living beings along with our own. In an ancestral burial of one child, a dolphin was laid adjacent surrounded by "thoughtfully placed abalone shells."[59]

[56] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.

Fernandeño Tataviam[60]

Fernandeño Tataviam exercises food sovereignty through their cultural workshops. Tribal citizens process yucca flowers at their non-profit's cultural center, Haramokngna, in the Angeles National Forest, 2019. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Traditional Village Structure: Sovereign Mini-States

Prior to colonization, the Native American ancestors of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians inhabited the villages in the Simi, San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys. Each village was an autonomous ministate, governed by its own lineage. While sovereign in its own right, each village was also part of a broader regional network, with shared beliefs, customs, and a unified understanding of the afterlife. The people of each village were deeply connected to its identity, following the leadership and traditions of their village captain, a role that maintained harmony within the community. Leadership was decentralized, meaning that there was no single authority that ruled over multiple villages. Instead, the villages operated as sovereign entities, each with its own leader, or *captain*, who would engage with other captains to resolve issues and foster peace.

Unique Laws, Traditions, and Linguistic Diversity

Each village had its own laws and customs, with serious consequences for those who disobeyed cultural practices and societal rules. The principle of village exogamy—marrying outside one's village—ensured a multilingual society, where members spoke various dialects and adhered to different religious beliefs. This cultural fluidity reflected the deep understanding and respect for interconnectedness among the villages. The Fernandeños developed unique worldviews that supported their way of life for thousands of years, yet these beliefs were often at odds with the Christian, colonial society that sought to replace them. Even the names of villages, many of which described the natural landscape or held sacred significance, were co-opted by missionaries in their efforts to convert the Native population.

For instance, the village of Tujunga, home to the Takic-speaking Tujubit people, was named after *tujú*, an old woman whose likeness was symbolized in a rock formation. This site, which had long served as a pilgrimage destination, was later reinterpreted by Spanish missionaries, who reattributed the figure to the biblical mother of Jesus.

[60] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

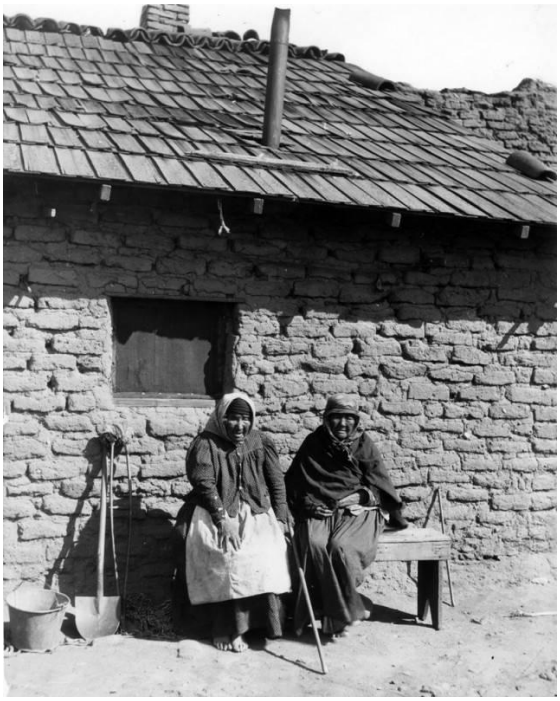

L: Fernandeño Tataviam progenitor and descendant of Tujunga Frances Garcia Cooke with husband.
R: Her descendants, Fernandeño Tataviam Elders Councilmember Bernice Cooke, Tribal Secretary Lucia Alfaro, and Tribal Senator Jesus Alvarez. [GARCIA LINEAGE] (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

A Society of Wisdom, Leadership, and Political Savvy

The pre-colonial Fernandeño society was highly intelligent, politically astute, and economically advanced. Leadership was vested in hereditary lineages that demonstrated exceptional knowledge of their history, culture, and ceremonies. This decentralized system meant that numerous leaders coexisted within the valleys of San Fernando, Simi, Santa Clarita, and Antelope, each overseeing their respective village. Villages controlled their own territories, established laws, and had systems for conflict resolution. Their authority extended to regulating the legitimate use of force and maintaining social order. Through exogamy and the exchange of cultural practices, Fernandeño people spoke multiple languages, strengthening economic and social ties with neighboring villages and forming a complex, interconnected network of communities.

First Peoples in the Mission Period, Under Mexican Rule, and through Early Statehood [1769-1930]

Disrupting the lives and culture of First Peoples, Spain continued their colonization from Mexico, moving north to what was then referred to as Alta California, the general boundaries of the present-day state of California, by sending Franciscan priests with armed Spanish soldiers to journey through California and establish 21 missions, beginning with the founding of Mission San Diego in 1769. These Missions were essentially religious labor camps that primarily benefited the Spanish colonizers and subjugated the First Peoples to intimidation and disease. The Missions introduced stock animals that disrupted the local ecology by eating the native plants and resources that First Peoples relied on, and therefore undermined the independent tribes by removing their food source and further disrupting and destroying their way of life.[61] The Missions were authorized by the Spanish Crown to "convert" California's First Peoples to Christianity and "train" them for a life under European colonial society over a 10-year period, after which the Franciscan Padres would surrender control of livestock, fields, orchards, and the mission buildings back to First Peoples. This, of course, never happened and California's First Peoples remained under Mission rule.[62]



Fernandeño Elders at Mission San Fernando CSUN/Oviatt Digital Library (Los Angeles Public Library)

In 1771, two years after Captain Gaspar de Portola and his men first camped in the village of Yaang'na and encountered the Tongva people, the Tongva were captured and used as slave labor to construct the Mission San Gabriel (located in the present-day City of San Gabriel). The enslavement of the Tongva under the Mission System was immediately followed by disease, kidnapping, imprisonment, and slaughter. This was apparent immediately after Spanish soldiers raped the wife of a chief. The chief was then murdered after confronting Spanish soldiers, and his son was forcibly baptized and became enslaved.[63]

Very similar stories unfortunately followed for the other California tribes at the 20 other Missions that were constructed across California. Outbreaks of smallpox, syphilis, diphtheria, chickenpox, and measles spread through the Native populations across California, widely decimating the population as Native Americans did not possess natural immunities to ward off European diseases. Outbreaks were recorded to have spread through vast regions of the Native American population, from Monterey to San Diego. These diseases, brought by the European colonizers, were made worse by the Mission System. Under the Spanish Mission System, enslaved First Peoples were forced to endure excessive demanding labor, lacked the nutrition they needed and were unable to sustain under confinement of the Mission, children were

[61] State of California Native American Heritage Commission. "Gabrielino/Tongva Nation of the Greater Los Angeles Basin AKA The Gabrielino Tongva Tribe." https://nahc.ca.gov/cp/tribal-atlas-pages/gabrielino-tongva-nation/.
[62] Library of Congress. "Early California History: An Overview." Article. *California As I Saw It: First Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900* (Collection). 2024.
[63] State of California Native American Heritage Commission. "Short Overview of California Indian History." *California Indian History.* 2024. https://nahc.ca.gov/native-americans/california-indian-history/.

separated from their parents, and adults [First Peoples] who did not convert to Catholicism were generally forced to live close together in barracks, all of which promoted the spread of disease.[64]

The cruelties within the mission system naturally sparked resistance throughout the California coast. Toypurina notably led an uprising at the Mission San Gabriel in 1785, immediately cementing her status as a Tongva folk hero. The Mission's intention to reform, baptize, and "civilize" the Tongva tribe quickly became a totalitarian assault through both physical violence and erasure of culture. Spanish padres actively suppressed Chinigchinich, the Tongva religion, which emphasizes relationships with ancestors through ceremonial dance. In response to the persecution, Toypurina and neophyte ("baptized Indian") Nicholas Jose rallied tribal numbers in revolt. Arriving with bows and arrows, the resistance movement was intercepted, quelled, and subject to punishment at the hands of the Mission. Ultimately, Toypurina died in exile far from her homeland and currently rests in an unmarked grave at Mission San Juan Bautista.[65]

Another early act of rebellion also occurred at the Mission San Gabriel in the form of protest art. In the early nineteenth century, an indigenous artist named Juan Antonio made 14 paintings of the Stations of the Cross for the Mission San Gabriel. Executed in an indigenous style that was similar to other paintings created by indigenous artists of the time, this work of art is particularly unique for its blend of indigenous style coloring and figure painting with European Christian iconography and Christian themes. The Stations of the Cross traditionally depict Jesus on his way to crucifixion and entombment. What is notable of this iteration from Juan Antonio is that the Roman guards, the brutal antagonists in the story, were depicted as Spaniards and the Christ figure is depicted as of indigenous descent. These paintings have since been recognized to be a form of protest art and a commentary on the ways that the First Peoples within the Mission San Gabriel saw themselves as opposed to the Spaniards.[66]

In 1797, the Mission San Fernando was established, immediately affecting the lives of the Native Americans who lived in the San Fernando, Santa Clarita, Antelope, and Simi Valleys, including the *tataviam*, later referred to as Fernandeño. Families were separated, children were married off, sacred sites were demolished, culture was suppressed, traditional ways of life were destroyed, natural food systems were scarce after the introduction of invasive species by the Spanish, and the Fernandeños were massacred through disease, hunger, violence, and slavery.[67]

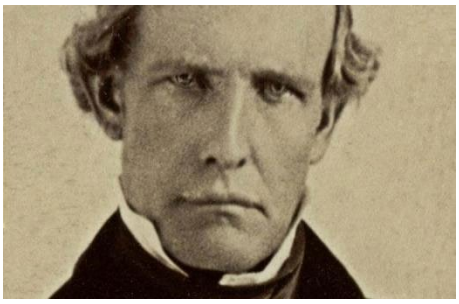
Mexico (which at that time included the land that is now California) achieved independence from Spain in 1821, thus altering the future life of First Peoples. Under the First Mexican Republic, Californians could now trade with foreigners, foreigners could hold land once naturalized and converted to Catholicism, and governors were encouraged to make grants for large parcels of land by Mexico to private citizens. These large land grants, a continuation of a practice started by Spain in 1784, became what are now more commonly referred to as ranchos. Various ranchos were established across the contemporary City limits and the breadth of Los Angeles County until the practice ceased in 1846. Additionally, the new Mexican Republic was determined to "secularize" the missions and remove the control held by the Franciscan Missionaries over First Peoples and the mission properties in California. This process began in 1834, although very few California tribes benefited. The Franciscans allotted each family a small parcel of land from the former Mission lands, however, many gave up attempting to farm the land after a few years, and the Mission structures and superlative buildings fell into disrepair. Most of the Mission land was taken

[64] State of California Native American Heritage Commission. "Gabrielino/Tongva Nation of the Greater Los Angeles Basin AKA The Gabrielino Tongva Tribe."
[65] Hackle, Steven W. "Sources of Rebellion: Indian Testimony and the Mission San Gabriel Uprising of 1785." *Ethnohistory* 50:4, Fall 2003.
[66] Phillips, George Harwood. *Vineyards and Vaqueros*. 2010.
[67] Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. "Heritage: History." 2024.

through large land grants made to white, recently arrived, well-connected immigrants from Mexico.[68] One exception, however, would be a portion of the land surrounding the Mission San Fernando. After the secularization of the mission, approximately 50 surviving Fernandeño Tataviam leaders negotiated for and received several land grants amounting to 18,000 acres held in trust by the Mexican government. Covering approximately 10 percent of the San Fernando Valley, these land grants included Rancho El Escorpion, Rancho Encino, Rancho Cahuenga, and Rancho Tujunga.[69]

In the immediate post-Mission era, although the First Peoples of California were no longer enslaved under the Mission System, the creation of ranchos and the arrival of immigrants from Mexico and the U.S. continued to suppress and further subjugate them. By the time that Pio Pico was governor in 1845, the population of First Peoples of California had plummeted from an estimated 300,000 before European contact to about 100,000 as a result of enslavement under the Mission System. Simultaneously, the population of permanent California residents was rising with a total of 14,000 permanent residents, about 2,000 of which were white non-Hispanic people who emigrated from the U.S.[70]

Between 1846 and 1873, the population of California's First Peoples further plunged to 30,000, and it is estimated that during this time about 80 percent of all California's First Peoples perished. While diseases, dislocation, and starvation were important factors in the decline of the population of First Peoples, it is estimated that somewhere between 9,500 and 16,000 people were murdered by non-Indians across the state through acts of violence such as shootings, stabbings, beheadings, and lethal beatings, which have since been called the "largest, most blatant, deliberate killing of North American Indians by non-Indians".[71]



California's First Governor Burnett saw Native Californians as lazy, savage and dangerous. He stated, "That a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct must be expected," during the state address in 1851. According to Historian B. Madley, the state spent a total of about $1.7 million—a staggering sum in its day—to murder at least 16,000 Native Americans. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

In the case of the genocide against California's First Peoples during this period, there were multiple and deliberate regional mass murder campaigns by both vigilantes and U.S. Army soldiers, which were effectively condoned by the actions and inaction of the Army, the California Supreme Court, the U.S. Senate, and the press. Between 1846 and 1853, California's First Peoples were stripped of their legal rights, making anti-Indian crimes difficult to prosecute, and officials refused to ratify treaties signed by federal agents and California Indian leaders that may have helped restrain violence and save lives. Instead, in 1854 and 1860, Congress passed two major funding bills that allocated about $1,300,000 to reimburse California for its past militia expeditions, thus retrospectively endorsing these genocidal actions and financially supporting future operations.[72]

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[68] Library of Congress. "Early California History: An Overview." Article. *California As I Saw It: First Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900* (Collection). 2024.
[69] Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. "Heritage: History." 2024.
For more information about the history of ranchos in the City and County of Los Angeles, refer to the SurveyLA Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement Context.
[70] Library of Congress. "Early California History: An Overview." Article. *California As I Saw It: First Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849-1900* (Collection). 2024.
[71] Madley, Benjamin. *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press. 2016.
[72] Madley, Benjamin. *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press. 2016.

Additionally, California's First Peoples were subjected to a legal form of slavery during this period. In 1850, the first California Legislature passed "Act for the Government and Protection of Indians," an indentured servitude and apprenticeship law, even amid the political debates on the other side of the country regarding slavery of African-Americans, and California's stance on entering the Union in 1850 as a free state. The California law that was passed declared that an Indian could be a "vagrant" if they could not support themselves, were found "loitering," or were leading an "immoral" course of life; if an indigenous person were found to have broken a law, they could be "bailed out" by a white person who would pay the fine, and the indigenous person would be forced to work for the white person until they paid off the fine. A white person could be placed responsible for the "care, control and earnings" of an indigenous child until they became an adult. Essentially, a system was created under which an indigenous person could be arrested for not having a job and be declared a vagrant, then in order to be freed their labor was sold to the highest bidder, where they would in turn work for up to four months with little to no pay or compensation, and likely afterward were left to be arrested for "vagrancy" again.[73]

Drawing of the Downey Block, on the northwest corner of Main and Temple Streets, drawn c.1890. (Los Angeles Public Library).

In Los Angeles, these policies were carried out and had direct effects on the local population of First Peoples of Los Angeles. During the mid-1800s, large agricultural farms and ranches surrounded what is now Downtown Los Angeles. These ranch heads and landowners took advantage of the above-described law and continuously used local First Peoples as cheap labor. Sources consistently describe how the landowners would pay First Peoples in alcohol, then have them arrested for "immoral behavior" or "vagrancy," and then "bail" them out for a nominal fee and force them to continue to work the fields for no compensation. These actions occurred within the City of Los Angeles, particularly within a building that was once referred to as the Downey Block, located at the corner of Main Street and Temple Street in Downtown Los Angeles. This building is no longer extant but was located where the current U.S. Court House (312 N. Spring Street) stands today.[74] This building was the site of auctions that took place nearly every week for almost 20 years (c.1850-c.1870) and has been discussed in various primary sources from the time. This practice became so routine that local administrators, landowners, or ranch heads would make their way to downtown Los Angeles every Monday morning and purchase First Peoples who had been arrested the prior week.[75] This practice continued essentially until there were no more First Peoples to take advantage of as their population within the City of Los Angeles fell from 3,693 to 219 between 1850 and 1870 as they moved further outside of the city limits and continued to suffer from the aforementioned abuses.[76]

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[73] Johnston-Dodds, Kimberly and Sarah Suphan. "Involuntary Servitude, Apprenticeship, and Slavery of Native Americans in California." *The California Indian History Website*. 2022. http://calindianhistory.org/.
[74] Peterson, Robert. "Los Angeles' 1850 Slave Market is Now the Site of a Federal Courthouse." PBS SoCal. 2016. https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/lost-la/los-angeles-1850s-slave-market-is-now-the-site-of-a-federal-courthouse.
[75] Peterson, Robert. "Los Angeles' 1850 Slave Market is Now the Site of a Federal Courthouse." PBS SoCal. 2016. https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/lost-la/los-angeles-1850s-slave-market-is-now-the-site-of-a-federal-courthouse.
[76] ACLU of Northern California. "Native American Slave Market." Article. *Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California*. 2019. https://www.aclunc.org/sites/goldchains/explore/native-american-slave-market.html

> "Los Angeles had its slave mart as well as New Orleans and Constantinople – only the slave at Los Angeles was sold 52 times a year as along as he lived, which did not generally exceed one, two or three years under the new dispensation. They would be sold for a week, and night up by the vineyard men and others at prices ranging from one to three dollars, one-third of which was to be paid to the peon at the end of the week, which debt, due for well performed labor, would invariably be paid in "aguardiente," and the Indian would be made happy until the following Monday morning, having passed through another Saturday night and Sunday's saturnalia of debauchery and beastiality. Those thousands of honest, useful people were absolutely destroyed In this way. Vineyards were of great profit in those days, and would be today, if we could recall the times as they were before the conquering Saxon came with his boasted perfection of laws, and his much-vaunted 'advance civilization'." – Major Horace Bell[77]

Despite agreements made between the U.S. federal government and First Peoples of Los Angeles, the land that was promised to First Peoples for reservations never came to fruition. Between 1851 and 1852, 18 treaties were drawn for California's First Peoples, in which First Peoples would cede the title of their land which they owned under Mexican governance to be purchased by the federal government. This land would then be permanently set aside for use as reservations to be occupied by First Peoples of Los Angeles. However, due to internal government neglect and conflict, these treaties were never ratified and were left unresolved and forgotten about by the federal government for decades.[78] These treaties were eventually rediscovered in 1918 hidden in a desk drawer in the senate archives.[79] Despite the discovery and the clear historic neglect by the federal government to appropriately provide land to California's First Peoples, the land that was stipulated in these treaties was never offered back to the tribes. First Peoples, who had received land from the Mexican government through land grants, began to be removed from their land with the passing of the 1851 Land Claims Act, which passed land into the public domain that was not filed within a two-year period. First Peoples, who could not read or write English, lost all of their land by 1900 to encroaching settlers in the growing region of Southern California.[80]

The types of resources associated with this theme include sites that were created or continued to be used after the arrival of European settlers, as well as buildings and resources that were constructed during this period.

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[77] Horace Bell. *Reminiscences of a Ranger*. Santa Barbara, California: Wallace Hebberd.
[78] Miller, Larisa K. "The Secret Treaties with California's Indians." *Prologue Magazine* (affiliated with National Archives). Vol. 45, No. 3 & 4, Fall/Winter. 2013.
[79] State of California Native American Heritage Commission. "Short Overview of California Indian History." *California Indian History.* 2024.
[80] Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. "Heritage: History." 2024.

Beginning of Settler Colonization

When the first European settlers began to colonize the land that belonged to First Peoples of Los Angeles, life for First Peoples began to drastically change. The construction of the missions, the removal of First Peoples from their villages, the changes colonization brought to the natural world, and the beginning of the spread of disease are all elements that directly affected the lives and livelihoods of First Peoples. Although some tribes of First Peoples of Los Angeles are associated with the Missions, nineteenth-century war buildings, and early adobes, these buildings were used by First Peoples under duress and/or enslavement. As such, they do not reflect the aspects of the history of First Peoples that this context desires to highlight and are therefore not discussed in depth in this context. That perspective on history is included in the *Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement, 1781-1849* context statement.

A crop field and an unidentified building at the grounds of the Mission San Gabriel, c.1880.
(Los Angeles Public Library)

Gabrieleño Tongva[81]

In the perspective of the colonists, school textbooks, and land markers, the beginning of time for California began with Juan Cabrillo's Spanish Expedition in 1542. The Tongva existed for hundreds of generations without need of anything the colonists brought to Tovaangar. The colonists came and could not identify with living among/with the land and began the process of "humanizing" the Tongva.[82]

Cabrillo documented his stop at the Channel Islands in 1542; he and his crew might have stayed at the Avalon Harbor. He wrote that the people were friendly, offered gifts, and showed no signs of fear. He was followed by Sebastian Vizcaino in 1602, who also documented the warm welcome by Gabrieleños. In the late 1700s, the Portola expedition made its way to Southern California. In his unpublished diary, Father Crespi recorded our ancestral homelands as a "paradise," with three flowing rivers, an abundance of food, and friendly people.[83, 84] Like many Native people across the U.S., our original feelings toward the explorers were friendly, trying to barter, and offering food.[85] We were accustomed to trade and bartering. Russians wanted our sea otter pelts, and our beads and soapstone bowls have been found in Alaska and Hawaii.[86] The next group of explorers included Father Junipero Serra in 1771, who quickly and permanently changed our world, our ways of knowing, and our "paradise."[87]

In the diaries, governmental records and letters, the Spaniards described, in condescending language and tones, that the Tongva weren't quite human beings, and this led the pathway of justification on how the Spaniards would interact and dominate them on the pathway to erasure.[88]

On August 2-3, 1769, Father Juan Crespi passed through Yaang'na and observed the following:

> "Sage for refreshment is very plentiful at all three rivers and very good here at the Porciúncula [the Los Angeles River]. At once on our reaching here, eight heathens came over from a good sized village encamped at this pleasing spot among some trees. They came bringing two or three large bowls or baskets half-full of very good sage with other sorts of grass seeds that they consume; all brought their bows and arrows but with the strings removed from the bows. In his hands the chief bore strings of shell beads of the sort that they use, and on reaching the camp they threw the handfuls of these beads at each of us. Some of the heathens came up smoking on pipes made of baked clay, and they blew three mouthfuls of smoke into the air toward each one of us. The Captain and myself gave them tobacco, and he gave them our own kind of beads, and accepted the sage from them and gave us a share of it for refreshment; and very delicious sage it is for that purpose. We set out at a half past six in the morning from this pleasing, lush river

[81] This narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[82] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[83] The use of "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño-Tongva.
[84] Brown, Alan K., trans. *A Description of Distant Roads: Original Journals of the First Expedition into California 1769-1770 by Juan Crespi*. San Diego State University, 2001.
[85] Johnston, Bernice Eastman. *California's Gabrielino Indians*. Southwest Museum, 1962.
[86] McCawley, William. *The First Angelinos*. Morongo Indian Reservation: Malki Museum, 1996.
[87] Morales, Kimberly. *Importance of the reconnection of California Native Americans to ancestral homelands*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. December 2022.
[88] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.

> and valley of Our Lady of Angeles of La Porciúncula. We crossed the river here where it is carrying a good deal of water almost at ground level, and on crossing it, came into a great vineyard of grapevines and countless rose bushes having a great many open blossoms, all of it very dark friable soil. Keeping upon a westerly course over very grass-grown, entirely level soils with grand grasses, on going about half a league we came upon the village belonging to this place, where they came out to meet and see us, and men, women, and children in good numbers, on approaching they commenced howling at us though they had been wolves, just as before back at the spot called San Francisco Solano. We greeted them and they wished to give us seeds. As we had nothing at hand to carry them in, we refused."[89]

The Tongva were helpless to fend off unprovoked attacks from the ravenous and restless soldiers dispatched to provide security to the padres. Soldiers advanced on the Tongva using muskets, which were more accurate and lethal than the Tongva projectile points that bounced off the soldiers' leather vests.[90]

Jacinta Serrano, a Native American woman, sits at a metate and grinds corn at the Mission San Gabriel, c.1900.
(Los Angeles Public Library)

[89] Brown, Alan K., trans. *A Description of Distant Roads: Original Journals of the First Expedition into California 1769-1770 by Juan Crespi*. San Diego State University, 2001.
[90] Ibid.

Fernandeño Tataviam[91]

Spanish Colonization: Expansion of Spanish Power in Alta California

In the late eighteenth century, Spain sought to strengthen its colonial presence in Alta California, turning its attention to the northern regions of Los Angeles County. At this time, unrest among Native populations at nearby missions prompted the Spanish Franciscans to establish new outposts. Their goal was not only to convert and "civilize" Native peoples but to expand Spain's reach over the fertile lands of California. The distance between the existing missions of San Gabriel and San Buenaventura—more than two days' walk—left many local villages beyond Spanish control. As a result, the Franciscans began multiple expeditions in search of a more strategically placed mission site.

The Founding of Mission San Fernando in the City of Los Angeles

After surveying the region, the Franciscans selected the San Fernando Valley, a rich and fertile land home to the Fernandeño people, among other Native groups. On September 8, 1797, Mission San Fernando Rey de España was founded in present-day Mission Hills, City of Los Angeles, marking a pivotal moment in California's colonial history. Located on land that had long been inhabited by the ancestors of the Fernandeño people, the mission would become the center of Spanish authority, ushering in dramatic and disruptive changes for the Native Americans in the region.

View of the Mission San Fernando from the road that would eventually become "El Camino Real" on which many Native Americans would be forcibly marched, c.1800s. (Image from Water and Power: https://waterandpower.org/museum/San_Fernando_Mission.html)

Becoming "Fernandeño"

The arrival of Spanish settlers and the imposition of the mission system disrupted this complex social structure. As the villages were forcibly relocated to missions, their autonomy was stripped away, and they were given Spanish-derived labels that erased their true identities. The Native peoples living at Mission San Fernando were baptized and collectively referred to as "Fernandeño," a term that came to represent the coalition of villages in the San Fernando Valley. This forced identity was an attempt by the Spanish to consolidate power and erase the unique cultural and political structures that had existed for millennia. Yet, despite the efforts to impose colonial rule, the spirit of the Fernandeño people—and their deep connection to the land, traditions, and sovereignty—endured.

Cultural Destruction and Forced Transformation

For the Fernandeños, the founding of Mission San Fernando was not merely the creation of a colonial outpost—it signified the beginning of cultural destruction and forced transformation. The Fernandeño people were swiftly relocated from their ancestral villages to the mission, where they were baptized, given Spanish names, and separated from their families. Their traditional ways of life, which were intimately connected to the land and their sacred customs, were replaced by foreign Catholic practices and European agricultural methods. Sacred sites were desecrated, and their spiritual relationship with the land was disregarded in favor of the colonizers' religious and economic objectives. The Fernandeños were thrust into a system that sought to erase their identity and replace their customs with rigid, foreign structures dictated by the missionaries.

[91] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

Brutal Imposition of Colonial Rule

The imposition of colonial rule was brutal and harsh. The Fernandeños were enslaved, their labor exploited to support the mission's agricultural and economic enterprises. The missionaries viewed the Native people not as individuals with rich cultural traditions, but as property—sources of cheap labor. The relentless demands placed on the Fernandeños—to work the land, tend livestock, and produce goods for the mission—were exhausting and dehumanizing. The combination of forced labor, the introduction of European diseases, violence, and hunger took a heavy toll on the population. By 1814, more Fernandeños were dying than being born, and entire families were devastated by disease, starvation, and overwork.

Fernandeño Tataviam gather at Mission San Fernando after a 650-mile pilgrimage across all California Missions by foot, 2015. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Cultural Resistance and Survival

Despite the overwhelming pressures to assimilate, the Fernandeños exhibited remarkable cultural resistance. While they were forced to adapt to the Spanish system in order to survive, many continued to practice their ancient traditions in secret. They blended Catholic rituals with their own spiritual beliefs, creating a covert yet vital means of cultural preservation. These small but significant acts of defiance—whether through the retention of traditional knowledge or the quiet performance of ceremonies—enabled the Fernandeño people to preserve their spiritual and cultural heritage, even under the weight of colonization.

Mexican Colonization: Secularization and New Challenges

As the mission system began to weaken in the 1830s, following Mexico's independence from Spain, the secularization of the missions offered the Fernandeños a glimmer of hope. The Mexican government's efforts to secularize the missions in the 1830s promised greater autonomy for Native peoples. However, this transition presented new challenges. The discovery of gold and the influx of settlers led to further displacement of Native communities. Nonetheless, in the 1840s, the Mexican government granted the Fernandeños land, recognizing their survival and petitioning efforts. More than 18,000 acres were awarded, including Rancho El Escorpion, Rancho Encino, Rancho Cahuenga, and Rancho Tujunga—land that allowed the Fernandeños to begin rebuilding their community and reconnecting with their ancestral territories.

Fernandeño Tataviam youth at a gathering at Mission San Fernando, 1920s. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

American Colonization: The U.S. and Further Displacement

The 18,000 acres of land grants given to the Fernandeño Tataviams, however, were short-lived. Following the U.S.' acquisition of California after the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo promised to protect the rights of Native peoples. Yet, the treaty's provisions were poorly enforced, and settlers, land speculators, and new government policies encroached rapidly on the land granted to the Fernandeños. As American expansion took root, the Fernandeños were once again displaced from their ancestral lands, relegated to the margins of society.

Despite continued setbacks under Spanish, Mexican, and American rule, the Fernandeños' resilience endured. They worked to maintain their cultural identity and a foothold in the land they had long called home. The impacts of colonization were profound, but the Fernandeños adapted, survived, and resisted in ways that allowed them to preserve their heritage and strength. They forged new political, social, and economic structures that reflected both their connection to the land and their ability to navigate the changing, often hostile, environment.

Genocide/Erasure/Relocation/Slavery

During the Mission Period, the Mexican Period, and the American period from the founding of California to the present day, First Peoples of Los Angeles have been forced to contend with varying degrees of genocide, erasure, relocation, and slavery. In each instance, these atrocities were imposed by the changing political forces which held governance over the land that was once their own.

The places associated with this theme are the physical manifestations of genocide, erasure, relocation, and slavery perpetuated against First Peoples of Los Angeles. These include resources such as village sites, and burial and cemetery sites, as well as residences and religious buildings.

Basket and weaving tools. (Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Gabrieleño Tongva[92]

There are many written accounts recorded by the mission padres, soldiers, and affiliates. Our labor was used to not only make the adobe, the infamous red tiles, but also bricks and structures to divert water from the Los Angeles River using the Zanja Madre.[93] However, despite our presence and skilled labor, there are no written accounts by the Native American people at the Mission San Gabriel. Instead, they hold our baskets, our photos, and our baptismal records. Still to this day, we are provided permission to review the records by written request. The Spaniards arrived in California in 1769 on a "spiritual conquest." By 1773, by royal decree from the viceroy, they took authority over baptized California Indians, "the management, control, and education of the baptized Indians pertains exclusively to the missionary fathers... just as a father of a family has charge of his house and of the education and correction of his children."[94] As a result, my great-great-grandparents (Jose and Presentacion Morales), great-grandparents (David and Olegaria Modesta), and grandparents (Arthur Sr. and Petra) were all married and baptized Catholic at the Mission San Gabriel.[95]

A brief look into the Mission System tells us that Father Junipero Serra was commissioned to expand Europe and the Catholic church on behalf of the Spanish Empire. Spanish soldiers brought the Catholic religion, whips, brutality, new food, and new diseases. All contributed to the first wave of breakdown and erasure of our traditional ways of knowing, living, and value systems. Disease, land loss, and starvation drove many California Indians to the Missions, not out of love or desire for the new settler padres, but out of desperation to survive. Cattle, farming, horses, and constructing square-shaped buildings replaced a reciprocal lifestyle of tending the land, cultural burns, gathering seasonal food, and living in small round huts in a communal village setting. Living in the Mission System meant subjecting yourself to being treated as a child, or worse, as a savage heathen. This mindset was met by the Indian people with objection, and sometimes violent uprisings. One notable uprising of the Tongva people was led by a woman known as Toypurina. She, along with approximately 200 Tongva people, tried to burn down the Mission San Gabriel. Her failed attempt led to her demise of being baptized, having her name changed to Regina Josefa, and forced to marry a Spanish soldier. Her companion Nicolas Jose was subjected to a trial of his peers and eventually killed.[96]

Passed in 1990, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) began requiring institutions that receive federal funding to return cultural items to lineal descendants. Prior to this law, there was no protection and no responsibility to do so. Subsequent California laws AB52 and SB18 require tribes to be notified when a project may impact a cultural site.[97]

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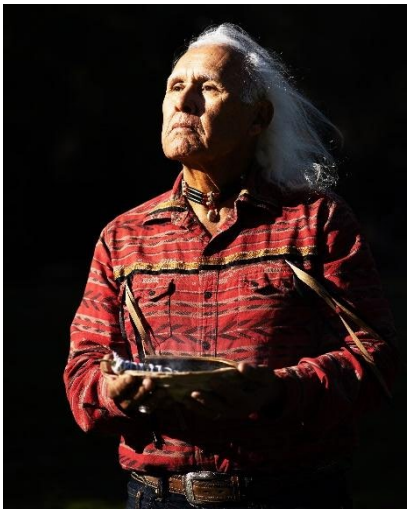
[92] This narrative is written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[93] The Zanja Madre, constructed shortly after the founding of the Pueblo de Los Angeles, is the original aqueduct that brought water to the Pueblo de Los Angeles from the Los Angeles River.
[94] Madley, *California's First Mass Incarceration System,* 2019; Morales, Kimberly. *Importance of the reconnection of California Native Americans to ancestral homelands*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. December 2022.
[95] Morales, Kimberly. *Importance of the reconnection of California Native Americans to ancestral homelands*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. December 2022.
[96] McCawley, William. *The First Angelinos*. Morongo Indian Reservation: Malki Museum, 1996.; Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

Bond from the State of California approving the genocide against First Peoples of Los Angeles.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Fernandeño Tataviam[98]



Fernandeño Tataviam Elders Councilmember Alan Salazar for the Los Angeles County Harms Report. Photo by Johnny Perez. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The Violence of the Mission System

The violence and destruction wrought by the Mission System continued to impact the Fernandeño people long after the Spanish colonial period ended. The forced labor, disease, and maltreatment of Native peoples at the missions led to high mortality rates, culminating in mass burial pits. At Mission San Fernando alone, the remains of over 2,500 Fernandeño ancestors were buried in unmarked graves. Many of these individuals had perished due to disease, malnutrition, or abuse, their deaths a direct result of the violence of the mission system. In a modern act of further erasure, the Los Angeles Archdiocese attempted to redesign the grounds of Mission San Fernando, landscaping over the mass burial sites. Despite repeated requests from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band for consultation and meaningful dialogue about how to honor their ancestors, the Archdiocese refused to engage with the tribe. Instead, they continued to deny the descendants of those buried at the mission a voice in the ways their ancestors' remains are treated. This continued disrespect deepens the trauma of centuries-old colonial violence, as the Fernandeño people's history is buried beneath layers of neglect and erasure.

The Failure of Local Courts

The failure of local courts to protect Native lands was exacerbated by the broader context of American westward expansion. As the Gold Rush and waves of settlers flooded into California, the lands that had once been designated as Mexican land grants were rapidly seized. The dispossession of Native peoples, including the Fernandeños, became institutionalized. Native communities were increasingly relegated to small, isolated areas or completely displaced, and by the late nineteenth century, most Fernandeño families had been evicted from their ancestral homelands.

Genocide: The Decline of the Fernandeño Population from ~3000 to 5 Families

By the turn of the century, the Fernandeño Tataviam had been removed from all their land holdings and left vulnerable to the federally and state-sponsored genocide of the nineteenth century.

By 1900, the U.S. Census recorded only 23 surviving Fernandeños—a grim reflection of the decimation of the Tribe through land loss, disease, and violence. The struggle for survival had reduced their population to a fraction of what it once was. Every life lost represented the erasure of not just individuals, but entire families, communities, and the cultural knowledge that had spanned generations.

Despite the near extinction of the Fernandeño people, the survivors became the foundation for the future of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. The descendants of three key families—the Ortega, Garcia, and Ortiz families—are the direct heirs of the survivors from this dark period in history. They have carried forward the legacy of their ancestors, who, in the face of unimaginable hardship, maintained their cultural identity and sense of community.

Resilience in the Face of Tragedy

[98] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

The history of the Fernandeños during the American period is a tragic tale of dispossession and marginalization, yet it is also a story of incredible resilience. Despite losing their lands, enduring cultural erosion under American laws, and struggling to maintain their way of life in a new and hostile environment, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians survived. The enduring spirit of the Fernandeño people is a testament not only to their historical survival but also to their continued presence in the San Fernando Valley and beyond.

The three surviving Fernandeño lineage progenitors and/or their earliest photographed descendants in the early twentieth century.
L to R: Antonio Maria Ortega (Ortega Lineage), Josephine Leyvas Garcia (Garcia Lineage), Joseph Ortiz (Ortiz Lineage).
(Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Fernandeño woman at Mission San Fernando, c.1880. (Photo courtesy of CSUN/Oviatt Digital Library [SFVHS Archives])

The number 23 represents more than just a statistic—it is a haunting symbol of a near-extinct culture. Each life lost signified the erasure of not only individuals but entire families, with their knowledge, languages, and traditions disappearing as well. The violence of colonization—through disease, forced labor, and outright brutality—had decimated the Fernandeño population. The fabric of their society was torn apart, leaving in its wake a culture that had once flourished across the San Fernando Valley and beyond.

Today, despite their numbers having been greatly diminished during the late nineteenth century, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians has experienced a resurgence. Though the lands they lost may never be fully reclaimed, their legacy endures in the generations that continue to fight for justice, recognition, and the preservation of their history. Their story is not just one of loss—it is a story of survival and of an unbreakable connection to the land and their ancestors.

A Story Not of Finality, But of Continuity

The story of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians is not one of finality; it is one of continuity. Despite the grave setbacks, the people survived and endured. They are living proof that even in the face of systemic erasure and cultural genocide, a people can rise again. The descendants of the 23 survivors—the Ortega, Garcia, and Ortiz lineages—continue to advocate for recognition, justice, and the preservation of their history for future generations. Their determination is not just for themselves, but for the generations to come who will carry forward the legacy of those who endured.

Fernandeño Tataviam in the early twentieth century.
(Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Generational Trauma: The Continuing Pain of Colonization

The brutal legacy of the Mission San Fernando system, which sought to erase the Fernandeño people's way of life, continues to reverberate through their descendants today. Just a few generations removed from the horrors of colonization, many Fernandeño families still bear the psychological scars of these disruptions. The violence that tore families apart, disrupted cultural practices, and dismantled social structures is not a distant chapter of history—it is a living wound that continues to affect the lives of their descendants.

Fernandeño Tataviam would often engage in seasonal celebrations at the Mission San Fernando. Pictured is the Fourth of July celebration at Mission San Fernando Rey de España, 1922. (Los Angeles Times photo)

For the Fernandeños, the mission system was not just an institution of religious conversion—it was a tool of annihilation. Ancestors were forcibly separated from their families, children were taken to be indoctrinated into foreign ways, and adults were subjected to brutal labor, stripped of their autonomy and dignity. The goal of the missions was not just to convert, but to destroy the Fernandeño culture, severing traditional knowledge, spiritual practices, and languages passed down through countless generations. This system was designed to erase their very identity and replace it with a colonial, European worldview. The resulting trauma has left deep, enduring scars that continue to affect the Fernandeño community to this day.

Assimilation and Segregation

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, First Peoples of Los Angeles faced dual pressures: On one end they were forced to assimilate into American culture, and on the other end faced racism and segregation after being integrated into American culture. Facing federal policies that withheld the land from First Peoples and local policies that allowed for racial covenants and withheld the option to even buy land back, the theme of assimilation and segregation is an important component to understanding the history of First Peoples and their present relationship with the land in Los Angeles.

The places associated with this theme are the result of physical manifestations of assimilation and segregation against First Peoples, and include single-family and multi-family housing buildings, religious buildings, and educational buildings.

Two Native American workers, identified as Sanese and Napoleon, at the Rancho Encino, 1906. (Los Angeles Public Library)

Gabrieleño Tongva[99]

Clara Duarte Henninger, circa 1910 assimilation in Rancho San Pasquel. (Photo provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Assimilation is defined as the absorption and integration of people, ideas, or culture into a wider society or culture. We were basically forced into seclusion until the late 1940s.[100] Our Tribe then felt free to present themselves publicly after the Indian Claims Act of 1946 by the U.S. Congress to hear any longstanding claims of Indian tribes against the U.S..[101]

Catholicization made us, referred to us, and recorded us as neophytes: a person who is new to a subject, skill, or belief. This was the beginning of efforts to eradicate who we were and our past existence as Native Americans. Baptismal records referred to us as neophytes having no previous name or history.[102]

We had maintained community by maintaining residence in a segregated community (village) and forming a non-descript social club in pretense of continued community and tribal unity.[103]

Arcadia

Victoria "Dona" Reid was the daughter of a Gabrieleno chief and inherited land known today as the City of Arcadia. Her family was from the village known to the Gabrieleno as Comicranga. As with many women in the 1800s, she knew her land was at risk of being stolen and married a Scotsman by the name of Hugo Reid.[104] Hugo Reid was another amateur anthropologist who took special interest in the Gabrielenos. Spelling our name Gabriel-*ino*, Hugo Reid published a series of 22 letters to the *Los Angeles Star* newspaper beginning in February of 1852. Reid documented changes of the mass migration of Gabrielenos after Mexico seized the land owned by the California Missions as part of the 1830s Mexican government secularization acts. These governmental changes mark the beginning of migration from our traditional homelands, with some Gabrielenos moving as far away as more than 300 miles to Monterey, California. This story highlights the patriarchal movement of non-Native men owning land, marrying women to steal their land, removing a matriarchal inheritance, and the beginning of our stories being told by outsiders, as well as the beginning of our people leaving our traditional homelands.[105]

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[99] This narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[100] The use of "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño Tongva.
[101] Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. "Maps and More."
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Johnston, Bernice Eastman. *California's Gabrielino Indians*. Southwest Museum, 1962.
[105] Deer, Sarah. *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*. Minnesota Press, 2015; Morales, Kimberly. *Native American epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. April 2024.

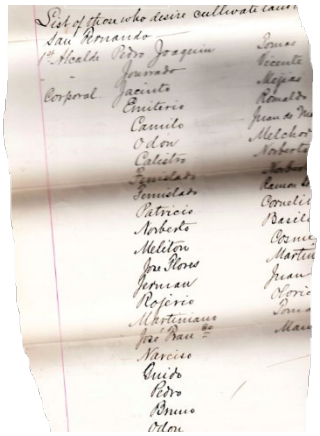
Family Land Allotment

Over the years, my family knew about a parcel of land located in the San Gabriel Valley that was given to our great-grandfather. The oral histories around the land included several "charlatans" and "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan" running off my great-great-grandparents while on horseback. That was all we knew, until this past summer. Potrero Chico is an area known today as Whittier Narrows, near the same parcel upon which the original Mission San Gabriel was built in 1771.

As stated earlier, the original Mission San Gabriel was moved due to an earthquake or possible flood. A letter from President Warren Harding dated April 4, 1923, states the Private Land Claim was given to Antonio Valenzuela. I was also given the documents that show our family sued and kept the stolen land claim in courts until 1953. This specific piece of land is at the intersection of the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel Rivers, making the fresh spring water a priceless "resource" for farmers and new colonial settlers; another story of dispossession that led to fractionation, trauma, and land theft. Today, this land is owned by the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks & Recreation and requires a parking permit as well as other bureaucratic systems to use the land.[106]

[106] Louis, Renee Pualani, and Aunty Moana Kahele. *Kanaka Hawai'i Cartography - Hula, Navigation, and Oratory*, 2017.

Fernandeño Tataviam[107]



Fernandeño Native American petitioners received 18,000 acres of land from the Mexican Governor. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Tribally Held Land in the Contemporary City of Los Angeles Boundary

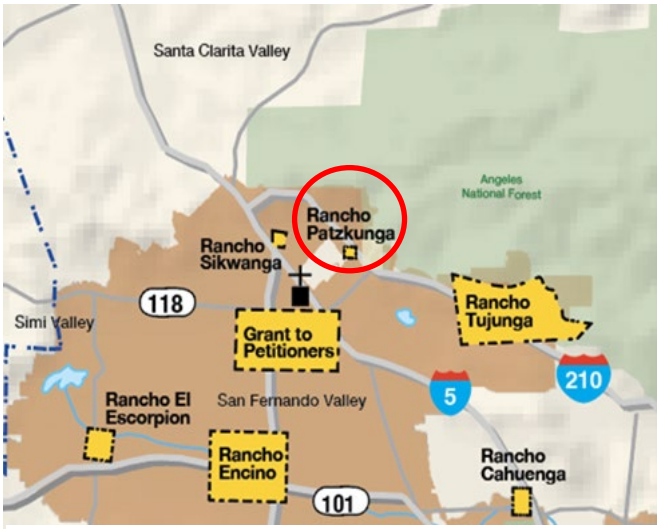
The lands that now comprise the City of Los Angeles hold an immeasurable historical significance to the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. Every Fernandeño Tataviam citizen traces their ancestry to Native peoples who once thrived in villages within the City's boundaries—specifically within the San Fernando Valley—and were forcibly relocated, assimilated, and displaced over centuries of colonization. Today, as the City of Los Angeles continues to expand, the lands upon which it was built represent not only the pain of displacement but also the enduring resilience of the Fernandeño people. These lands, steeped in cultural, lineal, and historic ties, tell the story of generations who lived in harmony with the land before being disrupted by colonial forces. The following are land holdings that were maintained by the Fernandeño Tataviam:

1. Mission San Fernando (1797)
City: City of Los Angeles
Native Enslaved: ~2,992 Baptisms
FTBMI Lineages: Ortega, Garcia, Ortiz

The history of the Fernandeños begins at Mission San Fernando, established in 1797 on the village of Achoicominga, within what is now the City of Los Angeles. Over 2,900 Natives from surrounding villages, including those from the San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys, were forcibly relocated to the mission, where they were baptized and given Spanish names. The mission system sought to erase their traditional ways of life and spirituality, and the Fernandeños became a people defined by their colonial experience, known as "Fernandeño" after the mission's name. Today, every citizen of the FTBMI descends from those enslaved at Mission San Fernando. The land that was once home to the vibrant village of Achoicominga is now part of the sprawling urban landscape of Los Angeles.

2. Rancho Patzkunga (~10 acres)
City: City of Los Angeles
FTBMI Lineages: Ortega, Garcia, Ortiz
Modern Location: Sylmar, Los Angeles

After the secularization of the missions, the Fernandeños found some stability on lands granted to them. One such landholding was Rancho Patzkunga, a 10-acre parcel near Mission San Fernando. Rogerio Rocha, a Fernandeño leader, established multiple houses and a blacksmith's forge for the Tribe's collective use. However, following the de Celis sale of 1874, the land was sold to new developers who illegally evicted the Fernandeños by 1885. Despite this eviction, part of Rancho Patzkunga lives on today in Rudy Ortega Sr. Park, named



Rancho Patzkunga circled in red. The brown background indicates the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

[107] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

after the late FTBMI president. The park sits on a portion of the land that was once the heart of Fernandeño community life.

3. Grant to Petitioners (~7,628 acres)
City: City of Los Angeles
FTBMI Lineages: Ortega, Garcia, Ortiz
Modern Location: Adjacent to Mission Hills, Los Angeles

In 1843, Fernandeño leaders petitioned the Mexican governor for land, and they were granted 7,628 acres of ex-mission land. This land, known as the "Grant to Petitioners", was intended for the collective benefit of the Fernandeños, though it was included in the de Celis sale of the 1870s, and the Tribe was eventually displaced as settlers encroached on their territory. Despite the loss of this land, the Fernandeños' connection to these areas is a key part of their identity, and the history of these grants continues to shape the community today.

Grant to Petitioners circled in red. The brown background indicates the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

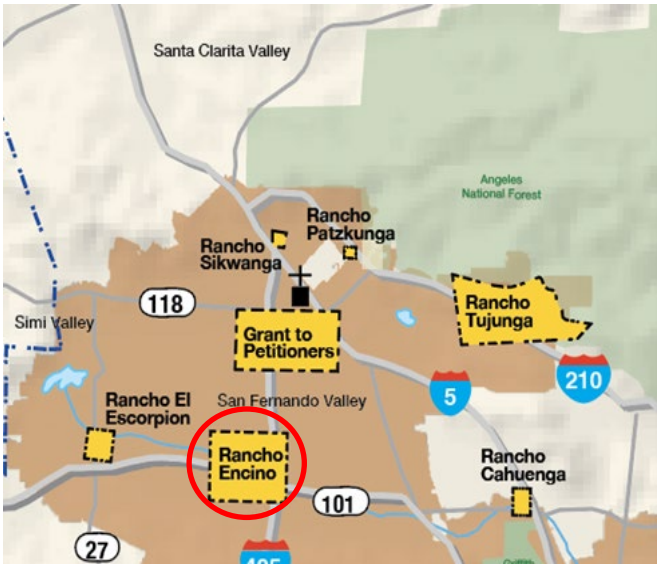
4. Rancho Sikwanga (~200 acres)
City: City of Los Angeles
FTBMI Lineages: Ortiz
Modern Location: Van Norman Reservoir, Los Angeles

The Fernandeño people's ancestral holdings also extended to Rancho Sikwanga, granted in 1851 to the Ortiz lineage. The Fernandeños built homes, grew crops, and planted orchards on this land, which was eventually sold as part of the de Celis sale. Despite this, the Ortiz lineage continued to occupy the land until at least 1878, and portions of the land grant can still be seen today near the Van Norman Reservoir in the San Fernando Valley.

Rancho Sikwanga circled in red. The brown background indicates the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

5. Rancho Encino (~4,460 acres)
City: City of Los Angeles
FTBMI Lineages: Ortega, Ortiz
Modern Location: Encino, Los Angeles

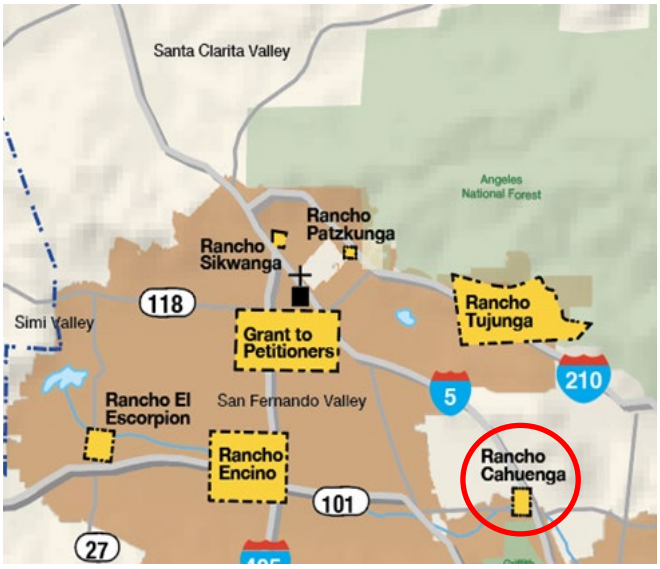
In 1845, Rancho Encino was granted to Fernandeño leaders such as Francisco Papabubaba and Tiburcio Cayo. This land, located near the present-day Los Encinos State Historic Park, was critical to Fernandeño life, providing both agricultural space and a spiritual connection to the land. By 1855, the land was seized by a local Spaniard, Vicente de la Osa, who forced the Fernandeños off their land. In the following decades, the population of Fernandeños was decimated by disease and violence. The land that was once vital to the Fernandeños is now a preserved historic site. Despite the loss, 70 percent of the FTBMI citizenry trace their lineage to the village of Siutcanga, beneath the rancho property.



Rancho Encino circled in red. The brown background indicates the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

6. Rancho Cahuenga (~388 acres)
City: City of Los Angeles
FTBMI Lineages: Ortiz
Modern Location: Toluca Lake, Los Angeles

In 1843, the Fernandeños petitioned for land at Rancho Cahuenga, which was granted to them in recognition of its importance to Fernandeño lifeways, especially its location near a vital water supply. However, rumors of impending war forced the Fernandeños to abandon the land, which was eventually traded for Rancho Tujunga. Today, a portion of Rancho Cahuenga can be found in Toluca Lake, a neighborhood that has grown around this once-sacred site. Despite the loss, 5 percent of the FTBMI citizenry trace their lineage to the village of Kawenga, beneath the rancho property.



Rancho Cahuenga circled in red. The brown background indicates the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

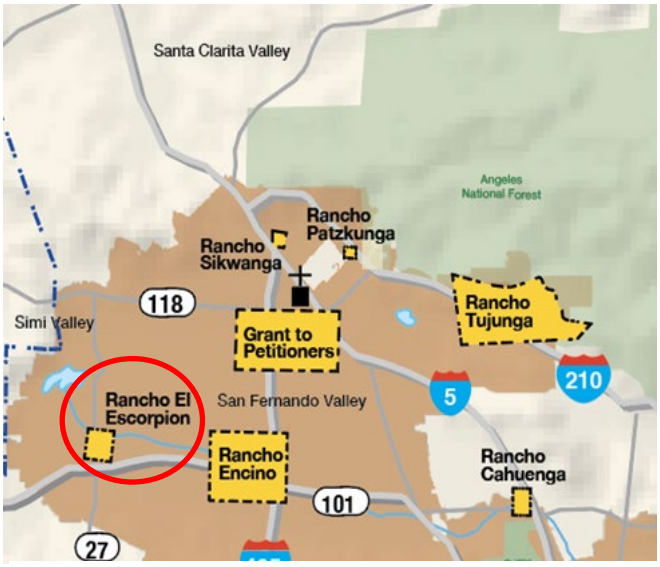
7. Rancho Tujunga (~6,661 acres)
City: City of Los Angeles
FTBMI Lineages: Ortiz
Modern Location: Lakeview Terrace, Los Angeles

After trading Rancho Cahuenga, the Fernandeños were granted Rancho Tujunga in 1845. Located on an ancestral village site, this land was critical to the survival and well-being of the Fernandeño people. However, the Ortiz lineage's claim to this land was never fully recognized by the American government, and by the late 19th century, the Fernandeños were evicted. Portions of the land are now located in the Lakeview Terrace neighborhood. Despite the loss, 25 percent of the FTBMI citizenry trace their lineage to the village of Tujunga, beneath the rancho property.

Rancho Tujunga circled in red. The brown background indicates the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

8. Rancho El Escorpion (~1,110 acres)
City: City of Los Angeles
FTBMI Lineages: Ortega, Garcia
Modern Location: Calabasas, Los Angeles

In 1845, Rancho El Escorpion was granted to Fernandeños Urbano, Odon, and Manuel. This 1,110-acre ranch became a thriving hub for the Fernandeños, many of whom lived there and maintained kinship and ceremonial relationships. As with the other lands, Rancho El Escorpion was eventually lost to settlers, but the memory of the Fernandeño community that once flourished there endures in the stories passed down through generations. Despite the loss, 25 percent of the FTBMI citizenry trace their lineage to the village of Jucjauyanga, beneath the rancho property.



Rancho El Escorpion circled in red. The brown background indicates the present-day City of Los Angeles boundary. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The history of the Fernandeño Tataviam people is inextricably tied to the lands within the present boundaries of the City of Los Angeles. These locations—once thriving centers of Fernandeño culture, agriculture, and spirituality—have been transformed over time, but the Tribe's connection to these sacred spaces endures. As the modern city grows, the Fernandeño people continue to remember and honor the land that sustained their ancestors and remain steadfast in their commitment to preserve their culture and history for future generations.

Boarding and Day Schools (Religious and Federal)

Beginning in the 1800s and continuing well into the twentieth century, Native American children from various tribes from across the country were forced to attend boarding schools or day schools funded by the federal government.[108] These schools separated Native American children from their families, stripped them of their culture (name, clothing, language, hair), and attempted to indoctrinate them into white Christian customs.[109] These schools were essentially cultural assimilation programs, and trained the children to work as farmers, maids, and cooks for white families. These institutions appeared across the U.S., including California. The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) was founded in 2012 to address and further understand the ongoing trauma created by the U.S. Indian Boarding School policy and is the present authority on the names and locations of Indian Schools across the country. NABS currently has identified 523 known Native American boarding schools in the U.S. and Canada, and of those boarding schools, 12 were identified to be in California.

Gathering of Native American children in San Gabriel, California.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Of the 12 Native American boarding schools in California, six were in Southern California and none were located in either the City or County of Los Angeles. The closest boarding schools to Los Angeles were the Anaheim Boarding School (1885), Perris Indian School (1891-1904), St. Boniface Indian School (1890-1974), and the Sherman Institute (1903-present).[110] Original documents from the Sherman Institute reveal that at least 50 students from the Gabrieleño Tongva tribe were enrolled at the school between 1890 and 1920, and very likely students continued to attend the Sherman Institute further into the twentieth century.[111] It remains highly likely that children from the Fernandeño Tataviam tribe attended the Sherman Institute school or the other nearby boarding schools as well. There are two documented Fernandeño children that attended, but not a complete count.

Tribal authors did not provide a narrative for this theme.

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[108] ACLU of Northern California. "Cultural Genocide." Article. *Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California*. 2019.
[109] Singleton, Heather Valdez. "Surviving Urbanization: The Gabrieleno: 1850-1928." *Wicao Sa Review*. Vol. 19, Series 2. 49-59. 2004. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1409498. Accessed April 21, 2023.
[110] The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. "Digital Map." 2024. https://boardingschoolhealing.org/digitalmap/.
[111] Singleton, Heather Valdez. "Surviving Urbanization: The Gabrieleno: 1850-1928." *Wicao Sa Review*. Vol. 19, Series 2. 49-59. 2004. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1409498. Accessed April 21, 2023.

Native Americans in Hollywood and the Entertainment Industry

In the earliest days of Hollywood filmmaking and the entertainment industry, the vast open spaces of Southern California and the national penchant for films that depicted Native Americans in the American West and Southwest (a genre later called Westerns) allowed space for participation by indigenous peoples on and off the screen. Native American actors performed a wide range of roles during the silent era and the earliest motion picture era of film beyond acting, and often tried to control representations of Native American life on film, petitioned and organized for better wages, and helped establish a community for both Native American actors in film and in Los Angeles. This was necessary as at times Native American actors "were treated as no more than props and setting for dramas of settlement."[112] An actors guild specifically for Native Americans was founded in the 1930s in an effort to promote accurate representation should a Native American be cast or included in a film.[113]

A studio from this time that prolifically produced Westerns and was known for hiring Native Americans was the Bison Film Company (Bison). Bison relocated from New York to Southern California in 1910, eventually purchasing 10,000 acres of land near the Santa Ynez Canyon located northeast of Santa Monica. In 1912, the studio negotiated a business arrangement with the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch (Miller Brothers) where, as part of the deal, the Miller Brothers would provide Bison with 75 Native Americans and 100 cowboys to be extras in the Western films that were produced on the lot. To meet this demand, Miller Brothers began recruiting Native Americans from reservations in various places across the country, but primarily from the reservations in the Midwest. Universal Studios, in 1913, sent director Thomas Ince to Pine Ridge, South Dakota, where, after negotiating with a local Indian agent, more than 30 Sioux Indian people relocated to Los Angeles to work for the studio. Upon arriving, they set up an encampment in Santa Ynez Canyon. This sparked a fierce war between Universal Studios and Miller Studios over which company actually owned the land.[114]

Overlay of the original location of Bison Studios, located at 1719 Allesandro Street (now Glendale Boulevard).

Bison Studios was originally located in the Echo Park area of Los Angeles, then a neighborhood called Edendale. The address was 1719 Allesandro Street (now Glendale Boulevard).[115] In 1911, the studio

[112] Hearne, Joanna. *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western*. Albany, New York: State University of New York.
[113] Fiske, Shirley. "Urban Institutions: A Reappraisal from Los Angeles." *Urban Anthropology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1979).
[114] Smith, Larry W. "Urban Indigenous Culture in Los Angeles County, California." 2011. Thesis presented to the Department of Geography, California State University, Long Beach.
[115] "Bison Studios." *The Moving Picture World.* March 1917.

moved to a new space at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway in Pacific Palisades. It once covered 18,000 acres with housing for 700 meant to accommodate film crews, performers, and at one point up to 100 Native Americans from various tribes. Named after Thomas Ince, the area is still called Inceville on maps today.[116]

Because of the actions of Bison and Thomas Ince and the very beginnings of the movement of tribal members to urban locations such as Los Angeles, Native American representation in the earliest days of the film industry featured actors and actresses from tribes across the country. Specifically highlighted are: William Eagleshirt (Lakota), Chief Red Fox (Lakota), Luther Standing Bear (Lakota), Nipo Strongheart (Yakama), Chief Yowlatchie (Yakama), Richard Davis Thunderbird (southern Cheyenne), Charles Bruner (Muscogee), Charlie Stevens (Apache), Ann Ross (Cherokee), Elijah Thurmont (Algonquian), Rod Redwing (Chickasaw), and Molly Spotted Elk (Penobscot). Thomas Ince, Bison, and other early Hollywood movie studios additionally hired hundreds of Native Americans over time as extras who remain uncredited and unnamed.[117]

Nipo Strongheart, an early Hollywood movie actor of the Yakama Nation, frequently opened his home (1522 Ensley Avenue) to students of the Sherman Institute who were visiting Los Angeles.[118] Nipo Strongheart was a life-long activist for representation of First Peoples in film, and worked as a translator, language coach, and casting agent for directors who sought to include realistic depictions of First Peoples in their film. He had also attended an Indian boarding school, the Carlisle School, and used his experiences there to provide an accurate representation of boarding school life for Native Americans in film. Hosting students from the Sherman Institute allowed him to foster a connection to local First Peoples and invigorate a new generation to continue to fight for accurate representation in film and media.[119]

As such, the resources included in this theme are representative of both the film industry in Los Angeles from its very inception until the present day, and the resources that arose from the political activism that resulted from the inclusion of Native Americans in film. Additionally, these resources may include places related to identified Native Americans who played an important role as actors, activists, or studio workers in the entertainment industry.

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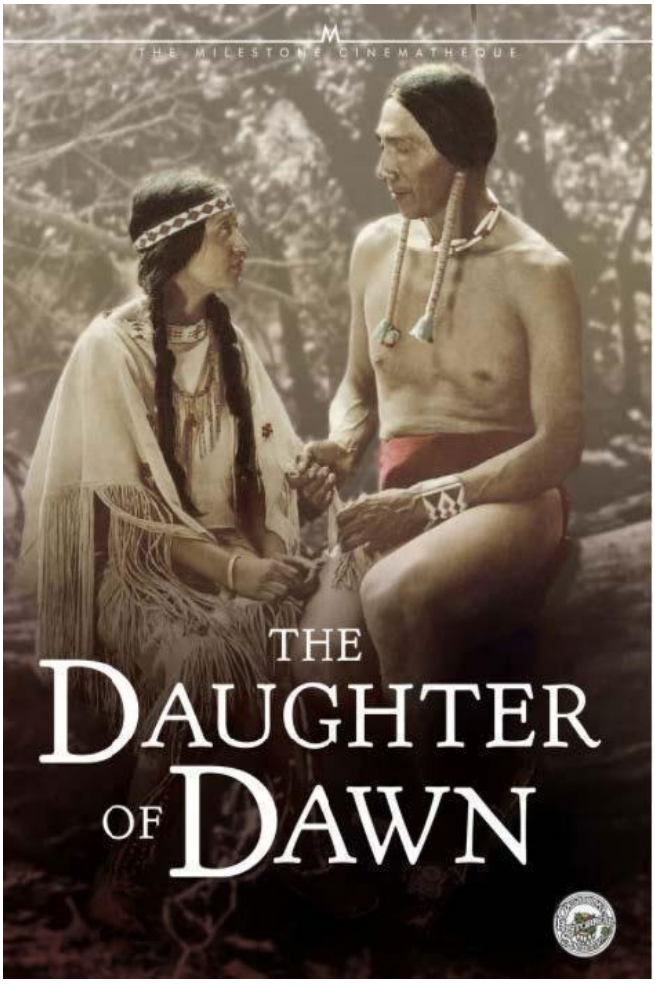
[116] Guldimann, Suzanne. "Inceville: Hollywood History on the Road to Topanga." *Topanga News Times*. June 4, 2021.
[117] Fiske, Shirley. "Urban Institutions: A Reappraisal from Los Angeles." *Urban Anthropology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1979).
[118] Siler, Bob. "Homes of the Western Stars, S-Z." Article. *Homes of the Western Movie Film Makers in Front and Behind the Camera*. https://stevesomething.wordpress.com/2011/06/30/homes-of-the-western-stars-s-z/.
[119] Hearne, Joanna. *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western*. Albany, New York: State University of New York.

Gabrieleño Tongva[120]

Hollywood has shaped how the world views Native Americans. The advent of film came when progressive thought leaders were developing the concept of eugenics as a benefit to society. Hollywood incorporated these ideologies into its interpretation of the histories of the First Peoples. Rarely was there an honest portrayal of the destruction wrought by the settler colonists. Film is the most potent agent of what our society understands as truth. Hollywood has educated us in what we know an Indian to be and another means of dehumanizing Native Americans in a global medium.[121]



The Daughter of Dawn movie poster.
(Image provided by Gabrieleno/Tongva Band of Mission Indians)

When the film industry relocated to Hollywood in the early twentieth century, it brought many people worldwide to Los Angeles to seek their dream of fame and fortune, the new settler-colonists. Another wave of a population explosion hit Tovaangar. Additionally, growth was fueled by the nouveau riche with an elitist ideology that disregarded the land with overpopulation, overbuilding, and the destruction of Tongva culturally sensitive sites, the same mindset seen with the first settler-colonists.[122]

Hollywood used a Caucasian interpretation of Native Americans. The scripts conveyed violence and ownership struggles (land and cultural) to be a common thread in the relationship between the Indigenous community and the settlers. Western-themed films evolved out of the live western rodeo shows that "Buffalo Bill" Cody produced to showcase the "tamed" savage Indians with an exaggerated Native American appearance. The silver screen increased the intensity of the elaborate Indian regalia with feathered headdresses on war-painted "red-faced" Caucasian actors. All Native Americans were easily identifiable to the audience, and all lived in the desert, not Los Angeles.[123]

Hollywood reflected the propaganda reporting of the early colonizers in their relation to the Native Americans; if the settlers attacked the Indians, it was a battle; however, if Indians attacked the settlers, it

[120] This narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[121] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

was a massacre. The Native Americans were barriers to manifest destiny, justifying the battle scenes[124].

Thomas Ince, considered the "father of Western movies," built a production studio at Shrine Lake, a sacred Tongva site in Pacific Palisades. Hollywood commodified the land, disregarding its spiritual sensitivity to the Tongva. The scripts were standard: the protagonist was the cowboy, and the antagonist was the Indian. The imagery of the simple-minded savage Indian, having no positive contribution to mankind in his current state, justifies the extermination or assimilation.[125]

Many tribal members participated in the "San Gabriel Mission Playhouse." There were several connections to Cecil DeMille. At one time, DeMille applied for federal recognition of "The Hollywood Indians."[126] However, the Hollywood industry and DeMille's antics are viewed as another form of erasure of the Gabrieleño Tongva people.

Petra Zuniga Morales and Vivian Morales Barthelemy.
(Image provided by Gabrieleno/Tongva Band of Mission Indians)

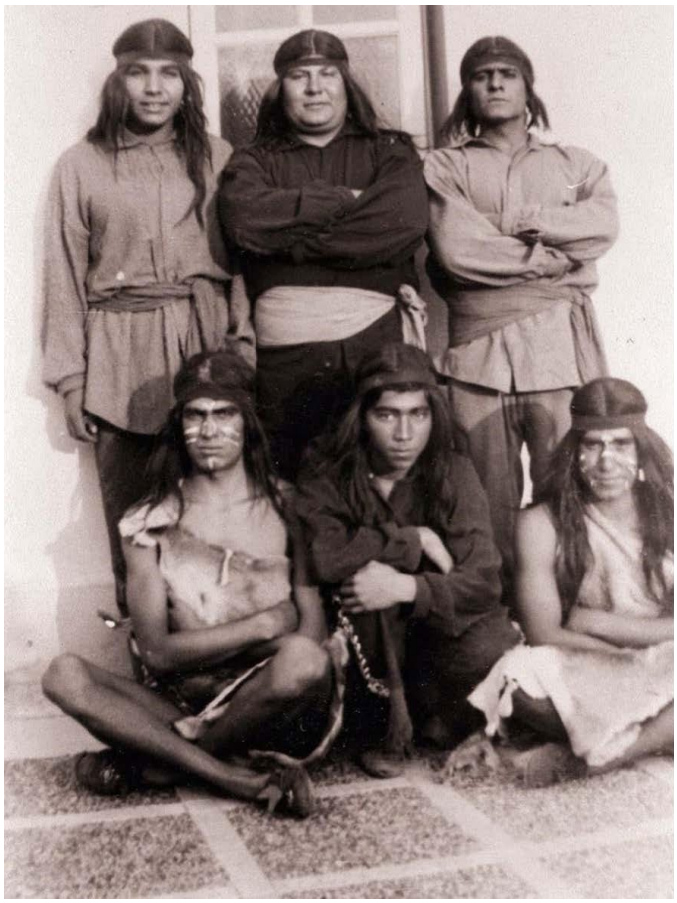
In the 1930s, John McGroarty from the San Gabriel Mission Playhouse was also producing "Hollywood type" movies and productions. He replicated the first "The Daughter of Dawn" silent film, my Grandmother Morales was made to resemble the character for the San Gabriel Mission Play. My grandfather, Art Morales Sr., and his brothers were also part of the play, their costumes very much inspired by the film as well as the Apache Indian idealism represented in Hollywood.[127]

In 2021, Netflix produced a children's animated television series, "City of Ghosts," to highlight the diverse population living in Los Angeles. In episode 4, *Tovaangar* featured the first peoples of Los Angeles, the Tongva. Prominent members of the Tongva community including Craig Torres, Mercedes Dorame, and Megan Windsor,shared the culture of the Tongva people.[128]

[124] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Raheja, Michelle H. *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film*. University of Nebraska Press. 2010.
[127] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[128] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*.

Examples of Segregation in Hollywood/Entertainment Industry

Looney Toons was an American children's animated series (1930-1969). In several episodes, Native Americans were characterized as unevolved sub-humans and, therefore, disposable. In one episode, Bugs Bunny is shooting "injuns" and taking score (hash marks) while singing the 1868 nursery rhyme, "One little, two little, three little Indians." Upon the discovery that he killed one who was not fully Indian, Bugs Bunny says, "Uh oh, that was a half-breed," and proceeds to erase half of the hash mark.[129]



Gabrieleno Tongva tribal members performing for the Mission Play; Art Morales, Sr. top row center.
(Image provided by Gabrieleno/Tongva Band of Mission Indians)

To emphasize the Indianness, Hollywood Injun Talk is spoken by the actors portraying the "Indian" character. Tonto was the fictional radio and television character in "The Lone Ranger." In Latin dialects, "tonto" is the word for "fool." Tonto's exaggerated use of the Injun Talk is where the term "Tonto speak" has developed from.[130]

Familiar themes for the Hollywood Injun's communication:
- Whooping and grunting
- Lifting an open hand and saying, "How!"
- The white characters speaking for the Indian
- Long pauses between words

Hollywood uses the words in a film script to message the disparity of intelligence between Indian and caucasian characters. The caucasian actor's words are polished in juxtaposition to the Indian actor whose words are clumsy and primitive often missing words for a complete.[131]

Anthropologist Barbara A. Meek describes how Hollywood has created a false narrative on how the Native American speaks:

> *"Morphosyntactically, the four grammatical markers used in "Hollywood Injun English" are lack of tense, deletion (of various grammatical elements), substitution, and lack of contraction. Lack of morphological tense is the most consistent and predominant pattern throughout all the dialogue transcribed and applies only to verb forms (tense may still be indicated adverbially). Deletion affects subject pronouns, determiners, and auxiliary or modal verbs. Substitution affects subject pronouns, replacing them with either a full noun or the corresponding object pronoun. Lack of contraction affects the merging of be or have verbs (non-modal auxiliaries and copulas) with the preceding subject pronouns and*

[129] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

the merging of the negation marker, not, with the preceding verb."[132]

Examples of what Hollywood Injun English sounds like:

- "Sometime you win, sometime we win." - *Peter Pan*
- "Magua said he understand English." *The Last of the Mohicans*
- "Him loose." *Maverick*

A narrative from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians was not provided for this theme.

[132] Meek, Barbara. *And The Injun Goes "How!": Representations of American Indian English in White Public Space*. Cambridge University Press, January 5, 2006. Available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-in-society/article/and-the-injun-goes-how-representations-of-american-indian-english-in-white-public-space/8BD38E091D5603F7AC58C86011FF8045.

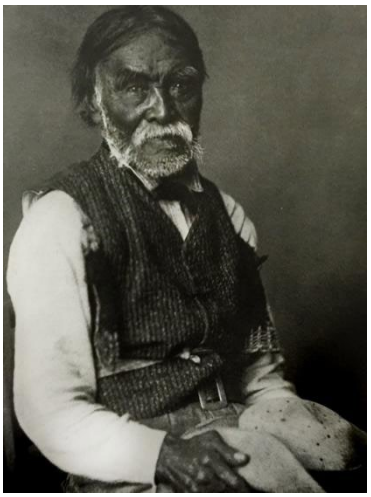
Tribally Held Land Grants and Holdings

A narrative from the Gabrieleño Tongva was not provided for this theme.

Fernandeño Tataviam[133]

A Tumultuous Era: California Statehoodl

When California achieved statehood in 1850, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians faced the beginning of a new and harrowing chapter in their history. The following five decades, from 1850 to 1900, would be defined by the violent processes of genocide, land theft, cultural erosion, and the ongoing fight for survival amidst settler expansion and a legal system designed to strip them of their ancestral rights.



Fernandeño Leader Rogerio Rocha represented the Fernandeños in land dispute cases in the nineteenth Century. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

In the early years of California's statehood, the U.S. government passed the 1851 Land Claims Act, a law that required landholders to file formal claims for their property within two years if they wished to retain ownership. While this legislation was intended to resolve land disputes in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War, it became a tool of dispossession for California's Native peoples—particularly those who, like the Fernandeños, were not familiar with the complex legal system introduced by the U.S. government.

For the Fernandeño Tataviam, the 1851 Land Claims Act proved devastating. Under Mexican rule, many Fernandeños had been granted over 18000 acres in the fertile San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas, including land along crucial water sources. These lands were not only vital for sustenance but were deeply embedded in the culture and traditions of the Fernandeño people. They were meant to be held collectively, ensuring the survival of the community. However, the arrival of American rule disrupted these agreements and left the Fernandeños vulnerable.

A System Designed for Failure: Legal Barriers and Land Seizure

The legal system that accompanied California's statehood was foreign and inaccessible to the Fernandeños. The majority of the tribe could neither read nor write in English, and they were unfamiliar with the intricacies of American property law. The Land Claims Act required detailed and bureaucratic filings that many Fernandeños could not understand or navigate. Without the resources or knowledge to file claims in time, they were easily dispossessed of their lands. The property taxes levied on their holdings were exorbitant, further complicating their ability to retain ownership. In short, the Fernandeños were set up to fail.

As a result, their valuable lands—especially those along water sources that settlers coveted—were seized by new landowners. Settlers, eager to exploit the fertile land and resources of the San Fernando Valley, took advantage of this legal framework, stripping the Fernandeños of the land that had been promised to them under Mexican rule. For the Fernandeños, this was more than just a loss of land—it was a systematic attempt to erase their connection to their ancestral territory and to further disenfranchise them.

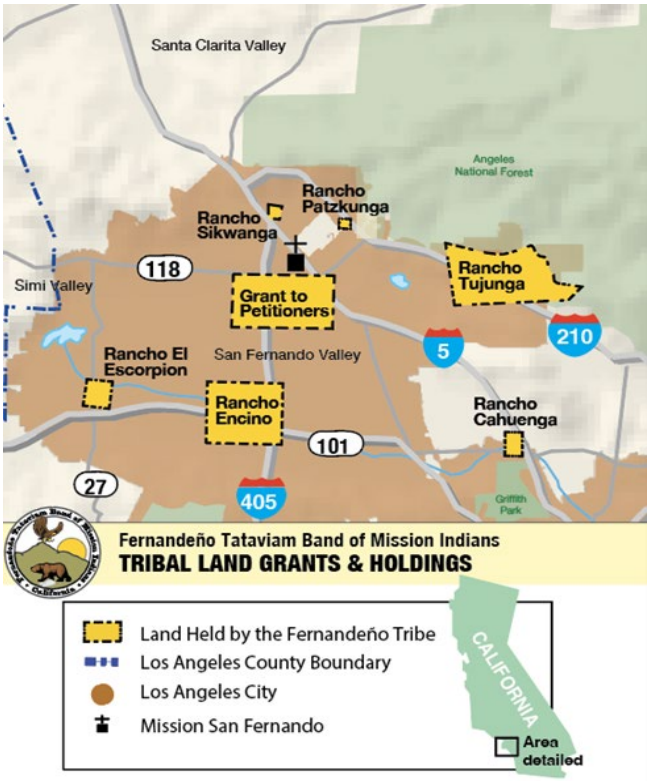
Fighting Back: Legal Efforts and Court Failures

While many Fernandeños were unaware of the legal requirements of the Land Claims Act, some

[133] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

attempted to defend their ancestral holdings through the legal system. Federal representatives, including Assistant U.S. Attorney G. Wiley Wells and Special Indian Agent Frank D. Lewis, were appointed to represent the Mission Indians, including the Fernandeños, in cases challenging the loss of their lands. These advocates worked to bring legal cases before the Los Angeles Superior Court, hoping to reverse the dispossession of Native lands.

However, the court system was overwhelmingly hostile to the claims of the Fernandeño Tataviam. State and local courts were influenced by the growing power of settlers and land developers, who had already moved into the area and sought to secure legal titles to the land. The courts consistently ruled against the Fernandeños, siding with the settlers and undermining any hope of securing land, restitution, or the creation of a reservation for the displaced people. The legal process that had been supposed to protect the rights of Native peoples instead became an instrument of further dispossession.



Fernandeño land grants and holdings petitioned and received by the Fernandeños, amounting to over 18,000 acres of the San Fernando Valley. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Fernandeño Tataviam progenitor Antonio Maria Ortega, c.1920s. As a teen, Antonio represented the Fernandeños in Los Angeles Superior Court in Porter et al v. Cota et al. He was later identified by Smithsonian ethnologist J.P. Harrington as a Fernandeño speaker in the Fernandeño language reel 106. However, he refused to speak with settlers due to the trauma he endured from the nineteenth-century land cases. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The Case of Porter et al v. Cota et al: A Symbol of Struggle and Failure

One of the most significant legal battles fought by the Fernandeño people was the case of *Porter et al v. Cota et al.*, in which several Fernandeño families sought to reclaim their land from settlers who had encroached upon their territory. This case was emblematic of the larger struggle for justice faced by the Fernandeños, as it represented their efforts to hold onto the land that had been granted to them under Mexican rule.

However, despite their efforts, the case, like many others, ended in failure. The local courts, especially under the newly established state government, were unsympathetic to the plight of the local tribes. The courts consistently ruled in favor of settlers and land developers, legitimizing the theft of Native lands. For the Fernandeños, this loss was not just a legal defeat—it was a devastating blow to their ability

to maintain their cultural identity and connection to the land that had sustained them for generations.

(L) Fernandeño native Antonio Maria Ortega's grandson Rudy Ortega, Sr. and great-grandson Rudy Ortega Jr. at the Andrés Pico Adobe advocating for Tribal History to be displayed in the present-day City of Los Angeles, 1996.
(R) Aerial view of the historic Andrés Pico Adobe in the present-day City of Los Angeles, 1935.
(Image from Water and Power: https://waterandpower.org/museum/San_Fernando_Mission.html)

The legal battles, while essential for the Fernandeños' survival, ultimately proved unsuccessful in halting the larger forces of colonization and settler expansion. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Fernandeños had been stripped of their lands and forced to survive in increasingly dire conditions. The loss of their ancestral territory marked not just a physical displacement but the disintegration of their cultural and social systems. As they fought to survive in the face of hostile legal systems, oppressive government policies, and expanding settler communities, the Fernandeños found themselves caught in a struggle that seemed designed for their erasure. Despite the harsh realities of dispossession and cultural destruction, the Fernandeños' fight for recognition and justice did not end with the nineteenth century. While they were not able to recover their lands or undo the violent process of colonization, their efforts in the face of these challenges would lay the groundwork for future resistance and resurgence.

Modern Identity, Tribal Continuity, and Revitalization [1930-Modern]

First Peoples of Los Angeles have created a community within the City of Los Angeles that celebrates culture, heritage, and overall identity. From the beginnings of contemporary political activism in the twentieth century until the present day and into the future, First Peoples of Los Angeles have emphasized the importance of identity in the modern age, the continuity of tribal heritage and culture, and the revitalization of the tribes amid a rapidly changing metropolitan city.

The resources identified in the corresponding theme include physical manifestations of these ideas, and could represent meeting places, the homes of historically significant individuals, commercial buildings that housed activities related to this theme, government buildings related to this theme, and religious buildings related to this theme.

Photograph of a ceremony.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Gabrieleño Tongva[134]

The important work of land access and recovering ancestral land has become a main objective for many Indigenous peoples involved in what is referred to as the "landback" movement. My participation in this movement is for our people to be able to make decisions directly related to the present and future decisions of our ancestral homelands which is imperative for California Native American Indian people.[135] Before I write any further, I would like to outline and define how I use "landback" and "land rematriation" in my research and writing. Landback can be as diverse and complex as it is literal and transparent. It strengthens our movement to land reclamation, cultural revitalization, and relationship to building all the while combating colonialism. Ultimately, "landback" is proving to be a movement that encompasses language revitalization, repatriation, stewardship of land, water, mineral rights, food sovereignty and culture. Returning land to the Native American Indigenous peoples of that land is referred to as "land rematriation." The term recognizes the patriarchal narrative of capitalism, land theft by non-Natives, and illegal possession. Rematriation recenters the word to the process of connecting and building relationships with ancestral homelands in order to combat and erode colonial norms, laws, and policies.[136]

In 2017, I was contacted along with other tribal members about the possibility of a single person donating a house back to the tribe. As a tribe with multiple community branches, I knew that the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians needed to play a part in this transaction. I worked with several other community members to create a nonprofit organization called the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, with the Native American Land Conservancy serving as our fiscal sponsor. Although many have trouble pronouncing the name, it was vital for us to use our Tongva language as a way of honoring our ancestors and promoting healing to the land.

Taraxat is the Tongva word for Indigenous people — plural. It is used here in the sense that this conservancy is intended to preserve the people and the culture of the Tongva as well as the land. *Paxaavxa* is the Tongva word for a parcel of land. Our Tongva language, spoken back to the land, provides the land with its inherent first words, it is a spiritual practice that strengthens our tie to the people and to the land.[137]

This first private land return (occurring outside of City of Los Angeles boundaries) has offered a time for our Tongva community to serve together for one common purpose, while healing and strengthening our tribal bond. We have successfully raised over $500,000 to help restore the 1/1 parcel of land and have been working diligently to prepare the land for ceremony.[138]

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[134] This narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[135] The use of "I," "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño Tongva.
[136] Morales, Kimberly. *Importance of the reconnection of California Native Americans to ancestral homelands*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. December 2022.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Morales, Kimberly. *Importance of the reconnection of California Native Americans to ancestral homelands*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. December 2022.

Cultural Resource Preservation

Current federal and state laws support the Tongva and Fernandeño Tatavium tribes in protecting the ancestral remains and personal belongings of the first peoples. Los Angeles City Planning , along with other governmental agencies and private builders, consults with these tribes before conducting any ground disturbance for construction purposes. If a project is located on sensitive tribal land, tribal monitors are present to oversee the area and observe the potential for cultural resources to be uncovered. The tribes also collaborate with the University of California, California State Universities, and other governmental agencies to ensure the proper reinterment of ancestral remains and funerary objects.

Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council Chair, Robert Dorame at Owl Falls, in Topaa'nga.
(Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Land Acknowledgements

The Tongva and Fernandeño Tatavium tribes have participated in assisting with the creation of a land acknowledgement statement for the County of Los Angeles as well as cities, schools, and agencies throughout Tovaangar. Chief Anthony Morales is a staple in the dedications and blessings that have been adopted throughout the City of Los Angeles.[139]

Land Restoration Projects

The Tongva people have been active in land restoration projects with agencies throughout Tovaangar. Local restoration projects include Topanga Lagoon (Topaa'nga Village, City of Malibu), Santa Susana Field Test Laboratory (Momonga Village, Ventura County), Randall Reserve (Genga Village, Costa Mesa), Los Cerritos Wetlands (Puvungna Village, Seal Beach), Catalina Island (Pimu Village), and the Ballona wetlands (Guashna Village, Playa Vista). The goal is to restore the land to its healthy and thriving pre-colonization state.[140]

Arts

The Tongva people have a tradition of using the visual arts to communicate cultural rituals and stories. Contemporary Tongva artists continue this expression of communication through visual arts, including painting, murals, sculpture, and photography.

[139] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[140] Ibid.

Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council Vice Chair, Mercedes Dorame with her Getty Exhibit, Woshaa'axre Yaang'aro (Looking Back). Getty Photograph.
(Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Notable Tongva artists include Robert Dorame, Mercedes Dorame, L. Frank Manriquez, River Garza, Katie Dorame, Weshoyot Alvitre, Samantha Johnson, and Adrienne Dorame. Their work is and has been displayed all over the U.S. and, more specifically, in the City of Los Angeles at The Getty Museum, The Autry Museum of the American West, Discovery Park (Playa del Rey), Loyola Marymount University, Oxy Arts, Hammer Museum, UCLA Fowler Museum, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.[141]

Revitalization: Basketry

As with other traditional Tongva traditions, basketry had been dormant for a century. In 2022, a group of Tongva tribal members sought to relearn the art of Tongva basketry and created the Nohaaxre Miyii Pokuu Collective. The Collective is another shining reflection of the resilience of the Tongva people.

Basketry requires harvesting safe materials because the process requires holding the materials in one's mouth. During Spanish colonization, practitioners no longer had access to harvesting areas. Colonists introduced invasive plants and animals to the land. The Tongva women could not safely tend to their gathering spots, dramatically impacting their ability to harvest the necessary materials. Private collectors and anthropologists caused a demand, and basketry generated income for the Tongva rather than utility.[142]

Revitalization: Ti'ats (Plank Canoe)

The Tongva held a maritime culture and crafted plank canoes (ti'ats) to travel to the islands for harvesting and trade. Nearly 200 years ago, the Pacific Ocean saw the last ti'at used by the Tongva. In 1991, culture restoration efforts brought the use of the ti'at to life. The ti'at was built authentically using wood planks and only lashing to bind them together; no nails were used in the construction. The ti'at was named *Mo'omat' ahiko*, Tongva for "breath of the ocean." It is 600 pounds (when dry) and can accommodate five to six paddlers. Mo'omat' ahiko has been launched at Catalina Island, Santa Monica, and Long Beach. Several ti'ats have since been built, and the construction knowledge and ocean navigation have been revived and passed on to future generations.[143]

[141] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

Fernandeño Tataviam[144]

The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians continues to exercise sovereignty through structured Tribal governance and administration, comprising both an executive and legislative branch that upholds the Tribe's Constitution, Codes, and Ordinances. This governing body is responsible for setting policies, creating government programs, and advancing self-determination. The Elders Council plays a crucial role in decision-making for sensitive projects, imparting confidential Tribal Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Ecological Knowledge, which guide the Tribe's activities regarding both human and natural environments. This ensures the protection of ancestral lands within the City of Los Angeles while shaping the Fernandeño Tataviam's administrative operations. The Tribe works diligently to protect its homelands from cumulative impacts, liberating cultural expression, restoring traditional lifeways, and facilitating access to basic needs and rights.

Pictured are Tribal Citizens of the FTBMI, which consists of the Garcia, Ortega, and Ortiz lineages that descend from the San Fernando, Santa Clarita, Simi, and Antelope Valleys, 2022.
(Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Access to ancestral lands is crucial for the continuity of lifeways for the Fernandeño, as the disruption caused by colonization since the eighteenth century has severed their connection to sacred sites now confined within various private and governmental boundaries. This loss endangers the invaluable knowledge and guidance imparted by the land, which holds deep cultural and historic significance for the Tribe.

In response to these challenges, the Fernandeño Tataviam has embraced innovation to secure their future. The **2024 Tribal Climate Resiliency Plan** exemplifies their commitment to addressing climate-related hazards in Los Angeles by integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge with scientific methods.

Additionally, the establishment of Pukúu Cultural Community Services in the 1970s has provided essential social services and cultural workshops to thousands of Native American families, while the founding of the Tataviam Land Conservancy in 2018 highlights their dedication to land access and restoration. Most recently, the Tiüvac'a'ai Tribal Conservation Corps, created in 2022, focuses on training Tribal youth for outdoor careers, reinforcing the Tribe's resilience and ongoing connection to their heritage and community.

[144] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

Discrimination Against First Peoples in Lending Practices

As the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County began to expand in the twentieth century and residential neighborhoods began to grow, an issue referred to as "redlining" began to impact the people of color living in Los Angeles who were hoping to rent or buy real estate in areas of the city. The City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning defines redlining as a "discriminatory practice that puts services (financial services, i.e. loans or otherwise) out of reach of residents of certain areas based on race or ethnicity" during the New Deal era of the 1930s.[145] Two agencies were created during this time: the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. Relying on local real estate agents and lenders to investigate and determine which areas of the city were of higher "risk" to give out loans, regions of the city were divided by color to represent neighborhoods that were rated between "most desirable" and "least desirable" based on racial and socioeconomic makeup.[146] Lower rated areas of the City, where people of color were already living, were areas where it became difficult to obtain home loans, and many people were forced to rent from landlords. Thus, redlining created a system where the areas that were rated more favorably continued to preserve racial segregation and were more likely to receive funding and improvements from the City, while areas that were rated less favorably faced continued disinvestment, neglect, and placement of environmental hazards such as industry and freeways.

To make decisions about the "desirability" of populated areas of the City, research was collected locally about the racial and socioeconomic makeup of each neighborhood. The demographic percentage recorded from the 1930 census primarily represents "Native Born White," "Foreign-Born White," "African American," and "Japanese Native and Foreign Born," with other racial minorities representing less than one percent of the total population.[147] However, the cultural melting pot of Los Angeles County was still apparent within the individual neighborhood descriptions, where references are made to the presence of specific ethnic populations such as Jewish people, Mexicans, and Italians. First Peoples of Los Angeles, and Native Americans in general, were not considered in the ethnic makeup of Los Angeles County at the time the HOLC survey was completed in the 1930s. However, some First Peoples of Los Angeles were incorrectly recorded in these neighborhood descriptions as Mexicans or "Mexican Peons." For example, the area by the Mission San Gabriel, in the southern section of that city is inaccurately described as a neighborhood that "is distinctly Mexican and some of the descendants of the original inhabitants still reside in the area."[148] It further notes that "the vast majority of the population, while American-born, are still 'peon Mexicans,' and constitute a distinctly subversive racial influence."[149] No similar information is available for the area immediately surrounding the Mission San Fernando. However, this neighborhood description reveals the words used to describe First Peoples, particularly the word "peon" which refers to a system of forced labor and coercion. This term very likely refers to First Peoples of Los Angeles, particularly as a result of the various policies that kept First Peoples under involuntary servitude well into the twentieth century.[150] "Mexican Peons" are noted throughout the entirety of Los Angeles County, however, they were particularly prominent in the San Gabriel Valley agricultural areas, always in a neighborhood rated with the lowest desirability. This is not to say that First Peoples of Los Angeles were not living elsewhere in the City; the 1930 census revealed that Native Americans were present and living

[145] Architectural Resources Group. "City of Los Angeles Historical Housing and Land Use Study." Prepared for City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning. 2024.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Nelson, R.K., and LaDale Winling. "*Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America*." Digital Scholarship Lab. 2023. https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Johnston-Dodds, Kimberly, and Sarah Suphan. "Involuntary Servitude, Apprenticeship, and Slavery of Native Americans in California." *The California Indian History Website*. 2022. http://calindianhistory.org/.

within Los Angeles, however were part of the racial minorities in the city representing less than one percent of the total population. However, in this incredibly biased and problematic survey by the HOLC, Native Americans were likely considered under the broad umbrella of "Mexican," and First Peoples of Los Angeles faced the same struggles of home ownership and unfair loan practices as many people of color living in Los Angeles County at the time.

In addition to redlining, homeowners associations, as well as real estate land groups, added restrictive race-based covenants to real estate contracts, where white home owners would sign contracts stipulating what racial groups or ethnicities to which they were or were not allowed to sell or rent their property. While some racial covenants implemented in the City of Los Angeles as well as the county were specific to race, very often the covenants were broad in order to encompass a wider group of people. Research has not revealed that First Peoples of Los Angeles were an ethnic group that were specifically mentioned in the language of racial covenants. However, First Peoples of Los Angeles were undeniably affected by the broader language that was very commonly used, which called for homeowners to avoid selling property to anyone who was not of "white" or "Caucasian" descent.

Photograph of an elder from the Gabrieleño Tongva tribe.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Native Americans in World War II: 1941-1945

After Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941 and America entered World War II (WWII), Native American men and women enlisted and served the U.S. for the duration of the war and after. It is estimated that 150,000 Native Americans participated in military service or worked agricultural and industrial jobs to support the war effort.[151] Of that number, it is estimated that 40,000 Native American men saw active duty (an estimated five to ten percent of the entire Native American population) and were fully integrated into the armed forces with "whites."[152] Additionally, it is estimated that 50,000 Native Americans left their reservations to help construct military depots and training camps and work in the defense industries, mainly on the West Coast.[153] Native American men and women were compelled to volunteer for service for a number of reasons. Some cited a powerful commitment to protect their country and their homeland from outside invaders, some were recruited from Indian Boarding Schools and felt comfortable with the military discipline that in many ways mirrored the boarding schools, and some saw the military or the jobs created to support the war effort as a way to escape the poverty of the reservation system.[154]

Native American women in particular volunteered for service in WWII or participated in jobs that supported the war effort. It is estimated that as many as one in four Native American women found work on assembly lines and factories in cities far from their reservations, where they were trained on how to work at aircraft or defense plants and were taught how to weld or operate machinery.[155] For women that did not travel, they replaced the shortage of labor left by the many men who enlisted, and took over jobs that only men traditionally held such as working in the sawmills and hauling trucks and freights. Six Native American women from different tribes joined SPARS, a woman's branch of the U.S. Coast Guard, in 1943. SPARS is an acronym for the Coast Guard motto "Semper Paratus" which means "Always Ready." This program recruited women from across the country to join the Coast Guard in non-combat service roles, and often promised women who joined that they would be able to stay with their friends through basic training. In Oklahoma, this is what led to the recruitment of the following Native American women: Mildren Cleghorn Womack (Otoe), Corrine Koshiway Goslin (Otoe), Lula Mae Obannon (Choctaw), Lula Belle Everidge (Choctaw), June Townsend (Yuchi-Choctaw), and Nellie Locust (Cherokee). These women together were known as the Sooner Squad, and were all college-educated women with secretarial or teaching experience.[156] After the war, several of the Sooner Squad returned to school on the GI Bill, receiving higher education degrees.

Native American men were instrumental in the success of the U.S. in WWII through the sheer number of men who volunteered and who saw active duty, and in the inclusion of "code talkers" in a number of military branches. Native American "code talkers" were men who were trained by various military

[151] National Museum of the American Indian. "World War II." Article. 2020. https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/world-war-2/.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Harper, Marilyn M. *World War II & The American Home Front: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*. "African Americans and Other Minorities on the Home Front" (Theme). 2007. Prepared for the National Park Service.
[154] National Museum of the American Indian. "World War II." Article. 2020; Harper, Marilyn M. *World War II & The American Home Front: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*. "African Americans and Other Minorities on the Home Front" (Theme). 2007. Prepared for the National Park Service; National Museum of the American Indian. "Native Women and World War II." Article. 2020. https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/native-women-and-world-war-2/.
[155] National Museum of the American Indian. "Native Women and World War II." Article. 2020.
[156] Russel, Alison. "Native SPARS of the Sooner Squadron." Article. *National Park Service*. 2024. https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/native-spars-of-the-sooner-squadron.htm.

branches on how to use their native indigenous language to relay messages between U.S. Command centers.[157] Because the structure and etymology of indigenous American languages can be complex and difficult to discern, these secret and encoded messages proved to be between challenging and impossible for the European or Pacific enemy forces to crack. In total, 534 Native American "code talkers" were deployed during WWII, with the U.S. Marine Corps operating the largest program with 420 Diné (Navajo) speakers who helped win the war in the Pacific.[158] In 1940 and 1941, the U.S Army recruited Comanche, Meskwaki, Chippewa, Oneida, and Hopi speakers, of which the Comanche participated in the D-Day invasion of Nazi-occupied France.[159]

Native American men and women were instrumental to the success of the U.S. in WWII, both in combat and domestically. However, participants returning home from war continued to face a great amount of discrimination, particularly the men and women who had relocated to other areas of the country to work on the jobs that supported the war effort. Native Americans recognized the level of contribution they brought to the war effort and began to wonder why, after fighting for the country, America continued to ignore tribal treaty rights.[160] This discrepancy was certainly felt in Los Angeles, as First Peoples of Los Angeles who fought and risked their lives for the country came home to continued racism, subjugation, and a lack of federal recognition.

Family of First Peoples of Los Angeles with two men enlisted in WWII.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

[157] Harper, Marilyn M. *World War II & The American Home Front: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*. "African Americans and Other Minorities on the Home Front" (Theme). 2007. Prepared for the National Park Service.
[158] National Museum of the American Indian. "Code Talkers." Article. 2020. https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/code-talkers/.
[159] Ibid.
[160] National Museum of the American Indian. "World War II." Article. 2020.

Gabrieleño Tongva[161]

Elder Art Morales shared that there was a disproportionate number of Native Americans represented in WII. His Uncle Joe came home after escaping from different prisoner of war (POW) encampments. Once home, he found out he was not awarded any veteran benefits. Dr. Hector Garcia set up the GI Forum, which helped Mexican and Native Americans to get their benefits. Joseph Morales was awarded the Bronze Star for his WWII service. WWII Bronze Star recipient Carlos Dorame served in the Pacific Campaign and was responsible for not only the protection of his fellow soldiers but was able to seize food from the enemy after General MacArthur had abandoned the campaign and U.S. soldiers were left to starve. Tongva have enlisted to serve in the U.S. military for all branches and have served in all military conflicts.

Carlos Dorame (WWII Bronze Star recipient) and his son Valentine (Korean War)
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno Tongva Indians of California)

[161] This narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.

Fernandeño Tataviam[162]

Fernandeño Tataviam Eulogio Ortega in military uniform, San Fernando, California, 1917. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The Fernandeños in the Twentieth Century: A New Era of Struggle and Resilience

As the Fernandeño community moved into the twentieth century, they found themselves caught in the turbulence of the modern world—where the shadows of their colonial past continued to loom large. While the loss of ancestral lands and the encroachment of settlers had defined their history, the global conflicts of the early twentieth century would introduce new struggles, amplifying the trauma of their past and testing their resilience in ways they could never have imagined.

World War I: A Generation Marked by Trauma

During World War I, many young men from the Fernandeño community, like young men across the U.S., were called to serve in the trenches of Europe. For these soldiers, the battlefields became places not only of violence and destruction but also sites where deep, generational wounds were reopened. These men were carrying the weight of their people's history—the trauma of dispossession, cultural erasure, and violence—which became even more pronounced as they faced the horrors of war.

When these men returned home, they came back forever altered, marked by the psychological scars of war. Though the language of "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) had not yet entered medical discourse, the effects of trauma were undeniable. The men of the Fernandeño community returned haunted by the memories of battle and the devastation they had witnessed. Many silently carried the burden of their experiences for the rest of their lives, as the emotional wounds they sustained in Europe could not be healed by the passage of time.

Fernandeño Tataviam Richard Bernard Ortega, U.S. Marine. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Seeking Solace: The Struggle for Healing

Some Fernandeño veterans sought help at the West Los Angeles Veterans Hospital, hoping to find relief from the trauma that weighed so heavily upon them. The hospital, intended as a sanctuary for soldiers returning from the front lines, offered care for physical wounds—but the psychological toll of war was often overlooked or poorly treated. Many Fernandeño veterans found the institutional care insufficient and chose to leave the hospital, opting instead to return to the San Fernando Valley. The land, though it had been stolen from their ancestors, remained a place of deep connection and grounding for them. Despite the violence they had endured, the land continued to offer a sense of identity and continuity—something that no hospital could provide.

Fernandeño Tataviam Abel Salazar, U.S. Marine. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

[162] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

Even as they returned to the land, the men of the Fernandeño community were forever changed. The psychological scars they carried were invisible, but they ran deep, leaving them marked by experiences they could not fully explain or heal from. For them, the land—though lost and reshaped by colonization—remained the only constant, a silent witness to their struggles.

Fernandeño Tataviam Bob and Benny Cooke, U.S. Army. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

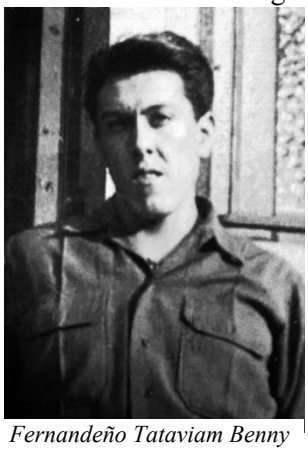
Fernandeño Tataviam Rudy Ortega Sr., U.S. Army (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

WWII: The Fernandeños Call to Serve

Only a decade later, the Fernandeño community was once again swept up in the chaos of another world war—WWII. As the U.S. entered the conflict, Fernandeño men once again enlisted or were drafted, answering the call of duty despite the heavy legacy of their people's dispossession. The impact of this second war was just as profound, but the stories of these men, like those who had served in World War I, were largely ignored by mainstream society.

Fernandeño Tataviam Vera Ortega on her porch in San Fernando, California, 1920s. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

When the men of the Fernandeño community returned from the battlefront, they found themselves in a world that had changed drastically during their absence. The San Fernando Valley—once a rural, open landscape connected to their ancestral way of life—had become increasingly urbanized and industrialized. The land that had once sustained their people was now dominated by suburban sprawl, new developments, and the expanding infrastructure of a modernizing California. This dramatic transformation further distanced the Fernandeños from the land that had been central to their identity for centuries.



Fernandeño Tataviam Benny Cooke, U.S. Army, pictured in Europe. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The Endurance of the Fernandeño Spirit

In the aftermath of the wars, as the community sought to rebuild and heal, the spirit of the Fernandeño people endured. While the world around them had changed, their connection to one another and to the land that had witnessed their ancestors' struggles remained unbroken. Though the wars were yet another chapter in their long history of hardship, they were also a testament to the endurance of the Fernandeño people—who, despite every attempt to erase them, continued to survive and thrive.

The wars of the twentieth century, like those before them, marked another layer of hardship in the long,

painful history of the Fernandeño community. But they were also part of a larger story—a story of perseverance, resilience, and the unyielding strength of a people determined to survive, adapt, and carry their heritage forward. The Fernandeños' story is not just one of survival in the face of colonization, war, and displacement—it is a living testament to the power of cultural endurance and the unbreakable bond between a people and their land.

Religion and Ceremonial Practices

Despite the oppression endured during the Mission Period, First Peoples of Los Angeles were able to retain oral histories and traditions of religion and ceremonial practices into the present day. Some First Peoples and Native Americans in Los Angeles have adapted these practices into contemporary religion, while others have kept them separate.

The resources included in this theme encompass the physical manifestations of religious practices, and therefore include elements of the natural world such as landscapes and waterways, and the physical built environment such as religious buildings.

Dancers perform in the opening of Red Box Station in the San Gabriel Mountains.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Gabrieleño Tongva[163]

Adornment of a kotuumot mourning pole by Claire Conley.
(Image provided by the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

For many Native and Indigenous people, the word "sacred" means something different to each tribe or band. However, I feel Rosalyn R. LaPier, a Native scholar from the Blackfeet tribe, may have defined it best when asked to describe the sacredness of water: "water was a distinct place — a sacred place."[164][165] It was the home of divine beings and divine animals who taught the Blackfeet religious rituals and moral restrictions on human behavior. It can, in fact, be compared to Mount Sinai of the Old Testament, which was viewed a 'holy ground' and where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments." My personal relationship with the Mission is complicated. My grandmother and extended family have always regarded the Mission San Gabriel as a holy place, therefore references to the Bible resonate with me. Many Native Americans are not Christian nor do they adhere to any Christian religious beliefs. However, that is not the case for me or my family. Many of our tribal members still reside close to the Mission San Gabriel, as did their families. Like most of the family and tribal members, I was baptized and married at the Mission San Gabriel, for many of us it was out of family tradition.[166]

As a lifelong tribal member, and someone who visited sacred sites since I was a child, sacredness was taught to me in alignment with my Catholic upbringing, sacred meant "holy." Something so special, not necessarily secret but powerful and beyond special. The massive destruction of our ancestral homelands has harmed our tribal community, fragmenting our culture, traditions and our people, including our tribal ancestral homelands. Early anthropologists complicated the harm by documenting that the "Gabrielino are extinct." Federal Indian agents sent to the area wrote the federal government that there were not enough Gabrielino to report about.[167] When the federal government sent Indian Health nurses out to the desert region, they were not allowed to care for the Indian people in Los Angeles.[168] We are the non-federally recognized tribe from Los Angeles. The many layers of erasure and harm has not only taken our culture and traditions, but in many cases the health, wellbeing and lives of our Tongva people. As a tribal member, I have worked with many Elders, not just from the Gabrieleno Tongva tribe, but also the surrounding southern California tribes in an effort to reclaim cultural knowledge and continue our traditions. I am thankful for the early recordings of our language, the documented letters by Hugo Reid, and the ethnographers who tried their best to piece together our cultural history. I am thankful to the Cahuilla people who have willingly shared their knowledge. All of these sources have added to my understanding and knowledge of our tribe. Our

[163] This narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[164] LaPier, Rosalyn. "Why is Water Sacred to Native Americans?" *Open Rivers*, Fall: 2017.
[165] The use of "I," "us," or "our" or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño Tongva.
[166] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[167] Heizer, Robert, ed. *The Handbook of North American Indians*. Vol. 8. The Smithsonian Institution, 1978.
[168] Trafzer, Clifford. "Strong Hearts and Healing Hands: Southern California Indians and Field Nurses 1920-1950." *California History* 99, no. 2 (Summer 2022):95–97.

fragmented Tribal history means I have had to include several sacred places and significant information about sacred sites and ways of knowing. I believe as my Elders have taught me, all of the Los Angeles Basin and the four southern Channel Islands; Tovangaar (our ancestral homelands) is sacred, it was all created for the Gabrieleno Tongva, taken care of by our ancestors for thousands of years. Our connection to this land and our sites continues to be at the heart of our work as tribal people.[169]

Gabrieleño Tongva Yakenar

The "Tongva Dancers" perform social songs and dances for the public at special events throughout the year.[170]

The Tongva Dancers celebrate the songs and dances, rituals and ceremonies of pre-European Tovangaar: the culture and world of the Tongva, the indigenous people of Los Angeles basin. This world, composed of hundreds of villages and towns, stretched from what is now Newport Beach to Malibu and as far northeast as San Bernardino and northwest into the San Fernando Valley. It included the four southern Channel Islands.[171]

Our ceremonies, songs, and dances were forbidden by the colonizers who enslaved us during the Mission era, which led to a mistaken notion that we became extinct. But we have survived and *e'qua chem* "We are still here!" The Gabrieleno Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians original historical tribe proudly resurfaced in Spring 1995 under the auspices of the Gabrielino Tongva's Tribal Council to continue their traditional ancestral ways, continuing ceremonies, and learning and performing traditional and social modern songs and dances.[172]

Performance of dancers at the Palomares House.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

[169] Morales, Kimberly. *Native American epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies*, unpublished paper prepared for PhD program. April 2024.
[170] Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. "Maps and More."
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

Fernandeño Tataviam[173]

> *"Generally the neophytes have not yet enough affection for Christianity and civilization. Most of them are excessively fond of the mountains, the beach, and of barbarous freedom and independence, so that some show of military force is necessary…" – Friar Lausen*[174]

The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians has worked diligently to preserve its religion, culture, and traditions, maintaining a vital connection to its ancestral heritage through private family records and oral histories that are not accessible to the public. These sacred records, passed down through generations, serve as a repository of spiritual knowledge, family histories, and cultural practices that have been carefully safeguarded from external forces seeking to erase or distort them. In addition to preserving these private archives, the Tribe's administration office plays a central role in educating younger generations through robust educational and cultural programs. These initiatives are designed to ensure that the youth of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band not only learn about their heritage but also actively engage in the practices that sustain it—whether through language revival, traditional ceremonies, or teachings on the sacred relationship with the land. By empowering the next generation with this knowledge, the Tribe continues to uphold its cultural integrity and religious practices, ensuring their survival for years to come. This commitment to cultural preservation stands in stark contrast to the efforts of Spanish missionaries centuries ago, whose goal was to systematically erase the identities of the Fernandeño people through forced assimilation and the destruction of their sacred traditions.

Fernandeño Tataviam Elders Councilmember Beverly Folkes for the Los Angeles County Harms Report. (Photo by Johnny Perez, Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Missionaries and the Attempt to Erase Fernandeño Ceremonies

The arrival of missionaries in California in the late eighteenth century heralded a new and violent chapter in the history of the Fernandeño people. These missionaries sought to "cleanse" the Native peoples of the region—particularly the Fernandeños —of what they considered immoral, non-Christian ways of life. The missionaries, with their religious zeal, sought to reshape the Fernandeño people into what they viewed as proper Christian subjects. They imposed forced religious conversion and agricultural labor, believing that the Fernandeños could be "civilized" and made to abandon their ancestral ways. However, despite the missionary belief that they were bringing enlightenment, they failed to grasp the depth and complexity of the Fernandeño worldview, economy, and cultural practices. Beneath the surface of forced submission, the Fernandeños quietly resisted, maintaining their ancestral spiritual practices, governance, and traditions, albeit in hidden, covert ways. Thus, despite the missionaries' efforts to impose their values, the Fernandeños managed to retain elements of their identity, their sacred traditions, and their profound connection to the land.

Quiet Resistance: Retaining Sacred Traditions

In the Mission period, while outwardly conforming to Catholic rituals, the Fernandeños continued to honor their ancestors and uphold their sacred practices in secret. Mission records, with a mix of incredulity and disapproval, noted that even after baptism, the Fernandeños demonstrated little understanding of Christian concepts like eternity, heaven, or hell. Instead, they carried forward their own belief systems—worldviews that did not need to conform to European ideologies of reward and

[173] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.
[174] Champagne, Duane (2021). *A coalition of lineages : the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians*. Carole E. Goldberg. Tucson. p. 5

punishment. One notable tradition that endured despite the missionaries' attempts to suppress it was the ritual of placing seeds in the graves of the deceased—a symbol of life, renewal, and the continuation of the cycle of nature. This practice, rooted in a deep spiritual connection to the land, survived in defiance of colonial oppression.

Fernandeño Tataviam Elders Council Chairman Dennis Garcia in traditional regalia. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Despite the brutality imposed by the Spanish and later the Mexican governments, the Fernandeños blended their cultural practices with the new religious framework thrust upon them. One of the most telling examples of this blending was the annual fiestas at Mission San Fernando, where Fernandeño dances, songs, and ceremonies were held to honor both Catholic saints, such as Saint Ferdinand, and their own sacred traditions. These celebrations were often sanctioned by the church, but beneath the surface, they were acts of cultural reclamation and defiance, preserving the spiritual ties between the Fernandeños, their ancestors, and the land.

By the late nineteenth century, the persistence of Fernandeño cultural practices had become a source of frustration for colonial authorities. In 1847, military commander Marino Guadalupe Vallejo reported to the American military governor that the efforts to assimilate the Fernandeños had failed. Vallejo's report lamented that the Fernandeños, despite harsh treatment—forced labor, punishment, and the suppression of Native ceremonies—had managed to hold on to their cultural identity. Vallejo suggested that more aggressive measures, including imprisonment, forced public labor, and military intervention, should be used to curb the Fernandeño people's resistance to assimilation. Yet, the Fernandeños' refusal to fully conform to colonial expectations proved that their connection to their culture and traditions was far from broken.

Fernandeño Tataviam youth revitalizing songs through the Tribe's Education and Cultural Learning Department, 2010s. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Perpetuating Harm: Practicing Fernandeño Lifeways in the City of Los Angeles

The Fernandeño Tataviam people face another significant challenge in the present: the loss of land and the difficulty of gathering sacred plants and materials necessary for ceremonies. Due to historical land dispossession and urban development, the Fernandeño Tataviam have been pushed off their ancestral lands, making it increasingly difficult to access the resources necessary for traditional practices. In the City of Los Angeles, Fernandeño Tribal Citizens are often prohibited from harvesting sage, a sacred plant, unless they obtain costly permits. For the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, these practices are not simply about cultural preservation; they are about survival. It is believed that failing to carry out sacred rituals and honor their ancestors can bring misfortune or spiritual harm to the people.

Despite the ongoing colonial violence, the deep intergenerational trauma, and the struggles they face in modern times, the Fernandeño people continue to practice and pass down their Traditional Ecological Knowledge. This knowledge, rooted in a profound connection to the land and the natural world, is the

Fernandeño Tataviam Timothy Ornelas preserves tradition through video archives. (Photo by Pamela J. Peters, Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

lifeblood of their worldview. It is through these practices—through ceremonies, rituals, and the honoring of the ancestors—that the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians endure. Their cultural survival is not just about resistance; it is a reaffirmation of their identity, their history, and their connection to the sacred land that has sustained them for millennia. Despite every effort to erase them, the Fernandeño people remain a vibrant, living testament to the power of culture, resilience, and survival.

Founding of Indian Churches in Los Angeles: 1936-1980

After secularization and the end of the Mission era, various religious institutions formed within the City of Los Angeles to aid and support the population of First Peoples in what were known as "Indian Churches," institutions that specifically offer religious and community services to the population of First Peoples of Los Angeles as well as other Native American tribes. These spaces primarily provided gathering places and offered a centralized and permanent location for community and community activities. These institutions often provided a more "non-denominational, common interest" space for indigenous peoples in Los Angeles looking to find a tribal community.[175]

The first Indian Church established in Los Angeles, the First American Indian Church, formed in the early decades of the twentieth century and was founded officially in 1936. These churches were founded and utilized largely as a source of community, and as such are for the most part non-denominational. Additionally, as more Native Americans from across the country moved to Los Angeles over the ensuing decades, there arose more of a need for spaces of community for Native Americans, thus leading to the founding of various Indian Churches across Los Angeles City and County. A notable example is the American Indian Bible Institute, which was founded in 1966 after the population of Native Americans in Los Angeles doubled to 20,000 and board members of the First American Indian Church became concerned with the spiritual health of the young Native Americans who relocated to Los Angeles and began to live their lives and start families in the City apart from their home and community.[176]

Many of the Indian Churches found a balance between Christian services and worship and traditional Native practices. Reverend Jonathon Wilson of the First Indian Baptist Church, a member of the Choctaw Nation from Oklahoma, stated that "to be a Christian, you don't stop being Indian" and spoke to the extent to which Native practices and symbols were incorporated into worship at his church. In 1989, 829 Native Americans in Los Angeles were surveyed and 82 percent said they would be interested in participating in an ecumenical non-denominational service. At this time, many Indian Churches began to coordinate plans and efforts to provide a space for worship and community for Native peoples in Los Angeles, expressing a "willingness to consider expressions of Indian spirituality and culture in worship."[177]

These services were open to Native Americans and First Peoples from any tribe, from any location. Some prominent examples of twentieth-century Native American churches or institutes are:

- *First American Indian Church*
  The First American Indian Church was founded in 1936 and is the first known church in Los Angeles that was founded as an "Indian Church." By 1965, the First American Indian Church at 2218 Hancock Street (extant) "[owned] its own building and [paid] its pastor a full salary."[178] (*Los Angeles Times* 1965).
- *First Indian Baptist Church*
  In 1955, a group branched from the First American Indian Church, and the First Indian

[175] Fiske, Shirley. "Urban Institutions: A Reappraisal from Los Angeles." *Urban Anthropology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1979).
[176] American Indian Bible Institute. "The History of the American Indian Bible Institute." 2022. [Unpublished PDF]. Accessed from https://aibi.org/.
[177] "American Indians Becoming More Open to Christian Worship Services." *Los Angeles Times.* March 25, 1989.
[178] "Evangelistic Campaign Set." *Los Angeles Times.* April 17, 1965.

Baptist Church was established by Baptist Creek Native Americans.[179] Reverend Jonathon Wilson, of the Choctaw, said his congregation formed in 1962 and had 90 members in 1989. This church is believed to be one of the oldest Indian churches in Los Angeles and was located at 2409 West Slauson Avenue, a building that has since been demolished.[180]

- *American Indian Bible Institute*
  In 1966, the American Indian Bible Institute (AIBI) was established by Native Americans who were a part of the First American Indian Church. The men on the advisory board have represented, over the years, nine different tribes. The Los Angeles area Indian Churches supported the AIBI, and the churches, as well as the homes of the individual members, served as meeting spaces and classrooms used in training for the ministry. This organization was officially dissolved in 2022. Research has not revealed there to be a centralized location for the institute, rather it appears to be largely community based.[181]

The local tribes continue to conduct ceremonial practices today, many of which are private and hold significant cultural and spiritual value for the Fernandeño Tataviam and the Gabrielino Tongva. While these traditions are usually maintained within the tribal community, there are occasional opportunities for the public to observe ceremonies and cultural demonstrations, particularly during Indigenous Peoples Day in October, Native American Heritage Month in November, or Winter Solstice in December.

Fashion Show hosted by the Gabrieleño Tongva, 2001.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

Tribal authors did not provide a narrative for this theme.

[179] Fiske, Shirley. "Urban Institutions: A Reappraisal from Los Angeles." *Urban Anthropology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1979).
[180] "American Indians Becoming More Open to Christian Worship Services." *Los Angeles Times.* March 25, 1989; "First Indian Baptist Church." *Los Angeles Times*. July 21, 1962.
[181] American Indian Bible Institute. "The History of the American Indian Bible Institute." 2022. [Unpublished PDF]. Accessed from https://aibi.org/.

Social Programs for Native Americans and First Peoples of Los Angeles: 1950-1980

During the first decades of the twentieth century, some First Peoples of Los Angeles became more politically active as they sought to cement a place for themselves within the city and society of Los Angeles. In 1919, the rediscovery of the 18 lost treaties from 1851 and 1852 led to opposition to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Southern California which in turn led to the formation of the Mission Indian Federation, the first Native American civil rights group to represent California tribes. With the intent to fight for freedom from the BIA and for full citizenship, the organization achieved its goals when, in 1924, Congress passed legislation that granted citizenship to all Native Americans, and a 1953 resolution was passed which reduced the influence of the BIA on reservations and fully ensured citizenship for all Native Americans.[182] However, because the 18 lost treaties resulted in First Peoples of Los Angeles living essentially as a "landless urban tribe" without a reservation in an increasingly growing metropolitan landscape, the most important legislation to First Peoples of Los Angeles passed by the U.S. Congress was the California Indians Jurisdictional Act (1928). This act, among other things, began to acknowledge some of the tribes of Los Angeles as part of the Mission Indians.[183]

Despite the passing of the act, First Peoples of Los Angeles as well as many California Indian Tribes have faced an excessively difficult and exceedingly complex path to federal acknowledgement as compared to other tribes across the country. Federal acknowledgment, also known as federal recognition, is the process by which the U.S. government formally recognizes an Indian tribe as a sovereign entity. This recognition establishes a government-to-government relationship between the tribe and the federal government. This process is important, as once a tribe is federally recognized, it becomes eligible for various federal benefits, services, and protections. These include funding for education, healthcare, and housing, as well as the ability to govern themselves and manage their own affairs. However, due to the rigorous review process of federal acknowledgement that incudes evaluation of a tribe's historical, genealogical, and anthropological evidence and the different cultures and histories between California Indian Tribes and tribes from other parts of the country, this process has remained demanding and complicated for many tribes of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Additionally, racial tension in Southern California and general prejudice against Native Americans increased after WWII and the growing immigration into Southern California. However, for First Peoples of Los Angeles, "this prejudice seemed to heighten…awareness of their own unique culture and history, helping weave the many strands of their identity into a whole cloth, once again."[184] Many political organizations, cultural groups, and educational organizations designed to shape the political and cultural future of First Peoples of Los Angeles were either formed or re-formed in the post-WWII period.

As a result of the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, an increased number of Native Americans from tribes across the U.S. arrived in Los Angeles only to be relocated immediately after receiving initial aid from the BIA Field Office. It became increasingly apparent that Native Americans arriving in Los Angeles needed expanded social, health, and employment services beyond what the U.S. government could offer. In Los Angeles, the small network of pre-existing institutions, community centers, and places of gathering founded for and by Native Americans merged and expanded, opening the doors for more of these types of services in Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, and across Southern California.[185]

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[182] Jurmain, Claudia, and William McCawley. *O, My Ancestor: Recognition and Renewal for the Gabrielino-Tongva Peoples of the Los Angeles Basin*. Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 2009.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

The growing number of these types of services for the Native American community in Los Angeles led to the creation of what is now known as Indian Alley, located in the Skid Row neighborhood of Downtown Los Angeles. The United American Indian Involvement (UAII) building (118 Winston Street near Werdin Alley) still stands today and housed an outreach center that became an important centralized spiritual, political, and rehabilitative space for the community of Native Americans living in Los Angeles. Because the UAII also provided dormitories for Native Americans who were displaced, it was a consistent and active gathering place as well as a dwelling place for many Native Americans between the time it was established in the 1970s and when the UAII moved to a new location in the 1990s. As an important outreach center that provided support for Native Americans in Los Angeles for several decades, the alley immediately adjacent to the UAII (Wedin Place) received the unofficial moniker of Indian Alley by the 1990s. Today, art such as murals and sculpture installed in Indian Alley/Wedin Place celebrate the history of Native Americans in Los Angeles and their presence in Downtown Los Angeles.[186]

Some prominent examples of social institutions created for and by Native Americans are follows:

Pukúu Cultural Community Services

Through innovation and a strong longing for community wellness, the FTBMI established its first non-profit in 1971, Pukúu Cultural Community Services (1019 Second Street, San Fernando), just outside the City of Los Angeles. To date, this social services organization provides emergency services, cultural programming, and wellness to all Native Americans living in Los Angeles County. Through funding acquired by their non-profit, Tribal leaders were able to self-sustain their affairs, uplift their Tribe and all Native communities in Los Angeles County.[187]

The Los Angeles Indian Center

An early iteration of what would become the Los Angeles Indian Center was the American Indian Center Association, present in at least the 1920s in Los Angeles. It was described as "a corporation organized on the non-stock, non-profit basis…the purposes of the organization center around the American Indian, his music, art and handicraft."[188] However, with a more concerted effort toward meeting the social needs of the Native Americans in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Indian Center was formed in 1935 and was the only institution of its kind until the Indian Welcome House was established in 1963.[189] The Los Angeles Indian Center was the first Native American institution to

Retail space at the Los Angeles Indian Center, 1963. (Los Angeles Public Library)

[186] Historic Places Los Angeles. "Planning District – Indian Alley." 2016. https://hpla.lacity.org/report/17469153-10d4-4289-a78c-1f3cc5c7cc65.
[187] Fatehi, Kimia. *Narrative of the Fernandeño Tataviam*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[188] "The American Indian Centre Association." *Los Angeles Evening Citizen News*. May 8, 1924.
[189] Fiske, Shirley. "Urban Institutions: A Reappraisal from Los Angeles." *Urban Anthropology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1979).

apply for and receive federal funding for social services, and, in 1970, the Office of Economic Opportunity, signed into law by Lyndon B. Johnson via the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, began four Model Urban Indian Center pilot programs. At that time, the Los Angeles Indian Center and the Indian Welcome House merged in order to be eligible to receive a $200,000 federal grant.[190]

The Los Angeles Indian Center was founded by Myra Frye (Weeping Star), "a Kickapoo from Oklahoma," in 1935. It originally was called the "Lowansa Teepee, Sweet Singer's Home."[191] She was a domestic worker and a Quaker. Originally, the meetings were held within the Pacific Electric Subway Terminal Building, then moved to a leased church at 529 Euclid Avenue (extant). In 1950, the center was still seeking a permanent location and was representing more than 25 tribes.[192] The Indian Center was sponsored at this time by the American Friends Service Committee, which had headquarters at 1904 West Sixth Street (demolished). This location was "used as a meeting place for the Indian in the Los Angeles area" and is where "many constructive and worthwhile programs are being carried on by the Indian People."[193] The Los Angeles Indian Center was described as "not organized to the point of sterility, and with no particular red tape showing" and "a friendly place and informal."

A newspaper description from 1970 indicated that demands on the Indian Center were increasing, and the center, "located in a small, old frame building at 3446 West 1st Street" (extant) was a "non-profit project operating with an all-volunteer staff and on private donations." The center helped "between 300 and 500" Native Americans in Los Angeles each month. The article described the Center's support for Native Americans who arrived in the city "just off the reservation," and were in need of food, furniture, and appliances. It provided aid to students who needed money for books and rent. It also provided assistance in finding employment.[194] After merging with the United Indian Development Association, a new address for the Los Angeles Indian Center was given at 600 S. New Hampshire Street (extant).[195]

After this merger, the Los Angeles Indian Center was able to expand its services and retained a "staff of Indians working in professional and non-professional fields to provide the following services: employment assistance, information and referral, youth activities, including the establishment of four youth satellite Centers, individual and family counseling, and a cultural heritage program." If there were services that the Los Angeles Indian Center was not able to provide such as medical services, welfare, or tribal activities sponsored by other organizers, the center would provide referrals.[196] By the 1980s, the Los Angeles Indian Center was located at 1125 W. Washington Boulevard (demolished).[197]

A 1971 pamphlet of the Los Angeles Indian Center states that the following services were provided:

- Legal Aid: Legal assistance is provided by Loyola University School of Law along with the Western Center on Law and Poverty
- Employment Assistance: This program provides on-the-job training as well as referrals, placement, and follow-up services

[190] Fiske, Shirley. "Urban Institutions: A Reappraisal from Los Angeles." *Urban Anthropology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1979).
[191] "Indians Bring Tribal Music to Institute." *The Whittier Star News*. July 7, 1938.
[192] "Indian Center is Lively Scene of Frolics Powwows and Job Counseling." *Daily News (Los Angeles)*. January 16, 1950.
[193] "Indian Board Hears Director of Movie." *The Whittier Star News*. October 22, 1951.
[194] "A Helping Hand for Urban Indians." *Los Angeles Times*. May 3, 1970.
[195] "Indians Get Aid to Begin Businesses." *Los Angeles Times*. August 8, 1971.
[196] The Indian Center, Los Angeles. "The Indian Center Los Angeles (Pamphlet)." 1971. *Accessed from the Autry Museum of the American West Library and Archives.* Call No. MIMSY EPH.970.33.58.
[197] "Indian Legal Project of Los Angeles." *Los Angeles Times*. January 20, 1983.

- Parolee Program: A parolee program assists Indians who are returning home from prison with help in securing jobs
- Alcoholism Program: The Indian Lodge provides treatment and rehabilitation therapy for those Indians with problems related to alcohol
- Social Case Work: This department deals with problems such as family troubles, housing, welfare, and emergency needs through counseling and assistance in dealing with governmental bureaucracies
- Community Services: The primary goals of this program are to promote social, cultural, educational, and political activities in the Indian community of Los Angeles. The involvement of as many Indian people as possible in the organization of these activities is essential to this program's success[198]

Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission

The Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission was a commission established in 1976 specifically to serve the needs of the urban Native Americans living in Los Angeles City and Los Angeles County.[199] It strove to promote the development of programs and funding resources to serve both Native Americans and Native American organizations, to serve as a sounding board for the Native American community, to increase the acquisition and application of funding resources for the Native American community, and to ensure that any efforts would not be duplicated.[200] This commission was established and continues to operate as a joint effort of the Los Angeles Native American community, the Los Angeles City government, and the Los Angeles County government.[201]

Upon its founding in 1976, it was recognized as the first Native American commission of its kind in the U.S. It was unique at the time for its recognition and focus on urban Native Americans, and for allowing the community the opportunity to elect five of the fifteen Native American council members (five would be appointed by the City and five would be appointed by Los Angeles County).[202] Rudy Ortega, Sr. of the Fernandeño Tataviam was one of the five Native Americans first elected by the community in 1976.[203]

The Indian Welcome House

The Indian Welcome House was established in 1963 by Bill Ng, a Presbyterian minister, at 2610 W. Eighth Street (extant).[204] Although the Welcome House was established in 1963, work began in 1961, and was supported "mainly by the church, but [also including] other organizations and individuals"[205] In 1968, the organization was described as having, for many years, "provided strategic services to Indians including job counseling, young adult activities, tutoring for children and leadership development." It was "under the direction of an all-Indian Board of Managers and relates to a Los Angeles Indian population in excess of 20,000."[206]

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[198] The Indian Center, Los Angeles. "The Indian Center Los Angeles (Pamphlet)." 1971. *Accessed from the Autry Museum of the American West Library and Archives.* Call No. MIMSY EPH.970.33.58

[199] "Commission on Indians Elects New President." *Los Angeles Times*. June 29, 1980.

[200] "Indians to Hold Election May 21." *Lincoln Heights Bulletin News*. May 18, 1977; Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission. "History." 2024. https://lanaic.lacounty.gov/commission/history-of-the-commission/

[201] Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission. "History." 2024.

[202] "Indians to Hold Election May 21." *Lincoln Heights Bulletin News*. May 18, 1977.

[203] Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission. "History." 2024

[204] Fiske, Shirley. "Urban Institutions: A Reappraisal from Los Angeles." *Urban Anthropology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer 1979).

[205] "Southland Parish: Bill Ng." *Los Angeles Times.* February 18, 1967.

[206] "Indian Welcome House." *Los Angeles Evening Citizen News*. November 30, 1968.

United Indian Development Association

The Urban Indian Development Association (UIDA) formed simultaneously with the United American Indian Council c.1970. The UIDA was "dedicated to bringing Indians into the American economic mainstream." It was set up as a "nonprofit organization" and was founded "by seven businessmen to open the doors of economic opportunity for other Indians" and "obtained $50,000 in federal funding through the Economic Development Agency." There was hope that the UIDA would provide the "know-how and help obtain business loans" to the Native population in Los Angeles. The offices for the UIDA were at 1541 Wilshire Boulevard (extant).[207]

Bureau of Indian Affairs Los Angeles Relocation Office

In 1958, this office was located at 1031 South Broadway (extant) and at that time had helped about 10,000 Native Americans in its first six years of operation. From that point until it shut down, it continued to assist the thousands of Native Americans arriving in Los Angeles through its relocation program. Its ultimate goal was "to help the Indians become self-supporting, to help relocate them from a reservation to an industrial area, to assist them with food and shelter, with health insurance for one year, with nominal furniture needs, with some household equipment, to see that they have at least the bare necessities of clothing, to help them find a place to live [and] to aid them enrolling their children in public school and to provide counseling service."[208]

In addition to offering social services, many of these spaces also offered a centralized location for the production and sale of crafts, and encouraged the production of Native craft as a community building activity, to be later sold at a fundraising event. For example, The American Indian Art Shop was located at 6930 Hollywood Boulevard (demolished), across the street from Grauman's Chinese Theater. Opened in 1929 by White Bird, the wife of actor and opera singer Chief Yowlachie, it provided a space where Native Americans could socialize and exchange news on jobs in addition to providing a place for Indians to sell their art and crafts.[209]

Moompetam at the Aquarium of the Pacific.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

A narrative from the Gabrieleño Tongva was not provided for this theme.

[207] "The Urban Indian." *Los Angeles Times*. March 23, 1970.
[208] "Indian Land Problems Bone of Contention." *Los Angeles Times.* June 30, 1958.
[209] Rosenthal, Nicholas G. "Representing Indians: Native American Actors on Hollywood's Frontier." *The Western Historical Quarterly*. 2006.

Fernandeño Tataviam[210]

Establishing Non-Profits: Pukúu Cultural Community Services

The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians has long exemplified resilience—a strength forged through centuries of struggle, survival, and cultural preservation. Deeply rooted in an understanding of their identity and the collective responsibility they have to one another, the Tribe has consistently worked toward empowering its citizens through self-reliance, community support, and cultural resurgence. Recognizing that sovereignty does not solely rest on Native governance, but in the health and strength of its people, Fernandeño leaders from the 1960s onward took decisive actions to secure the future of the Tribe. This foresight laid the groundwork for vital social programs that continue to serve the community today.

Fernandeño Tataviam youth in Pacoima, California, 1955. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

In the 1960s, Fernandeño leaders understood that ensuring the Tribe's long-term well-being meant not only addressing immediate needs but also creating a sustainable infrastructure that could endure political and legal challenges. To minimize tax burdens and ensure flexibility for future growth, the Tribe established an entity separate from the Tribal government—allowing them to deliver services effectively and support their members in meaningful ways. This initiative culminated in the creation of *Pukúu Cultural Community Services* in 1971, a nonprofit organization that has since become a cornerstone of the Tribe's social and cultural efforts.


2 scholarships awarded

San Fernando Valley Inter Tribal, Inc. awards $500 scholarships to two students enrolled at California State University, Northridge, for the fall semester. From left are Rudy Ortega, Inter Tribal diector; scholarship recipients Sylvia Ortega and Cindy Groset, and Johnny de La Cruz, treasurer of Inter Tribal, Inc

Valley News Photo

Fernandeño Tataviam founded Pukúu Cultural Community Services to serve all Native Americans living in Los Angeles County, Valley Green Sheet, August 17, 1977. Pictured is the late Tribal President Rudy Ortega, Sr. with the non-profit's first scholarship recipients. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Pukúu became far more than a charitable organization—it became a lifeline for Native American families in the Los Angeles area, particularly those from the Fernandeño Tataviam community. Through initiatives like holiday toy drives, scholarships for Native youth, and seasonal cultural celebrations, *Pukúu* helped address immediate community needs while also reinforcing a sense of belonging, pride, and cultural continuity. The organization's work was crucial in uplifting the community, fostering connections, and ensuring that every member, regardless of age, felt supported and valued.

Through these programs, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band is addressing immediate needs while also setting the stage for broader cultural and economic revival. Providing job training, educational support, and access to healthcare services enables Fernandeño families to thrive in a world that has often marginalized them. At the same time, the Tribe is investing in long-term projects focused on environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and land reclamation—key components of their vision for a thriving future.

[210] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

A Holistic Approach to Healing and Empowerment

The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians' approach to healing is deeply holistic. They recognize that true empowerment comes not just from economic growth, but also from nurturing cultural identity, political advocacy, and restoring ancestral ties to the land. Social programs have played a vital role in this process—providing the Tribe with tools to heal and strengthen the community bonds that have long united them.

Fernandeño Tataviam toy drive hosted through the Tribe's non-profit, Pukúu Cultural Community Services, in the 1970s. Pictured in the back is the late Tribal President Rudy Ortega, Sr. This event still occurs every winter solstice. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Today, as the Tribe continues to move forward, these programs are not merely reactive responses to past hardships; they are proactive efforts to build a strong foundation for future generations. By reinforcing their community's strength, preserving their culture, and working toward economic independence, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians is laying the groundwork for a vibrant and empowered future.

Healing and Reviving Cultural Heritage: The Path Forward

Today, the Tribe's commitment to strengthening its community and promoting self-sufficiency is stronger than ever. As the Tribe works to heal historical wounds—inflicted by centuries of colonization, land dispossession, and cultural erasure—it is equally dedicated to reviving its cultural heritage and advocating for the rights of its people. Social programs have evolved into a dynamic set of initiatives that reflect both the Tribe's historical values and its aspirations for the future.

The Fernandeño Tataviam providing education and food to Native Americans in the 1960s. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

First Peoples of Los Angeles in Civil Rights and Political Activism: 1970-Present

First Peoples of Los Angeles have used their voices and their presence for political activism since the beginning of the Mission Period, starting with the earliest known examples of acts of resistance by Toypurina and the protest art created by Juan Antonio through his depictions of the Stations of the Cross. Throughout the nineteenth century, political activism by First Peoples of Los Angeles was primarily seen in the discourse between tribes and the federal government in the land deals and creation of treaties, and in the subsequent responses to inaction by the state and federal governments. By the early twentieth century, First Peoples of Los Angeles became more politically charged, particularly seen in the founding of the Mission Indian Federation which led to various pieces of legislation introduced by the State of California including the California Indians Jurisdictional Act, which passed in 1928 and authorized the Attorney State General to sue the U.S. Government over the 18 lost treaties of 1851 and 1852.[211]

Leading up to the mid-twentieth century, particularly after WWII, a new wave of Americans arriving from various locations across the country to Southern California increased racial tension and prejudice toward all minorities, but which was particularly felt by First Peoples of Los Angeles as many of these newcomers to Los Angeles brought their prejudices and preconceived notions of Native Americans with them.[212] This appeared to be the push needed to unite some tribes of First Peoples of Los Angeles, who had previously been thought for several decades to have been erased, and led to the establishment of the Gabrielino/Tongva Tribal Council. Over the years, political differences on topics such as recognition or the rules of membership led to other political organizations forming and representing the First Peoples of Los Angeles.

By the mid-to-late-twentieth century, many minority voices in Los Angeles grew stronger and louder as they fought for their rights. This was true as well with First Peoples of Los Angeles, who fought for rights, recognition, and land through both legal avenues as well as grassroots political activism which brought forth primarily the voices of First Peoples of Los Angeles backed by concerned members of the community of Los Angeles. Many of these issues are ongoing, complicated legislation as well as land-ownership issues have made it difficult for First Peoples of Los Angeles to own and access their sacred and ancestral land. Complicated further by various tribes retaining different goals towards federal recognition, most political campaigns by First Peoples of Los Angeles remain ongoing, although some have been successful. Some examples include:

Puvuu'ngna, 1980. (Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians)

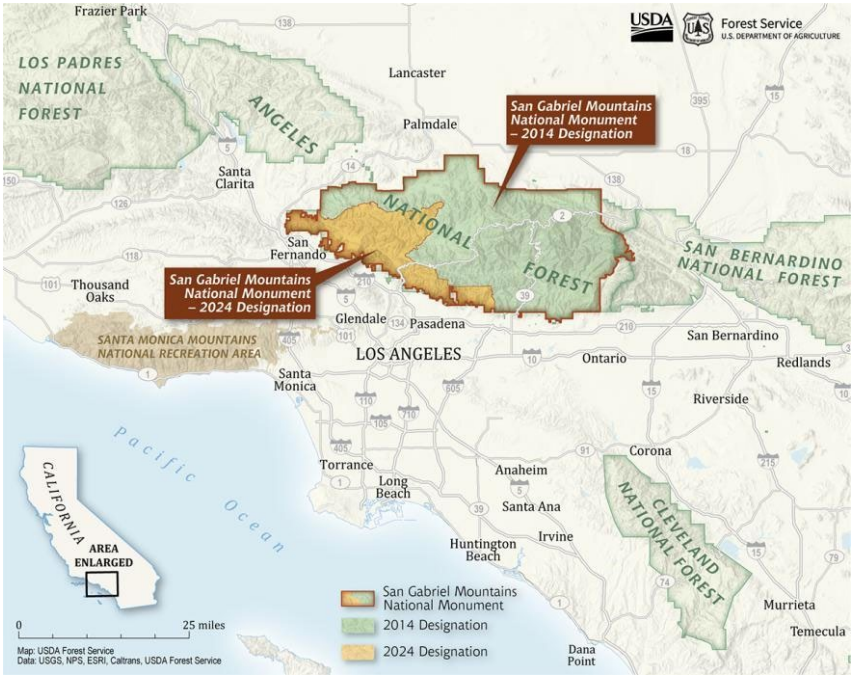
Povuu'ngna (Puvungna)
This site was uncovered at California State University Long Beach during construction in 1972, when campus workers discovered the remains of First Peoples of Los Angeles. The remains were placed in an archaeology lab, resulting in a multi-year campaign led by First

[211] Jurmain, Claudia, and William McCawley. *O, My Ancestor: Recognition and Renewal for the Gabrielino-Tongva Peoples of the Los Angeles Basin*. Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 2009.
[212] Ibid.

Peoples, students, and concerned citizens of Los Angeles to reinter the remains. Despite the site's placement on the National Register of Historic Places, First Peoples of Los Angeles continuously had to fight against proposed development of the area, which ranged from the potential construction of a strip mall to the potential construction of a parking lot. This fight for recognition of sacred spaces and access to land remains ongoing, as the site was used as a dumping ground for dirt and trash as recently as 2019, prompting action from First Peoples yet again to protect the site from further harm.[213]

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

In 2014, President Barack Obama used the Antiquities Act to create the San Gabriel National Monument (a U.S. National Monument), which comprises 346,177 acres of public lands in the San Gabriel Mountains. The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians began to urge President Joe Biden to expand the San Gabriel National Monument to include an additional 109,000 acres, which would protect even more sensitive plants and species, but most importantly additional cultural sites. They asked for limited public access to the heritage sites within San Gabriel National Monument, while allowing for increased access for the tribal community. In May of 2024, President Biden issued a proclamation that expanded the monument by 105,919 acres, which was enacted in the presence of the Fernandeño Tataviam and Gabrieleño Tongva tribes.[214]



Map of the 2014 boundaries of the San Gabriel National Monument (green) and the expanded 2024 boundaries (orange). (Image obtained from the U.S. Forest Service)

[213] "About Puvungna." 1995. Online flier available from California State University Long Beach. https://home.csulb.edu/~eruyle/puvudoc_0000_about.html; "Protect Puvungna: Indigenous Peoples Fight to Preserve Land on CSULB campus." *ABC 7 News*. December 1, 2020. https://abc7.com/puvungna-csulb-long-beach-native-american/8418295/.

[214] Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, ed. "San Gabriel Monument Expansion." 2024. https://www.tataviam-nsn.us/community/national-monument/; "Fact Sheet: President Biden Expands San Gabriel Mountains National Monument and Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument." *Whitehouse.gov*. May 2, 2024. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/05/02/fact-sheet-president-biden-expands-san-gabriel-mountains-national-monument-and-berryessa-snow-mountain-national-monument.

Playa Vista

Playa Vista, a housing development in Los Angeles adjacent to the Ballona Wetlands, has garnered ongoing issues since the 1990s. The area has long been known to archaeologists to have been the site of the Gabrielino Tongva village of Guashna/Saangna and when development looked inevitable in 1991, leaders of several of the Gabrielino Tongva bands signed an agreement to allow the reburial of any unearthed skeletons somewhere else on the site. However, unbeknownst the area of Guashna(Saangna) was a burial ground for First Peoples and hundreds of ancestral remains were unearthed during construction in 2003. Thus, as a sacred cemetery site, First Peoples of Los Angeles engaged in various forms of political activism against the developers of the site, who did not immediately reinter the remains and planned to continue on with the project despite the sanctity of the land to First Peoples. Finally, the first set of remains were reinterred in 2008, and a second set in 2012. In 2021, a monument was constructed at Ballona Discovery Park honoring the remains that were reinterred in the area and the First Peoples who occupied that area of land from time immemorial until colonization. This atrocity led to a series of challenges to the California Environmental Quality Act review processes.[215]

Tongva Memorial on the campus of Loyola Marymount University. Artist: Mat Dorame, photo by Lisa Fimiani. (Image obtained from Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Monument to Honor the Tongva Ancestors at Discovery Park, Playa Vista. Artist: Chairman Robert Dorame. (Image obtained from Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

A narrative from the Gabrieleño Tongva was not provided for this theme.

[215] Gibson, J. William, and Chester King. "Skeletons in Playa Vista's Closet." *Los Angeles Times*. June 20, 2004; "Tongva Memorial Installed in Ballona Discovery Park." *CURes Blog* (Supported by Loyola Marymount University). November 17, 2021. https://curesblog.lmu.edu/tongva-memorial-installed-in-ballona-discovery-park/.

Fernandeño Tataviam[216]

The Resilience and Political Activism of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians: Reclaiming Sovereignty, Land, and Culture (1970–Present)

Since the onset of colonization, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians has been at the forefront of a political and cultural renaissance, actively resisting the forces of colonization that have sought to erase their identity. From appearing before the Los Angeles Superior Court in the 1800s to advocating for Tribal Consultation in the 1900s, the Fernandeño Tataviam have steadfastly fought for recognition, justice, and the preservation of their cultural rights, relentlessly resisting erasure and asserting their sovereignty at every turn.

The late Tribal President Rudy Ortega, Sr. engaging in Tribal Consultation for a cultural site in the Santa Susana Field Laboratory, a landscape affiliated with the villages of Taapu/Ta'apunga and Jucjauyanga, the villages from which the Fernandeño Tataviam descend, c.1980s. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The 1960s marked a turning point for the Fernandeño Tataviam Band, as Native American activism surged across the U.S. Inspired by the broader Native American rights movements, leaders of the Fernandeño Tataviam pushed back against centuries of marginalization through public education and grassroots organizing. The Tribe began to publicly shed light on its political gatherings, demanding recognition from local, state, and federal authorities.

Establishing Non-Profits: The Tataviam Land Conservancy

For the Fernandeño Tataviam, the fight for ancestral land is inseparable from their cultural identity. The ongoing dispossession of sacred land and the fragmentation of ancestral territories have been central to the Tribe's political agenda. Colonization by Spain, Mexico, and later the U.S. separated the Fernandeño Tataviam from the land that is not only central to their livelihood but also to their spiritual and cultural practices. The Fernandeño people see their connection to the land as a matter of survival—both cultural and physical.

Fernandeño Tataviam participating in parades across the San Fernando Valley in an effort to educate the local public of their presence, c.1970s. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

In 2018, the creation of the Tataviam Land Conservancy marked a pivotal moment in the Tribe's efforts to protect and restore its ancestral lands. This nonprofit organization was established to facilitate the restoration of key cultural and spiritual sites and to advocate for the preservation of sacred lands that had been endangered by development, encroachment, and environmental degradation. The Conservancy's work includes land restoration projects, environmental conservation, and legal advocacy to ensure the Tribe's long-term control over their ancestral territories.

[216] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

The Conservancy's efforts go beyond land reclamation; they symbolize the Tribe's resistance to environmental and cultural erasure. In the face of ongoing pressures from land developers, local governments, and corporate interests, the Conservancy plays a critical role in ensuring that the Fernandeño Tataviam have access to the lands for religious, cultural, and ceremonial uses.

Fernandeño Tataviam Tribal Citizens look over the 550+ acres of land returned back to the Tribe through the Tataviam Land Conservancy, 2024. (Image provided by the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Environmental Activism: Integrating Tradition with Modern Solutions

The FTBMI has also led efforts in climate resiliency and environmental activism, drawing on traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) to address the challenges of climate change. In 2024, the Tribe developed its Tribal Climate Resiliency Plan, which merges ancestral wisdom with contemporary scientific tools to protect natural resources, manage fire risk, and promote sustainable land stewardship. This plan isn't just about adapting to the environmental challenges of today—it's about rebuilding a sustainable future while maintaining deep ties to the land and ancestral practices. The Tribe's approach emphasizes holistic solutions that honor their long history as caretakers of the land, reinforcing the idea that environmental justice is intrinsically linked to cultural and political sovereignty.

FTBMI Tribal Citizen Sisco Valenzuela with children at Mapipinga (Vasquez Rocks). (Photo courtesy of Natural History Museum Los Angeles)

Establishing Non-Profits: Pukúu Cultural Community Services

Cultural revival has been a central focus of the FTBMI's activism since the 1970s. One of the Tribe's first actions was the founding of Pukúu Cultural Community Services in 1971, a nonprofit organization aimed at preserving and promoting traditional cultural practices. Pukúu became a vital resource for cultural workshops, youth programs, and community services, offering a platform for the Fernandeño people to reclaim their history and pass it on to the next generation. Today, Pukúu continues to serve as a hub for cultural education, social services, and advocacy.

Establishing Non-Profits: Tiüvac'a'ai Tribal Conservation Corps

In 2022, the Tribe established the Tiüvac'a'ai Tribal Conservation Corps, a program designed to engage youth in environmental conservation and land stewardship. The program offers hands-on experience in sustainable land management, cultural practices, and environmental science, ensuring that the next generation of Fernandeño leaders is equipped to continue the Tribe's legacy of resilience, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. This program is both a political and cultural initiative, empowering youth to become active participants in their community's future while grounding them in the traditions that have sustained their ancestors.

Pictured are corpsmembers of the first Tribal Conservation Corps in Los Angeles County, the Tiüvac'a'ai Tribal Conservation Corps, in front of Pacoima City Hall, 2024. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

A Legacy of Political Activism and Cultural Revival

The Fernandeño Tataviam's activism is not just about reclaiming lost land or protecting cultural traditions—it is about building a future rooted in the principles of self-determination, resilience, and environmental justice. Through grassroots activism, legal challenges, and cultural revival, the Tribe is creating a powerful legacy of political engagement, cultural empowerment, and environmental stewardship.

By laying the groundwork for a new generation of leaders, advocating for land and resource rights, and continuously fighting for justice, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians demonstrates that resistance is not just about surviving colonization—it is about flourishing in the face of it, ensuring that their culture, traditions, and sovereignty are upheld for generations to come.

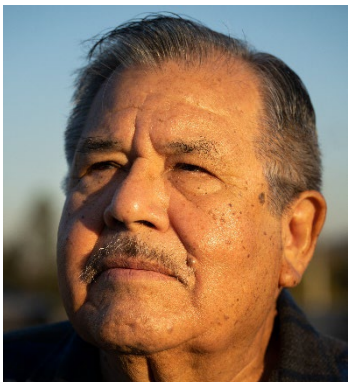
Federal Recognition

The histories of First Peoples of Los Angeles differ greatly between individual tribes, and as a result the individual tribes display different levels of interest and have achieved different levels of success in Federal recognition. Federal recognition can mean many things for a tribe, both negative and positive, and as such has become a contested topic in Los Angeles.

The resources identified in this sub-theme pertain directly to commercial, government, educational, or religious buildings that represent the individual tribes' relationship to Federal recognition.

Mural showing an eagle flying over the desert, painted at Werdin Place (now Indian Alley), c.1985. (Los Angeles Public Library).

Gabrieleño Tongva[217]



Chief Anthony Morales (Image provided by Gabrieleno/Tongva Band of Mission Indians)

Despite us not "existing" we, along with the other 110 federally recognized tribes of California, received 47.1 cents per acre of land for California tribes in 1971, and we were part of the "Lost Secret Treaties" of 1852.[218] An Indian agent purchased land for us by Fort Tejon, but lost the land and, in doing so, we lost our formal recognition. Despite these records, the federal government refuses to acknowledge an ongoing relationship with us. On August 11, 1994, the City of San Gabriel worked with tribal leadership for the State of California to recognize the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, and Chief Anthony Morales was handed the formal Assembly Joint Resolution 96.[219] Many tribal members went to Sacramento to receive the resolution; however, since the State of California does not have a formalized process for acknowledging tribes, our "State Recognition" remains under review.[220]

Many people living and working in the City of Los Angeles are unaware of the First Peoples of the area, who thrived for thousands of years before colonization. While many are familiar with tribes such as the Apache, Mohawk, and Navajo, they are unaware of the Tongva, one of the original inhabitants of Los Angeles. This lack of knowledge has led to a poor understanding of the cultural significance of our heritage and our connection to the land. Consequently, this insufficient appreciation affects decision-makers regarding the land and negatively impacts our efforts to protect tribal cultural resources.[221]

No federal recognition means limited to no acknowledgement and prioritization by governmental agencies. When tribal comments/consultation are sought, the voices of federally recognized tribes outweigh all other tribes. It is expected to default to a federally recognized tribe rather than the First Peoples of an area.[222]

With no federal recognition of the Tongva being the aboriginal tribe of Los Angeles, there is no obligation to recognize or value the cultural significance of our connection to the land or our ancestral burial grounds. For example, during construction for a housing development in Playa Vista, Tongva burial grounds were unearthed and disturbed. The shocking legal response was callous: "George Mihlsten, a lawyer representing the Playa Vista development said the company was not legally bound to consider the Tongvas' wishes because they were not members of any of the 562 federally recognized tribes."[223] Developers disregarded the value of human life and used a federal loophole: ancestors were Tongva and not federally recognized.

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[217] This narrative was written by authors from the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California.
[218] The use of "us," "our," or similar pronouns refers to the Gabrieleño Tongva.
[219] The full resolution is available here: http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/93-94/bill/asm/ab_0051-0100/ajr_96_bill_940831_enrolled#:~:text=BILL%20NUMBER:%20AJR%2096%20ENROLLED%2008/31/94%20BILL,Archie%2DHudson%2C%20Baca%2C%20Bornstein%2C%20Bronshvag%2C%20Valerie%20Brown%2C%20Burton;.
[220] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[221] Marsden Conley, Christina. *Narrative of the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[222] Ibid.
[223] "Developer Unearths Burial Ground and Stirs Up Anger Among Indians," *New York Times*, June 2, 2004.

When a non-federally recognized tribe is reinterning an ancestor, a federally recognized tribe has to sponsor the process. This process has created misunderstandings, frustrations, and a subordinate position for the federally non-recognized tribe. Federally recognized tribes have taken the personal effects of our Tongva ancestors and claimed them as their own. They have reinterred our ancestors without the obligation of notifying our tribe.[224]

The Tongva would be able to protect our sacred island of San Nicolas which is currently occupied by the U.S. Navy and a sacred area rich in cultural resources and an area which we are unable to visit. San Nicolas is a sacred area rich in cultural resources and an area which we are unable to visit for ceremony.[225] Ancestral effects have been removed from the island by archeological field schools and placed in banker boxes in locked rooms at universities throughout California.

The U.S. government has made gaining recognition on a federal level burdensome and strategically impossible. Current federally recognized tribes acknowledge that they would most likely not be able to fulfill what is required now to be federally recognized.[226]

Federal recognition for the Tongva would mean more resources for the restoration of land, education and the preservation of our culture.

Additionally, it is worth noting that many tribal members from the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians have a "Certified Degree of Indian Blood" (CDIB) issued by the federal government. However, despite our ancestors proving their identity for the federal government and the government issuing the CDIB, we as a tribe are not federally recognized. Not having federal recognition has led to many other self-identified Gabrielinos starting their own tribe and has led to five different tribal organizations acknowledged by the Native American Heritage Commission.[227]

The federal government and the State of California have acknowledged San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians in the past. It is our hope the government will reinstate the recognition of the descendants of the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. We are currently working on landback, culture back, language back, community back, and our members' genealogy. We have been able to identify five families from five different documented Tongva villages.[228]

[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Morales, Kimberly. *Narrative of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*, prepared for First Peoples Historic Context Statement. July 2024.
[228] Ibid.

Members of the Gabrieleño Tongva in Washington, D.C. for Indigenous Peoples Day.
(Image obtained from Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians

Fernandeño Tataviam[229]

Federal Recognition Does Not "Grant" Sovereignty; It Acknowledges It

For over 150 years, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians has been on an enduring quest to gain formal recognition from the U.S. federal government. This pursuit is not about gaining sovereignty—which the Tribe has always maintained—but about having that sovereignty officially recognized. Under the Department of Interior's regulations, tribes must prove their continuous existence and political structure dating back to before 1900—a difficult challenge, especially for those whose histories were systematically erased by colonial powers. For the Fernandeños, this means navigating a complex process filled with legal, historical, and bureaucratic obstacles.

Indians Invited to Valley Meeting at Mission Park

All Valley Indians are invited to a meeting Sunday, Feb. 27, at the San Fernando Mission Park to form a new San Fernando Valley Inter-Tribal Club.

Rudy Ortega, who has been tribal coordinator for the San Fernando Mission Band Indians, has announced the meeting, stating that he hopes to involve all area Indians in his goal of establishing an Indian Center for the Valley.

Mission Band members are only those who are descendants of San Fernando Mission Indians.

The gathering, which will include a potluck dinner, election of officers

(L) The late Tribal President Rudy Ortega, Sr. spent over 50 years petitioning the federal government for recognition of the Fernandeños until his passing in 2009. Today, the petitions are spearheaded by his son, Rudy Ortega, Jr. (R) Valley Green News article about a Fernandeño Tataviam gathering in the City of Los Angeles, 1972. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The Tribe's efforts to gather evidence for federal recognition have been complicated by limited access to essential historical records. Many documents crucial to their claim were either scattered, lost, or locked away in archives inaccessible to the community. Forced to rely on external experts—historians, genealogists, and attorneys—the Fernandeños invested millions of dollars and years of work to build an archive of thousands of documents that support their claim. These include genealogies, land grants, baptismal records, and testimonies. Each document represents more than just a piece of history; it is a testament to the Tribe's unwavering commitment to preserving its identity and reclaiming its place in the historical narrative.

The Bureaucratic Catch-22: The Struggle for Land and Recognition

In the 1960s, Fernandeño Tataviam leader Rudy Ortega, Sr. wrote a letter to the federal government to secure land for his people, hoping to restore the land that had been taken from them over centuries. However, they faced a devastating Catch-22: the government could not negotiate land without federal recognition, and yet, there was no federal recognition process established by the government at that time. This created a legal paradox—without recognition, they couldn't access land, but without land, they couldn't attain a land base to support their people. This bureaucratic impasse

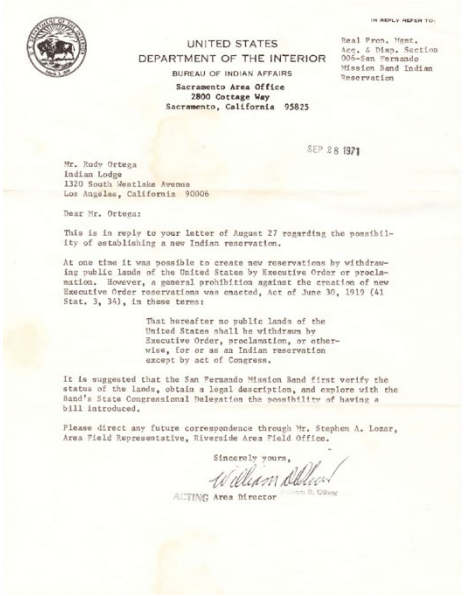
Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians meetings at Brand Park in City of Los Angeles, with the Mission San Fernando in the background, the epicenter of the community, for cultural, ceremonial, and political gatherings, c.1960s.(Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

[229] This narrative was written by authors from the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

underscores the systemic barriers that non-recognized tribes face, as federal recognition is often the only pathway to securing resources, land, and legal protections.

Pathways Toward Healing: The Fernandeño Tataviam's Ongoing Journey

Despite the hurdles, the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians continues to push forward with strength and determination. Federal recognition may provide critical resources and protections, but it is not the ultimate goal. The Tribe has existed for generations without it, preserving their culture, governance, and sense of community despite centuries of colonization. Their true identity and sovereignty are not defined by recognition—they are rooted in their living traditions, their connection to the land, and their shared history.



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Sacramento Area Office
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825

IN REPLY REFER TO:
Real Prop. Mgmt.
Acq. & Disp. Section
006-San Fernando
Mission Band Indian
Reservation

SEP 28 1971

Mr. Rudy Ortega
Indian Lodge
1320 South Westlake Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90006

Dear Mr. Ortega:

This is in reply to your letter of August 27 regarding the possibility of establishing a new Indian reservation.

At one time it was possible to create new reservations by withdrawing public lands of the United States by Executive Order or proclamation. However, a general prohibition against the creation of new Executive Order reservations was enacted, Act of June 30, 1919 (41 Stat. 3, 34), in these terms:

That hereafter no public lands of the United States shall be withdrawn by Executive Order, proclamation, or otherwise, for or as an Indian reservation except by act of Congress.

It is suggested that the San Fernando Mission Band first verify the status of the lands, obtain a legal description, and explore with the Band's State Congressional Delegation the possibility of having a bill introduced.

Please direct any future correspondence through Mr. Stephen A. Lozar, Area Field Representative, Riverside Area Field Office.

Sincerely yours,

William Oliver
ACTING Area Director

The U.S. Department of Interior's response to Fernandeño Leader Rudy Ortega, Sr.'s request for land access, 1971. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

Cultural Revival and Reconnection: Preserving Heritage for Future Generations

In addition to their legal and political advocacy, the Fernandeños are deeply committed to cultural revival. Through language restoration programs, the revitalization of ceremonial practices, and other efforts to reconnect with their ancestral heritage, the Tribe is ensuring that future generations remain connected to their roots. Their journey is not just about reclaiming legal status—it is about preserving and celebrating their culture, reinforcing their community, and ensuring that the legacy of their ancestors endures for generations to come.

Fernandeño Tataviam Singers revitalizing traditional gourd songs, 2024. (Image provided by Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians)

The Fernandeños' pursuit of recognition is ultimately a fight for justice, acknowledgment, and the preservation of their heritage. Whether or not the federal government formally acknowledges their existence, the Fernandeños will continue to thrive. Their resilience and cultural vitality will ensure that they are never erased from history, and that their presence—against all odds—will always be felt in the heart of Los Angeles County.

Conclusion: 1980 and Beyond

The contributions that First Peoples have brought and continue to bring to Los Angeles history and culture are far-ranging. Despite the lack of federal recognition which prevents ownership of ancestral lands that form part of Los Angeles by the tribes, the presence of First Peoples of Los Angeles is palpable through the presence of cultural centers, museums, murals, nature centers and parks found throughout the city and associated with First Peoples. These spaces allow for education of both children and adults about the deep history of the land, the story of First Peoples of Los Angeles, the key roles that First Peoples have played in the history of the city from its very beginnings, and the key roles they will continue to play into the city's future. Some examples include Kuruvungna Village Springs and Cultural Center, Angel's Gate Cultural Center, Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, and the murals installed at Indian Alley.

Artists, River Garza and Jaque Fragua, Indian Alley, 2024. Photo by Stephen Ziegler. (Image obtained from Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Additional contributions to the present culture of Los Angeles include consultation in the creation of a map of Los Angeles by artist Adrienne Kinsella that features the names and locations of known villages of First Peoples, the Ballona Discovery Park monument and the Loyola Marymount monument that acknowledges and celebrates the history and continued presence of First Peoples of Los Angeles, and the continued use of inlaid abalone on the Ti'at Mo'omat'ahiko, a canoe used by First Peoples of Los Angeles, which exhibits exemplary craftsmanship through the inlaid abalone, which was crafted without the use of nails.

Since 1980, the voices of First Peoples of Los Angeles have continued to grow stronger and will continue to hold an important place in the future of the city as city residents become more educated and open to learning the history of Southern California and Los Angeles through the realities of those who have lived in the area the longest. Ultimately, understanding the history, stories, and culture of First Peoples of Los Angeles can only enrich and add value to the understanding of what it means to live on this land and what it means to truly be a native to Los Angeles.

Los Angeles City Hall with Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California members, Christina Conley and Tongva artist Adrienne Kinsella joined by Gabrielino Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians tribal council member, Mona Morales Recalde (Image obtained from Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California)

Eligibility Standards by Theme

Theme: Natural World

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage, social history, religion, education, and/or recreation for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. First Peoples of Los Angeles have shared a deeply connected, symbiotic relationship with the natural world around them. Every part of the landscape was and continues to be significant to them. Associated property types are limited to sites and landscapes.

Period of Significance:
Time Immemorial – Present

Period of Significance Justification:
Consistent with NRHP guidance, the period of significance for Traditional Tribal values is considered from time immemorial to the present.[230] Similarly, the temporal context is best understood outside of a limited timeframe. It is acknowledged by lineal descendants that First Peoples have been living in these areas since the beginning of time and the land continues to speak to the Indigenous People into the present time and convey knowledge to them. Most importantly, the descendants of the First Peoples carry on in the memories, the ceremonial knowledge, commemorations, and cultural practices within the City of Los Angeles, which continues to teach and impact the psyche of Indigenous Peoples. In this way, the properties disseminate cultural values and information from time immemorial to future generations.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles. Particularly in the areas around Kuruvunga Spring (now on the grounds of University High School), the Los Angeles River, and the Pacific Ocean.

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History, Religion, Education, Recreation

Criteria:
NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

Associated Property Types:
Site: Landscape
Waterways: Ocean, River, Stream, Creek, Spring
Site: Mountain Formation
Site: Ceremonial

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include landscapes and waterways associated with First Peoples of Los Angeles that played an important role in their relationship with the natural world.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme played an important role and are directly associated with First Peoples of Los Angeles and their relationship with the natural world.

[230] Parker, Patricia, and Thomas King. *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* (National Register Bulletin 38). Originally published 1990, revised 1998.

Eligibility Standards:

- Is used by First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is a landscape that is important to First Peoples of Los Angeles and their relationship with the natural world
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance which could include auditory, atmospheric, and visual features
- Associated with a natural landscape important to First Peoples of Los Angeles
- Continues to be a gathering place for the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Some original materials may have been removed or altered
- Original use may have changed

Theme: Pre-Contact Village Life/Habitation

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage, social history, community planning and development, education, and archaeology for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. Communities were composed of small villages whose societies were highly intelligent, multi-lingual, economically advanced, and politically savvy. Associated property types are limited to sites and landscapes.

Period of Significance:
Time Immemorial – Present

Period of Significance Justification:
Consistent with NRHP guidance, the period of significance for Traditional Tribal values is considered from time immemorial to the present.[231] Similarly, the temporal context is best understood outside of a limited timeframe. It is acknowledged by lineal descendants that First Peoples have been living in these areas since the beginning of time and the land continues to speak to the Indigenous People into the present time and convey knowledge to them. Most importantly, the descendants of the First Peoples carry on in the memories, the ceremonial knowledge, commemorations, and cultural practices within the City of Los Angeles, which continues to teach and impact the psyche of Indigenous Peoples. In this way, the properties disseminate cultural values and information from time immemorial to future generations. The period of significance extends to present day; it does not end in 1542 with the first European contact because some villages were still occupied during the Mission Period and then reoccupied after secularization.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History, Community Planning and Development, Education, Archaeology

Criteria:
NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

Associated Property Types:
Site: Village Site
Site: Burial
Site: Cemetery

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include village and burial sites of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with and played an important role in the lifeways of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

[231] Parker, Patricia, and Thomas King. *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties* (National Register Bulletin 38). Originally published 1990, revised 1998.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was established by First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is the location of a site or district that is significant to the lifeways of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance which could include auditory, atmospheric, and visual features
- Associated with the lifeways of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- May continue to be a gathering place for the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles

Integrity Considerations:

- Should have an integral relationship to traditional cultural practices or beliefs
- The condition of the property is such that the relevant relationships survive
- Should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed

Theme: Beginning of Settler Colonization

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. After the arrival of European colonizers and the beginnings of settler colonization, the life of First Peoples of Los Angeles irreparably and drastically changed forever. The resources that were constructed after the arrival of European colonizers and the resources that were in use during this era are represented in the associated property types of sites, landscapes, and buildings.

Period of Significance:
1542 – 1833

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1542 with the first European exploration of the Los Angeles area and ends at the end of the Mission Period (1833).

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles, but particularly in areas historically associated with Spanish and Mexican colonization in the San Fernando Valley and Downtown Los Angeles.

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History

Criteria:
NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

Associated Property Types:
Site: Village Site
Site: Burial
Site: Cemetery
Site: Trails
Residential: Single-family property
Residential: Multi-family property
Institutional – Religion/Spirituality: Religious Building
Institutional – Military: Barracks and Officers Quarters

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include villages, burial sites, trails, and institutional and residential buildings used during the period of colonization of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with villages, burial sites, trails, institutional and residential buildings and the colonization of Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was associated with First Peoples during the period of significance
- For buildings, was constructed or used by First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is the location of a site, landscape, or building directly associated with settler colonization in the history of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
    - For sites and landscapes those could include auditory, atmospheric, and visual features
    - For buildings, features must convey why the building is significant for Criteria A/1 and its Area of Significance and be associated with the period of significance.
- Associated with a site significant to the history of settler colonization in the history of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- May be associated with a particular institution (such as the mission) related to the colonization of First Peoples of Los Angeles

Integrity Considerations:

- For sites and landscapes
    - Should have an integral relationship to traditional cultural practices or beliefs
    - The condition of the property is such that the relevant relationships survive
- For buildings
    - Should retain essential physical features
    - Should retain essential aspects of integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed

Theme: Genocide/Erasure/Relocation/Slavery

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. Upon the founding of the Mission System, Mexican rule, the founding of the State of California and the American period, First Peoples have faced oppression in the form of genocide, erasure, relocation, and slavery, some practices which continue to affect First Peoples in the present. The construction and use of resources that arose from and/or contributed to these practices are represented by associated property types of sites, landscapes, and residential and institutional buildings.

Period of Significance:
1769 – 1980

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1769 with the beginning of the Mission Period. Although relocation/erasure continues through the present, the end of the period of significance coincides with the end of the period of significance of SurveyLA and may be extended as part of future survey work.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles, but particularly in areas historically associated with Spanish and Mexican colonization in the San Fernando Valley and Downtown Los Angeles.

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History

Criteria:
NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

Associated Property Types:
Site: Village Site
Site: Burial
Site: Cemetery
Residential: Single-family property
Residential: Multi-family property
Institutional – Religion/Spirituality: Mission
Institutional – Military: Barracks and Officer's Quarters

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include villages, burial sites, trails, and institutional and residential buildings associated with important events and institutions involved with the Genocide/Erasure/Relocation/Slavery of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with villages, burial sites, trails, institutional and residential buildings and the Genocide/Erasure/Relocation/Slavery of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was associated with First Peoples during the period of significance
- For buildings, was constructed or used by First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is the location of a site, landscape, or building directly associated with the Genocide/Erasure/Relocation/Slavery of First Peoples of Los Angeles.
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
    - For sites and landscapes those could include auditory, atmospheric, and visual features
    - For buildings, features must convey why the building is significant for Criteria A/1 and its Area of Significance and be associated with the period of significance.
- Associated with a site significant to the Genocide/Erasure/Relocation/Slavery of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- May be associated with a particular institution (such as the mission) related to the Genocide/Erasure/Relocation/Slavery of First Peoples of Los Angeles

Integrity Considerations:

- For sites and landscapes
    - Should have an integral relationship to traditional cultural practices or beliefs
    - The condition of the property is such that the relevant relationships survive
- For buildings
    - Should retain essential physical features
    - Should retain essential aspects of integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed

Theme: Assimilation and Segregation

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. From the end of the Mission Period into the present day, First Peoples of Los Angeles have been forced to contend with legalized forced assimilation into European and then American society, and then legalized segregation upon entrance into European or American society. The resulting built environment that arose from these types of practices are seen in the associated property types of residential, educational, and religious buildings.

Period of Significance:
1833 – 1980

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1833 with the end of the Mission Period and the beginning of the assimilation of First Peoples into the broad culture and society of European-influenced Los Angeles. Although segregation continues through the present, the end of the period of significance coincides with the end of the period of significance of SurveyLA, which is appropriate for properties that continue to have significance.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History

Criteria:
NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

Associated Property Types:
Residential: Single-family property
Residential: Multi-family property
Institutional – Religion/Spirituality: Religious Building
Institutional – Education: Educational Building

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include institutional and residential buildings associated with important events and institutions involved with the Assimilation and Segregation of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with important events and institutions in the history of Assimilation and Segregation of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:
- Is a site or institution that is directly associated with the history of Assimilation and Segregation of First Peoples of Los Angeles.
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Features must convey why the building is significant for Criteria A/1 and its Area of Significance and be associated with the period of significance.
- Associated with a site significant to important events, practices, and institutions in the history of Assimilation and Segregation of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of location, materials, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed
- Some original materials may have been removed or altered

Theme: Boarding and Day Schools

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. Beginning in the late 1880s, one form of assimilation and segregation was the forced attendance of boarding schools by the children of First Peoples of Southern California. Associated property types are educational and residential buildings.

Period of Significance:
1892–1980

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1892 with the construction of the Perris Indian School, which later became the Sherman Indian School in Riverside, California. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History, Education

Criteria:
NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

Associated Property Types:
Residential: Single-family property
Residential: Multi-family property
Institutional – Education: Educational Building

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include institutional single-family residence, multi-family residence, and educational buildings that are directly associated with boarding schools that taught First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with boarding schools in the history of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:
- Was constructed or used by First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is the location of a building directly associated with the boarding schools of First Peoples of Los Angeles.
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Features must convey why the building is significant for Criteria A/1 and its Area of Significance and be associated with the period of significance.
- May be associated with a site significant to important events and institutions in the history of boarding schools of First Peoples of Los Angeles.
- May be associated with a particular institution significant in the cultural history of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- May be important for its association with historic figures (who attended a school) for the cumulative importance of those figures to the community
- May represent issues relating to equal access to education or school desegregation

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of location, materials, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Integrity is based on the period during which the significant institution occupied the property or was related to the institution
- Original use may have changed

Theme: Native Americans in Hollywood and the Entertainment Industry

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. First Peoples of Los Angeles as well as Native Americans who migrated to Los Angeles have played a significant role in the early years of Hollywood and filmmaking. Beyond appearing in feature films as actors and actresses, many Native American actors were also politically active and advocated for accurate representation of Native Americans in media and film. The built environment that arose from early Hollywood and the homes of famous Native American actors are represented in the associated property types of commercial and residential buildings.

Period of Significance:
1911–1980

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1911 with the construction of the first movie studio in Los Angeles and the employment of First Peoples in the entertainment industry. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History

Criteria:
NR: B CR: 2 Local: 2

Associated Property Types:
Residential: Single-family property
Residential: Multi-family property
Industrial: Studio

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include the single-family and multi-family residential buildings or places of work for individuals of First Peoples of Los Angeles who played prominent roles in the entertainment industry

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with members of First Peoples of Los Angeles who made significant contributions to the entertainment industry.

Eligibility Standards:
- Was the primary residence or place of work for the historically significant member of one of the tribes
- Is directly associated with the productive life of the person within the entertainment industry
- Individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to the entertainment industry
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- The individual must have resided or worked at the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain essential aspects of integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Properties may be difficult to observe from the public right-of-way due to privacy walls and landscaping
- Some original materials may have been removed or altered
- Adjacent setting may have changed

Theme: Religion and Ceremonial Practices

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. First Peoples of Los Angeles have been able to preserve cultural religions and ceremonial practices that have been practiced since time immemorial. Some First Peoples and Native Americans practice both traditional cultural ceremonies and western religions. The property types that are associated with traditional religion and ceremony and the property types that are associated with western religion are represented as associated property types of sites, landscapes, and buildings.

Period of Significance:
1833–1980

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1833 with the end of the Mission Period and the beginning of the assimilation of First Peoples into the broad culture and society of European-influenced Los Angeles. Although segregation continues through the present, the end of the period of significance coincides with the end of the period of significance of SurveyLA, which is appropriate for properties that continue to have significance.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History, Religion

Criteria:
NR: A CR: 1 Local: 1

Associated Property Types:
Site: Landscape
Site: Waterways
Site: Mountain Formation
Site: Ceremonial
Institutional – Religion/Spirituality: Religious building

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include ceremonial sites and institutional buildings used by First Peoples of Los Angeles that played an important role in modern religion and ceremonial practices.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with important events and institutions in the development and/or continued use of modern religion and ceremonial practices in the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was associated with the First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is associated with an institution or religious site that made important contributions to the development or continued use of modern religion and ceremonial practices in the First Peoples community of Los Angeles
- Is the long-term location of an institution or religious site that is significant to the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
    - For sites and landscapes those could include auditory, atmospheric, and visual features
    - For buildings, features must convey why the building is significant for Criteria A/1 and its Area of Significance and be associated with the period of significance.
- Interior spaces that functioned as important gathering/meeting places must remain readable from the period of significance
- May be associated with a particular group or institution significant in the cultural history of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- May have served as a gathering place for community leaders of the First Peoples community

Integrity Considerations:

- For sites and landscapes
    - Should have an integral relationship to traditional cultural practices or beliefs
    - The condition of the property is such that the relevant relationships survive
- For buildings
    - Should retain essential physical features
    - Should retain essential aspects of integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Original use may have changed
- Some original materials may have been removed or altered
- Adjacent setting may have changed

Theme: Modern Identity, Tribal Continuity, and Revitalization

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. Despite the legalized oppression that First Peoples experienced since first encountering European colonizers, First Peoples of Los Angeles have maintained a community and identity that remains strong in the present day. The efforts that First Peoples have made in not only maintaining their community, but revitalizing tradition by maintaining and practicing cultural elements, are exemplified in the associated property types of commercial, institutional or residential buildings.

Period of Significance:
1833 – 1980

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1833 with the end of the Mission Period and the beginning of the struggles of the First Peoples to retain their identity and tribal practices. The end of the period of significance coincides with the end of the period of significance of SurveyLA, which is appropriate for properties that continue to have significance.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles, but with a concentration in Downtown Los Angeles on Werdin Place between Winston Street and Fifth Street, also known as Indian Alley.

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History

Criteria:
NR: A/B CR: 1/2 Local: 1/2

Associated Property Types:
Residential: Single-family property
Residential: Multi-family property
Commercial: 1-3 story building
Commercial: 3+ story commercial building
Institutional – Government: Government building
Institutional – Educational: Educational building
Institutional – Religion/Spirituality: Religious building

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include commercial and institutional buildings used by First Peoples of Los Angeles that played an important role in the development of modern identity, tribal continuity, and revitalization.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme are directly associated with important events and institutions in the development of modern identity, tribal continuation, and revitalization in the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed or used by First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is associated with a commercial business or institution that made important contributions to the development of modern identity, tribal continuity, and revitalization in the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- Was the founding location of, or the long-term location of, a commercial business or institution that is significant to the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- Under Criterion B, the individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to modern identity, tribal continuity and revitalization or must be proven to be a community leader.
- Under Criterion B, directly associated with the productive life of the historically significant individual
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Features must convey why the building is significant for Criteria A/1 or B/2 and its Area of Significance and be associated with the period of significance.
- Interior spaces that functioned as important gathering/meeting places must remain readable from the period of significance
- Under Criterion B, the individual must have resided in or used the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- May be associated with a particular group or institution significant in the cultural history of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- May have served as a gathering place for community leaders of the First Peoples community

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of location, materials, feeling, association from period of significance
- Adjacent setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed
- Some original materials may have been removed or altered

Theme: Modern Identity, Tribal Continuity, and Revitalization: Federal Recognition

Summary Statement of Significance:
A resource evaluated under this theme may be significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and social history for its association with the community of First Peoples of Los Angeles. While the various tribes of First Peoples of Los Angeles have different views and relationships to the idea of federal recognition, it is undoubtedly a relevant topic that should be addressed. Various resources pertaining to this theme within the built environment of Los Angeles are represented through the associated property types of commercial and institutional buildings.

Period of Significance:
1900–1980

Period of Significance Justification:
The period of significance begins in 1900, as tribes seeking federal acknowledgement are required by federal regulations to prove they have upheld their sovereignty and descend from a historical Indian community that pre-dates 1900. The end date for SurveyLA is 1980 and may be extended as part of future survey work.

Geographic Locations:
Throughout Los Angeles

Area(s) of Significance:
Ethnic Heritage, Social History

Criteria:
NR: A/B CR: 1/2 Local: 1/2

Associated Property Types:
Commercial: 1-3 story commercial building
Commercial: 3+ story commercial building
Institutional – Government: Government building
Institutional – Educational: Educational building
Institutional – Religion/Spirituality: Religious building

Property Type Description:
Property types under this theme include commercial and institutional buildings used by First Peoples of Los Angeles that played an important role in the history of the fight for federal recognition for First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Property Type Significance:
Properties significant under this theme *are directly associated with important events and institutions* in the fight for Federal Recognition of First Peoples of Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed or used by First Peoples during the period of significance
- Is associated with a commercial business or institution that made important contributions to the development of federal recognition for one of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- Was the founding location of, or the long-term location of, a commercial business or institution that is significant to federal recognition for one of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- Under Criterion B, the individual must be proven to have made an important contribution to the fight for federal recognition for one of the First Peoples
- Under Criterion B, directly associated with the productive life of the person who made important contributions to the fight for federal recognition
- The association and significance is confirmed through consultation with representatives of First Peoples associated with the resource

Character-Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Features must convey why the building is significant for Criteria A/1 or B/2 and its Area of Significance and be associated with the period of significance
- Interior spaces that functioned as important gathering/meeting places must remain readable from the period of significance
- Under Criterion B, the individual must have resided in or used the property during the period in which he or she achieved significance
- May be associated with a particular group or institution significant in the cultural history of First Peoples of Los Angeles
- May have served as a gathering place for community leaders of the First Peoples community

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain essential aspects of integrity of location, setting, materials, feeling, and association from period of significance
- Original use may have changed
- Some original materials may have been removed or altered
- Adjacent setting may have changed

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Appendix A: Table of Associated Historic Places

Name	Location	Designated	I. Natural World	II. Pre-Contact Village Life/Habitation	III. Beginning of Settler Colonization	IV. Genocide/ Erasure/ Relocation/ Slavery	V. Assimilation and Segregation	V. Subtheme: Boarding and Day Schools (Religious and Federal)	VI. Entertainment Industry	VII. Modern Religion and Ceremonial Practices	VIII. Modern Identity, Tribal Continuity, and Revitalization	VIII. Subtheme: Federal Recognition	Comments
Kuruvungna	University High School, West Los Angeles	X	X										Despite the centralized location at University High School, the location of these springs spread far beyond the limits of the high school. This location remains one of the few extant examples of elements of the natural world that retained importance to the First Peoples
Siutcanga/ Rancho Encino	Intersection of Ventura and Balboa. Los Encinos Historic State Park, Los Angeles	X	X	X	X								A village within Los Angeles that was occupied by First Peoples before Spanish colonization and an area of the city of Los Angeles identified by members of the FTBMI as bearing importance to the history of the FTBMI and the understanding of assimilation and segregation that occurred in the attempts to reclaim the land that once belonged to First Peoples.
La Brea Tar Pits	Wilshire Boulevard / Fairfax Avenue	X	X										The asphaltum from the tar pits were utilized by First Peoples for basketry and canoes.
Achoikominga	San Fernando Mission			X									Achoikominga is the name of the village of First Peoples that was located where the San Fernando Mission was founded.
Pakoinga	Pacoima			X									A village within Los Angeles that was occupied by First Peoples before Spanish colonization.
Kawenga/ Rancho Cahuenga	Universal City, Toluca Lake			X									A village within Los Angeles that was occupied by First Peoples before Spanish colonization and an area of the city of Los Angeles identified by members of the FTBMI as bearing importance to the history of the FTBMI and the understanding of assimilation and segregation that occurred in the attempts to reclaim the land that once belonged to First Peoples.
San Fernando Mission	15151 San Fernando Mission Boulevard, Mission Hills, Los Angeles	X			X	X	X			X	X		The San Fernando Mission was constructed by First Peoples under duress and is an example of a resource that marks the beginnings of the effects of settler colonization. The San Fernando Mission was a site of genocide, erasure, relocation and slavery for the entirety of the time it was in use by First Peoples. The San Fernando Mission and its surrounding structures stand as a site of assimilation as it was used to attempt to "assimilate" First Peoples into European society.
Romulo Pico Adobe	10940 N Sepulveda Boulevard, Mission Hills, Los Angeles	X			X	X	X						The Romulo Pico Adobe was likely constructed by First Peoples under duress. The Romulo Pico Adobe was a site of genocide, erasure, relocation and slavery for the entirety of the time it was in use by First Peoples. The Romulo Pico Adobe is a site of assimilation and segregation as it represents the attempt to "assimilate" First Peoples into European society.
Drum Barracks and Officers Quarters	1051 N. Cary Boulevard, Wilmington, Los Angeles	X			X	X	X						The contemporary location of the Drum Barracks and Officers Quarters was once a village of First Peoples. Later this building was constructed by First Peoples under duress. The Drum Barracks and Officers Quarters was a site of genocide, erasure, relocation and slavery for the entirety of the time it was in use by First Peoples. The Drum Barracks and Officers Quarters are a site of assimilation and segregation as it represents the attempt to "assimilate" First Peoples into European society.
First People Slave Auction Site	312 N. Spring Street						X						Former location of a building where weekly slave auctions took place to purchase First Peoples for indentured servitude from the 1850 to 1870s
Rancho Patzkunga	San Fernando Mission vicinity						X						An area of the city of Los Angeles identified by members of the FTBMI as bearing importance to the history of the FTBMI and the understanding of assimilation and segregation that occurred in the attempts to reclaim the land that once belonged to First Peoples.
Rancho Sikwanga	Van Norman Reservoir Vicinity						X						An area of the city of Los Angeles identified by members of the FTBMI as bearing importance to the history of the FTBMI and the understanding of assimilation and segregation that occurred in the attempts to reclaim the land that once belonged to First Peoples.

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Rancho Tujunga	Lakeview Terrace vicinity					X							An area of the city of Los Angeles identified by members of the FTBMI as bearing importance to the history of the FTBMI and the understanding of assimilation and segregation that occurred in the attempts to reclaim the land that once belonged to First Peoples.
Rancho El Escorpion	West side of San Fernadno Valley					X							An area of the city of Los Angeles identified by members of the FTBMI as bearing importance to the history of the FTBMI and the understanding of assimilation and segregation that occurred in the attempts to reclaim the land that once belonged to First Peoples.
Nipo Strongheart Residence	1522 Ensley Avenue					X	X	X					Nipo Strongheart was a Native American actor as well as an activist, and frequently hosted visiting Native American students from the Sherman Institute at his home.
Bison Studios	Sunset Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway							X					This was an expansive studio location that hired indigenous actors. It is also the general location of a site that held importance to some of First Peoples of Los Angeles.
Bison Studios (c.1900 - 1912)	1719 Allesandro Street							X					This was the original locatoin of the studio that hired indigenous actors, and at this address one studio remains.
Plaza Church Cemetery	Plaza Church (535 N. Main Street) Los Angeles	X							X				This is the site where some ancestors of First Peoples were buried. It remains a focal point of the history of Los Angeles and therefore represents, positively and negatively, the story of First Peoples of Los Angeles.
First American Indian Church	2218 Hancock Street								X	X			This church was founded by Native Americans for Native Americans, and it offers both a place of community gathering as well as worship. This location continues to be a gathering place for Native Americans in Los Angeles.
First Indian Baptist Church	2409 W. Slauson Avenue								X				This church was founded after the First American Indian Church under a different denomination, however, it similarly offers community gathering as well as worship.
Indian Alley	Werdin Place (between Winston Street and Fifth Street)	X								X			Although the social services that were once available at this location have moved, this area has become a central location for art and murals celebrating the history of Native Americans in Los Angeles.
Los Angeles Indian Center	600 S. New Hampshire Street									X			Although no longer extant at this location, this service once supported Native Americans in Los Angeles.
Indian Welcome House	2610 W. Eighth Street									X			Although no longer extant at this location, this service once supported Native Americans in Los Angeles.
United Indian Development Association	1541 Wilshire Boulevard									X			Although no longer extant at this location, this service once supported Native Americans in Los Angeles.
Bureau of Indian Affairs Los Angeles Relocation Office	1031 S. Broadway									X			Although no longer extant at this location, this service once supported Native Americans in Los Angeles.
Brand Park	15174 San Fernando Boulevard			X									A park identified by the FTBMI as a site where the FTBMI held government meetings for over one century.
FTBMI Administration Office	13307 Van Nuys Blvd									X			FTBMI utilized this space for government and administration meetings in the 1980s