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Creating the Space to Reimagine and Rematriate Beyond a Settler-Colonial Present: The Importance of Land Rematriation and “Land Back” for Non-Federally Recognized California Native Nations

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A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in American Indian Studies

by

Cheyenne Sherri Reynoso

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Creating the Space to Reimagine and Rematriate Beyond a Settler-Colonial Present: The Importance of Land Rematriation and "Land Back" for Non-Federally Recognized California Native Nations

by

Cheyenne Sherri Reynoso

Master of Arts in American Indian Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Shannon E. Speed, Chair

The Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy provide an alternative space (outside of our settler-colonial present) for Indigenous peoples to connect and practice their cultures; allowing for people to reimagine and Indigenize the present and future. This thesis examines the process and impact of land rematriation and "land back" for unrecognized California Native communities. The process and practice of both land rematriation and "land back" is foundational in supporting access and caretaking for ancestral homelands, cultural revitalization, Indigenous sovereignty, and self-determination efforts for these communities. California Native communities have survived three waves of colonial governments, laws, policies, and actions that continue to create enormous barriers for non-federally recognized California Native communities. This has not stopped unrecognized California tribal community members from building upon the inter-generational movement work that their families and communities have been a part of to advocate and practice land

rematriation and “land back.” This thesis focuses on the work of the Sogorea Te’ Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, two case studies that exemplify and uplift the impactful work of land rematriation and “land back.” By establishing and building restorative relationships with their ancestral homelands and community, Sogorea Te’ Land Trust’s and Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy’s praxis reimagines and provides a space for people to re-engage and practice deep radical relationality, healing, and supports reestablishing a relationship with their homelands, culture, and one another in meaningful ways. In this thesis, through the experience of these two Native-led organizations, I focus on local “land back” struggles and how the collaborative, Indigenous-centered focus and practice they engage in have shaped the outcomes as land rematriation. I conclude my thesis by highlighting community voices on the impact of land rematriation work and suggestions that these communities recommend to support “land back” efforts.

The thesis of Cheyenne Sherri Reynoso is approved.

Kyle Travis–Carrington Mays

Randall K. Akee

Shannon E. Speed, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

Dedication Page

To my siushi, Nita Iskitini, for constantly reminding me to be curious, humble, and to play every day. Chi hullo li. Tikba ish ikhaiyana chike.

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Acknowledgements

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Frankie for his groundedness, consistency, commitment, and love – thank you for holding us down; to our BFF family (Abraham, Edith, Ytzli, and Elijah) for the decades of friendship, encouragement, and growth together – I couldn't dream up a better Apocalypse Team; to Belia for being a protective force, being a caring friend, and showing me possibility when things felt impossible; to AnMarie who is one of the strongest people I know – thank you for your unwavering support, guidance, and bravery (you continue to teach and inspire me); to Maura who reminds me that love for self and others takes vulnerability and is a constant practice – your intentionality and curiosity to practice radical relationality motivates me to practice this every day; to my I tek Chahta Lina who helped me stay consistent, accountable, and brought balance to situations when chaos ensued; and to Marina for being a constant motivation to build relationships and do community work in a good way – our check-ins and writing sessions pushed me to do the unthinkable: to write and finish this thesis! Yakoke! Mvto! Wado! I hold love and respect for each and every one of you.

Creating the Space to Reimagine and Rematriate Beyond a Settler-Colonial Present: The Importance of Land Rematriation and "Land Back" for Non-Federally Recognized California Native Nations

"We shouldn't be just striving for land-based pedagogies. The land must once again become the pedagogy."[1]

The Sogorea Te' Land Trust[2] and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy[3] provide an alternative space (outside of our settler-colonial present) for Indigenous peoples to connect and practice their cultures; allowing for people to reimagine and Indigenize the present and future. 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 "land back" movement.

My research examines the process and impact of land rematriation[4] and "land back" for unrecognized[5] California Native communities. I argue that the process and practice of both land

[1] Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 14.

[2] "Land trusts are nonprofit organizations that raise funds to purchase conservation easement or accept and oversee donated easements on properties within their area of focus." (Beth Rose Middleton, *Trust in the Land: New Directions in Tribal Conservation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 26.). Learn more about Sogorea Te' Land Trust at their website: (The Sogorea Te Land Trust, "Homepage," accessed June 8, 2021, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/.)

[3] "Native American land conservancies affirm tribal sovereignty by recognizing and reaffirming tribal members' rights to their homelands. The land conservancy structure has provided a useful way for some tribes to organize, build alliances with other Native and non-Native groups, and raise funds for the protection of sacred sites. Tribes can adapt the basic format of a conservancy to fit their own cultural, social, and political patterns of organization, or to address a particular land-based struggle or need." (Middleton, *Trust in the Land*, 224) Although the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy was not created by the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and is not a tribal non-profit conservancy; it is similar in its effect on the Tongva tribal community. The Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy supports and affirms tribal self-determination and sovereignty for Tongva community members, was created by Gabrieleno Tongva community members, and includes an all Tongva board. It was created to support land access, Tongva self-determination, cultural and language revitalization efforts, and land rematriation of Tongva homelands for Tongva community members. Learn more about the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy at their website: (Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, "Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy," Accessed June 16, 2022, https://tongva.land/.)

[4] I use the definition of rematriation provided in Sogorea Te's Purpose and Vision webpage ("Purpose and Vision," Sogorea Te' Land Trust, accessed September 5, 2021, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/purpose-and-vision/.):

rematriation and "land back" is foundational in supporting access and caretaking for ancestral homelands, cultural revitalization, Indigenous sovereignty,[6] and self-determination efforts for these communities. California Native communities have survived three waves of colonial governments, laws, policies, and actions that continue to create enormous barriers for non-federally recognized California Native communities. These barriers include not having access to or being able to protect their homelands and sacred sites, practice and teach futures generations ceremonies, gather their medicines and plants, and fulfill their ancestral duties as the original caretakers of the land. This has not stopped unrecognized California tribal community members from building upon the inter-generational movement work that their families and communities have been a part of to advocate and practice land rematriation and "land back." I highlight the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, two case studies that exemplify and uplift the impactful work of land rematriation and "land back." By establishing and building restorative relationships with their ancestral homelands and community, Sogorea Te' Land Trust's and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy's praxis reimagines and

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"Rematriate: to restore a people to their rightful place in sacred relationship with their ancestral land." I discuss land rematriation further in the following paragraph.

[5] Throughout this thesis, I refer to unrecognized and non-federally recognized tribes interchangeably. I do this intentionally in order to highlight the complexities and varying identifiers that California Native community members have used throughout my time interviewing and conducting my research for this thesis. When I use these terms, I am referring to California Native communities that are not legally recognized by the US federal government and, thus, do not have access to their ancestral homelands through the federal recognition process. The term unrecognized does not represent the recognition, acknowledgment, histories, and relationships with other California Native communities, local governments, or other entities. By using the terminology of local community members who are unrecognized, it allows for the reader to contextualize the complex histories that have situated the Gabrieleno Tongva and Lisjan Ohlone within my research and the important processes and outcomes of land rematriation and "land back" movement work within their homelands.

[6] There are numerous discussions, critiques, and ways that sovereignty is defined and used that are beyond the scope of this thesis. When I mention sovereignty throughout this thesis, I am referring to the way that Corrina Gould, Co-Founder of Sogorea Te' Land Trust, used it in my second interview with her on August 12, 2021. She stated: "Having that one little piece of land that actually says this is who I am that gives us that *sovereignty* again. That allows us to make decisions about who we are going forward is an amazing thing. It transforms us back into human beings." It gives Native people the ability to make decisions for themselves. I feel as though Corrina's use of sovereignty is best aligned with how I wish to articulate and use it for the purpose of this thesis.

provides a space for people to re-engage and practice deep radical relationality, healing, and supports reestablishing a relationship with their homelands, culture, and one another in meaningful ways. In this thesis, through the experience of these two Native-led organizations, I will focus on local "land back" struggles and how the collaborative, Indigenous-centered focus and practice they engage in have shaped the outcomes as land rematriation.

"Land back" can be as diverse and complex as it is literal and transparent. It is central to Indigenous reclamation, cultural revitalization, relationship building, and combatting colonialism. Depending on who you are speaking to or what community you are engaged with, "land back" can refer to language revitalization, repatriation efforts, stewardship of ancestral lands, waters, foods, and cultures. Ultimately, it is a movement that encompasses diverse and creative tactics with the overall goal of returning Indigenous lands to Indigenous care and decision making. "Land back" centers Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty, with the understanding that connection to ancestral land is directly related to cultural revitalization, consent, health, and community well-being. "Land back" also highlights the importance of consent and acknowledges the violations of non-consensual relationships, interactions, and actions that have historically been forced upon Indigenous peoples. "For the Tongva, our true goal is to be good stewards of our homelands again. This is the objective behind the "land back" movement, which simply seeks to return available land back to the Tribal communities from which it was taken."[7]

[7] Wallace Cleaves and Charles Sepulveda, "Native Land Acknowledgments Are Not the Same As Land," *Bloomberg*, August 12, 2021, (accessed September 1, 2021), https://www.bloomberg.com/tosv2.html?vid=&uuid=b3f609d2-2faa-11ed-810f-625a6c644d6f&url=L25ld3MvYXJ0aWNsZXMvMjAyMS0wOC0xMi9uYXRpdmUtbGFuZC1zdGV3YXJkc2hpcC1uZWVkcy10by1mb2xsb3ctYWNrbm93bGVkZ21lbnQ=.

Similarly, Sogorea Te' Land Trust defines rematriation as a process "to restore a people to their rightful place in sacred relationship with their ancestral land."[8] "Sogorea Te' Land Trust names this process of returning land to the indigenous stewards "rematriation," recognizing the ways that native land stewardship also can undermine the patriarchal paradigm of capitalistic landownership and possession."[9] Rematriation highlights the importance of dismantling patriarchy, acknowledging the destructive role that it has played within colonialism, and positions the process of connecting and building relationships with ancestral homelands in order to combat and undermine colonial norms, laws, and policies. Through this acknowledgement process and praxis, Indigenous centered praxis is vital and is in direct contrast to the legacy of reinforced colonial systems. Indigenous communities' interaction and history with colonization ensures that land rematriation and "land back" are interconnected. When we are discussing prioritizing self-governance and sovereignty, the right to choose and implement and the ability and structural support to give genuine consent through "land back" efforts, it also calls upon the evaluation and examination of how patriarchy is a part of the core values and policies within the historical and current colonial system. So, when Indigenous communities start to discuss, address, advocate, and implement "land back," they are also critically interrogating and rejecting the societal foundations of patriarchy, thus potentially engaging with, and practicing land rematriation in the process. Place and relationship to land is inseparable for Indigenous people. Because of this, land rematriation and "land back" has a direct impact on Indigenous cultures, self-determination, sovereignty, and well-being. Ultimately, "land back" and land rematriation is about reclamation, revitalization, and combating the erasure that colonialism tries to accomplish.

[8] Sogorea Te' Land Trust, "Purpose and Vision."

[9] K. Nicole Wires, and Johnella LaRose. "Sogorea Te' Land Trust Empowers Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the San Francisco Bay Area," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, no. 9 (2019): 33.

It is about repair, healing, and centering Indigenous lifeways through land rematriation and "land back."

In this introduction section, I lay out my positionality as an Indigenous researcher, scholar, and community member. I tell a story of how I focused my research on Indigenous land rematriation and "land back" efforts in California. I provide my academic and community methods that are both centered in Indigenous knowledge and praxis and provide details of how these methods support my research, relationship building, and actions within this thesis project. I include a detailed account of how I started to engage with these methods through storytelling of local relationship building. Following this introduction, in Chapter 1, I provide a brief California Native history with an emphasis on how this history has affected the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone)[10] and Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians[11] communities. In Chapter 2, I present the reader with information about what "land back" mean for California Native people including the fact that "land back" and land rematriation has multiple definitions and meanings. These two concepts connect California Native people to their culture and identity. In Chapter 3, I introduce a concise history, give details and a critique of federal recognition as well as how the impact of being unrecognized continues to cause hardship for the Lisjan Ohlone and Gabrieleno Tongva communities. In Chapter 4, I articulate the importance of "land back" movement building and emphasize its intergenerational legacy. I

[10] Throughout my thesis, I use the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone) and Lisjan Ohlone interchangeably. Part of the Lisjan Ohlone's traditional territories are located and currently, most often referred to as Oakland, California. Learn more about the Lisjan Ohlone at their website: https://villagesoflisjan.org/.

[11] When I mention the Gabrieleno Tongva or Tongva in this thesis, I am specifically referring to the community members I was in conversation with from 2020 – 2022 who created the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy and are a part of the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. The San Gabriel Band was established before the California Native American Heritage (NAHC) Contact List and is older than any of the other Tongva groups. The Gabrieleno Tongva's ancestral territories are located and currently, most often referred to as the Los Angeles Basin, and the islands of Santa Catalina, San Nicholas, San Clemente, and Santa Barbara in California. Learn more about the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians at their website: https://www.gabrieleno-nsn.us/.

describe the movement work that Sogorea Te' Land Trust was a part of in creating and building their organization and the land rematriation impact it has had on the community. In this chapter, I also document the formation of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy and the process that the Gabrieleno Tongva community members took to reclaim a portion of their ancestral homelands. In detailing both of these land rematriation community organizations, the main themes that continue to be centered are Indigenous-centered practices, relationship building, cultural revitalization efforts, and land rematriation/ "land back"/ land access. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I name the "land back" practices that the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy and Sogorea Te' Land Trust are involved in. The "land back" practices that both organizations have been engaged with are focused on connecting community with their homelands and culture. In this last chapter, I include community voices on the impact of land rematriation work and suggestions that these communities recommend for those who would like to support "land back" efforts. Lastly, I close out this chapter with a reflection on how these two case studies of "land back" in California are powerful examples of Indigenous sovereignty and highlight the importance of relationship building and Indigenous-centered praxis within rematriation efforts. Throughout my thesis, I use the voices and knowledges of California Native people who have created and are a part of these organizations because they are the experts in the work that they do and are leaders within their communities.

Throughout my time connecting and engaging with this research, I built relationships with and committed to centering Gabrieleno Tongva place-based praxis within my research as a *Kuuy*.[12] I understood that my research interests were based upon three main pillars: the

[12] I use the singular word *Kuuy* instead of the plural *Kuuyam* as I discuss my specific relationship and positionality as a guest in my thesis research and practice. Dr. Charles Sepulveda defines *Kuuyam* [plural] on page 41 in his article "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility:" *"Kuuyam* is an Indigenous theorization that disrupts the dialectic between Native and settler through a Tongva understanding of non-natives as

importance of land rematriation and "land back", Indigenous-centered praxis, and relationship building. Through my research, I concluded that all three of these pillars were essential to succeed in my research and were key to framing and carrying out my research topic. I was interested and motivated by the Indigenous-centered rematriation work that I was examining and what was reflected in Sogorea Te Land Trust's work and developed with the creation of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy.

Trajectory of Research Questions and Priorities:

I refined my research interests in land rematriation and "land back" efforts in California through a research paper I wrote in early 2020. In my research paper, the questions I was interested in answering were: How can communities of color and local Native Nations come together to work towards prioritizing, implementing, and honoring Indigenous sovereignty while collaborating and building relationships to make land reclamation within urban landscapes a reality together? Additionally, how can these types of projects and long-term relationships uphold, invest, and implement Indigenous sovereignty? This research paper allowed me to deep dive into researching the differences between Native land trusts and conservancies and community land trusts. What I learned was that I had chosen a complicated topic: land conservancies had vastly divergent definitions depending on who was establishing them and how they were being used. I focused on two case studies for my final paper: the Native American Land Conservancy (NALC)[13] and East LA Community Corporation (ELACC).[14] While NALC's

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potential guests of the tribal people, and more importantly - of the land itself."(Charles Sepulveda, "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7, no. 1 (2018): 41.)

[13] Learn more about the Native American Land Trust (NALC) at their website: https://www.nativeamericanland.org/.

[14] Learn more about the East LA Community Corporation (ELACC) at their website: https://www.elacc.org/.

"mission is to acquire, preserve, and protect Native American sacred lands through protective land management, educational programs, and scientific study,"[15] ELACC approached their relationship to land conservation differently. ELACC was deeply invested in land trusts to support the opportunity for green spaces and affordable, long-term housing within the urban spaces that their community lived. With overlapping, yet distinct approaches to inter-generational issues of colonialism, displacement, desecration, and gentrification in local Native communities and communities of color within California; these organizations priorities, tactics, and outcomes were different from one another's. This research paper made me realize that I would have to greatly narrow my scope for my thesis research. It helped me articulate my curiosity and engage with the structure and tools to start a multi-year journey towards my thesis project focused on non-federally recognized land rematriation and "land back" efforts in California.

At the time, in early 2020, there was a lack of academic articles focused on cultural and Indigenous based land conservancies and land trusts in California and the US.[16] I found plenty of resources and articles focused on land and environmental conservancy for protecting "open spaces," specific endangered species of plants and animals, and even affordable housing. Even though there were minimal academic articles, research, and representation specifically focused on Indigenous land reclamation and cultural conservation in California or the US, there was amazing work that was being done on the ground locally, across the state, country, and world by Indigenous peoples in-regards to this topic. Communities had been building, supporting one

[15] Nalc, "About Us | Native American Land Conservancy | Banning," accessed February 11, 2022, https://www.nativeamericanland.org/about_us.

[16] One book that was extremely helpful in learning more about Native land trusts was Dr. Beth Rose Middleton's paramount and informative book *Trust in the Land*. In *Trust in the Land*, the author interviews and provides information about numerous Native communities and organizations who are working on land rematriation, easements, land trusts, and conservation efforts within their ancestral homelands.

another, and documenting their journeys and stories along the way. They had been organizing around this idea and continuing to fight to protect their cultures, sacred sites, and homelands in truly vibrant and magnificent ways. This is how I came across the empowering work of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust.[17] "Sogorea Te' Land Trust is an urban Indigenous women-led land trust based in the San Francisco Bay Area that facilitates the return of Indigenous land to Indigenous people."[18] I became interested in the Sogorea Te' Land Trust because of their local sacred site and cultural work, actions, land rematriation model, community and land projects, and their Shuumi Land Tax.[19] I attempted to search for academic articles about Sogorea Te' Land Trust, but, again, I had trouble finding academic writing about their amazing work. I had to rely on social media and other community-based articles and resources to learn more about their work and long-term efforts to rematriate the land in the East Bay.

I continued to read more about the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the settler colonial elements that continue to affect the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone) on their ancestral territories including being non-federally recognized and being in an urban sprawl with high concentrations of wealth that directly impact and limit their community's access to a land base in their own ancestral territories. As I was learning more about the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, I felt as though there were commonalities between the Gabrieleno Tongva in Los Angeles and the Lisjan Ohlone. Similar to the Lisjan Ohlone, the Gabrieleno Tongva are not federally recognized and their ancestral territories in Los Angeles are in highly urban populated areas with vastly unequitable distributions of resources and wealth. The stark contrast of being

[17] The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Homepage."

[18] Sogorea Te' Land Trust, "Purpose and Vision."

[19] "The Shuumi Land Tax is a voluntary annual contribution that non-Indigenous people living on the Confederated Villages of Lisjan's territory can make to support the critical work of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust." Learn more about the Shuumi Land Tax at the website: https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/shuumi-land-tax/. (The Sogorea Te Land Trust, "Shuumi Land Tax," Accessed April 4, 2020, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/shuumi-land-tax/.)

unrecognized by the federal government which means that they have less access to existing programs, resources, and do not have the option for land to be held in trust by the federal government (all of these factors are a standard for federally recognized tribes) and both of their ancestral homelands being consumed by inequitable wealth, privilege, and resources are all factors that create a barrier and hardships in accessing land and being able to practice their culture within their ancestral homelands. Based off of the research I had done on Sogorea Te' Land Trust; I started researching what an Indigenous Land Tax could look like in the Los Angeles region for my thesis. My interests were focused on how an Indigenous Land Tax could be a financial option for Native Nations to obtain "land back." I intended to use the Sogorea Te' Land Trust that was created by Corrina Gould and Johnella LaRose in occupied Ohlone Territory (Oakland, California) in 2012 and the Shuumi Land Tax that was launched in 2015 as a main case study in my work. I believed that the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Shuumi Land Tax were instrumental in theorizing Indigenous centered organizing and movement work. From the beginning of my research journey, I was determined to center the Gabrieleno Tongva and Sogorea Te' Land Trust representatives' oral histories throughout my thesis to provide context of the creation, implementation, and sustainability of their land rematriation efforts in their ancestral territories.

Positionality:

As I specified my thesis topic and goals, I reflected on my positionality as a third-generation urban Native woman born and raised in Tongva and Acjachemen Homelands and currently raising my son in Tongva Territory. My positionality, identity, and cultural protocol are central to my research. My memories and the lessons I have learned throughout my life are entwined with the geography and environment I grew up within. With this in mind, I would like

to uplift Dr. Charles Sepulveda's concept of *Kuuy*[20] as particularly important in my work and research within his homelands:

> *Kuuyam* allows for a re-centering of place, and instead of dividing peoples into categories (and binaries) it allows all peoples to understand themselves as guests of the land – either they behave appropriately, or they do not. Either they act in ways that are respectful to the earth or they do not. This respect for the earth includes Native peoples ourselves – we also must recognize the sacredness of the land, including our genealogical responsibilities. We must not be complicit, but instead seek awareness of the ways in which we have been colonized. Once we are aware then we can begin the long process of decolonization.[21]

I approach Dr. Sepulveda's concept of *Kuuy* as a cultural, personal, and academic method in my research, work, and as a call to action. As a *Kuuy* on Tongva homelands, it is essential for me to recenter Indigenous knowledges, concepts, and a relationship with land in my work as a visitor and guest. Our connection to land and space as Indigenous peoples is central to our cultures and identities. For myself, another layer of responsibility and evaluation is added because of my family's generations of memories, stories, and connections to Acjachemen and Tongva homelands. For me, this additional layer reinforces the methodological importance of *Kuuy* in my work. This recentering challenges me to be accountable for my actions or inactions as a visitor and guest in direct relation to the land that raised, nourished, and taught me: land that I am a part of.

Methods:

Being guided by Indigenous methodology and centering relationship throughout this process, Indigenous studies theoretical tools are central to my thesis. Ethnographic research

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[20] I use the singular word *Kuuy* instead of the plural *Kuuyam* as I discuss my specific relationship and positionality as a guest in my thesis research and practice. Dr. Charles Sepulveda defines *Kuuyam* on page 41 in his article "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility:" *"Kuuyam* is an Indigenous theorization that disrupts the dialectic between Native and settler through a Tongva understanding of non-natives as potential guests of the tribal people, and more importantly - of the land itself." (Sepulveda, "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility," 41.)

[21] Ibid., 55.

methods and participatory action research supported my research methods and journey. I utilized interviews, archival, and secondary research in order to compose and carry out my research. I used these resources to weave together community stories and experiences, historical facts, personal experiences, policy, and interviews.

The methodological guides for my thesis rely on Dr. Charles Sepulveda, Dr. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Dr. Shawn Wilson. Dr. Wilson's articulation in *Research Is Ceremony* formulates an Indigenous research paradigm which "is relational and maintains relational accountability,"[22] Dr. Simpson's Radical Resurgence Theory and Method articulated in *As We Have Always Done* in addition to her writing about consensual relationships and action in her article "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," and Dr. Sepulveda's work in his article "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility" have grounded me in my role as an Indigenous scholar, researcher, and community member. Dr. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is a Nishnaabeg Kwe who centers her identity, culture, and language as her methods in her community and life work. She engages with the intimacy and vulnerability that learning entails, reflecting in her article "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation" that consensual action and relationships are core to land, community, and cultural work:

> True engagement requires consent… We cannot just think, write or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers on how to re-build and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement (kinetic) through lived experience and embodiment. Intellectual knowledge is not enough on its own. Neither is spiritual knowledge or emotional knowledge. All kinds of knowledge are important and necessary in a communal and emergent balance.[23]

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[22] Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 71.

[23] Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 15.

Dr. Simpson's writings and work continues to guide me to be authentic and "practice what I preach." It is not enough to speak about my beliefs. What is most important is to put my beliefs into action. We must live our beliefs through being in consensual relationship with each other and the world around us. To do this requires a restructuring of priorities and actions. So, to me, this means that this requires a whole paradigm shift to become accountable and responsible people engaging in right relationship with the land, human, and non-human beings. I repeatedly return to Dr. Simpson's eloquent and revolutionary words and work to support me in my process of learning, unlearning, connecting, and healing.

Dr. Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* has supported my growth as an Indigenous scholar. He takes his time to articulate an Indigenous research paradigm and continually brings the reader back to the foundations of relationality and relational accountability as core to any category of Indigenous research: "the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action).[24]... Indigenous research paradigm is relational and MUST be relationally accountable."[25] As an Indigenous researcher and scholar, this core value of relationality and relational accountability was central to how I approached my research. To me, it is one of the most important things that is needed in any form of research, community building, and action. Although heavily theory based, I felt as though Dr. Shawn Wilson's book also assisted me with naming the processes that I was engaging and evolving with over the last two years. Dr. Wilson articulates:

[24] Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 99.

[25] Ibid., 100.

> By using the term "strategies of inquiry," I am implying that one specific research method would not fit the subject being studied. Instead of writing down one (or several) chosen methods and planning to stick to them, I developed a general strategy of where I wanted to go. This strategy needed to allow for change and adaptation along the way. By having an end goal I would like to achieve and perhaps a process or way by which I would like to get there, I hoped to remain open to any change that the situation required. In addition to the process changing in order to achieve the end goal, the end goal also changed to meet the emerging process.[26]

When I read this and took the time to reflect on Dr. Wilson's statement; I felt that it was simple yet so profound. This was how my research was happening. First, with how my interests and research unfolded at the beginning of this section and later when I decided that it was not appropriate for me to focus on an Indigenous Land Tax and, rather, focus my research on the land rematriation and "land back" efforts that were taking place. Naming "strategies of inquiry" in my research process supported my engagement and when challenges and changes transpired, supported my process to adjust and pivot in a more holistic, fluid, and healthier way. Without forcing myself into the confines of rigid traditional research methods, I was able to assert my research within Indigenous-centered knowledge, praxis, and realities. Being able to align the diverse and expansive truths of Indigenous research gave me the space to ask deeper questions, challenge myself, and gave flexibility to stay accountable and committed to community.

Establishing Research Connections:[27]

Keeping Dr. Shawn Wilson's concepts of developing an Indigenous research paradigm through "shared aspects of relationality and relational accountability"[28] in mind, I give a more detailed account below of the next steps I took to intentionally situate myself as an Indigenous

[26] Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 40.

[27] I provide the reader with details about my process of connecting with local Tongva community members and Sogorea Te' Land Trust representatives because I hold relationship building as essential in my research and to my methods. These specifics offer context and helps emphasize the importance of this practice to the reader.

[28] Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*, 7.

centered scholar, starting on the path toward building the relationships that are central to the research.

Through many conversations, I learned that Dr. Wallace Cleaves,[29] Dr. Charles Sepulveda,[30] and L. Frank Manriquez[31] had been talking about creating an Indigenous Land Tax in Los Angeles since before the Pandemic. I knew that it was necessary to connect with them to see if my research interests could support their efforts.

I sent Dr. Cleaves an email introducing myself, naming that I was "interested in what an Indigenous Land Tax could look like [as a financial option towards "land back" in the Southern California area]" and that I "wanted to connect with local folks who are already doing this or similar work to see if this would be a beneficial and appropriate topic to pursue." Wallace Cleaves and I were able to connect over the phone on November 5, 2020.

In our conversation, I introduced myself and named my research interests and intentions. I mentioned that I was inspired by the work that the Sogorea Te' Land Trust has done up north in the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone) homelands and their creation and success with the Shuumi Land Tax. Their success and creativity with their Indigenous Land Tax and land trust inspired me to think of what this would look like in Southern California. And, if an Indigenous Land Tax was not something that local community members were interested at in the moment; another idea I had was to document community voices on "land back" possibilities in Los Angeles. I was interested in centering Gabrieleno Tongva voices and supporting Gabrieleno Tongva sovereignty efforts within my research as an Indigenous scholar.

[29] Learn more about the Dr. Wallace Cleaves in the glossary. Throughout my thesis I will use Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Dr. Cleaves, and Wallace Cleaves interchangeably.

[30] Learn more about Dr. Charles Sepulveda in the glossary. Throughout my thesis I will use Dr. Charles Sepulveda, Dr. Sepulveda, and Charles Sepulveda interchangeably.

[31] Learn more about L. Frank Manriquez in the glossary. Throughout my thesis I will use L. Frank Manriquez and L. Frank interchangeably.

Dr. Cleaves introduced himself and shared the impactful work that he has been engaged in with Gabrieleno Tongva community members. In our initial conversation, Wallace Cleaves mentioned his involvement with the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and his family's history working on Tongva state recognition in 1994,[32] his work with The Acjachemen Tongva Land Conservancy (ATLC),[33] and his support and work with the Gabrielino/ Tongva Springs Foundation.[34] Dr. Cleaves also spoke to me about working with Kimberly Morales Johnson[35] on numerous local issues including renaming a park, getting the Heritage Commission to recognize the tribe, as well as working with Kimberly, the Lassos family and Dr. Sepulveda on developing a Tongva Land Conservancy.

Wallace Cleaves shared that he was speaking with Charles Sepulveda and L. Frank about an Indigenous Land Tax and L. Frank was trying to put them in touch with Sogorea Te' Land Trust regarding their Shuumi Land Tax and then Covid hit. He mentioned that the land tax is very important and something that could be a way to support cultural and community projects. He also expressed his resistance and hesitation due to the reality that "it [an Indigenous Land Tax] will really be contentious." I asked Wallace Cleaves if he thought it would be appropriate for me to gather research on how an Indigenous Land Tax could be implemented in Southern California, if it's beneficial, or if it is something that would not be appropriate for me to research.

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[32] Dr. Wallace Cleaves mentioned in our phone conversation on November 5, 2020, that he and his father worked with the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians and Tom Kayden on successfully obtaining state recognition in 1994 which recognized Gabrieleno Tongva people as Indigenous people of Southern California and the Channel Islands.

[33] Acjachemen Tongva Land Conservancy, "Acjachemen Tongva Land Conservancy," Accessed May 4, 2022, https://www.atlandconservancy.com.

[34]Also known as Kuruvungna Village Springs: "Kuruvungna Village Springs | Gabrielino Tongva Springs Foundation," Accessed August 8, 2022, http://gabrielinosprings.com/wpsite/.

[35] Learn more about Kimberly Morales Johnson in the glossary. Throughout my thesis I will use Kimberly Morales Johnson and Kimberly interchangeably.

He responded that it is a topic of interest, and it is going to be something that is going to come up. He emphasized the fact that the San Gabriel Band needs to be involved in this discussion. Dr. Cleaves was interested in how the topic of an Indigenous Land Tax could be approached in an area that has no federal recognition and suggested that individual groups could ask for the Indigenous Land Tax or that a coalition of groups established with different organizations or groups can be donated to with a portion of the money going to each.

Wallace Cleaves reflected that an Indigenous Land Tax could be a way of getting funding to obtain and support "land back." "The Tongva Land Conservancy does not have funding. They have an offer of land that is culturally relevant and very important for them, but they do not currently have the funding to obtain it. It needs the funding first to get the land. So, it is a catch 22."[36] He highlighted the importance of doing this work in a good way, allowing people and community the choice: "this is not the only way, here are some other ways and other organizations that you can give to in the area. If they are interested in helping the Indigenous population of the Los Angeles Basin to forward their cultural autonomy and get their land back; this is a good way to do it. To have this and have it as a good option for those who want to donate."[37]

Dr. Cleaves was very gracious with his time with me, brainstorming with me possible ways that my research interests could support local community efforts. He mentioned that I could directly name organizations that could benefit from this including: The Ti'at Society,[38] the Acjachemen Tongva Land Conservancy (ATLC), Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of

[36] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, phone conversation with author, November 5, 2020.

[37] Ibid.

[38] The Ti'at Society is a Tongva cultural maritime organization. Learn more about the Ti'at Society in the article: (KQED, "Between Homelands: How a Canoe Connects a Tongva Woman to Her Tribe," accessed May 20, 2022, https://www.kqed.org/news/10524648/between-homelands-canoe-connects-a-tongva-woman-to-her-tribe.)

Mission Indians, Chia Café,[39] Mother Earth Clan,[40] Kuruvungna Springs Foundation, and really sustaining a reciprocal value system in the research that I was embarking on. The big question from our discussion was how would an Indigenous Land Tax in Los Angeles look in action and how would it function?

At the end of our conversation, Dr. Cleaves recommended that I connect with Dr. Sepulveda, encouraged me to reach out to speak with Sogorea Te' Land Trust, and suggested that I connect with L. Frank. Before I was able to reach out, L. Frank was a part of a conversation with Resource Generation Los Angeles (RGLA)[41] and Tongva community leaders that engaged the land rematriation and Indigenous "land back" topics mentioned here.[42]

I originally thought of using Sogorea Te' Land Trust as a main case study, highlighting their Shuumi Land Tax as an example of how an Indigenous Land Tax could be implemented in the Southern California urban environment and context, when I was researching land trusts in 2020. On November 20, 2020, I Zoomed with Ariel Luckey,[43] Development Director with the Sogorea Te' Land Trust. Ariel shared with me his history with Sogorea Te' Land Trust and how he became involved in their land rematration and Shuumi Land Tax work. He spoke about his

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[39] The Chia Cafe Collective was co-founded by Tongva Elder Barbara Drake. Learn more about the Chia Café Collective from the article: (Katherine Clark, "Chia Café Collective Educates Students on Decolonizing Their Diet," *The Occidental*, April 3, 2019, https://theoccidentalnews.com/culture/2019/04/03/chia-cafe-collective-educates-students-on-decolonizing-their-diet/2897330.)

[40] The Mother Earth Clan is made up of three Southern California Native educators including Tongva Elder Barbara Drake. Learn more about the Mother Earth Clan from the article: (KCET, "Barbara Drake, Chia Cafe Collective," Accessed July 11, 2022, https://www.kcet.org/people/barbara-drake-chia-cafe-collective.)

[41] Learn more about Resource Generation Los Angeles (RGLA) at their website: https://resourcegeneration.org/local_chapters/los-angeles/. Throughout my thesis I will use Resource Generation Los Angeles and RGLA interchangeably.

[42] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, phone conversation with author, November 5, 2020.

[43] Learn more about Ariel Luckey in the glossary and at the Sogorea Te' Land Trust's Staff website: https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/staff-board/. Throughout my thesis I will use Ariel Luckey and Ariel interchangeably.

own personal journey of learning about local Lisjan Ohlone peoples and how learning this, he realized his responsibility to local peoples and place. He mentioned that he helped Corrina Gould and Johnella LaRose create their website and supported the development of the Shuumi Land Tax platform in 2015. Ariel was a part of a team of people who figured out a progressive tax calculator for those who wanted to contribute to the Shuumi Land Tax. We spoke about the success of Shuumi Land Tax and the Indigenous Land Tax Model Sogorea Te' Land Trust had incubated across the country.[44]

Ariel and I spoke about our different experiences of being visitors on another's land and our responsibilities as guests:

> I was born in Huchiun, in the traditional territory of the Lisjan Ohlone People and was born and raised in Oakland and have basically lived in the East Bay my entire life. I feel very deeply connected to this place as my home… you know like my whole life history is deeply embedded in this landscape. And at the same time, my parents moved to the Bay Area. So, I also recognize that I am a settler here, that as a descendent of Ashkenazi Jewish and northern European people, my history and my family history on this place is very brief. I hold both of those, a very deep connection personally, and thus brief, you know, in terms of a Ohlone time, I'm just a, a very recent guest. I was nineteen before I even learned the word Ohlone. I grew up with a profound ignorance of the Indigenous people of this land, of the history of attempted genocide and colonization and really, as a young adult like after I finished college, went through a whole reeducation process for myself, trying to learn just the basics of the Indigenous history and the colonial history of this place and that was devastating to learn. It was heartbreaking, it was enraging, And it was clear that, for me, that part of my life work would be to try to contribute towards some sort of healing that might be possible on this place. This place that I call home, where I live, where I'm raising my children. And if that felt like part of my relationship and a responsibility, I have been really in, in response to Corrina's invitation trying to figure out what it means to be a good guest on this land. To be able to live here in a respectful way and balanced way. And in an appropriate way. And you know, what does that mean in terms of rematriation? And what does that mean in terms of redistributing wealth, and changing the way our society and our laws, and all of our system manage land, and make decisions about land and use land and you know, all of those things…

Although Ariel and I have different histories, lineages, and lives; it was meaningful, informative, and inspiring to speak and connect with him about his experience and his amazing

[44] Ariel Luckey, Zoom meeting with author, November 20, 2020.

work with Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the local Lisjan Ohlone and urban Native community. After speaking with him, my research vision and goals became that much clearer. Ariel was supportive of my research interest, mentioning that he had ties to Los Angeles, and would love to support and see an Indigenous Land Tax created in Los Angeles. He encouraged me to not just write about it, but to support the creation of one that is so necessary and needed. We had a great conversation and I promised to follow up once my thesis work started to move.

After connecting with Ariel, Dr. Charles Sepulveda and I were able to Zoom on November 21, 2020. I started our Zoom meeting thanking him for taking the time to meet with me and opening up with a brief introduction and update regarding my research interests and intention. My thoughts were that my research topic and information focused on Indigenous Land Tax could potentially be a resource for local folks to utilize to support local community efforts towards "land back" initiatives and projects. This could be a part of a larger conversation and financial option towards "land back;" towards engaging with direct action for folks across the board. I was interested in his thoughts about my thesis and research ideas, and I also wanted to ask permission to use his writing on *Kuuyam* as a method. I felt like a huge component of what I was interested in highlighting was direct action. So, focusing on one component, an Indigenous Land Tax, as an action component of how land rematriation efforts can be moved for the Tongva community seemed to be something that could be beneficial as a research topic.

Dr. Sepulveda recommended that I get my IRB done as quickly as possible so that I could start my interviews and engage with the topic as I am having these conversations with different people. He mentioned that it will help me lay out what the research is doing, and the questions that I want to answer, and to think of it as kind of a guideline for myself. He highlighted that

centering “land back” was important and that it would be beneficial to name Indigenous organizations that people could financially contribute to.[45]

A few days after meeting with Dr. Sepulveda, Ariel introduced me via email to Ian Schiffer[46] from Resource Generation Los Angeles (RGLA) who was interested in implementing an Indigenous Land Tax in Los Angeles and wanted to connect to local people. Through this thread, Ian and I coordinated a time to talk about our interests. When solidifying a meeting time, Ian mentioned that he organized with RGLA. I had heard of the engaging and transformational work that Resource Generation has supported with. I realized that this conversation was not going to be just about my research interests, so I looped in Wallace Cleaves and Charles Sepulveda the same day via email.[47]

Wallace Cleaves and Charles Sepulveda were responsive and supportive. Dr. Cleaves mentioned that it would be important to bring Kimberly into the conversation so that tribal governance is involved. I responded to Ian confirming a Zoom meeting and introduced Wallace Cleaves and Charles Sepulveda into the conversation.[48] Before our first Zoom, Dr. Cleaves included L. Frank to be a part of the conversation and meeting on December 14, 2020.

Before confirming our first Zoom with RGLA, I was able to connect with Kimberly Morales Johnson. Wallace Cleaves connected me with Kimberly so that I could meet with her and further discuss my research interest with the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians’ Tribal Council and community and to decide whether my research should be a

[45] Dr. Charles Sepulveda, Zoom meeting with author, November 21, 2020.

[46] Learn more about Ian Schiffer in the glossary.

[47] This was an important meeting and was a defining moment of connecting these two different groups of people: The Gabrieleno Tongva and Resource Generation Los Angeles (RGLA). This was a foundational meeting to this process!

[48] Indigenous Solidarity Organizing in LA Email Thread, December 1, 2020.

formal proposal to the board or of I just needed to keep the tribe and council informed. We were able to meet over Zoom on December 10, 2020.[49]

Kimberly had hesitations about financial topics (like an Indigenous Land Tax) and reflected on the fact that anything to do with money often becomes an issue and had created conflict amongst different people and groups in past experiences. I understood her hesitation and agreed. If it was not appropriate or time to focus on an Indigenous Land Tax, I respected that. She also named that she had already had conversation with community members and knew that it [an Indigenous Land Tax] was something that was going to be brought up and acted upon whether they were involved in the conversation or not (and, with these types of things, they historically have not been given a seat at the table). With her own air of rightfully focused caution, she said that she would be open to connecting more about this and me focusing my topic more broadly on this subject. Kimberly suggested that I look into providing resources and information regarding issues that have been affecting their community including protecting White Sage. She named that uplifting something that is common ground and an issue that we are all fighting for is supportive and helpful. I asked if discussing and refocusing on oral narratives and what community members envision and see as "land back" would be a topic that she thought would be beneficial to focus my research on. Kimberly said that she thought Tongva community members would engage with that and offered some community members to possibly follow-up with. I thanked her for talking it through with me and for offering me her time, honesty, and support. As our conversation was coming to an end, Kimberly stated that it would be good for

[49] The week that Kimberly Morales Johnson and I were originally planning on meeting, a Tongva Elder, Barbara Drake, passed away on November 19, 2020. Because of Barbara Drake's passing, Kimberly and I met on a later date. Barbara Drake's passing rocked the Gabrieleno Tongva community and all who knew her. She had done foundational cultural and community work for and with her community. There was a passing of another respected Elder, Julia Bogany a couple months later on March 28, 2021. Over the last two years, both of these Indigenous matriarchs were named as driving forces, as motivation in establishing and carrying out commitments in reclaiming Tongva lands and spaces. They gave so much to their community and their community wanted to honor them in ways that were showing themselves in these moments.

me to present to tribal council so that we are doing things in a good way and keeping the community informed. I agreed.

I was able to present my research interests, IRB information, and share more information about the first two meetings we had had with RGLA regarding the land rematriation support to the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians' Tribal Council and community on January 6, 2021, over Zoom. The community members and tribal council asked a few questions including more information about the Sogorea Te' Land Trust's structure and programs as well as more information about RGLA. Kimberly supported me in answering questions and supplying additional information.

I conducted two interviews with Corrina Gould[50] and Ariel Luckey from Sogorea Te' Land Trust on June 17, 2021, and on August 12, 2021. I reviewed my research and their history and programs from their website. I used the original questions I had submitted with my IRB to formulate more specific questions regarding their work. I prioritized the most important ten questions and saved the others in case I had more time. I used TapeACall to record and create a transcript of our interview and I also used Zoom to record a video. After my first interview, I learned that it took about an hour to get through six questions. This helped me prioritize my questions for my second interview with Ariel and Corrina. I reviewed my questions, combined and specified what I could, and practiced. In my second interview with them, I did a bit of grounding through updating them about what was happening in Los Angeles with land rematriation efforts. I felt as though doing this set the tone in a good way. From there, I pressed record, started off with a few follow-up questions, and completed the second and final interview with Sogorea Te' Land Trust. I reflected on the time spent interviewing Corrina and Ariel and

[50] Learn more about Corrina Gould in the glossary and at Sogorea Te' Land Trust's Staff website: https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/staff-board/. Throughout my thesis I will use Corrina Gould and Corrina interchangeably.

thought about the significance of their work. They were demonstrating how to be in radical relationship through the foundation of Indigenizing realities. They have multiple elements and projects, all stemming from the relationship of listening to the land and organizing for the ancestors. Their work exemplifies another way, another reality beyond capitalism and colonialism that focuses on land rematriation.

Over the last two years, I have kept Sogorea Te' Land Trust representatives and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy group updated about my research. This has included meeting and checking in with community members, emailing my IRB documents, thesis abstract (from IRB), my study plan and thesis timeline (Fall 2020 – Spring 2021). I also included twenty-seven Sogorea Te' interview questions I created before my first interview with Sogorea Te'Land Trust, and fifteen Tongva community interview questions I drafted. I did not end up directly interviewing Gabrieleno Tongva community members. I used my notes from meetings and conversations that took place over the 2020 – 2022 time period during the development of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy.

I provide a detailed account above as to how I became involved in this work and research because relationship building is one of my main methods. I have been able to be a part of the conversations that established and created the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. I was a *Kuuy* in these conversations and built relationships with the people who were involved, thus these conversations and relationships helped position me in this research. As the meetings continued and the focus and movement work became clearer – so did my research, focus, and my commitment to supporting Gabrieleno Tongva land rematriation efforts.

Chapter 1: A Brief California Native History:

"Our relationship with land cannot heal until we hear its stories."[51]

California Native communities have a distinct and unique history. Since first contact, California Native communities have battled against oppression and domination by outside forces.[52] They have always been active in defending their lands, waters, communities, and sovereignty. Throughout three distinct and ever-growing waves of colonization, California Native peoples actively mobilized Native groups using diverse methods to ensure that their communities, lands, cultures, and future generations continued. The ongoing impact of colonialism, genocide, and violence has disrupted Californian Native communities, yet these communities continue to exist and revitalize their cultures.[53]

California Native peoples experienced three different colonial occupations and exploitations of their lands, lives, and culture through the Spanish period (1769 - 1821), Mexican period (1821 – 1848), and American period (1848 – present). All three of these occupations were

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[51] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Second hardcover edition, (Minneapolis, Milkweed Editions, 2020), 9.

[52] I will not go into detailed and holistic accounts of these three waves of colonization that have been forced upon California Native communities, rather I will give brief overviews with a few examples. My intent with this information is to give the reader context and not to focus on the violence towards Native peoples which, unfortunately, has historically been a large focus of non-Native research in connection to Native peoples across the globe. As Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy mentioned in her conversation with UCLA's American Indian Studies Graduate Cohort in 2021: "I wanted them [the reader] to understand that this is not about their attempted genocide of us, we existed before that, we will exist after that, and the story I want to tell is about us; not about what they tried to do to us." Native scholars and researchers documenting and acknowledging the violence that has been done to Native people is essential, and Indigenous peoples have diverse and complex histories, stories, and lives before and beyond colonialism that are important to uplift.

[53] In articulating and summarizing a brief history of California and unrecognized tribes in California in this chapter and in chapter 3, I have cited from Dr. Olivia Chilcote's and Dr. Charles Sepulveda's dissertation work and knowledge as Californian tribal member of unrecognized tribes. Dr. Olivia Chilcote's and Dr. Charles Sepulveda's work is meticulously researched and has supported my growth in this research. I reference a substantial amount of their dissertation work to give context regarding the historical processes, overwhelming influence, and hurdles that being unrecognized in California has on tribal communities. This is important to detail and dissect within my thesis because the two case studies I use are organizations that are created by individuals who are from unrecognized tribes. They have committed to land and cultural rematriation on their own terms despite being unrecognized by the federal government within their own homelands.

violent, exploitative, and detrimental to all of California's Indigenous ways of life and culture. These three oppressive governments not only attempted to annihilate California Native ways of life, but also destroyed, altered, and exploited the plants, animals, land, and waters.[54]

The Spanish, Mexican, and American governments were draconian systems of oppression that relied on the exploitation and theft of Native lands and waterways, Indigenous labor, sexual violence, enslavement, and exploitation of Indigenous knowledges to benefit and create wealth for themselves.[55] To state it simply, these governments came to pillage, extract, and gain wealth by any viable means. They were obsessed with power and control through domination and were intent on being a colonial parasite[56] to Indigenous people. One example (of many) of the Spanish's systems of violent control was within their mission systems that they established throughout California. Spain proclaimed title to Native land through the Doctrine of Discovery, which led to the establishment of 21 missions in California. All of the missions relied on the pilfering of plants, animals, environment, waters, and of Native lands as well as on the submission, control, and enslavement of Native bodies.[57] The California mission system and the

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[54] "One of the most devastating impacts of colonization was the destruction of resources that tribal members tended for generations. Tribes were violently driven from their lands for reclamation projects and industrial development." (Middleton, *Trust in the Land*, 18.)

[55] There are numerous books, articles, and publications written by California Native scholars and researchers that detail the impacts of the Spanish, Mexican, and American colonial governments on California Native people's lifeways, cultures, and environments as well as the resiliency and ingenuity of California Native people. Some examples are M. Kat Anderson's *Tending the Wild*: *Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*, Cutcha Risling Baldy's *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies*, Deborah A. Miranda's *Bad Indians*: *A Tribal Memoir*, and Damon B. Akins and William J. Bauer Jr.'s *We Are the Land: A History of Native California*.

[56] I define colonial parasite as a structure and system of governance that extracts and mauls Indigenous peoples of their lifeforce and resources. This is similar to what Dr. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz names on page 60 in Chapter 4 of her book *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* as "settler parasites" who are a community of extractors who completely depend on Native peoples' knowledge and resources for their survival.

[57] On page 64 in Dr. Olivia Chilcote's dissertation "The Process and The People: Federal Recognition in California, Native American Identity, and the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians," she emphasized the destruction that the mission system wreaked on Native California, naming that the padres and solders control was "multilayered because it did not just directly affect Native Californians by means of social control, aggressive interaction, and gendered

foundation of incarceration and control of Native bodies in California must be mentioned because the California mission system utilized the church, state and economic power to attempt to dominate the California landscape and its inhabitants. A prime example and oppressive structure that was established by the California missions were *monjerios*. "These dorms [*monjerios*] were small- mostly unventilated spaces where Indian women and girls were locked up at night to keep them virginal and separate from the men. In the corner of the room was either a hole or a bucket where the women could relieve themselves and the barred windows were placed high on the walls in order to both keep them from escaping and to discourage communication between inside and outside."[58] Within the mission structure, *monjerios* were specific and intentional buildings that aligned the purpose of the mission's oppressive structure in controlling Indigenous women and their reproduction through physical force. These physical structures manipulated and attempted to control Indigenous communities, labor, resources, and land. *Monjerios* were used as spaces of imprisonment for young Native girls (as young as seven) and women and were justified in their usage as a means to "protect" the baptized Indians of the missions. In Dr. Sepulveda's dissertation entitled "California's Mission Projects: The Spanish Imaginary in Riverside and Beyond," he explains that the *monjerios* were the first structures used to imprison Native California women by literally controlling their movement, interactions, and reproduction. They did this in the most inhumane ways possible, by reducing Native women and girls to less than cattle or livestock and locking them up in order to control. Within these spaces, the *monjerios* were causes of death and disease for California Indian women in the missions.

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violence. Spanish colonialism also brought new pathogens and domesticated plants and animals that drastically changed the natural landscape, practices of Indigenous landscape management, and the relationship between California Indians and their environment." (Olivia Michele Chilcote, "The Process and The People: Federal Recognition in California, Native American Identity, and the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians," Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley (2017): 64.)

[58] Charles Anthony Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects: The Spanish Imaginary in Riverside and Beyond," Dissertation, University of California, Riverside (2016): 59.

Furthermore, these first models of prisons were opportunities for priests and Spanish soldiers alike to have access to Native girls and women sexually.[59] Throughout the literature, it has been documented that syphilis affected the Native populations imprisoned within the missions and *monjerios*.[60] Given the information and accounts that are provided in-regards to sexual violence; it is not too far of a reach to correlate these diseases (to be more specific sexually transmitted infections like syphilis) "caught"[61] within these small confines with the sexual exploitation and violence happening to young girls and women incarcerated within the *monjerios*.[62] The levels of control and violence enacted on Indigenous girls and women's bodies were to be the foundation and model of control and conquest that would be replicated within the carceral system. To fully encompass the power and influence of the settler-state, Dr. Sepulveda summarized this trinity of power:

> The Mission system in California was rooted in not only colonialism and Catholicism, but the two were bound to an economy of global trade. This triad, Church, military and capitalism, was inseparable as it functioned symbiotically in an interdependent relationship. While there were disagreements between the Church and Spanish military

[59] (Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 6.): Dr. Charles Sepulveda gives a detailed analysis of the documented accounts of California Native girls and women's imprisonment within the *monjerios*. The author also provides an overview of diseases and sexually transmitted infections, particularly syphilis, within the missions that prevailed due to the incarceration of and violence towards California Native girls and women. He includes a critical examination regarding the way that historians and researchers exclude or seem uncomfortable to mention the context of how California Native girls and women were contracting syphilis within the missions.

[60] Documentation and discussions about syphilis within the California mission can also be found in M. Kat Anderson's *Tending the Wild*: *Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*, Robert H. Jackson and Edward D. Castillo's book *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on the California Indians* and in James A. Sandos' book *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions*.

[61] Dr. Sepulveda notes on page 62 in his dissertation "California's Mission Projects: The Spanish Imaginary in Riverside and Beyond" that "[In these histories] the rape of Indian women is often told in a passive voice that deflects the issue and does not lay blame on anyone." By doing this, it is easy for authors, historians, and others to normalize the violence and passively detach from critically evaluating and accounting for the intentional rape and sexual violence that was used as a mechanism of control and domination by the Spanish through the mission system. (Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 62.)

[62] Ibid.

> for example, those arguments did not disconnect one from the other. Colonialism functioned through all three.[63]

This tri-pronged approach further solidified the role and function of settler-colonialism as a long-term project, utilizing Californian Native women bodies as food for its growth and survival. Through all this, California Native peoples still exist(ed) and resist(ed).

The devastation of the Mission system and Spanish colonialism transformed within the Mexican period focused upon colonialism and occupation. The Mexican periods reign of destruction and exploitation was mobilized through land theft and oppressive systems of labor. During this period, secularization[64] passed. Although secularization was written into policy and documented, this policy was often ignored, and California Native people were still displaced from their lands and violated.[65] Dr. Charles Sepulveda documented in his dissertation:

> In fact, tribes under Mexico (1821- 1847) lost more land than through Spanish colonialism (1769-1821). This dispossession can easily be seen through the granting of land to non-Indians by Mexican authorities. Very few land grants were given to individual Indians, and neither tribal sovereignty nor indigenous property were honored in the granting of huge tracts of land to non-Indians[66]… Despite Mexico having abolished slavery in 1829, Indians continued to be enslaved to provide labor on Californio ranchos.[67]

No matter what colonial force was presiding in California, California Native people where continually displaced, violated, and were consistently exploited and "punished" for the

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[63] Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 68.

[64] "The mission lands were parceled out in the form of Mexican rancho land grants and some tracts of land became Indian pueblos. Under Mexican law, rancho land grants had a clause that excluded lands in use and occupied by an Indian village." (Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 67.) Although this was written into policy and documented, this policy was often ignored, and California Native people were still violently displaced from their lands and violated.

[65] In Dr. Olivia Chilcote's dissertation footnote 123, she explains: "The Mexican period (1821-1848) and end of the mission era also greatly impacted Native peoples' access to land – as non-Native/private residents took over large tracts of land and used Native people as very low-wage laborers." (Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 46.)

[66] Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 117.

[67] Ibid., 118.

resources that their homelands provided and the labor that could be extracted from them. Even when a policy or law was created that seemingly supported the Native population; historically, the enactment of said policies or laws excluded and further harmed the California Indian population to a large extend.

The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo installed a new colonial entity, the American period. Dr. Chilcote communicates the continued violence and colonial repercussions directly impacting California Native people as the oppressive government shifted: "The battles over land ownership and acquisition were furthered by genocide in California… The creation of an environment in which Indian people were denied basic rights facilitated genocide in California."[68] Dr. Sepulveda explains that "as non-whites,[69] they [California Natives] had no legal right to property and could not use the court system. The beginning of the American period in California established a genocidal system."[70] With laws, policies, media, and the government structure intentionally set on "… a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races, until the Indian race becomes extinct…:"[71] California Native peoples had no means of recourse or protection. These intentional and structural acts to destroy a specific group of people defines an act of genocide. Genocidal policies and practices increased with the settler discovery of gold in 1848 in Coloma, California. Because of this, California's population drastically

[68] Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 72.

[69] Dr. Charles Sepulveda explains: "whiteness functioned not as a rigidly defined concept predetermined by skin color or biological decadency, but as property, fluid and extendable to those with property and political and social status." (Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 130.)

[70] Ibid., 122.

[71] Peter H. Burnett, "Governor's Annual Message to the Legislature, January 7, 1851,"
Journals of the Senate and Assembly of the State of California, at the Second Session of the Legislature, 1851-1852, (San Francisco: G.K. Fitch & Co., and V.E. Geiger & Co., State Printers, 1852), 13. This was a brief excerpt from the first governor of California as he proclaimed and vigorously supported genocide against California Native people.

increased: "The Gold Rush period is representative of one of the most horrific state and federally funded genocides of Indigenous peoples, and those who came to California during this time did so at the cost of Native ancestral lands, traditional resources, and lives[72]… Many of these people set up homesteads or bought parcels of land during that time at the expense of Native claims to land."[73] In 1850, the California Legislature passed "An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians" that allowed the enslavement of Native peoples including children.[74] These acts of Indigenous enslavement, encroachment and stealing of Native land, and exploitation of Indigenous land, waterways, and resources were made possible by the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, the Land Claims Act of 1851[75] and the failure on the part of the California Legislature to ratify the 18 treaties in California. Dr. Chilcote notes that, "scholars of genocide in California contend that the legal environment, created by politicians in the California State Legislature who were heavily influenced by public sentiment, made possible the disenfranchisement, dispossession, and murder of California Indian people."[76] The American period continued and expanded on the legacy of creating structural oppressive policies and laws that resulted in further dispossession and assaults on Native people and tribal groups within California. Around this same time, these foundational acts were coupled with social commentary and "academic research" that worked to erase California Native peoples and communities and

[72] Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 48.

[73] Ibid., 72.

[74] Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 122.

[75] "The 1851 Act to Ascertain and Settle the Private Land Claims in the state of California, also known as the Land Claims Act, was informed by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo's requirement for the U.S. to recognize and legitimate land claims created under prior sovereigns. Any land claims found invalid or not presented to the land commission within two years would enter the public domain and become available for homesteading and preemption… The federal agents reported that Spanish and Mexican law only recognized Indian land ownership over settled lands as opposed to the entirety of the state." (Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 75-76.)

[76] Ibid., 73.

popularized the categorization of what "real and authentic Indians" were as well as racing to collect and document all they could before California Indians "disappeared." "What was significant to anthropologists such as Boas and Kroeber was the past prior to "contamination" through Western contact. Kroeber viewed the Native populations of California as non-existent culturally beyond 1850."[77] The significance and influence of Boas and Kroeber's work supported the erasure, oppression, and control over California Native peoples through their "expert advice and opinions" on what a real Indian was. These categorizations and documents were used to define who was California Native and who was not. Dr. Sepulveda reflected on the impact of this, stating that: "California Indians have been reduced in historical and anthropological sketches to be merely those acted on, erasable, as objects composed of otherness."[78] Although anthropological documents and recordings have helped some tribes in California revitalize their language and cultural practices, the logic and method of these anthropologists were used to dispossess California Native people from their lands, cultures, and identities. The American government continues to be a powerful force in legalizing and implementing colonial structures of domination, displacement, control, and power over California Native communities and tribes.

Corrina Gould, a Lisjan Ohlone community leader and co-creator of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, reflected in our interview:

> You know, in our territory... there was colonization that happened consecutively. And so, who do we begin to start that with? Is it the Spanish government and the missions that they brought here? Should they give back all of that land that the Catholic church has? Yes, they should. They should definitely do that. When there were these Ranchos that were broken up into large tracts of land and our ancestors were taken off of those missions that we were enslaved in and enslaved us in our own territories again. So the Mexican Government, have something to do with that? Yes they do. And so, do they

[77] Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 43.

[78] Ibid., 18.

> have some reparations to pay? Yes, they do… When the United States government totally annihilated us through their own laws that started California, and then erasing us off of the federal list of tribes. Do they owe us something? Yes they do. And so, when we look at all of that, we have three different governments that have come into our territories, that have created genocide on our people in three different ways. And do they all owe something because of the way that they made money and profit off of our land and the genocide of our people? Yes. And so those conversations need to be had and I think that when we're looking at restorative justice, that's what we're talking about. It's bringing in those people to the table who [are] going to be the representatives for all of those people to come to the table to talk about what it is that they're going to do to reverse, to change, to make better what they've done over the last two hundred years.[79]

As Corrina revealed above, all three colonial systems have a lot of work to do to make amends for the legacy of devastation and destruction that they have and continue to cause on California Native people. They are all complicit and have a responsibility in taking action steps due to their intentional acts of violence and genocide targeting California Native peoples. The Spanish, Mexican, and American governments created the policies, laws, structures, and outcomes that have foundationally disrupted and continue to hinder California Native communities' self-determination. All three have played a pivotal role in the creation of a colonial, anti-Indigenous, highly exploitative, hostile, and violent political, legal, economic, and social structures that accelerates and continues settler policies. This history and violent legacy will not be something that will go away. There needs to be acknowledgment, action, and restoration done with consent from California Native people.[80]

Colonial oppression in California directly ensnared the Ohlone and Tongva communities and continues to disrupt both of these communities' cultures, practices, hinders them from protecting their cultural and sacred sites and ancestors as well as their efforts to live as sovereign

[79] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[80] There is not a singular answer to this. The question of reparations and the responsibilities that these three colonial governments have in creating and upholding these oppressive structures came up multiple times in conversations with Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Dr. Charles Sepulveda, and Corrina Gould. It is important to mention here that the perspectives, process, and "answers" to what this would actually look like are varied and diverse.

peoples. Despite this, these communities continue to revitalize their cultures, languages, ceremonies, and actively work towards reclaiming and reconnecting with their ancestral homelands and waterways. The profound and impactful land rematriation efforts and organizations that members of these two tribal groups have created are the two main case studies in my thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, I will provide a brief history and focus on the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone) and the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians to give the reader background of these two groups of California Native peoples.

A Brief History – The Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation:

The Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone) ancestral homelands are in the East Bay, San Francisco Bay Area, and territories span five Bay Area counties. The Lisjan Ohlone are unrecognized by the federal government which has resulted in the ongoing struggle to access land, obtain resources, and protect sacred sites and buried ancestors. They are one of seven tribal groups who were enslaved at Mission San Jose and Mission Dolores.[81] The Lisjan Ohlone speak Chochenyo.[82] As settlers' populations increased and stole Chochenyo homelands during the Gold Rush, they also destroyed and desecrated Ohlone shellmounds to build their towns and cities. Ohlone shellmounds are sacred burial and cultural mounds that are in the Bay Area. Nels Nelson created a 1909 map documenting 425 shellmounds. As of today, the majority of the shellmounds have been leveled and paved over.[83] The displacement and erasure of the Lisjan Ohlone community and the urbanization and development of the Bay Area that led to the

[81] Confederated Villages of Lisjan, "Tribal History," May 26, 2021, https://villagesoflisjan.org/home/tribal-history/.

[82] Confederated Villages of Lisjan, "Cultural Revitalization," May 26, 2021, https://villagesoflisjan.org/tribal-work/cultural-revitalization/.

[83] Confederated Villages of Lisjan, "Shellmounds of the Bay Area," July 7, 2021, https://villagesoflisjan.org/home/shellmounds-of-the-bay-area/.

destruction of the majority of the shellmounds are a direct result of settler-colonial laws, policies, and actions.[84] Lisjan Ohlone tribal members organize to protect and educate others on the importance of protecting the shellmounds and the importance of accessing sacred sites, waterways, and land for their community.

A Brief History – The Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians:

"The Gabrieleno/ Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians (AKA) "Gabrieleno Tongva" is the Historically Traditional Tribe within the County of Los Angeles. The Gabrieleno Tongva occupied the entire Los Angeles Basin and the islands of the Santa Catalina, San Nicholas, San Clemente and Santa Barbara, and from the mountains to the sea."[85] In AnMarie Mendoza's thesis entitled "The Aqueduct Between Us- Inserting and Asserting an Indigenous California Indian Perspective about Los Angeles Water," she identifies key developments that aided in enslaving, exploiting, and erasing Tongva ancestors: "…the Spanish wave of colonialism that began in 1769 with that the establishment of San Gabriel Mission. This led to the founding of El Pueblo de Sobre el Rio de Nuestro Senora la Reina de Los Angeles del Rio de Porciuncula in 1781, where the community was the first source of exploitable labor to the Spanish."[86] Kimberly Morales Johnson mentions that the Tongva community have sacred sites all over Orange and Los Angeles County and that some have been completely destroyed. She explains the colonial heritage of exploitation and violence against Tongva people and the lineage to the founding of Los Angeles:

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[84] The Sogorea Te Land Trust, "Lisjan (Ohlone) History & Territory," Accessed October 1, 2021, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/lisjan-history-and-territory/.

[85] Gabrieleno (Tongva), "About | Gabrieleno (Tongva) Band of Mission Indians," Accessed June 13, 2022, https://www.gabrieleno-nsn.us/about.

[86] AnMarie Ramona Mendoza, "The Aqueduct Between Us- Inserting and Asserting an Indigenous California Indian Perspective about Los Angeles Water," Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles (2019): 9.

> In 1850, Los Angeles had a mayor by the name of Alpheus P. Hodges. And it is ironic that he served as the mayor and also the coroner. He didn't receive payment for services as mayor, but, according to the historical documents that we have seen; he was paid a hundred dollars for each time he presided over the inquest of an Indian. And that's equivalent to about $3,424 dollars today. So, every time that there was a Native American that was caught in the city limits of LA for being drunk or not working, they could hang them or beat them, and he would be paid a lot of money. To prove my point further, in 1850, the governor of California issued a bounty for $17.50 to exterminate the Indians of California… there was a slave market between the years of 1850 and 1870 and, as I said, Native Americans were enslaved or killed, under the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians and so,… they were charged and… that's where they were sold – right there in downtown on Main Street.[87]

Settlers developed a system in which they were directly profiting off the abuse and death of Tongva peoples to gain notoriety, wealth, and land. Kimberly explains the social conditions and environment that negatively impacted the Tongva community further:

> But we are landless Indians – we still are today. We have countless burial sites. I've been told, back in the 60's and 70's that it wasn't uncommon for homeowners to landscape their backyard and to find relics or even human remains in their backyards, and they wouldn't know who to call. There were multiple graverobbers on Catalina Island… he also was a collector of, what they termed, "Indian bones" but what I call my grandparents and my great-grandparents – but these were the things that were on display.[88]

Due in large part to not being federally recognized, the Gabrieleno Tongva do not have the resources that are needed to protect and to stop the desecration of their ancestors. Nor do they have access or decision-making power regarding their ancestral homelands to protect their sacred sites. To settlers, desecrating Tongva ancestors was just one more way to make money and make a name for themselves in a new place, but for Tongva people; it was a complete affront and eruption of their cultural protocols and way of life. One way that settlers were able to situate

[87] Kimberly Morales Johnson, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement: New Models of Support and Reparation for Indigenous Communities," Webinar, 3rd LA Series at USC Dornsife, May 13, 2021, https://dornsifecms.usc.edu/3rdla.

[88] Ibid.

themselves so easily within the business of desecration of Tongva ancestors and culture was through a system of erasure that was already well structured and enforced.

AnMarie Mendoza highlights that:

> Los Angeles is a place that is perceived as many things, but an ancestral homeland is not one of them and it is imperative to anyone who lives in LA today to start to understand why… This is an important to understand how historians write about the original people because it will aid in understanding the struggle the tribe faces in trying to protect sacred waters in the present time. It is difficult to protect ancestral waters if you are written off in histories pertaining to your homeland.[89]

As a Tongva scholar and researcher, AnMarie Mendoza's "work aims to combat erasure so that [her] community can be visible as to better assert [their] decision making authority as a state recognized tribe."[90] This quote is particularly important when discussing the history of the Tongva because she identifies the influential role of how Indigenous erasure plays within a colonial structure: succeeding as a tool to control narratives, rewrite history, contain resources, and dominate people. The intentional and structural erasure of the Tongva community's historical presence has created a situation where the Indigenous caretakers of Los Angeles, the Tongva, are not identified as connected to their ancestral homelands. This continues to explicitly affect the Tongva community in current issues dealing with and directly impacting their culture, waters, and homelands. Similarly, Wallace Cleaves reflects on the problem of invisibility and how "it is particularly exacerbated by the fact that we live in incredibly populated metropolitan area,"[91] that they are not federally recognized, and that there are large amounts of other

[89] Mendoza, "The Aqueduct Between Us." 6.

[90] Ibid., 7.

[91] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement: New Models of Support and Reparation for Indigenous Communities," Webinar, 3rd LA Series at USC Dornsife, May 13, 2021, https://dornsifecms.usc.edu/3rdla.

Indigenous groups which has, at times, "aided in further erasure within their own homelands."[92] Naming and critically analyzing the historical impact and colonial strategy of erasure, as AnMarie Mendoza, Dr. Cleaves, Dr. Sepulveda, and Dr. Chilcote do throughout their work as California Native scholars and researchers helps to frame the historical and present-day context of dispossession and disruption of Tongva self-determination and sovereignty. Wallace Cleaves names that his homelands are:

> … a place with a rich history. Our own history goes back 10,000 years and more, to creation. We are the descendants of all of our ancestors which are the rocks and the trees and plants and the animals. The is a place that is profoundly ours and it was never a desert… People often think of Native environments as completely natural that we lived in harmony with, but we altered, improved, and maintained our environment. It was a conscious, symbiotic relationship. So, it was not a desert until the missions came and destroyed the land, cut down those oak forests, and raised animals that were never meant to be here on that land.[93]

The importance of centering California Native people's voices and the lasting effects of California's colonial history on the Lisjan Ohlone and Gabrieleno Tongva:

Corrina Gould offers insight into the impact of erasure and a way that California Native people can build with one another, and facilitate honest conversations about how to reimagine and reconnect to their ancestral homelands:

> You know, I think that for us [California Native People] that were in the missions, you know, most of our territory is urbanized. So, it's very difficult for people to understand or to see the landscape of what has been here. When all of our waterways have been coverted underground, you don't understand the relationship between the land and the waters and the human beings anymore. I think that's a way that California Natives come together, that's a way for us to begin to really talk about how do we see these landscapes again? How do we reimagine it in a way that people are living here in our territories? And how do we do that?... It's just an invisibility in your own land and indescribable invisibility so that you, that nobody knows who you are, what you are talking about,…

[92] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

[93] Ibid.

> we know that you are all dead, so it makes it okay… take over your land and to destroy your landscapes.[94]

By naming and acknowledging, uplifting, and prioritizing Indigenous centered voices and narratives, the formal historical account implodes. When local California Native voices and histories are respected, told, and upheld the vast complexities and richness of local Native culture and lifeways cannot be dismissed or erased as easily as they have been in the past. These stories and foundational insights allow others to glimpse a miniscule example of the devastating impact that the missions and colonization have on California Native people, the environment, land, waters, and cultures.

Both the Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone) and the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians' ancestors survived the Spanish mission system. Large, historically wealthy, and powerful urban landscapes are within both tribes' homelands while the Lisjan Ohlone and the Gabreieleno Tongva are unrecognized by the federal government. Due to these factors coupled with the legacy of colonial violence and exploitation, both communities have been fighting erasure of their cultures, tribes, peoples, sovereignty, and struggle to gain access to their homelands and be acknowledged as sovereign Native California tribes.

The Lisjan Ohlone and the Gabrieleno Tongva have fought for generations to access their tribal lands and cultures and have continued to use whatever means necessary to ensure that they are revitalizing their cultures. Kimberly Morales Johnson reflects about her community:

> I am proud to say that we have a strong community that has survived. I am proud to say that we have various cultural workshops and revitalization of our language. And we are working everyday with multiple cities, museums, and academic institutions to continue our legacy. And we do practice and maintain our traditions. We still have ceremony. We

[94] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

> still make regalia. We're still learning, and we are reclaiming, and we are teaching our kids.[95]

Some community members are hopeful that there are California bills and actions that have been taken to support protecting and supporting California Native tribal communities. More specifically, Charles Sepulveda cited "California Assembly Bill 52 and Senate Bill 18 which require notification and consultation with California Indian Tribes listed on the California Native American Heritage Commission Sacred Land's File when tribal cultural resources may be impacted by development"[96] as well as naming Governor Gavin Newsom's acknowledgement and apology "on behalf of the state of California for the historical violence, exploitation, disposition, and attempted destruction of tribal communities." So, this is a great step in going forward – going in the future. But as Wallace Cleaves said, "we need space to preserve our culture."[97] These recent gestures are in the right direction: acknowledgement is a starting point – not a destination. There are lifetimes of action and restitution that is owed to California Native tribal people.

[95] Kimberly Morales Johnson, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

[96] Dr. Charles Sepulveda, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement: New Models of Support and Reparation for Indigenous Communities," Webinar, 3rd LA Series at USC Dornsife, May 13, 2021, https://dornsifecms.usc.edu/3rdla.

[97] Kimberly Morales Johnson, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

Chapter 2: What Does "Land Back" Mean for California Native Peoples?

"We are story makers, not just storytellers."[98]

California has immense language and cultural diversity.[99] If you ask California Native people what "land back" means to them, you will receive a diverse variety of answers. Given the expansiveness of their cultures and languages along with the intensely violent and volatile colonial history that California Native people have survived; it is to no surprise that there is a range of outlooks, perspectives, and realities. A common thread that constantly presented itself within the conversations that I was a part of was the importance in centering California Native people's relationship to their homelands and waters, protecting their ancestors, revitalizing their cultures and languages for their community and future generations, and being able to protect, advocate, and make decisions for the betterment and caretaking of their ancestral homelands – as the original caretakers of the land. Dr Sepulveda reflects that: "The world of Californian Indian ancestors are our lands, our cultures, and even our names for ourselves. What we are dispossessed of is something we cannot fully know…none of us will have the ability to fully comprehend what we have lost because we have never lived the lives our ancestors did."[100] Place and the relationship to land is inseparable for Indigenous people. Because of this, land rematriation has a direct impact on Indigenous cultures, self-determination, sovereignty, and well-being.

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[98] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 341.

[99] "California is home to an enormous diversity of tribes, tribal homelands, and Native languages, as well as one of the most egregious histories of genocide of Native peoples and disregard for Native land rights." (Middleton, *Trust in the Land*, 34.)

[100] Dr. Charles Sepulveda, "Abolition on Stolen Land." Webinar, UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality & Democracy, October 9, 2020, https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/abolition-on-stolen-land-with-ruth-wilson-gilmore/.

In my conversations with Corrina Gould, she expressed that her connection to the land and to her ancestors are entwined:

> Our relationship with land is that we have an unbroken tie to this place since the beginning and I have the opportunity to speak on behalf of my ancestors who have lived here forever and whose cemeteries and sacred places have been destroyed because of colonization and so that continuously connects me back to the land… Our land is connected, I'm connected to this land that I call home because our ancestors prayed for us to be here today… I do, of course, the work for the ancestors so that they're not forgotten and with them not being forgotten then we're not forgotten either.[101]

Corrina reflects further about the connection to her homeland and how it grounds her in the work that she does for her community:

> And so, you know the connection to the land is being able to have our arbor for the first time in two hundred fifty years, to have that sacred fire, to have ceremony here again. To have the language coming home to re-engage with our medicinal plants and our food ways and to be able to work with other Indigenous people and allies in our territory to really dream about how this can be, how we can sustain ourselves, how do we reimagine our lives on this land together? How do we create something that's outside of these colonial boxes? And so, it's exciting, you know, as well as challenging. And so, the connection to land really grounds me in the work that I am doing here and I'm just thankful to be alive today.[102]

The work that is being done with Sogorea Te' Land Trust is bringing Californian Native and Lisjan Ohlone revival work full circle. The "land back" process has given the opportunity for Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the local community to create and build together, outside of the rigid colonial structure. Corrina states:

> And so, I look at the billboards going up in Tongva land right now, right? And that's part of it. That's part of "land back," that's part of claiming the space again. That's about saying that we still exist, that we are still here, that our ancestors have been here forever and it's putting that right out in the public eye for conversations to begin to do that kind of work. And that's important, it's important work. Having the name changed from Andrew Jackson Park to Chochenyo Park in Alameda is a way of doing that. Creating

[101] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[102] Ibid.

> those relationships with the city and county entities, with non-profit organizations that hold up the work that you're doing as well.[103]

As mentioned in the beginning of this section and further shown in the example above, "land back" is diverse and has various action components attached to it. At its core, "land back" and land rematriation are about reclamation, revitalization, and combating the erasure that colonialism tries to accomplish. It is about repair, healing, and centering Indigenous lifeways.

For L. Frank, "The language is a big part of our reclamation in California… The reciprocity for us being here is that we are of service."[104] Language is central to how California Native people are able to engage with themselves and their culture. Furthermore, L. Frank recognizes the responsibility that comes with being connected to her ancestral homelands and practices, what that represents, and the responsibility that comes with that as a Tongva person. Wallace Cleaves further emphasizes the importance and roles that are essential to Tongva community and culture as well as the importance that this brings to all communities when land rematriation efforts are honored and fulfilled:

> Why is that ["land back"] so important for us? Because, we don't have our own space to perform the ceremonies that we need to perform. We don't have our own space where we can [get] the materials, the food stuffs, the ceremonial items, the basket making materials, all of the other things that we need to continue to preserve, promote, and develop our culture… our duty is to be caretakers of this land. And, we need to have a space where we can perform that, where we can do our ceremonies, where we can gather, where we can educate… We want to help everyone have a better relationship with this place that is the home of so many, but we need to have our own space to do that. Tovangaar is our world. And it is more than just the land. It is our connection, our relationship with the land. It is our ancestral place.[105]

Having access to land through "land back" efforts is essential to carry out Tongva responsibilities as caretakers and to practice and live their culture. When California Native

[103] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[104] Manriquez, L. Frank, First Tongva & RGLA Meeting, Zoom, December 14, 2020.

[105] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

people can fulfill their roles as Indigenous peoples and strengthen their relationship with the land, thus strengthening their relationship with their culture, language, ancestors, and each other; they are able to also guide and nurture the reconnection and healing of the land. This process benefits everyone's relationship with the land and with the original caretakers of Tovangaar.[106]

In our two interviews, Corrina reflected on what "land back" efforts mean to and could look like for California Native people:

> So, I think the unifying voice in California can also be around this apology, that Newsome made, right? This apology that he made for the genocide… so then what do you do with that, right? Do you just create these Truth and Reconciliation conversations where we get to go and tell our truth and then what does it do? It sits in a binder and then nobody hears about it again, or do you actually take action and re-engage the Native people in their own land?... So then do you work to reverse the federal government's policies of genocide and give us all federal recognition? Do you put your resources behind ensuring that our children have education, that they have a land base, that they have medical insurance? Do you do that? Is that what the federal government is saying when they apologize? And I think, you know, that is a unifying thing. There were so many California Indians that were unilaterally wiped off of the federal recognition list, but that's the way to do that. That is a way for us to maybe begin to come into right relationships in that way.[107]

Coming into right relationship, acknowledging, and taking action to address the harms that have been done to California Native communities is central to healing and moving forward. Above, Corrina is reflecting on Governor Newsom's apology that was made to California Native peoples in 2019 and addresses what would actually be helpful. Two main topics are apparent in Corrina's reflection: federal recognition and land. These two issues go hand in hand. What Corrina is asking is if this apology has action behind it. And, if so, this action should be meaningful to right the wrongs that have been forced upon California Native people. Recognize

[106] Dr. Wallace Cleaves mentioned during the "Beyond Land Acknowledgement: New Models of Support and Reparation for Indigenous Communities," Webinar on May 13, 2021, that: "Tovangaar is our world. And it is more than just the land. It is our connection, our relationship with the land. It is our ancestral place. It is, you know, parts of Los Angeles County, it is the coast, it is the Channel Islands, it is parts of Riverside, and Orange County as well."

[107] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

tribal groups and make their ancestral homelands accessible to the original caretakers of the land, to California Native people. This is a call for justice through federal recognition, support, and "land back." In Corrina's own words:

> I think that "land back" is the best thing. How do we become human beings again and work in relationships and reciprocity with our land? And then once we are able to do that, how do we bring other people, that are now guests on our territories, back into that right relationship to work alongside of us to fix the harms that have happened up here… How do we become human beings so that we can all survive this, together?[108]

Once land is returned to California Native people and the issue of federal recognition is acknowledged and addressed; the possibility of attending to relationship building and repairing harm can start to be assembled. California Native people have various ideas of how to accomplish this, but what seems to be clear is the essential action that needs to be taken in order for California Native people to access, care for, and rematriate their ancestral homelands. The necessity to be able to access their homelands and exercise their self-determination as sovereign peoples is fundamental to the health and well-being of all people's relationship with the land and future.

[108] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

Chapter 3: The Thing About Recognition for California Native Nations:

"As such, healing is a return home; a connection with relatives and ancestors in place."[109]

Currently, there are 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in the US.[110] According to the Office of Federal Acknowledgement (OFA): "The acknowledgment process is the Department's administrative process by which petitioning groups that meet the criteria are given Federal "acknowledgment" as Indian Tribes and by which they become eligible to receive services provided to members of Indian Tribes."[111] Tribes within the US can obtain federal recognition through a president's executive order, through an act of Congress, by taking their recognition case to court and obtaining a ruling, or by petitioning through the Office of Federal Acknowledgement (FAP). The federal recognition process is arduous, complex, and expensive. This process has also been critiqued for relying on anthropological and colonial records to "prove" tribes' existence and connection to their homelands. These modes of authentication invalidate and disregard oral or cultural narratives as valid sources. The same records, policies, institutions, and agencies that were created to displace, destroy, erase, and exploit tribal nations are also the same entities that are relied upon to "prove" that a tribe has the valid claim to be federally recognized by the government that attempted to exterminate them. In an attempt to support a more realistic and supportive process, the BIA modified its criteria for tribes to apply for federal recognition in 2015. The main requirement that was updated was the requirement that tribes must provide proof that they have been identified as

[109] Middleton, Elisabeth, "A Political Ecology of Healing," *Journal of Political Ecology* 17 (2010): 9.

[110] "Tribal Leaders Directory | Indian Affairs," Accessed June 5, 2022, https://www.bia.gov/bia/ois/tribal-leaders-directory.

[111] "Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) | Indian Affairs," Accessed June 11, 2022, https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/ofa.

Indian on a consistent basis since 1900 instead of the original criteria that stated that tribes had to prove their identity and presence since contact.[112]

There are 109 federally recognized tribes in California[113] as well as four tribes who have cultural and ancestral affiliations to California lands but whose tribal residence is located outside of California. "State tribal recognition does not confer the same benefits as federally recognized tribes; it acknowledges tribal status within the state but does not guarantee funding from the state or federal government… In California, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) is required to keep a list of non-federally recognized tribes that meet certain criteria with whom city and county governments must consult when they amend a general plan."[114] Thus, the NAHC Contact List was specifically created for cultural monitoring (financial) purposes. In California, there are about 87 different contacts associated with unrecognized tribes listed on the Native American Heritage Commission's (NAHC) Contact List.[115] Dr. Chilcote reflects on California Native history and how this has deeply impacted the relationship with federal recognition:

> The histories of Spanish and Mexican colonization in the state, the U.S. federal government's historical uneven treatment of California Indian tribes and people, the legacy of state and federally funded genocide, and the denial of treaty ratification make it difficult, if not impossible, for California tribes to meet criteria for federal acknowledgment. These difficulties are compounded by the historical and contemporary

[112] "25 CFR 83.11 -- What Are the Criteria for Acknowledgment as a Federally Recognized Indian Tribe?" Accessed June 8, 2022, https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-25/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-83/subpart-B/section-83.11.

[113] Federal Register, "Indian Entities Recognized by and Eligible To Receive Services From the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs," January 28, 2022, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/01/28/2022-01789/indian-entities-recognized-by-and-eligible-to-receive-services-from-the-united-states-bureau-of.

[114] "State Recognition of American Indian Tribes," Accessed July 7, 2022, https://www.ncsl.org/legislators-staff/legislators/quad-caucus/state-recognition-of-american-indian-tribes.aspx.

[115] There may be multiple bands associated with a tribe's name, thus, there may be less than 87 unrecognized tribal groups within California. Without more focused research on the diverse and multiple bands of California Native Nations, I am not able to list a specific number of non-federally recognized tribal nations that are identified on the NAHC Contact List in California. This goes beyond the scope of my thesis.

realities of colonization, in environmental and cultural terms, of tribes throughout the state.[116]

The complex and violent waves of colonial rule and oppression in California make it exceptionally difficult for unrecognized tribes to gain federal recognition.[117] Because of the distinct colonial history that California tribes have faced, they are often not able to meet the seven main criteria that the Office of Federal Acknowledgement requires to obtain federal recognition. The termination of California tribes through The California Rancheria Act of 1958[118] (which was made possible through the Federal Termination Act of 1953) targeted and terminated forty-one California tribal nations of their federal status as well as six more California Rancherias through an amendment in 1964. As a direct result, California has the most unrecognized tribes of any state in the US. AnMarie Mendoza states in her thesis "The Aqueduct Between Us- Inserting and Asserting an Indigenous California Indian Perspective about Los Angeles Water" that "Erasure is aligned with the settler colonial mentalities that attempted to

[116] Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 39.

[117] Assembly Bill 1968 (AB-1968), the Tribal Land Acknowledgment Act of 2020 reads in part: "California is home to nearly 200 tribes. Had the 18 original treaties with California Indian tribes been honored by the state and federal government, California Indian tribes would possess over 7,500,000 acres of land. Today, California Indian tribes collectively possess about 7 percent of their unratified treaty territory. Despite federal and state efforts to erode ownership, control, and visibility, California Native American people remain actively engaged in cultural revitalization, resource protection, and self-determination within every region of California. Systematic denial of Native American knowledge, cultural authority, and historical experiences perpetuates the colonial structure of oppression." (Tribal Land Acknowledgment Act of 2020, AB-1968, https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1968). Although this bill did not pass, I cite AB-1968 for the truth of the matter that it asserts.

[118] During this same time period, the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 was created to motivate the relocation of Native peoples from across the US to move from their reservations into urban locations. The goal of relocation was to assimilate Native people, cease the federal obligation and relationship that tribes had with the United States Government, and to acquire tribal lands. This was carried out through false promises of resources, jobs, housing, and financial support. These two policies have had lasting effects of erasure and displacement on California Native communities.

physically wipe out indigenous populations."[119] In California, the history of genocide, erasure, and the hurdles to obtain federal or even state recognition are clear examples of this.

Federal recognition is a controversial topic. There has been thoughtful dialogue and research led by Indigenous scholars across the globe who engage the complex, colonial, and contradictory topic of recognition. Some of these researchers and scholars include Dr. Glen Sean Coulthard in his book *Red Skin, White Mask*, Dr. Taiaiake Alfred's numerous articles and discussions including his webinar titled: "Resurgence of Traditional Ways of Being: Indigenous Paths of Action and Freedom,"[120] Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask's *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* along with so many others. These three authors particularly analyze and discuss the limitations of recognition and how, when tribal nations engage with and validate colonial recognition; they lose so much more than they gain. In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Dr. Coulthard "argue[s] that instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of *reciprocity* or *mutual* recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend."[121] Dr. Coulthard examines how the process, structure, and history of recognition has never been consensual and how it furthers the goal of settler-colonial powers and agenda. Ultimately, to Dr. Glen Sean Coulthard, the prerogative of recognition validates and solidifies a structure that causes more harm than good to Native Nations and peoples. Recognition legitimizes the US colonial government; solidifying settler colonialism and

[119] Mendoza, "The Aqueduct Between Us," 36.

[120] Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawa:ke), "Resurgence of Traditional Ways of Being: Indigenous Paths of Action and Freedom," Arizona State University Library Channel, December 12, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ABP5QhetYs.

[121] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 3.

its mechanisms. Similarly, in Dr. Alfred's discussion "Resurgence of Traditional Ways of Being: Indigenous Paths of Action and Freedom," he reflects:

> Legal aspect of self-governance and rights [in Canada], can advocate and fight for this; but still doesn't address fundamental aspect of what our ancestors knew and what our traditional teachings tell us what is… in order to succeed as a rights bearing citizen of Canada and the courts; you have to become a citizen of Canada… cultural suicide to assimilate into the larger society.[122]

For Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, the focus of arguing for recognition within the colonial legal system wastes the precious time and energy that should be focused on building the practices and culture of their people:

> "We don't have two or three generations to argue for recognition within the courts, while our culture is dissipating more and more… The real priority is strengthening the foundation – as who we are as a people. Anything that contradicts or takes energy away from that [cultural foundation] primary enterprise, that primary task, that primary goal is, is harmful really. It's a harmful thing."[123]

Both Dr. Coulthard and Dr. Alfred are addressing recognition from a First Nation's[124] context. Although both of these Indigenous scholars and researchers are specifically naming the issues of recognition within their own tribal nation's geography in Canada; their contributions and research are beneficial and insightful when discussing federal, state, and colonial recognition in the US and particularly in California.

In Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask's book focused on the fight against the various violent and exploitative abuses of colonialism against her Hawai'ian homelands and sovereignty as Indigenous peoples of Hawai'i, Dr. Trask's profoundly reflects on identity and recognition by the US colonial entity:

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[122] Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, "Resurgence of Traditional Ways of Being," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ABP5QhetYs.

[123] Ibid.

[124] First Nations are how some Indigenous people in so-called Canada refer and identify themselves as.

> The experience of a legal identity is, as all identities, both psychological and political. Who we believe ourselves to be is often *not* what the colonial legal system defines us to be. This disjunction causes a kind of suffering nearly impossible to end without ending the colonial definitions of who we are. Barring this, we are constantly in struggle with government agencies and, sometimes, with our own people. We are besieged by state powers attempting to decrease our numbers and therefore our claims by merely defining us out of existence. Or, we are categorized in a manner alien to our cultures in the hopes of strangling our ancestral attachments to our own people.[125]

The power that colonization and "recognition" through legal identity that Dr. Trask mentions above has deep and lasting impacts on the Indigenous people who are defined and controlled by the effects of these decisions. There is no solace or compromise and thus offers no amount of peace or restitution for Indigenous people who, just by existing, are unreconcilable in state and colonial terms.

Others, like Dr. Chilcote, articulate the limitations that federal recognition possessions for a sovereign nation like her own, naming that: "Critiques of federal recognition point out that if it is considered the pinnacle of "success" for contemporary tribes, then it only serves to reaffirm the hegemonic framework of privileging the structures of the dominant colonial society that sovereignty is accepted within."[126] She understands the limitations and harm that the recognition process produces for tribal nations:

> It is especially crucial for Native peoples in the United States not only because of the ways in which settler colonialism operates through the dispossession of land, but also because claiming a racialized and politicized Native American identity reveals how land and power are uniquely tied to definitions of indigeneity and sovereignty. Because of this, Native identity remains controversial and contested into the contemporary, and the FAP [Federal Acknowledgment Process] is one way that contests over tribal legitimacy endure within the United States. Using federal recognition through the FAP as a lens for viewing Native identity exposes just how powerful a federally approved Indian identity actually is—with all of the material, political, social, and legal benefits at stake in the

[125] Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii,* Revised Edition, (University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 104.

[126] Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 32.

> definitional authority. The FAP acts as a gatekeeper and has the power to both limit and control tribal authority and Native identity.[127]

Yet Dr. Chilcote stresses the importance of pursuing federal recognition because her tribe, like many others, believes that it is the best route to take in the reality that they live in.[128] Relatedly, Dr. Sepulveda echoes the reality and "costs" of being unrecognized as a California Native tribal member:

> Although recognition by the state has recently been widely critiqued in Native Studies, and rightly so (Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson, 2011, 2015), one of the many consequences un-recognized tribes continually experience is exemplified in the above example: lack of contact and nation-to-nation consultation by the federal government for inclusion in early participation in actions taken within the tribe's territory.[129]

Dr. Charles Sepulveda clearly articulates the ongoing whiplash in real time for unrecognized tribal communities including his own. The impacts are detrimental and attempt to deconstruct and obstruct unrecognized tribal nations from being included in advocacy, discussions, and decision making within their own homelands, territories, regarding their ancestors, and cultures. Dr. Sepulveda also critically analyzes the tension and changing relationships when federal recognition is involved:

> You know there are some tribes that have gaming that are making money off of our homelands right, that they have investments in our homelands and, you know, do a lot of business there or they [are] advertising their casinos; you know, they are making money off of our lands. And, yet they are not giving any of that back to us, right. And so that is just another way in which federal recognition, you know, incorporates tribes into the system instead of working against the system. It incorporates them into the system, especially economically, right. It's not to say that gaming is bad, but it does produce a way of viewing land differently and, instead of being in relationship with our peoples,

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[127] Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 31.

[128] "While the FAP [Federal Acknowledgement Process] and its associated bureaucracy are problematic on a number of levels, unrecognized tribes from California consistently engage with the process regardless. They do so because the goal of campaigns for federal recognition is the formal acknowledgment of tribal sovereignty, or the right to self-government." (Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 62.)

[129] (Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 50.); Dr. Charles Sepulveda further contents: "Not including the un-recognized tribes is a direct violation of the U.S.'s obligation through its support of the United Nation's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2007)." (Ibid.)

> they decided to not have that relationship in a lot of ways. And, you know, just go the economic route instead of the Indian route.[130]

Charles Sepulveda reflects in the above passage on the dynamic of recognition, capitalism, and relationship with the land. When recognized tribes are so focused on making money and benefitting from a colonial system, they are not focused on challenging the colonial system or building relationship with the land, unrecognized tribes, or other tribal people. For some federally recognized tribes, the focus and energy has shifted from building relationships with the land and people and working with other California tribes to advocate for their sovereignty to a more extractive goal and business.

L. Frank reflects on the federal recognition process and how these topics are connected to canoeing with multiple tribal people:

> When we get in the canoe with all of the hundred canoes in Washington, canoes of Indigenous peoples from around the world: there's no blood quantum, there's no paperwork, there's no politics, there's just a moving village. So, everybody is who they are according to their canoe. And, so I have witnessed, not once, not twice, but four times, I have witnessed the possible. And that's what I am hoping for in our homelands and all the homelands in California. I think that the more that the federally recognized recognize the absurdity of a system on one piece of paper says that you are real and another says that I am not, that they would choose to stand, again, you know, more with us. I just hope that that happens, and that's what I'll work towards.[131]

To L. Frank, the logics of federal recognition don't make sense in a moving, living group of people who are working together to live, practice, and revitalize their cultures. The actual requirements that are demanded to obtain federal recognition are requirements that do not aid tribal nations who are working to practice or revitalize their cultures. Furthermore, being federally recognized does not make one group of California Native people real while the others are not. Even though obtaining federal recognition could be a source of support for tribes to

[130] Dr. Charles Sepulveda, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

[131] L. Frank Manriquez, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement: New Models of Support and Reparation for Indigenous Communities," Webinar, 3rd LA Series at USC Dornsife, May 13, 2021, https://dornsifecms.usc.edu/3rdla.

access resources and protect their homelands, federal recognition in itself does nothing to incubate and strengthen the culture that is a part of California Native communities.

Wallace Cleaves emphasized that with the dynamic between federally and non-federally recognized tribes and the overall federal recognition process, the importance of "land back" and creating their own way of achieving their land rematriation efforts are important now more than ever:

> …hope that federally recognized tribes will continue to assist us but it does speak to why we need to do this the way we are doing it. Why we need to pursue "land back" and have an organization, a non-profit that is supporting our people, our community, and our "land back" efforts. Because the federal recognition process is so problematic and frankly for many non-recognized California tribes broken, that we have to find other ways… So we are pursuing other ways to get our land, to get our land back and to have access to it…[132]

The barriers to land access due to the lack of federal recognition is a fact for the majority of unrecognized California Native tribes. This has resulted in unrecognized California Native people utilizing their creative ingenuity and innovative methods to access and pursue "land back" within their ancestral territories.

California does not claim to recognize tribes on a state level, even though there are two tribes who have been formally recognized[133] through the California Legislature: The Juaneno Band of Mission Indians and The Gabrielino Tongva.[134] Both tribal groups are in the Southern California region and are neighboring tribes.

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[132] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

[133] "The federal government has also legitimized state recognition by allowing state-recognized tribes to access certain funding and resources based on the legal status. In California, there are currently two tribes recognized by the state… the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians and the Gabrielino-Tongva Tribe are the only official state-recognized tribes in California." (Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 35.)

[134] (Assembly Joint Resolution No. 96 Relative to the Gabrielinos, AJR 96, (1994), http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/93-94/bill/asm/ab_0051-0100/ajr_96_bill_940913_chaptered.)
The Gabrielino Tongva are formally recognized by the state of California through the California Legislator Bill AJR 96 in 1994. In the legislation, the result states, in part: "Resolved by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the State of California recognizes the Gabrielinos as the aboriginal tribe of the Los Angeles Basin and takes great pride in recognizing the Indian inhabitance of the Los Angeles Basin and the continued

In Dr. Olivia Chilcote's dissertation entitled "The Process and The People: Federal Recognition in California, Native American Identity, and the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians," the author goes into significant detail about the difficulties of the federal recognition process and how federal recognition (or lack thereof) affects unrecognized California tribes as well as her tribe's history and identity as the only non-federally recognized tribe in San Diego County and the only non-federally recognized band of Luisenos. In her opening abstract she states:

> The United States maintains an artificial hierarchy amongst Native American tribes by acknowledging, or recognizing, some tribes' inherent tribal sovereignty over others. Tribes are considered federally recognized or unrecognized not because of intrinsic differences, but rather the history of their interactions with the government. Without a federally recognized sovereign status unrecognized tribes are often landless, are denied protections from federal laws designed to aid Native people and tribal nations, are unable access to federal resources for education or health services, and are limited in their ability to practice self-determination.[135]

In this brief synopsis, Dr. Chilcote effectively summarizes the government's historically detrimental impact on tribal communities through the federal recognition process. She articulates the contradiction of how tribes are recognized, or not, through the relationship they have with the government and the devastating impact that non-federally recognized, unrecognized, unacknowledged and terminated tribes still have to grapple and live with. Without federal recognition, Native tribal communities are not able to access basic services and resources. It is hard for them to uphold a sovereign infrastructure that has been attacked since colonialism. These facts coupled with the reality that "unrecognized tribes are often landless," leaves

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existence of the Indian community within our state…" Furthermore, one of the Tongva groups were working with elected officials to pass a bill in the California Legislature to create a state reservation near Compton Creek in 2008 (Gabrielino-Tongva State Indian Reservation Act, SB 1134, (2008), http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb_1101-1150/sb_1134_bill_20080131_introduced.html.) The bill did not pass in the Senate, but this information contributes to the fact that California has, in fact, acknowledged and stated their recognition of the Gabrieleno Tongva as a state recognized tribe.

[135] Chilcote, "The Process and The People," 1.

unrecognized tribes in volatile and vulnerable positions. It is not only difficult for non-federally recognized tribes to access resources and advocate for their people, but it also creates a barrier for tribal members to access cultural and sacred sites and protect their homelands – making it harder for California Native people to practice their cultures.

How this affects the Lisjan Ohlone:

The Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Lisjan Ohlone) are one of many tribes in California who are not federally recognized. They are officially recognized by the City of Oakland[136] and are on the Native American Heritage Commission's Contact List. Corrina Gould reflects on the federal recognition requirements:

> "The requirements of this [federal recognition] process are so onerous that achieving recognition is virtually impossible, especially for tribes whose ancestors were enslaved in the California Missions. Of the eight petitions submitted by Ohlone tribes since 1988, not one has led to approval… For me, it does not matter whether or not this government recognizes us. My ancestors recognize who I am, and who we are supposed to be right now. And so, this work is for them."[137]

As I engaged in conversation with Corrina Gould and Ariel Luckey from the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, the structural hurdles and repercussions of being unrecognized was a topic that came up prevalently in our discussions and interviews. Corrina reflected in our first interview that: "We did not even know what a land trust was when we started a land trust. That's, that's the truth. We were working for over 20 years to protect our shellmounds, our sacred sites in the Bay Area. We did walks around the Bay Area for four years. Stopping at different shellmounds that had been desecrated."[138]

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[136] The City of Oakland acknowledges that "Oakland was founded on unceded Chochenyo Ohlone land, the land of Huichin, Confederated Villages of Lisjan" in its Oakland 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan (ECAP) Document from 2020 and multiple other city documents.

[137] The Sogorea Te Land Trust "Lisjan (Ohlone) History & Territory."

[138] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

Corrina's work has been driven by the urgency of protecting sacred sites to her people. She witnessed the destruction of her ancestral and cultural sacred spaces and recognizes that her ancestors are being held captive at UC Berkeley (and other institutions). Her ancestors do not have a place to be safely laid to rest because her tribe is unrecognized which means that they do not have access to their homelands or have a say in how or if their ancestors are protected. When this realization happened, Corrina reflected that:

> On those [Shell Mound] Walks for five years, we had been praying for the ancestors to come home. From UC Berkeley, holds over 9,000 of our ancestor's remains and thousands upon thousands of our funerary objects. But being non-federally recognized means we have no land base so that makes us homeless in our own homelands. And so, how are we going to take these ancestors back? If we had no land to bring them home to?[139]

Corrina Gould and Dr. Middleton reflected on the reality and challenges that non-federally recognized tribes often face in urban areas:

> [A] big reason tribes are not recognized in these areas is the extreme development of that land and extreme value of that land… you're having to buy back your own land…[140] We had no connection. We had no legal connection to our own homelands and all of this work. I think once we decided to take up that work, it just kind of began to move on its own and created this whole life of its own[141]… it's disturbing sometimes, you know, to have to do this kind of work and try to protect the sacred and to know that we were invisiblized and to have to deal with the effects of colonization and genocide… and the continuous erasure of our people.[142]

Corrina realized the dire importance of having a space for her ancestors to rest and not be disturbed again. When Corrina and Johnella decided and worked to create Sogorea Te' Land Trust, this was one of multiple issues that motivated them to embark on the journey toward co-

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[139] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[140] Dr. Beth Rose Middleton, *Beyond Recognition*. Documentary, Underexposed Films, 2014, https://underexposedfilms.com/beyond-recognition.

[141] Corrina Gould, *Beyond Recognition*. Documentary, Underexposed Films, 2014, https://underexposedfilms.com/beyond-recognition.

[142] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

creating an Indigenous land trust with the goal of reconnecting and rematriating Ohlone homelands. Her experience of bearing witness to the desecration of her ancestors and the erasure of her culture within her homelands was an issue that directly impacted her community.

How this affects the Gabrieleno Tongva:

Allowing their ancestors this respect is core to both Corrina, her tribe, as well as the Gabrieleno Tongva in Los Angeles. Like Corrina, the desecration of sacred sites, ancestors, and the lack of access to land was foundational to the Gabrieleno Tongva community members who co-created the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy in February 2022. Both named a deep desire to have a safe and final resting place for their ancestors. This was a key defining factor in wanting to secure land for their community and tribe – to let their ancestors have a resting place. In early discussions that I was a part of with Gabrieleno Tongva community members and Resource Generation Los Angeles (RGLA), these issues were crucial to building relationships and communicating the desire and necessity of land rematriation within their homelands.

The Gabrieleno Tongva's first Zoom with Resource Generation Los Angeles (RGLA) took place on December 14, 2020. The space was given for Tongva community members to introduce and lead the conversation. Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Dr. Charles Sepulveda, and L. Frank Manriquez introduced themselves and gave context to local Tongva history and current issues and needs including the erasure of their tribe within the urban sprawl of Los Angeles, the desecration and displacement of ancestors including the unearthing at La Plaza in 2010[143] and Playa Vista in 2004.[144] Charles Sepulveda highlighted the "injustice of these types of actions, not

[143] San Diego Ethnic Studies Consortium, "Removal of Tongva Human Remains," January 5, 2011, https://sdethnicstudies.wordpress.com/2011/01/05/removal-of-tongva-human-remains/.

[144] Nick Madigan, "Developer Unearths Burial Ground and Stirs Up Anger Among Indians," *The New York Times*, June 2, 2004, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/02/us/developer-unearths-burial-ground-and-stirs-up-anger-among-indians.html.; Karen Grigsby Bates, "At Playa Vista, a Controversy over Indian Remains," *NPR*, May 1, 2007, sec. National, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9940767.

as historical markers, but as current events that are still continued blasphemy on the Tongva community" and that "he sees language as a reclamation tool to support their community in remembering who they are." Dr. Cleaves discussed the work that he has been collaborating on with Kimberly Morales Johnson, Tribal Secretary of the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, since 2017 to rematriate a piece of land that a property owner wanted to give back to the Gabrieleno Tongva in Altadena, California.

Wallace Cleaves brought up a huge challenge for the Tongva community is the very real issue of displacement – many Tongva community members cannot afford to stay in their homelands. They simply do not have the economic and financial security to live in their traditional, ancestral territories. This is a huge irony, especially since Los Angeles is known as a space of opportunity and a location that people come to start fresh. He mentioned that erasure is a challenge for their community. This is amplified through the vast number of other communities, even other Indigenous communities living in Los Angeles.[145] Dr. Cleaves communicates the challenges to obtain respect of Tongva history, presence, and community:

> Our traditional territory has some of the highest property values in the country and land ownership and even rent is beyond the means of many of our community members. Increasingly, Tongva descendants, particularly our Tongva youth, have been forced to move away from Tovaangar and leave their ancestral land due to untenable housing practices and outrageously high costs of living, especially in terms of rent. It is particularly abhorrent that our community is being, once again, forced off our traditional land, this time by callous market forces. It is our hope that we can, eventually, invest in

[145] In *We Are the Land: A History of Native California* authors Damon B. Akins and J. Bauer Jr. open their chapter "*Native Spaces* Los Angeles," on page 262, speaking about erasure and naming that: "The old joke that no one in LA is actually *from* LA is a dangerous myth. And it is totally untrue. It erases Indigenous People and the idea of indigeneity itself." In this chapter, the authors discuss the significance of space, the history, and dynamics of displacement for both non-California Native and California Native (specifically Tongva) peoples. On the following page (page 263), the authors state: "Today, Los Angeles County has one of the largest American Indian populations in the United States, but that population is made up largely of Indians *from outside the LA basin and California*." (Damon B. Akins and J. Bauer Jr., *We Are the Land: A History of Native California* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 262-263.)

> sustainable housing that can provide the opportunity for our people to continue to live in our ancestral homeland.[146]

In a later meeting, he explained the implications and hurdles of being non-federally recognized[147] and thus, not having access to ancestral homelands. "Because we don't have federal recognition, we don't have a way to transfer the land to a sovereign government. Let me just clarify this: we don't have any other place at all where we have the land ownership. I understand it's under the colonial system, but there is literally no other place."[148] Kimberly and Wallace Cleaves went on to name the limitations with the minimal access and compromises that they must contend with in order to access some of their lands:

> Kuruvungna is on a lease. For the Robert Redford Conservancy, we actually have to fill out an application to gather the plants from that field station…We are very limited on how much we are able to do there. If this [site in Altadena] is private property, we would have a lot more freedom over being able to grow what we want to grow, and gather, and practice as many traditional ceremonies as we could, as we would want to.[149]

Wallace Cleaves added: "If we do have land in a non-profit that is completely controlled by Tongva people, I do think it would be meaningful. I don't want this to start and stop with this place… This is such a critical thing for us."[150] He communicates further that:

> Attempts to collect and archive such information have always been controlled by academic and inherently colonial institutions, severely limiting both the scope of such research and its ability to preserve what is actually meaningful to Indigenous communities. We must support efforts both by and for our Tongva people to record our cultural knowledge, consolidate and reconstitute the extractive research that has been performed upon us, and to expand and develop our living cultural practices. To this end we would support research by or in close collaboration with our community, preservation

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[146] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, 2022 Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Vision Statement Packet, 2.

[147] "The [Tongva] tribe must rely on government codes and executive orders requiring consultation between the tribes and state agencies because non federally recognized tribes do not have a government to government relationship with the federal government." (Mendoza, "The Aqueduct Between Us," 7.)

[148] Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

[149] Kimberly Morales-Johnson, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

[150] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

> of documents, artifacts and knowledge relevant to our community, and encourage both traditional and emerging cultural art, performance, scholarship, and practice related to our Tongva heritage.[151]

How the lack of recognition affects the Lisjan Ohlone and the Gabrieleno Tongva:

The issues that the Lisjan Ohlone and Gabrieleno Tongva have been forced to engage with are directly connected and tied to recognition, or lack thereof. Dr. Simpson points out in "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation" that "Within the context of settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples are not seen as worthy recipients of consent, informed or otherwise, and part of being colonized is having to engage in all kinds of processes on a daily basis that, given a choice, we likely wouldn't consent to."[152] Because of these tribes' history of geographic location, missionization, and erasure, it has been an ongoing unacknowledged exploitative situation where colonialism and a tyrannical government that is the United States blatantly disregards both tribes' histories, resistance, survival, sovereignty, and continued existence – directly affecting their access to protect, steward, advocate for, and access their homelands, waters, ancestors, and cultures. The United States' federal recognition process is a fraudulent system that exploits and makes it close to impossible for these tribal nations to fulfill and practice their sacred and cultural duties to their lands, ancestors, cultures, and future generations. The federal government's procedural and systematic federal recognition process essentially holds non-federally recognized tribes' hostage in an unstable limbo of exceptionally expensive and time-consuming procedures and paperwork. The monumental expenses, onerous documentation needed, and bureaucratically burdensome procedure required to engage with the federal recognition process has created the underpinnings of erasure, displacement, disconnection, and systematic hurdles. It does not allow unrecognized tribes to access resources

[151] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, 2022 Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Vision Statement Packet, 2.

[152] Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 15.

or their homelands and practice their culture or lifeways in the ways that are needed and desired. And yet, the Lisjan Ohlone and Gabrieleno Tongva continue to revitalize their lifeways and cultures and have reimagined a world outside of an "unrecognized" present. Community members from both tribes have worked to create space for their community and others to access land, practice culture, reconnect, and build with one another through land rematriation.

Ch. 4: "Land Back" Movement Building:

"Restoring land without restoring relationship is an empty exercise."[153]

To start to understand the significance, importance, and historical context of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, I provide the history of both of these communities' dedicated efforts and lifetime work committed to "land back" and land rematriation movement building. To do this, I provide a brief context of how both of these organizations were created. Through narrative and stories, I will present the process, histories, relationship building, and "land back" efforts that Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy engaged and centered in order to create Indigenous centered cultural and land rematration organizations.

From the beginnings of my conversations with Gabrieleno Tongva community members, Sogorea Te' Land Trust was an influential example to strive towards and to look to as a model of land rematriation through Indigenous- centered praxis in California. It was encouraging to learn about how impactful their work towards land rematration was while ever encompassed in culture and community. A further encouraging aspect for local Gabrieleno Tongva community members was the fact that one of the co-founders, Corrina Gould, was an Indigenous woman carrying out this revitalization work on her traditional homelands in an Indigenous-centered way. The distinct history and effects of colonization on California Native peoples, being non-federally recognized within an urban area, and struggles with the continuation of erasure, displacement, and issues of accessing their ancestral homelands were factors that were similar to the influences and hurdles that the Gabrieleno Tongva faced as well.

[153] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 338.

The Creation of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust:

Throughout my research, it was easy to trace the legacy of community work that both Corrina Gould and Johnella LaRose, the founders of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, had created, led, and supported. Their work spanned decades and created connections throughout the East Bay area and beyond. This community work and organizing was core to who they are and the work that they do. It was what brought them to create Sogorea Te' Land Trust and what continues to grow their vision of "land back" rematriation movement work.

Sogorea Te' Land Trust was co-founded by Corrina Gould (Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation (Ohlone)) and Johnella LaRose (Shoshone Bannock/ Carrizo). Sogorea Te' Land Trust is an Indigenous women led urban land trust. Corrina is the Tribal Chair and Traditional Spokesperson for The Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation[154] and lives and organizes on her ancestral Homelands of Huichen (Oakland).[155] Both Corrina and Johnella co-founded The Shellmound[156] Peace Walks in 2005[157] and Indian People Organizing for Change (IPOC) in 1999. They created this organization in direct response to the shellmound disturbances and to organize Native and non-Native peoples to take action against the desecration of Ohlone ancestors' remains, culturally significant and sacred sites that were being destroyed by development and businesses in the Bay Area. What Corrina found through organizing and

[154] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[155] Ibid.

[156] (Sogorea Te' Land Trust, "Purpose and Vision."): "Shellmounds are sacred funerary monuments, burial grounds, for Ohlone people. At one time, 425 shellmounds surrounded the entire San Francisco Bay. Every one of them has been destroyed by development. My goal is that one day, we can re-create a shellmound so there is a place for us to actually bring those ancestors home and re-inter them. With everybody helping out, it can happen."

[157] The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Lisjan (Ohlone) History & Territory."

educating the community through facilitating the Shellmound Peace Walks and protests was that people resonated with the land.[158]

In 1999, the City of Vallejo attempted to disrupt a sacred site through a public park construction project at Sogorea Te'.[159] The development plans proposed to pave partially over the shellmound, which would desecrate and disrupt the ancestors buried there. Johnella and Corrina organized through IPOC and with Wounded Knee DeOcampo (Tuolumne Miwok)[160] to support the protection of Sogorea Te'. Corrina reflected on the occupation of Sogorea Te' that drew her into "land back" rematration work in her ancestral territories:

> In 2011, we reoccupied a village site along the Carquinez Strait called Sogorea Te'. We stayed there for a hundred and nine days to stop the desecration of two shellmounds that were on that site. And we created a village there basically. There were people from all walks of life. Different Native people, Indigenous people came and stayed there to protect that land from being destroyed… It was because of the decision that the City of Vallejo had that we took that land and lit a sacred fire that lasted a hundred and nine days and there were four other fires around the world that lasted just as long and people came and had ceremony with us and brought gifts and food. But really, it was like, Johnella says, it's like, we thought we were saving the land, but the land saved us.[161]

Corrina revealed in our interview that this was a time that she remembered seeing people come together and connect with the land and each other. She witnessed and was a recipient of cross-cultural and intertribal solidarity that sparked a realization of how impactful and powerful it was for them to occupy the land after exhausting all other means. People from all walks of life came together to care for the land and keep the occupation alive. Corrina named:

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[158] *Beyond Recognition*, Documentary, Underexposed Films, 2014, https://underexposedfilms.com/beyond-recognition.

[159] A 3,500-year-old Karkin Ohlone Village and burial site at Glen Cove in Vallejo, California.

[160] Corrina Gould reflected in our first interview on June 17, 2021: "In 2011, the City of Vallejo filed bankruptcy and gave the park district $30,000 worth of permits for free in order to destroy the site. It had been a fight that Wounded Knee DeOCampo had led for over twelve years before we decided to take over the land."

[161] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

> We realized what it was like to live as human beings again, to be interdependent with one another to not have someone tell you what your job was but you figure it out in the village what your job was… it was a beautiful way to live, and we forgot as human beings what it was like to live like that. Today we go home, and we don't even know who our neighbors are, we shut the doors and we are insulated in our own spaces.[162]

Being on the land in solidarity and community with other people, putting their bodies on the line to protect a sacred site was foundational to Corrina. Realizing the impact that came from the time on the land, it validated the work that she had been doing over the decades and gave her the experience of how powerful it was for her and others to be in relationship with her ancestral lands.

The one hundred- and nine-day occupation came to an end once a cultural easement and memorandum was signed between the Patwin/ Wintu tribes, the Greater Vallejo Park District, and the City of Vallejo; all agreeing to protect the site. In 2012, the agreement was broken and desecration against the Ohlone ancestors and land was carried out to create a parking lot. Sadly, "Patwin/ Wintu tribal monitors were complicit in allowing this to occur."[163]

The violation of Sogorea Te' was devastating to everyone who was involved in the fight to protect Sogorea Te'. Corrina recalled this as a pivotal learning and growing point for her, naming it as a "better way of doing this organizing."[164] Their occupation and reconnecting with the land was paramount to her work of protecting her culture, community, and ancestors.

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[162] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[163](The Sogorea Te Land Trust, "Our History," Accessed September 5, 2021, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/history/.); In our 1st interview on June 17, 2021, Corrina Gould detailed the agreement: "It created the first cultural easement between two federally recognized tribes, the city, and the park district… The two federally recognized tribes paid I think it was $30,000 to the city and the park district so that they have the same rights as the city or park district to that land. And so that no one entity could change that land without the other twos permission."

[164] *Beyond Recognition*, Documentary.

After the occupation, Dr. Beth Rose Middleton invited Corrina to a Native Land Trust Conference in 2012.[165]

> About six months after the takeover [Sogorea Te' Occupation] was done in July… she [Dr. Middleton Manning] invited me to this meeting in Southern California on Native land trusts. And I have no idea what it was, but I trusted her, and I went and sat in a room with these, a handful of tribes, that were creating land trusts to buy back their sacred sites, to buy back land or to lease land in their own territory… in order to tell their own stories, both federally recognized and non-federally recognized tribes. And as I begin to hear the stories about this, it was like, this is what we need to do.[166]

While "Generally, land trusts in the Bay area have been used for protecting open spaces; protecting certain habitats or species of concern and protection agricultural uses,"[167] Johnella and Corrina were interested in the concept and cultural and community focused opportunity that land trusts offered. They were interested in approaching developing and creating a land trust that had a cultural focus on conservation land rematriation.

> And so, we decided that it was going to be an Indigenous women-led land trust. And that when we went to look at land in these urban areas which is my territory that has been totally urbanized and to begin to look at it as a checkerboard of these pieces of land that are sitting there unattended and how do we go back and tend to be pieces of land again and again. How do we re-engage Indigenous people? How do we tell our stories? How do we hire young people to learn the stories and to tell their stories? How do we re-engage with our medicines? How do we do those things? And that's how the Sogorea Te' Land Trust was, it was just about a blink of what we can begin to do.[168]

Through her years of experience mobilizing and organizing community, Corrina realized the powerful possibility that land rematriation could be for the community. She connected the importance of having access, stewardship, and the ability to protect her ancestral territory as a way to bring together generations of Indigenous community members to engage, learn, and heal through their culture by reconnecting and creating space on the land.

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[165] Corrina Gould, *Beyond Recognition*, Documentary.

[166] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[167] Dr. Beth Rose Middleton, *Beyond Recognition*, Documentary.

[168] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

Corrina Gould and Johnella LaRose co-founded the Sogorea Te' Land Trust in 2012.[169] "Inspired by their occupation of the local site in 2011, they decided to name it Sogorea Te'."[170] Corrina reflected on the significance of how the first piece of land rematriation was given back to Sogorea Te' Land Trust:

> These folks in Oakland, Gavin and Haleh are a couple that run an organization called Planting Justice[171]… They had gone to Standing Rock and they were moved by what they saw there. How everything was centered around ceremony and how everything was around prayer. And that there was a different way of organizing and this different capacity and they asked the elders when they were there: What should they do when they come home? And the elders told them, they should work with the First Nations people on who's land they're on. And they took that to heart.[172]

Corrina named that Diane Williams, an Athabaskan Elder that Johnella and she knew for over 30 years, who worked at Planting Justice set up a meeting with them. Through that meeting, Planting Justice offered Sogorea Te' Land Trust a quarter acre of land. Corrina revealed:

> I still am dumbstruck about having land returned after 250 years... That craziness of these ancestors was that this land that got returned to us was right along our waterway, Lisjan, which is our name- we're named after. It's at a point where it's also near the 880 Freeway, which is where the Bay used to come. And so, our ancestors would always create our villages where fresh water met the saltwater. And so, quite literally, could be on or near a village site my ancestors had been on for thousands of years and it's only a half mile walk from my home… These ancestors, create these miracles all the time, but they never cease to amaze me in the work that they do because we've listened. And so, I'm blessed that that's how that land got to be.[173]

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[169] Indigenous Solidarity Network, representatives from the Sogorea Te' Land Trust/Shuumi Land Tax, Real Rent Duwamish, and Manna-hatta Fund. "Resource Guide for Indigenous Solidarity Funding Projects: Honor Taxes & Real Rent Projects," Accessed March 15, 2022, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Resource-Guide-for-Indigenous-Solidarity-Funding-Projects-with-links.pdf.

[170] The Sogorea Te Land Trust, "Sogorea Te' Timeline," Accessed September 8, 2021, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/timeline/.

[171] "Planting Justice Grow Food. Grow Jobs. Grow Community," Accessed January 8, 2022, https://plantingjustice.org/.

[172] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[173] Ibid.

Corrina knew that this blessing of having land returned to Sogorea Te' Land Trust was not just about the work that she was engaged with and was dedicated to. The space, timing, and connection aligning in the literal geography of her homelands and ancestral village incubated confidence for both Corrina and Johnella to take action and build relationships that created an opportunity to grow and establish their dreams of land rematration. Their openness to receive and engage with opportunities that the ancestors presented to them created a space outside of a rigid colonial system to one that is based on ancestral knowledge, Indigenous-centered action, and the bravery and creativity to try. These elements further solidified Corrina's commitment to "land back" and land rematriation – reminding and reconnecting her to her ancestors and homelands.

Sogorea Te' Land Trust formed a partnership in 2017 with Planting Justice. Planting Justice agreed to a cultural easement with Sogorea Te' and plans to transfer the full title of Rolling River Nursery to Sogorea Te' Land Trust once the mortgage is paid off. The ultimate goal of this arrangement is for Sogorea Te' Land Trust to have decision making power over the land. The cultural easement will support the cultural revitalization of traditional dances, plant and medicine gathering, basket weaving, and rebuilding relationship with the land.[174] Corrina named that:

> We made it conditional that we as an organization would pay Johnella's salary for a year to be on that land so that she can create relationships between the people that work there and cleaning up the land, right? Because it made no sense to walk across this two-acre lot to the back of the lot to where our land would be and not have relationships with the people who are taking care of that land. And so we began that relationship through Johnella being there on a daily basis, helping them with the work that they were doing, inviting them to help with work we were doing. And the land got cleaned up.[175]

[174] Wires and LaRose, "Sogorea Te' Land Trust Empowers Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the San Francisco Bay Area," 34.

[175] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

Guiding Sogorea Te' Land Trust in their own way, through ancestors and community, has been a common means of guidance for the Sogorea Te' Land Trust. As I listened to Corrina and Ariel speak and reminisce, our conversations were uplifting and inspirational. All of their accomplishments, projects, and history seemed otherworldly, but then I realized that my excitement was coupled with the realization that Sogorea Te' Land Trust was grounded in relationship building and Indigenous-centered praxis. I was witnessing an organization revitalize lifeways, languages, build relationships, connect with the land, and rematriate with the guidance and leadership of local Native people. During our interview, Corrina mentioned:

> Johnella and I always have this thing, which, since we started the walks, years ago is like, you know, when we were going to do the first walk; we had somebody say, oh, we have to get permits and we were like permits for what, you know, this is our land. And so, why can't we just walk or land? You know? And so, and we did, we never asked permission. You know, when you begin to ask permission, you know, you kind of start putting yourself in these little, tiny boxes, where you feel like things are, you aren't able to overcome them… Rather do it now and say you're sorry, then ask permission and not be able to do it… It's kind of where the heart goes… where the spirits leading you to do this work. And because of that, we have seen miracles that we never would have imagined, and we have come across people and had conversations and connections with people that would have never would have happened, you know, and it's because we're open to doing that… And so, I really truly believe that, that we have to say yes to so many things that we wouldn't say yes to before. And that when we do that, it opens up these opportunities for the ancestor to do their magic. And so, um, that's kind of how I've been living my life. Do what you want. Let's see where we go today.[176]

From the beginning of Sogorea Te' Land Trust, Corrina Gould and Johnella LaRose have made decisions and have taken action that prioritize the community, culture, and are always guided by the ancestors. For them, they could not rely on the colonial structures that we live in currently to fulfill the goals of their dreams to rematriate Corrina's ancestral homelands. That would be counterproductive and cause more harm than good. They needed to build outside of the structure of a traditional land trust in order to fulfill their responsibilities as caretakers of the land. They did this through practice, cultural and ancestral guidance, relationship building, and

[176] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

Indigenous-centered praxis. As they lead in a good way; positive relationships, opportunities, and connections continue to support Sogorea Te' Land Trust.

Sogorea Te' Land Trust continued to grow and garner support. Non-Native and Native community members worked to support and co-create rematriation opportunities. One of the relationships that were built in the support of Sogorea Te' Land Trust was with the current Development Director of Sogorea Te' Land Trust, Ariel Luckey. Ariel originally met Corrina and her daughter Deja at his show called *Free Land* at Laney College Theater. They connected and co-organized an annual event every November called *Thangs Taken: Rethinking Thanksgiving*. Ariel continued to build a relationship with Corrina and the community through participating in the Shellmound Walks and other local events and actions.[177] Throughout the years, Ariel started to work with Sogorea Te' Land Trust and supported the development of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust Website and the Shuumi[178] Land Tax[179] that launched in 2015. He was a part of a team of people who supported the creation of it as well as handled the logistics and implementation of it. In our interview, Ariel remembered:

> We were really thinking about how to not get caught up in all the kind of traditional nonprofit cycles and hustles of chasing grant work. Or, you know, just like how to make this deep and sustainable and looking at the Bay Area, there are a lot of people with accumulated wealth… who are maybe politically aligned with the values of reparations, or the values of rematriation, or the values of Indigenous sovereignty but don't have a way to take tangible action. And so, we designed it to be really accessible for people and we created a calculator… It was a calculator for individuals to think about, you know, the

[177] Ariel Luckey, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[178] (Ibid.): Ariel Luckey recalled that: "Deja, Corrina's daughter, is the Chochenyo Language Keeper for the tribe. We were trying to figure out what to call this thing and how to organize it, and how to frame it, and we asked her, and she proposed Shuumi, which is the Chochenyo word for "gift."

[179] (Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples. "Home," Accessed February 1, 2022, https://7genfund.org/home/.); In my first interview with Corrina Gould on June 17, 2021, she mentioned: "We found out that it was Tia Peters up at the 7th Generation Fund who created this idea [Indigenous Land Tax]. That, that's as far back as we can take it… When the Wiyots got an island returned to them, they didn't have any funding to clean it up or anything and so she asked permission to do that work to create this tax so that people could pay into it so that they can have money to do it. And they agreed to allow her to do that through the 7th Generation Fund."

> land that they live on, and we created a progressive sliding scale so that people with more money would pay more, basically, and people with less would pay less… But all of those are just kind of metaphors for helping people dive into these deeper questions of what is your relationship to the land you live on? What is your like ecological and political footprint here in Lisjan Ohlone Land and then therefore what is your responsibility to be contributing towards this work of rematriation?[180]

Sogorea Te' Land Trust's staff member's built relationships that incubate trust and created a structure of imaginative and engaged support from diverse communities and individuals. Corrina explained:

> That's how Sogorea Te' began to grow because we then invited people from all walks of life to help us to create this dream. To work that land. To clean it up. To, uh, to debark the redwood trees to, uh, to do all of that rebuilding community, um, with people from not just Indigenous people, but all people in the Bay Area that wanted to come and help us to do that… Young people from Stanford and Davis, and all of these different places came as workdays to do that and to be a part of that dream because they had heard about it, you know, and wanted to participate allowing people those, those imaginations again of being in community.[181]

Sogorea Te' Land Trust connected with and pulled in community through various events and projects. This allowed creative space for those who were committed to supporting the growth of Sogorea Te' Land Trust to try new and innovative ways of connecting to people and requesting support. The implementation of the Shummi Land Tax and the innovation and detail of the calculator allowed donors to interact with the process in a personal and active way; guiding donors in the process of contributing to land rematriation and supporting Indigenous leadership and work.

Along with the creation of the Shuumi Land Tax and the Land Tax Calculator; Sogorea Te' Land Trust has supported the conception of numerous other Indigenous Land Tax projects across the country. They are also consistently creating and providing culturally relevant and important content for communities and allies who want to learn and support land rematriation

[180] Ariel Luckey, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[181] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

efforts.[182] The alternatives that they are creating as an organization and community are monumental. They are celebrated as an activation network that supports others in practicing their relationship with the land and Indigenous people in collaborative, reciprocal ways.

In 2018, Sogorea Te' Land Trust established their Himmetka Program.[183] The program started out of a storage container at Lisjan and also included an urban garden on a long-term lease in West Oakland named Rammay.[184] Himmetka is one of many programs that Sogorea Te' Land Trust has created to support and provide for local Native and non-Native people in the East Bay as a support for people in times of need. The Himmetka Program was Johnella's idea and came from the idea of emergency response preparation and mutual aid for neighborhoods in need. Understanding the systematic neglect that the United States leads with,[185] Johnella advocated for the need to create hubs of support throughout the area. The first Himmetka site had a container and additional resources including a water tank for freshwater, water catchment

[182] Some resources that Sogorea Te' Land Trust have created include a: Rematriation Resources (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Return Land / Land Return." Accessed March 8, 2022. https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/return-land/.), a recommended reading list (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Recommended Reading." Accessed October 10, 2021. https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/recommended-reading/.), a blog and newsletter (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Blog." Accessed June 13, 2022. https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/blog/.), a resource library (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Resource Library." Accessed September 12, 2021. https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/resources/.), How To Come Correct Page (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "How to Come Correct." Accessed July 7, 2022. https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/slt_resources/how-to-come-correct/.), a Rematriation Resource Guide (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Rematriation Resource Guide," July 12, 2021. https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/slt_resources/rematriation-resource-guide/.), a Resource Guide for Indigenous Solidarity Funding Projects: Honor Taxes & Real Rent Projects (Indigenous Solidarity Network, representatives from the Sogorea Te' Land Trust/Shuumi Land Tax, Real Rent Duwamish, and Manna-hatta Fund. "Resource Guide for Indigenous Solidarity Funding Projects: Honor Taxes & Real Rent Projects.") as well as various content on their social media (@sogoreatelandtrust on Instagram) and a website (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Homepage.").

[183] The Sogorea Te Land Trust, "Himmetka: In One Place, Together," Accessed June 15, 2021, https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/himmetka/.

[184] The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Sogorea Te' Timeline."

[185] In our second interview on August 12, 2021, Corrina Gould mentioned that the big earthquake that is overdue in California, the devastation of the levies breaking in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, and the lack of response or support the United States answered communities of color with motivated her in understanding the importance of creating Himmetka sites.

system, access to fresh harvested medicine, first aid kits, canned food, a stove, and solar energy.[186] Corrina provided context about Himmetka in our second interview together:

> This is a poor neighborhood in Oakland that, for many years, the city has forgotten about, you know, and why would they come here first to take care of us? We really need to be able to take care of ourselves in case of a man-made or natural-made disaster… What is our responsibility as Indigenous people? To be good hosts on our land, to take care of not just Indigenous people, but people that live right there in that neighborhood, that are going to have to have a place where people can be safe together. That there will be food to share, that there will be a place to stay that we will have. That all of those needs, those basic needs met, in case of those kind of emergencies… But also, for ceremonies then you have gatherings and so, you know, it'll be, it's not just for that, but it's, it is Himmetka - is a place where we all gather, right? It's a beautiful word in our language.[187]

Himmetka support fortifies Sogorea Te' Land Trust in the East Bay and Oakland communities. The Himmetka sites engage and meet the surrounding community where they are at which, in turn, invests local people into the work and goals of Sogoreat Te' Land Trust as a site of land rematriation and relationship building. Corrina further elaborated:

> And what about people that are doing this kind of work that we're in relationship with?.. [Himmetka is] a way for us to take care of our ancestral duties as hosts on this land. It's a way for us to ensure that people in our territory and our families are taken care of. It's something that we have done for thousands and thousands of years. To ensure that we have these places that are there in times of crisis, right?.. There has to be some kind of way for us to take care of each other in different kinds of ways. And so, it's just that old thinking of going back in order to go forward. How do we take all of these things that we know are true and steadfast and that we use them today to benefit the folks that are living here and to prepare for those yet-to-be-born so that there are these places and spaces that are here.[188]

Throughout my interviews with Ariel and Corrina, the support and collaboration with Native and non-Native communities were a foundational piece in the success and expansion of Sogorea Te' Land Trust's rematration efforts, programs, and support. Corrina emphasized that the focus was never on the resources, labor, or money that others could provide, but rather:

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[186] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Ibid.

> As we approach this work; the work is really about relationship building always… We have to begin there, because there was no beginning of relationship building when the destruction happened on this land. So there really needs to be a re-education of how do we live on this land together. And that's what, really, it is about the energy of guest and a good host… And so, for me, I think that's what Sogorea Te' does. It brings us the opportunities to have relationships with people that we would have never thought of having relationships with before, you know.[189]

Focusing and building upon this as a main goal, there has continued to be an outpouring of support for Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Shuumi Land Tax. This has included people from different communities volunteering and Sogorea Te' sharing skills and their space in collaboration with them, young people contributing their energy and sharing in the dream of their work and projects while at Sogorea Te', people giving land and resources back, people creatively thinking up ways to be in relationship and contribute to Sogorea Te' Land Trust, a multitude of non-Native people and organizations creating curriculum to educate their communities and engage in relationship building and contributing through the Shummi Land Tax to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, foundations and the recent City Council of Alameda approving to contribute Shuumi Land Tax,[190] partnering with the Cultural Conservancy[191] in Marin to support food distribution and the creation of a Himmetka space,[192] and building a network of urban Indigenous families and community members through providing weekly food distributions and supplies during Covid. Ariel reflected on the interconnectedness of all of the work that Sogorea Te' Land Trust is involved with, partnering and building with others, and the importance of

[189] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[190] (Ibid.): Corrina Gould named that the day before, an Alameda City Council Member took up the task to propose that the city pay Shuumi Land Tax. This was officially passed the day before on June 16, 2021, and is the first city to do this!

[191] The Cultural Conservancy, "The Cultural Conservancy," Accessed August 20, 2022, https://www.nativeland.org.

[192] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

"doing that direct mutual aid."[193] Ariel goes on further to name that: "We live in a mainstream society where the values are not actually to take care of everyone. To me Himmetka, and the food distribution, and so much of this just speaks to a different value system, in a different way of thinking about the world, and in being a relationship with each other, and being in relationship to the land."[194]

For Corrina and Sogorea Te' Land Trust as an organization; their focus is on relationships: relationship with the land, people, culture, ancestors, and the future. The approach that they take as an entity is supported by the knowledge that the energy and effort put into long-term relationship and investments into the land and community will support everyone. The responsibility that Corrina names ties her to her identity and culture as an Indigenous Lisjan Ohlone women facilitating growth, healing, and reconnecting on her homelands - thus directly investing her in the people and the land around her.

Corrina and Johnella's vision of Sogorea Te' Land Trust has grown[195] and continues to embody land and cultural rematriation as they connect, build, and strengthen relationship with the land and community. When discussing what is needed to do this work, Corrina emphasized education, "acknowledging the ancestors,"[196] and taking up the work that they "were being called to do."[197]

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[193] (The Sogorea Te Land Trust. "Sogorea Te' Timeline."): "In response to Covid-19, Sogorea Te' partners with Bay City Produce and Gill Tract Community Farm to distribute boxes of fresh fruit and veggies directly to the doorsteps of community members in need."

[194] Ariel Luckey, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[195] Along with the Shuumi Land Tax and Himmetka, the Sogorea Te' Land Trust has various other programs including their Rematriate the Land Fund and their "The Young Ones Rising: Mitiini Numma" Youth Program. Sogorea Te' facilitates these programs and hosts a Chochenyo language series for Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation tribal members called Mak Noono Tiirnikma.

[196] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[197] Ibid.

The Creation of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy:

The Gabrieleno Tongva community members, who came together to create the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, advocacy for their self-determination, identity, culture, protection of their medicines and ancestors, and access to their homelands has been an intergenerational process. A lot of the same complex histories, struggles, and issues that the Gabrieleno Tongva community members' relatives fought for are also the same issues that continue to directly affect their community to this day.

For example, Kimberly Morales Johnson's family have been actively involved in leadership roles with the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. Her family has fought to protect their ancestors from desecration as well as preserve their cultural practices and stories. She has been involved with tribal events her entire life including being involved with protecting and learning about sacred sites and reburial sites with her dad.[198] Kimberly continues this work through her advocacy and education as she is learning and perfecting her skills as a Native scholar and researcher as a PhD student in Native American Studies at UC Davis, community engaged roles as the Tribal Secretary of the Gabrieleno (Tongva) San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, as a representative for the Los Angeles City County Native American Indian Commission, as a Co-Founder and Vice-President for the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, and in so many other capacities and roles in her community, throughout the city, county, and state.

Another example of a Tongva community member who is engaged with intergenerational cultural work is Dr. Wallace Cleaves. Wallace Cleaves' great, great, great, grandmother was

[198] Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

Narcissa Higuera Rosemyre.[199] His parents were involved with the work to protect Bolsa Chica.[200] Before his father's passing, Dr. Cleaves' father helped create a federal recognition packet that supported the tribe in gaining state recognition in 1994. Wallace Cleaves worked with his father on this monumental task and also collaborated with Chief Anthony Morales, Angie Burns, and other community members on their tribal constitution (which he was a signatory on). He is a founding board member of Kuruvungna Springs,[201] and served on The Kuruvungna Springs Board for over 20 years.

The intergenerational cultural and community work has continued throughout Tongva community members lives. Both Kimberly and Wallace Cleaves work together on numerous local issues, projects, and continue that work in diverse and various ways into the present. Some of the issues that they worked on collaboratively has been to get the Heritage Commission to recognize the tribe as well as working with the Lassos family and Charles Sepulveda in developing a Tongva Land Conservancy.[202]

I provide a few details of the longevity of the struggle for recognition, language, cultural revitalization, and land rematriation to further support and emphasize the fact that the work

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[199] Dr. Wallace Cleaves shared with me during our first conversation on November 5, 2020 that Narcissa Higuera Rosemyre was recorded by C. Hart Merriam using "Tongva" as an identifier for their people and shared a variety of Tongva words with Merriam. She was a fluent speaker of her language, a cultural singer, and practitioner. He shared that Mrs. Higuera was taken to the Tejon Reservation then sent to Bakersfield.

[200] For more information about Bolsa Chica, visit the Acjachemen Tongva Land Conservancy's website: (Acjachemen Tongva Land Conservancy, "Initiatives," Accessed February 8, 2022, https://www.atlandconservancy.com/initiatives.) and view the 1994 LA Times article briefly discussing the decades long fight to protect Bolsa Chica: (Los Angeles Times. "Bone Sites Verified at Bolsa Chica Wetlands: Artifacts: Native Americans Say Planned Development Is on Burial Ground. It's Not Known If Bones Are Human.," February 15, 1994. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-02-15-mn-23226-story.html.)

[201] (Dr. Wallace Cleaves, phone conversation with author, November 5, 2020).; The Burnes, Dorme, and Lassos Families were involved in this effort as well.

[202] This will become the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy that gained its 501c3 status in 2021 and obtained its first piece of land back in February 2022. This was also a long-term community effort to create. Originally, the piece of land that was donated back was being handled by the Ti'at Society, but they asked Dr. Wallace Cleaves and Kimberly Morales Johnson to continue the work in 2017.

towards "land back" movement building work of Tongva homelands has been a struggle that has been advocated and fought for in diverse ways, involving different community members, and has been a movement throughout generations of Gabrieleno Tongva community members.

AnMarie Mendoza's thesis research and work points to California history, policies, and literature that directly aids in erasing the Tongva community from the "story of Los Angeles." She highlights that most historians and authors implement the "second chapter Tongva Gabrielino disappearance act"[203] to set the foreground of the past, but "ceases to… mention [the Tongva] once the author begins to analyze the power structures of the United States colonial rule."[204] Too often Tongva existence has only been used as the baseline of where "progress" began, a marker in a historical distance, and in proximity only to measure the distance between an Indigenous past and a current capitalistic present.[205] It has served as a colonial tool to formally "other" the Tongva and other Indigenous peoples; neutralizing and normalizing the erasure of Indigenous impact, stories, places, peoples, knowledges, and cultures. Charles Sepulveda explains: "California Indians have been reduced in historical and anthropological sketches to be merely those acted on, erasable, as objects composed of otherness."[206] Tongva are disappeared out of history as something in a far-off, one-dimensional, non-human distance that is not seen as relevant or tying into "human issues" of today. This is still painfully relevant and can

[203] Mendoza, "The Aqueduct Between Us," 21.

[204] Ibid.

[205] On pages 9 through 10 in Dr. Charles Sepulveda's dissertation, he explains that: "Conceptions of time for the West are critical to understanding history. For them, then, history is a narrative of markers displaying human technological progress and Christian salvation… Both time and space, often measured through distance, were key markers for colonialism and resultant imperialism." (Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 9-10.)

[206] (Ibid., 18.); Dr. Charles Sepulveda goes into a much more detailed analysis of the structural process by which Native peoples are "othered" and erased. He concludes in this section of his work on page 19 that: "The power to define and control the Other, the Native, must be stripped from the colonizer and the settler if decolonization is to become a reality and not simply a metaphor." (Ibid., 19.)

be clearly exposed whenever conversations or issues arise regarding Native burials, desecration of graves or burial items.[207] Another example of this disconnect is the lack of including local Native tribal groups in discussions, boards, projects, consultation, etc. regarding their homelands and social, political, environmental, culturally relevant issues and happenings on their lands.[208] Issues that affect any community, land, environment, water, policies, and life should include the Native Nations on whose lands these things are being decided and discussed on. As AnMarie Mendoza articulates: "The more that historians engage with the Tongva-community in the past in a meaningful way, the more it influences a future where tribal sovereignty can flourish, especially during this critical time when Los Angeles is pursuing a variety of environmental sustainability initiatives…"[209] This brief history and context provide a framework of issues and struggles that are important to the Tongva community as well as acknowledges a relationship and actions over time in their homelands. This is important to recognize and uplift because, the reality has been that the history of erasure and nonconsensual actions have been made that directly disconnect, displace, and erase the Tongva community from their ancestral homelands.

So, when the Gabrieleno Tongva community members began to meet with Resource Generation Los Angeles (RGLA) in 2020, these legacies of cultural and political actions to support and protect their tribal communities, ancestors, and homelands and the importance to

[207] Often, graves that are disturbed and desecrated are seen as relics of the past to gawk over, study, and put in museums. They are not respected, protected, or seen as ancestors that need to be returned to their families and communities.

[208] Dr. Charles Sepulveda writes on page 20 in his dissertation: "Native authenticity, and therefore Native humanity if it can be recognized by the West, can only fully exist in the past, prior to the corrupting influences of colonialism." Dr. Sepulveda further explains his analysis on the difficulties of erasure on page 48 in his dissertation: "Los Angeles is not often read by scholars as remaining to belong to Indigenous people who continue to experience the effects of genocidal conditions and are therefore not included in studies of the city and its racial formations." The normalized action of categorizing Native people as static and set in a certain time period excludes Native people from very important conversations and actions that effect their lives. (Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 20, 48.)

[209] Mendoza, "The Aqueduct Between Us," 6.

prioritize creating a relationship to practice self-determination and build relationships with organizations and entities in a consensual and reciprocal way created the framework for these meetings. When the Gabrieleno Tongva community members and RGLA first met, there was split representation from RGLA and the local Tongva community members. The first few meetings supported introductions and created space for an in-depth contextualization of the local area, needs, envisioning of "land back," land tax, and local politics. It continues to be a Tongva-led space with RGLA members collaborating, offering insight, care, and open dialogue as to how the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy can and will be supported and resourced.

In the beginning session, when thinking about projects and important things that need support in the Tongva community, Charles Sepulveda brought up that they had been working to establish a Tongva Land Conservancy 501c3, so that they would have the ability to receive land. He mentioned that this was especially important because they are non-federally recognized – which is a problem and an opportunity. Wallace Cleaves named the desire to learn and garner support and guidance since he did not have experience with creating non-profits. Realizing that there will be pushback and critiques, he also understood and saw that it is the time that this needs to happen: "The most important thing right now is getting that land for the people. Without federal recognition we need self-determination. The pie [scarcity of funding, resources, and opportunities] is a lie."[210] Dr. Cleaves shared some of the history of the property that they had been in the process of obtaining back:

> In 2017 a property owner in Alta Dena met with a member of the Tongva community, Jerry Lassos, by chance and indicated an interest in returning a family property in the hills near Eaton Canyon to the Indigenous people of the region. Initially she worked with the Ti'at society, a group dedicated specifically to preserving the maritime traditions of the Tongva towards this goal. After initial steps to form a 501c3 to take stewardship of the land, challenges arose, and Wallace Cleaves, an enrolled member of the Tongva and a

[210] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, First Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 14, 2020.

descendant of Narcissa Higuera, was asked by both parties to take over the formation of a nonprofit to receive the land.

> Working with Angie Lassos and Kimberly Morales Johnson, they continued to meet with the property owner and work towards creating a 501c3 nonprofit to take stewardship of the land. In the course of discussions, the property owner indicated that she required that the nonprofit have $60,000 in funds in order to assure that we would be able to take on the property and maintain it.[211]

The work and energy that the Gabrieleno Tongva had devoted to building relationships with the land and property owner over the years, led them to see the importance and need to create the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. "We wanted to make sure that if we did go through the trouble of creating a 501c3 and trying to fund it, that it wouldn't be limited to only this [piece of land][212]… It's really important for our people and I know it was really important to Barbara."[213] Wallace Cleaves and Kimberly had been working towards finalizing the Tongva 501c3 in order to receive and secure the land for their community. Dr. Cleaves mentioned the evolution of how they wanted to formalize the 501c3 and how this came to fruition over the years in an early meeting with RGLA. He named that people had communicated with him about being interested in donating large funds and "land back," but that the tribe did not have anything established to accomplish these things: "I see the point of the conservancy to enable this kind of thing but to not just be about this property."[214] Wallace Cleaves went on to say that originally, when the Ti'at Society and Larry Lassos had connected with the property owner and were working on getting the land donated; it really was just about that piece of land. When some

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[211] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, 2022 Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Vision Statement Packet, 1.

[212] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, January 18, 2021.

[213] Ibid. Barbara Drake was a Tongva Elder who passed away on November 19, 2020. Barbara Drake's passing rocked the Gabrieleno Tongva community and all who knew her. She had done foundational cultural and community work for and with her community.

[214] Ibid.

challenges came up when the property owner communicated a requirement of $60,000 to get the land signed over to them, he named: "This is reasonable, that we would need to have some initial funding to be able to take the land. I do recognize that it kind of puts us in the catch 22. Not being able to have the land yet makes it very difficult to write grants [to obtain and raise funds to secure the land]."[215] This again highlights the uphill battle for the Tongva to access their own homelands. Since the Gabrieleno Tongva are not federally recognized, they do not have a secure land base for their community which also puts the tribe at a disadvantage to obtain funds to access and acquire land. So, even when the opportunity of accessing and securing land presents itself like in the example above; the ability to secure finances and resources in order to rematriate a part of their homelands is still out of reach for an unrecognized tribe with limited funds. Formalizing into a 501c3 through the state and federal government was an important step in this process to transfer and secure the land and grow out the vision that they had for years. With this status, they are able to build upon the practice of "land back" by having a specific avenue for those willing to donate land, give time, funding, and support resources as well as for their organization to securely structure their long-term goals as a board and community entity to move towards a future that allows them to rematriate and reconnect to their culture and homelands. Through a structure that has to meet certain governmental and, thus, colonial, guidelines and requirements; it still grants the possibility for them to creatively engage with it in their own way and incorporate community and cultural values.

The Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members intentionality focused on creating a 501c3 that embodied Tongva values and goals from the beginning. They thought it was important to create an all Tongva Board to support and make decisions for the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. By centering Tongva community and prioritizing the Gabrieleno Tongva

[215] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

community needs and representation, it solidifies and secures the cultural and conservation focus for generations within their homelands. They are using the non-profit model to create a framework for themselves.

The importance of language in "land back" and land rematriation efforts came up as a central component during these meetings from the beginning. As the Gabrieleno Tongva community members were discussing their history and processes that they were developing with their Tongva conservancy 501c3, L. Frank emphasized the importance of language revitalization in this work of rematriation: "There might be a Native name you can call the organization and the other name can be secondary. If you want to lead with language and culture, you should lead with language and culture. We need to get used to putting that first."[216] Wallace Cleaves reflected:

> That's part of the decolonizing, is learning, is relearning to use us first when we can[217]… We [Wallace Cleaves and Kimberly Morales Johnson] tried to come up with terms we thought really reflected it. There wasn't a perfect fit for culture, but Taraxat is a word for Indigenous peoples. It's not necessarily just the Tongva. That was the word for people so that included Acjachemen, Cahuilla, Tataviam, and other groups around as well. But with a focus on us of course… The Paxaavxa refers to a specific piece of land and I kind of like the play on that. It is sort of a recognition that we're not getting it all back. But we'd like some of it back at least.[218]

L. Frank worked with the other Tongva community members on the call to support with incorporating the Tongva language and naming the conservancy.

As the Tongva community members and RGLA continued to meet, strategize, and build together; Wallace Cleaves created a Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Vision Statement Packet to support the creation of the 501c3. After he presented the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa

[216] L. Frank Manriquez, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

[217] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

[218] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, January 18, 2021.

Conservancy Vision Statement Packet and talked about the significance of the conservancy's name and goals, L. Frank reflected: "I am glad that you used language because it's another way of seeing ourselves…And then other people do see you as well so…Using the language, it also starts to shift the world view in our own minds. The more we start learning language, the more we connect in a different way than we did before."[219] Wallace Cleaves discussed the critical importance of centering language in their land reclamation efforts:

> Some of the most key things are the land, our connection with the land… Where does it all start? And almost all of us will say, with the language… really knowing and understanding the language is a vital part of reclaiming and rehabilitating our culture… When Kim and I were thinking about this too, we realized it's really important to make sure that this conservancy is not just a conservancy of the land. It's also a conservancy of culture… everything should not just be about preservation. It should also be about restoration.[220]

By taking the steps to revitalize the Tongva language through the implementation of naming the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, they bridge together the foundations of their cultural revitalization and land rematriation efforts. Dr. Cleaves names the interlocking components that are comprised of and are of priority to the conservancy: the language, the land, the culture and the action of conservation, preservation, and restoration. These components could not exist without the other. They are entwined and are an essential part of the land rematriation process.

In the first few meetings between the Tongva community members and RGLA, the Tongva community members exemplified and guided others in the priorities of how the land rematriation work should be carried out in a good way. Wallace Cleaves, Kimberly Morales Johnson, L. Frank Manriquez, and Charles Sepulveda set the groundwork by sharing their stories, experiences, and reflections about what was needed. They led the conversations with

[219] L. Frank Manriquez, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, January 18, 2021.

[220] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 28, 2020.

deep insight, vulnerability, and honesty. They took the time to share the complexities of Tongva histories and realities and engaged in relationship building. RGLA members came into the space ready to engage and listen. They did not ask the Tongva community members to educate them, but rather, they researched, attended community events, connected with other community members, and asked questions when it was appropriate. The learning that RGLA embarked on created the relationships of accountability, respect, and consent. These key elements led to an environment of trust and a space for everyone to be involved and feel invested in supporting land rematriation efforts through centering Indigenous knowledges and leadership.

Throughout the first few meetings, RGLA listened and brainstormed, asked clarifying questions, and took notes. They asked what some needs were and what they could support with.[221] From the beginning of these meetings with Gabrieleno Tongva community members, RGLA mentioned their desire to build relationships and their intentions with taking the necessary time to do so. They expressed excitement in building together towards a common goal. After a few meetings and conversations, RGLA members committed to resource and fundraise support for Tongva land rematriation efforts. The RGLA group started to ask what resources or information they could support with and what would be helpful in acquiring the land. RGLA networked and provided financial support for legal assistance, consultation, as well as connections to allied legal and financial networks that support land reclamation work. RGLA members reached out to other projects and organizations in their networks and gathered information regarding capital campaigns, budget examples, legal and tax support, organizations who had formalized into a 501c3 and their strategic planning process, as well as provided additional information and resources. RGLA offered consistent support and resources over the years including connections to banks, institutions, and organizations that specialize in financial,

[221] First Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 14, 2020.

technical assistance, and capacity building to support building relationships. They also were a sounding board for Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members to ask questions, build relationships, and, if fitting, utilize their and other organizations and individual resources. RGLA asked if it would be helpful to coordinate separate meetings outside of the larger group meetings to discuss and strategize fundraising. This was open to RGLA and anyone else from the group who was interested and who may be able to support with resource mobilization so that folks (particularly Tongva members) who were overburdened and had limited energy and time for these meetings did not have to attend and put more attention towards multiple projects and meetings. The goals of this subgroup were to focus on fundraising goals, follow up with commitments, and a mobilizing strategy with the initial $60,000 goal by mid 2021.[222] These meetings became a space of brainstorming and co-collaboration. In these meetings, fundraising emails and volunteer day emails were created, edited, and sent out, organizing donor databases were incubated, reconnecting with networks of supporters, and organized fundraising meetings and update Zooms were facilitated and aided the development of a supportive fundraising structure for the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. These coordinated, long-term, and transparent efforts led to a swell of Native and non-Native community support within the Los Angeles region (and beyond)! As RGLA and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy started to share about the land rematriation goals that the conservancy was working towards, people were interested in committing time, expertise, resources, and skills to support the creation and growth of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. With a team of RGLA folks supporting the fundraising and resource movement and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Team envisioning and building the organization's infrastructure; Charles Sepulveda reflected: "This is

[222] Tongva & RGLA Meeting, January 18, 2021.

not just about moving money and land, this is about shifting our relationship, trusting Indigenous leadership."[223] As Dr. Middleton expresses in *Trust In The Land*: "It can take a great deal of time to build communication and trust, and Native land conservancies and their partner should be prepared for a multiyear effort, including several small projects and cooperative endeavors (such as joint fundraising), before embarking on a larger land acquisition."[224] Because of the Pandemic and the multiple years of learning and strategizing together, the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy and Resource Generation Los Angeles were able to come together, build trust through relationship building over two years, and worked together to secure the funds to rematriate the first piece of land back to the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy!

It took patience, trust, bravery, and communication for the group to build relationship. This happened over time and with the intention coupled with action, respect, and accountability. One defining moment that I experienced of how this trust and care for each other was held was when, about a month into meeting one another, an RGLA member invited another Indigenous group into the meeting space without asking consent from the Tongva group members. This could have easily been dismissed and not discussed; potentially harming the communication and trust that was being established, not acknowledging the legacy of non-consensual actions against the Tongva and other Indigenous peoples and normalizing the breach of consent within the space that was being created. The Tongva community members bravely called RGLA members into the conversation and discussed the importance of asking permission and gaining consent, recalling the history of nonconsensual actions that continues into the present against their communities. One Tongva community member emphasized the importance of practicing consent in this rematriation and relationship building work. Resource Generation Los Angeles members

[223] Dr. Charles Sepulveda's reflection during a Tongva & RGLA Meeting, February 22, 2021.

[224] Middleton, *Trust in the Land*, 236.

response was apologetic and acknowledged their breach of consent with the group, uplifting the harm and committing to action steps in learning and repairing the harm. At the next meeting, RGLA members brought up the situation and held space for Tongva community members to discuss the situation if they desired, acknowledging that the articulated requests from Tongva community members was to ask consent in this process. The Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members were able to discuss the issue and named that so often when people or groups desire to build with their community and if there is an issue that needs to be addressed, the people or group will not sit with the uncomfortable reality of the harm. The relationship will often change, causing further harm to the people involved and the potential relationships that could have been built. So often, relationships and resources are based on those people and groups terms. These types of interactions continue to be an issue of not asking consent or taking accountability. The Gabrieleno Tongva community members named that the history and legacy of colonization is within the issue of not being consulted with and it is a matter that is difficult but needs to be addressed and honored. The conversation was brought back to the importance of space for their community. The ability to have a space for community and their community to build, feel support, and heal is directly tied into addressing harm (consent and accountability specifically).[225]

From this discussion forward, RGLA members committed to consensual engagement with the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members. This was demonstrated through various actions including: sharing meeting notes, circling back repeatedly to define and clarify each person's and organization's role in this "land back" and rematriation effort (including the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members in discussions and meetings that RGLA were having with anyone regarding the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy that involved

[225] Tongva & RGLA Meeting, January 18, 2021.

fundraising conversations, outreach, and networking opportunities), asking consent before making decisions regarding anything having to do with the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, involving and asking the Tongva community members for guidance when it came to RGLA involvement in other projects in Tongva ancestral homelands, and inviting and prioritizing including Gabrieleno Tongva community members in events and panels that were happening within their homelands. Resource Generation Los Angeles used the uncomfortable situation of not asking for consent at the beginning of establishing a relationship with Gabrieleno Tongva community members as a learning opportunity. They did not dismiss or become hostile. Instead RGLA took accountability, discussed it, and repaired the relationship through direct practice and action - by asking consent throughout their work and relationships with the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members moving forward. These actions were achieved through consistent communication, intentional action, and respectful engagement.

Ultimately, what these instances of relationship building provided to the group was trust in the process and the security to build beyond the present. This was essential when difficult challenges came up with the group including dealing with changing dynamics with the landowner. Because Resource Generation Los Angeles and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy had intentionally built together and continued to ask consent, take accountability, and repair; this project and the challenges that came with it where possible. This example of repair and accountability has led to impactful relationships and work between the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, the Gabreieleno Tongva Community, and RGLA.

Due to Covid, we had been meeting over Zoom and building relationship primarily in a virtual setting. We had a virtual discussion with the property owner in mid-June 2021 to discuss details and issues that needed to be dealt with in order to move through the process and obtain

more information about the property transfer and legal details. In late July 2021, we were able to visit the site for the first time as a group. The impact of interacting with the land and space motivated everyone involved to work towards the goal of rematriation for the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. Some of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members showed us around the property and shared stories. The land was so impactful in this process. It was as if it rejuvenated the already motivated group and inspired us to think of the possibilities and what the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members were envisioning for the space and their community. From that first meeting on the land, a reimagining and renewed sense of purpose struck us. The RGLA members and I were able to witness the power and beauty of the space that the Gabrieleno Tongva had been working for years to rematriate and have full access to. This was a defining moment: showing the non-Tongva individuals of the group that this is the first land rematration of its kind to happen in Los Angeles. This can be a starting point for others; showing them that "land back" is possible!

Sogorea Te' Land Trust's Support with the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy:

From late 2020 to early 2022, Ariel and Corrina (from Sogorea Te' Land Trust) have supported the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. This has included a couple meetings to discuss their organizational creation, process, and collaborative brainstorming sessions to support in the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy's growth and development (more specifically around donations, organizational logistics, databases, and structural recommendations). Ariel has also reached out to connect the group with individuals who are interested in partnering and educating themselves and their communities about the Gabrieleno Tongva community and supporting Tongva land rematriation efforts. In these meetings and interactions, Corrina encouraged and reminded Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members that they are

reimagining how to do this work and "It's our sovereign right to protect and do what we need to do to take care of our land."[226]

The Sogorea Te' Land Trust's process to secure and establish themselves and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy creation took generations of work. These organizations' "Native land stewardship ethics generally have a multigenerational orientation"[227] that supported the journey of creating, maintaining, and expanding on their land rematriation dreams and goals. For both Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, their success in land rematriation and cultural revitalization work has been an intergenerational struggle that has spanned across families, communities, and has required dedication, patience, trust, relationship building, and the bravery and insight of leading with Indigenous leadership, action, and self-determination.

[226] Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy & Sogorea Te' Land Trust Zoom Meeting, February 1, 2021.

[227] Middleton, *Trust in the Land*, 61.

Chapter 5: "Land Back" in Practice:

"*But the land is the one with the power – while they were working on the land, the land was working on them. Teaching them."*[228]

Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy have built a structure to access and protect their homelands, revitalize, practice their cultures and languages, and rematriate their ancestral homelands. Each of their stories and journeys are unique and different, yet both are entwined in the process of "land back" efforts. Both organizations and community leaders' work are examples that many others would benefit greatly from learning about. In this last section, I focus on how Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy continue to engage with "land back" and land rematriation practices within their work currently and include their reflections regarding the importance and impact of this essential work. I end this section with suggestions on how to support land rematriation efforts locally from Sogorea Te' Land Trust members and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members and close out my thesis with a reflection and analysis as to why these two case studies of "land back" and land rematriation work are key to California Native peoples' healing, cultural revitalization, and self-determination.

The actions and impact of "land back" and land rematriation practices for Sogorea Te' Land Trust:

From the beginning, Corrina and the formation of Sogorea Te' Land Trust has been led by the ancestors and community voices. Corrina mentioned throughout our interviews that centering the ancestors and being open to listening and building relationships was what kept the blessings flowing. She reflected:

[228] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 213.

> And, I would say that it was us acknowledging those ancestors and then them, in return, acknowledging us that really pushed this whole work forward. So, I have no qualms about saying that this was something that was otherworldly basically, that our ancestors pushed us to do this work and that we took up the work that was being, we were being called to do. And in doing that, they have revealed miracle after miracle in getting the land back and people recognizing us and fighting alongside of us for our sacred sites and lifting up the work and really trying to be good allies and guests on our land again.[229]

The trust, dedication, and action towards the vision of land rematriation for Sogorea Te' Land Trust has allowed them to co-create and support multiple projects and "land back" efforts within Ohlone Territory. Corrina names that with the constant guidance and trust in the ancestors, Sogorea Te' Land Trust:

> … recreated an arbor, a sacred dance place, a sacred gathering place on there. We lit that fire that brings people from all over the world to come and to be a part of this dream with us. That allows us to tend to the land, that allows my grandchildren to have a deeper connection to the land, that they know that that is their place that they can always go there, that that is something that they have been continuously tied to… that is a place that is their own.[230]

For Corrina, the work is so much more than physical. It is spiritual, intergenerational, and cultural. It is essential for the ancestors that guide her through her life's work as well as the future little ones who are a part of the sustainability and future of their rematriated land efforts. Their vision and work towards "the construction of a traditional Ohlone roundhouse in the East Bay area that would welcome all Ohlone families and bands, acting as a space for healing and spiritual renewal. A roundhouse would be a spiritual center for the Ohlone people in the East Bay, allowing them to enact the obligations they have from their creator…"[231] would not have been possible without Sogorea Te' Land Trusts constant engagement with community, Indigenous-centered praxis, and the dedication and belief in their vision.

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[229] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Wires and LaRose, "Sogorea Te' Land Trust Empowers Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the San Francisco Bay Area," 33.

Corrina mentioned a few necessary things that were needed in order for Sogorea Te' Land Trust to thrive and become what it is today:

> I think in the Bay Area, that people needed to know that we were still alive… I really always go back to that. When Johnella and I started doing this work, over 20 years ago, people still thought we were all dead, and that we were in the past, and we were still being taught about in fourth grade as in the past. And so, it was really the wakening up of people in the Bay Area and to really talk and be those voices that said, "No, we're still here," and "Who are destroying our sacred sites?" And we have the right to be here and to pray and we have an obligation and because you're on our territory, you have an obligation as well.[232]

Education of local Lisjan Ohlone stories, histories, and struggles created the opportunity for people to meaningfully engage with local Native people, the Sogorea Te' land Trust, and become invested in Indigenous land rematriation efforts. Through educating and engaging in reciprocal relationships with other Bay Area communities, Corrina and the Sogorea Te' Land Trust were able to support other's process of responsibly engaging with Indigenous projects and work. They held space for people who occupy the Bay Area in a larger discussion of acknowledgment and their responsibility to Lisjan Ohlone people and Corrina's homelands.

In our second interview together, Corrina communicated the importance of sharing space and gathering:

> … creating spaces where people can gather, you know, Native and non-Native people… we are working with Gill Tract Farm and Albany to create those spaces where people are asking permission to come onto that land to do ceremony, asking permission to come onto that land to have their Danza group there when they had no indoor places to practice, and then work in collaboration with us… really working in reciprocity and calling people in when we need large amounts of people, when we need to take care of the land in different kinds of ways. And so, really giving people the opportunity to engage in that work as well is an important aspect.[233]

[232] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[233] Ibid.

For Sogorea Te' Land Trust, building the relationship with local communities created new opportunities for them to build relationship, trust, and solidarity with others. The vulnerability and trust that was invested in creating these relationships have strengthened the work and the organization. It has allowed for a new way of interacting and growing with one another. Corrina names the important of reclaiming and sovereignty that Sogorea Te' Land Trust has created:

> It [Sogorea Te'] has been our center point and it is amazing and crazy and it's sovereign land. It's a place where we can decide who comes onto that land, who doesn't. What are the rules on that land? How do we have ceremony on that land? And again, allowing our children, or grandchildren to play and laugh on that land without outside interference and to reimagine what it could be like.[234]

Throughout my interview with Corrina and Ariel, the space to reimagine and build with others was foundational to being able to practice and build Sogorea Te' as a community and cultural space. The physical space to be on her [Corrina Gould's] homelands and be in relationships with others as they reconnect and create together was essential in incubating the ability to provide consent in Sogorea Te's everyday process and allows them to approach and move forward as sovereign entities.

This opened a new possibility for people to engage with the land, each other, and the traditional caretakers of the space at the Sogorea Te' Land Trust. Sogorea Te' Land Trust was necessary to give access to the reimagining of space and the future.

The importance of accessing traditional homelands and supporting Ohlone and Tongva connection to land and culture is essential in these efforts. The work that went into obtaining the land and securing it for future generations and the goal to obtain more land back in the future is something that both Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy are working towards. Sogorea Te' Land Trust has been able to create this reality and the Tongva

[234] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy recently received its first piece of land back in February 2022 and are already in conversations with other potential land rematriation sites.

The actions and impact of "land back" and land rematriation practices for the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy:

The Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy's volunteer days help mobilize Native and non-Native community members into investing and becoming a part of the efforts to support Tongva "land back" initiatives in meaningful and reciprocal ways. The Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy's first Community Cleanup Volunteer Day on February 27, 2022, welcomed excited and motivated Native and non-Native volunteers locally, from different counties, and even from different states. Elders, Tongva community members, and Indigenous allies also attended. When my son[235] and I arrived with supplies, there were already a lot of people in attendance. People assisted with many jobs that day including hauling wood and trash, cleaning out debris, cleaning the structures on site, and clearing out a garage that had generations of boxes and items stacked to the ceiling. About mid-day, the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Board and community members gathered everyone in attendance, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming out, shared the history, importance, and connection to the space and the process of rematriating the land. Wallace Cleaves and Kimberly reflected on the generations of work and dedication that got them to this moment. They mentioned the commitment and perseverance of their relatives and ancestors in recording and documenting their language, revitalizing their culture, and the arduous process of obtaining state recognition. After a Welcome Song, an Ancestor Song, and a communal smudging and acknowledgement; the property owner officially signed the land over to the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy!

[235] I am so happy that I brought Nita Iskitini with me this day. It is important to show and have him be in community and be a part of local events. It is how we both learn, grow, connect, and practice being in relationship as *Kuuyam*.

The Tongva board members had learned that all the legal documents were in order and that the land was going to be signed over that morning.

The energy was ecstatic! It had taken six years and countless hours of hard work from the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy to make this a reality. Those who had been involved in the meetings over the last two years could not believe it. The dreams and vision of the elders who had passed on and who had asked the Tongva community members to support the process to obtain "land back" had come full circle. Two of those elder's pictures went up in the main house that day.

You could feel the energy of possibility expanding throughout the day. The impact of what this meant was profound: we were witnessing history being made. More importantly, we were seeing the impact of centering Indigenous people and praxis, the process of healing, and the importance of connecting to land. At the next Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy meeting, multiple people reflected upon the impact of what this process and having the land signed to the conservancy meant to them. For the folks who were not Tongva, individuals reflected on the inspiration they felt to continue to build and move forward with supporting these efforts to rematriate and support "land back." The goal of getting the land signed over motivated them to creatively think of more ways to support fundraisers and efforts to aid the conservancy board. There was also expressions of profound gratitude and humbleness in being able to be a part of this magnificent and transformational process. For some of the Tongva community members, they reflected on the significance of what this meant for the tribe, for their cultural practice, revitalization, and what it meant to them as Tongva people. Nothing like this had ever been done in this capacity in their homelands. They expressed the motivation to create the space for people to learn, grow, and connect to the land and the community.

The Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy officially received its first piece of rematriated "land back" when escrow closed on March 29, 2022. The fundraising and community building meetings with Resource Generation Los Angeles and Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members have continued to build support, resources, and sustainability for the structure and organization including the launch of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy website in late April[236] and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Newsletter starting this summer. Three more successful and productive volunteer days took place on the site with substantial attendance. People came from different areas to support the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, brought food, supplies, and helped to clean up the space. The last volunteer day included loading a large industrial sized dumpster from the city with debris and items. Other volunteers assisted in cleaning the buildings on the property as well as taking out invasive plants and starting to replant Native plants in their place. From one volunteer day to the next, the space has been transforming physically with the help of community. The reimagining and rematriation process that the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy has created is building an alternative for people to connect with the land, each other, and Gabrieleno Tongva culture and people in a more collaborative, reciprocal, and respectful way – as *Kuuyam*.[237]

From December 2020 to the present day 2022; the group continues to meet to support the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. We meet at least every two weeks, communicate on text and emails chains, support individual projects and organizational events on an individual and community level, visit and tend to the land, celebrate, and collaborate together. The individuals who make up the two organizations have taken the time to foster and create long-term, genuine

[236] Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. "Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy."

[237] "The status as *Kuuyam* is neither demanded nor ordered. It is instead a relationship offered and chosen." (Sepulveda, "Our Sacred Waters," 54.)

relationships with one another. Both groups have embodied this rematriation opportunity and process to adjust to a different way of going about building together. The priority isn't about meeting deadlines but more about building, creating, reimagining, and rematriating on their own timeline; doing so when it feels right to do.

This is the beginning of relationship rebuilding and rematration of Tongva lands that the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy have been planning and preparing for. The land rematriation process and future of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy's goals are articulated best by co-creators of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy itself:

> This is bigger than just the landowner or the piece of land, this is a commitment to those who have been invisible. This is an important time for Tongva people, it's time to bring back trust, this can bring back trust between a decimated peoples[238]… "Land back" means more than recognition. It allows us to be stronger - any assistance in the fight to be who we are gives us the strength to move onto more generations fighting against this. Our mandate from creator is to care for this place. It's not that hard to be an ally to us.[239]
>
> Part of our hopes is that we can have a spot that funerary items or artifacts can be received back into possession by Tongva people and Tongva controlled that knows how to curate these items. So much has been taken and put in archives, basements, museums, and we want them back into our possession to preserve our culture and have something to hand off to our children… Respect, relationship, reciprocity. These are the 3 R's. We need to get back to the basics of how Native peoples lived here for thousands of years. The more we can do this, we can change the trajectory that we're on.[240]
>
> … Working on restoring Tovangaar and the system of knowledge teaches us how to be in relationship with place, with communities, families, kinship networks, and people not of Tongva descent. It's a way outside of settler-colonialism. Instead of domesticating the land, we can be guests, not just to Tongva people, but to the land itself. Can learn not just from original people of the land, but also from the land itself.[241]
>
> This gives us a place to meet, conduct ceremony and gather. For decades and decades, we haven't been able to do ceremonies on our own land. We want to broaden this beyond to

[238] L. Frank Manriquez, Tongva & RGLA Meeting, February 22, 2021.

[239] L. Frank Manriquez, First Tongva & RGLA Meeting, December 14, 2020.

[240] Kimberly Morales Johnson, Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Update & Fundraiser Call, December 14, 2021.

[241] Dr. Charles Sepulveda, Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Update & Fundraiser Call, December 14, 2021.

> more "land back" efforts. Recover traditions, gather, and come into relationality with people and the land… This is part of a larger focus - partnering with city, county, and state agencies to get land back or steward land.[242]

Throughout my conversations with Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy representatives, multiple suggestions regarding how people can support local Native land rematriation and "land back" efforts presented themselves consistently. I will do my best to give a few recommendations from both organization's members to provide the reader with tools and action steps to move forward as responsible *Kuuyam*[243] and support the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy with their "land back" efforts and goals of Indigenous rematriation work in California.

How to support the Sogorea Te' Land Trust:

I asked Corrina and Ariel in our interview about steps that can be taken to support "land back" initiatives for non-federally recognized tribes in California. They highlighted three main topics that can support rematriation efforts:

First, uplift and advocate for Indigenous leadership, culture, and ancestors' rematriation:

> … there needs to be the Indigenous leadership in order to do that, there needs to be those songs returned. The ancestors need to be returned back into the land and re-entered. There needs to be all of these things that are set in place, so that we could actually move forward to, to change something. So, reparations means a lot of different things.[244]

[242] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Update & Fundraiser Call, December 14, 2021.

[243] "To be *Kuuyam* is to be in good relation to the land – to learn from it and to be accountable. It also means being in good relation with your hosts, the Indigenous peoples." (Dr. Charles Sepulveda, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar.")

[244] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

Second, pay Shuumi Land Tax[245]:

> Shuumi Land Tax, I think, has been successful because, it's an invitation for just people, just individual people on a grassroots level in whatever way they can, to do the right thing. And whether that's, you know, write a check, or come out to an event, or share their garden, or build a relationship, or educate their kids, or whatever, right? There's like all of these ways that people can show up and try to contribute to the work that has been happening and, and heal, and transform and do this kind of thing, and it's not dependent on… any kind of external power structure or the powers-that-be…[246]

> … we don't really use the word reparations that much… what I think about that, I think about acknowledging history right. A historical harm and trauma and then figuring out what is needed to try to repair harm and restore balance and heal. And so, you know, we talk more about Shuumi as a gift and land, and we talk about rematriation, and "land back," and those are really kind of the framework… And I feel like, part of what that rebalancing looks like is for white folks and settlers and, you know, all of us who have benefited from this horrific legacy of colonization and materially, certainly not spiritually, but materially need to… give back land, give back money, give back access, give back all these kinds of things.[247]

Third, give land back to local Native people/ Sogorea Te' Land Trust:

> Yes, there are things that people can do. People can financially support the tribal people that are trying to return their land. People can give land back… and make it so that it does not cost the tribe money to get that land back… As we are looking at these different mechanisms of people wanting to give land back, but the laws that are created around a single-family homes or pieces of property comes with all of these other horrible, little strings attached to it. That is, you have all these hoops that you have to jump through that makes it impossible for Indigenous people to really get land back sometimes… And so, it really is, who are those folks that want to do that. And what is that thoughtful process to ensure that this land is returned, it's taken off of the market forever and that Indigenous people have sovereignty over that land to do what they want, right.[248]

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[245] Cities can take the lead in creating ways to contribute. For example Corrina Gould announced in our interview on June 17, 2021 that on June 16, 2021, Alameda became the first city in the Bay Area to pay Shuumi Land Tax and that: "It's a part of their regular budget for the next two years to give Shuumi and to work with us to create a campaign within the city to get individuals in the city to also pay their Shuumi and to tell the story about why the city of Alameda is doing that."

[246] Ariel Luckey, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[247] Ariel Luckey, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #1 with author, June 17, 2021.

[248] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

How to support the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy:

Similar to Corrina and Ariel's suggestions, the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy's community members uplifted five recommendations that would support land rematriation efforts within their ancestral homelands:

First, support and advocate for Tongva projects and cultural efforts:

> We need help. We need resources, we need assistance, we need allies, we need supporters, we need collaborators who are going to work with us. And that's a way to do that.[249]

Second, be an accomplice to Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty:

> Unfortunately, we're fighting back against all those capitalist and colonial forces that, you know, urge continued development. I think the most critical thing is to bring awareness as much as we can and to bring pressure – to make it a question to candidates that, that institutions have to answer frequently: What are you doing? What is your connection with the local communities? How are you helping and supporting them?[250]
>
> If we truly want diversity, equity, inclusion, these kind of code words that people increasingly use; then we must confront how white supremacy structures our lives. And that includes the theft of Native lands, the imposition of heteropatriarchy, and anti-Blackness. Without land return and abolition, we will always live in a society structured through white supremacy.[251]

Third, practice consensual and respectful relationship building with the Tongva:

> The trauma that we experienced with that unearthing of our ancestors lives with us today. Land acknowledgement must come with relationality. And rarely are people's ancestors treated disrespectfully if there are good relationships and respect for the living. Actions speak louder than words.[252]

Fourth, donate to the *Kuuyam* Guest Tax:

> To that end, we hope that we can set up, as part of the fundraising efforts, a land or honor tax to support the work that we hope to do. Our hope is that the Conservancy can prove

[249] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

[250] Ibid.

[251] Dr. Charles Sepulveda, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

[252] Ibid.

> the validity and functionality of such a tax and serve as an initial receiving body for the funds. We believe that the conservancy, which has the approval and support of a wide range of Tongva communities and groups and is largely independent of internal political affiliations, would be the organization most able to receive such funds without more serious contention.[253]

Fifth, give land back to the Tongva:

> Our lands and resources were taken without our consent. What does it mean to acknowledge that a place is on the unceded lands of Tongva peoples without prioritizing restitution developed in conjunction with tribal nations as the United Nations Declaration advises? If it can be acknowledged that the land was stolen, land can be given back… Los Angeles is a place of vast wealth and yet the Tongva are basically homeless on our own lands. Our lands have been stolen. And if the City of Los Angeles can acknowledge that, then it is time to take responsibility. Move beyond a land acknowledgment and work with the local tribal nations to form good relationships and give land back.[254]

Additional ways that people can support the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy is by becoming actively involved with the organizations: volunteer time, skills, share and educate themselves and others about local California Native struggles and issues, and donate resources, land, and monetary funds to support their land reclamation and cultural revitalization efforts.[255]

The importance of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy:

Throughout the two interviews with Corrina and Ariel, Corrina continuously reinforced the power and importance of being connected to her ancestral homelands:

> And so, it really isn't whether we have land that is in our hand under this title, by this government, that is settling on our lands right now or not. We still have that deep connection to this place and space that we have been for thousands and thousands of years… And so that gives you a sense of grounding, a rootedness back into your land that's different than just saying: "Oh, I live in Oakland. I live in my territory." But having

[253] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, 2022 Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Vision Statement Packet, 5.

[254] Dr. Charles Sepulveda, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."

[255] You can donate to the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy here: https://tongva.land/. You can donate to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust here: https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/donate/.

> that one little piece of land that actually says this is who I am that gives us that sovereignty again. That allows us to make decisions about who we are going forward is an amazing thing. It transforms us back into human beings.[256]

To Corrina, it does not matter whether the present colonial government is validating or recognizing the tribal presence and connection with the land. The sovereignty and connection to their ancestral lands cannot be destroyed by any colonial government, entity, or individual. This fact will always prevail and hold steadfast within her work. The inherent sovereignty and culture that ties her to her homelands is what continually drives and grounds her and her community to their land. The power to caretake and make decisions for her homelands should not be discounted. With the understanding that her community is tied intimately and securely to the land and people (it is something that cannot be pulled a part), it is of even more importance that they are able to caretake and tend to their ancestral homelands. It strengthens the relationship with the land, culture, and local people. It is essential in the rematriation work.

Similar to Corrina's reflections of reimagining and the power of sovereignty, Wallace Cleaves writes about the future dreams of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy:

> In the course of our discussions, our vision for this conservancy has also grown beyond simply being able to take possession of the Alta Dena property to include setting up this organization to be able to handle taking in other property donations in the future. As "land back" becomes more than just a slogan, we hope that other individuals with property in Tovaangar, the Tongva region, will be willing to follow the example of our initial donor and return land to our people… Looking to the future, we would like to take this initiative even further and regain custodianship of significant portions of our traditional lands so that we can help to restore them and maintain them for our future generations.[257]

The multi-year and intergenerational work that the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy members have contributed to is coming to fruition. Focusing on reclaiming their traditional homelands, their organization is excited and ready to support and be a part of land

[256] Corrina Gould, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[257] Dr. Wallace Cleaves, 2022 Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy Vision Statement Packet, 1-2.

rematriation for their community and culture. They have been reimagining and planning for a future that is outside of the constricts of the colonial present. A future that affords them connection to their ancestral lands and revitalizing their culture.

Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy are using their experiences as California Native people to create a space outside of colonial normativity. Dr. Middleton names in her book, *Trust in the Land*, that "By using conservation tools, tribes and other Native entities can enshrine their ties to the land and resources in a legal document that will enable them to access and care for a particular site in perpetuity."[258] Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy have created Native-led non-profits that utilize the legal mechanisms to protect the land that is legally held within their non-profit, while also creating a space that allows them to make decisions, involve the community, center their culture, and uplift revitalization and land rematriation efforts. With the 501c3 structures that were established, local tribal peoples have a consistent and accessible space to access land and culture, thus supporting the importance and need to have long-term access to build relationship with the land and with one another. In this way, as Dr. Middleton states, it is "more in line with Native goals for the land."[259]

The California Native people who make up these two organizations have fought for generations to protect their homelands, waters, cultures, ancestors, and sovereignty. For both organizations, creating Native led non-profits to support their efforts was beneficial. Due to the history of erasure and violence on their communities amplified by the fact that they are not federally recognized within large urban spaces that are their ancestral homelands; creating a non-

[258] Middleton, *Trust in the Land*, 19.

[259] Ibid.

profit in order to practice cultural revitalization through "land back" and land rematration was one way that they could support these efforts. As Ariel described in our second interview:

> The goal of Sogorea Te' is not to be a really successful nonprofit right? The tools of the nonprofit are just to support the dream and the vision and like it's about reclaiming the land base and it's about revitalizing the culture. And, you know, the heart of the work is so much deeper and it's spiritual and it's political and so profound. And I feel like Corrina and Johnella have always been clear that like, yeah, we're using these tools of the current capitalist system… But always being clear what this work is really about, which is about the land, and it's about being human beings, and it's about the connection and relationships… that feels like a really profound paradigm shift. Which I think has been really helpful.[260]

Both Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy understood the colonial and institutional limitations that incorporating and formalizing into a non-profit entailed. In no way was this a substitute for decolonizing.[261] Creating a 501c3 to rematriate their ancestral homelands is a tool that aided the cultural and communal Indigenous-centered work that they and their families have been involved in for generations. This knowledge and realization were a strength and a tool of insight that both organizations centered throughout their discussions. In Dr. Middleton's book *Trust in the Land*, the author states:

> Tribes and Native organizations are using conservation tools in innovative ways to conserve cultural resources and to regain a stake in the stewardship of their traditional

[260] Ariel Luckey, Sogorea Te' Land Trust Interview #2 with author, August 12, 2021.

[261] On page 6 in Dr. Sepulveda's Dissertation "California's Mission Projects: The Spanish Imaginary in Riverside and Beyond," he reflects: "Also, it seems clear to me that many Native peoples and communities have well-defined ideas of what decolonization could or should look like. Much of that vision is based on pre-colonial traditional cultures where people once again have a sustainable relationship, and therefore a responsibility, to land without capitalist interventions and environmental degradation." A 501c3 land trust or conservancy as a whole does not fit this description. Elements of being able to make decisions, protect and access land, and practice their culture are a few key points that came up as an empowering and an important aspect of the healing and cultural regenerative process that a Native led 501c3 could secure. As Dr. Simpson explores on page 8 in "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation:" "Propelling us to rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality and not just "dream alternative realities" but to create them, on the ground in the physical world, in spite of being occupied. If we accept colonial permanence, then our rebellion can only take place within settler colonial thought and reality;" It is dire that Native people take action steps to "rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality." For the Tongva, there is no better time than now to connect with their land, revitalize their culture, and exercise self-determination. (Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects," 6.) (Simpson, "Land as pedagogy," 8.)

> homelands."[262]… in order to preserve the land and share this vision, they are using private, market-based conservation tools… Herein lies the creativity and resistance in the Native conservation movement: conservative conservation tools for private land, which have a history of supporting wealthy non-Natives, are being used productively and innovatively to assert Native rights to and understandings of place.[263]

Knowing and understanding this, Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy were able to strategically choose to use the colonial mechanisms and safeguards that establishing a land trust and land conservancy created to better focus in on and fortify their rematriation goals of obtaining "land back" for their ancestors and community. As Dr. Middleton reflects and as both organizations recognize:

> Constraints upon indigenous stewardship affect different members of the community differently, depending not only upon their economic positionality (i.e., as landowners or not), but also upon their epistemological and cosmological positionality, which may not vary predictably with the former, and which defines how individuals see themselves in relation to the environment.[264]

Because of this, Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy realize the paramount importance of using the 501c3 structure to further support and include community in reconnecting and cultural revitalization efforts. In Dr. Simpson's article **"**Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," she explains the powerful impact that land has on Native communities. Naming that:

> The land, aki, is both context and process. The process of coming to know is learner-led and profoundly spiritual in nature. Coming to know is the pursuit of whole body intelligence practiced in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, inter-dependent and self-regulating community minded individuals. It creates communities of individuals with the capacity to uphold and move forward our political traditions and systems of governance.[265]

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[262] Middleton, *Trust in the Land*, 223.

[263] Ibid., 237.

[264] Middleton, "A Political Ecology of Healing," 19.

[265] Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy," 7.

Both organizations and communities recognize the foundational strength and power that being in relationship with the land holds for individuals and for their communities as a whole. Their efforts in land rematriation are not just about reclamation, but also about healing, reconnecting, and being able to engage with community and cultural practices in sustainable, consensual ways. Dr. Simpson names that, ultimately, "we need to create generations of people that are capable of actualizing radical decolonization, diversity, transformation and local economic alternatives to capitalism."[266] For California Native people, Sogorea Te' Land Trust, and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy; they know the way to accomplish these goals and they have been involved in intergenerational struggles to achieve these objectives. The crux of this work is entwined with the understanding that "land back" and land rematriation efforts are necessary to obtain these goals. It is necessary to connect, to learn, and to be on the land. As the amazing community leaders that I have gained so much insight from over the last two years have mentioned throughout my thesis; the land is the foundation and an essential component of their relationships to their culture, language, ancestors, each other, and the world. It is the balance that holds them. The process of connecting to their homelands is a coming home and remembering; a recentering and reimagining of worlds.

The profound significance of these case studies, stories, and actions that have been implemented by Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy are the long-term result of their Indigenous-centered praxis within their own tribal communities and ancestral homelands. Both organizations took the time to build relationships and approach "land back" and land rematration efforts in a way that addresses the needs of their communities. Their efforts support their larger goal of revitalizing their community's connection to their homelands,

[266] Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy," 23.

creating access to culture, community, and other people who are invested in supporting Indigenous sovereignty, cultural revitalization, and self-determination. They have worked and sacrificed within an unforgiving system to create a space that centers them fully: constructing an alternative reality outside of the settler-colonial norm and providing space to local Native peoples to engage with rematriation and cultural revitalization efforts. These action steps directly challenge the colonial, capitalistic, settler-state that we exist within and create an alternative for present and future Native people to dream, reimagine, heal, and act within. By developing the mechanisms and structure for community to directly reconnect with ancestral homelands; it also allows for community to reconnect with their culture, ceremonies, songs, dances, stories, and each other. It provides the space to heal. It regenerates a reciprocal relationship and, in-turn, healing that colonialism continually seeks to destroy. Through Indigenous-centered praxis, both the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy are regrounding themselves and reestablishing the relationship with their homelands as well as practicing the deep radical relationality that their ancestor's established in order to fulfill and carry out their caretaker duty and responsibilities as California Native peoples.

Dr. Leanne Simpson reflects in her book *As We Have Always Done* that, since first contact, "… there has never been a time when indigenous peoples were not resisting colonialism."[267] California Native people know and live this reality with particular intimacy. Surviving three waves of genocide, combating and withstanding three separate colonial government forces that were focused on domination, exploitation, erasure, and eradication; California Native people continue to revitalize in the ways that are accessible to them and beyond – through their own creative methods. This becomes increasingly difficult when the

[267] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Indigenous Americas, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 73.

legacies of colonial policies and laws continue to influence and dictate what tribal nations are "recognized" or "unrecognized." Without the bureaucratic seal of approval that is federal recognition, there are usually massive hurdles for Native Nations in California to access basic resources and funding for their communities including healthcare, education, and social services. This is further exasperated when it comes to supporting cultural and language revitalization efforts, land access, and land rematriation efforts. Without access to their ancestral homelands, unrecognized California Native communities are not able to protect their ancestral homelands and sacred sites, practice and teach futures generations ceremonies, gather their medicines and plants, and fulfill their ancestral duties as the original caretakers of the land. Denying and creating obstacles for California Native people to access their traditional homelands is, as Wallace Cleaves states, "… one of the conditions of genocide: being removed and that removal continues…"[268] This history, coupled with the current reality, has created enormous barriers and has had lasting effects on land access for unrecognized California tribal communities. These factors have not stopped California tribal community members from building upon the inter-generational movement work that their families and communities have been a part of. The Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy have reimagined and created a process that upholds Indigenous centered knowledge, praxis, relationship building, and consensual reciprocity central to establishing and building healthy restorative relationships with the land and people. Their work and actions reimagine what and how people can re-engage with

[268] (Dr. Wallace Cleaves, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Webinar."): Dr. Wallace Cleaves reflected on the historical and current issues of forced removal of Tongva community members. He mentioned in the "Beyond Land Acknowledgement: New Models of Support and Reparation for Indigenous Communities," Webinar, 3rd LA Series at USC Dornsife on May 13, 2021, that "We have community members who have literally been forced out of their ancestral homelands because of rising home and rental costs and, that's not ok. You know, that's actually, provisionally one of the conditions of genocide: being removed and that, that removal continues is incredibly profound."

the land and with each other in meaningful ways. Their "land back" and land rematriation work creates a space outside of the colonial norm that is an act of Indigenous recentering.

The intention of my thesis research is to emphasize the importance of land rematriation of unrecognized California Native Nations by highlighting these two organizations transformational work. This thesis provides context of the movement work that both organizations have gone through to create, sustain, and successfully rematriate part of their ancestral homelands. Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy provide recommendations for the reader to engage with and act upon. To reiterate the recommendations from both organizations: Corrina and Ariel of Sogorea Te' Land Trust recommend to first, uplift and advocate for Indigenous leadership, culture, and ancestors' rematriation; second, to pay Shuumi Land Tax; and third, to give land back to local Native people/ Sogorea Te' Land Trust.

Similarly, the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy's community members recommend to first, support and advocate for Tongva projects and cultural efforts; second, to be an accomplice to Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty; third, to practice consensual and respectful relationship building with the Tongva; fourth, to donate to the *Kuuyam* Guest Tax; and fifth, to give land back to the Tongva.

Additional ways that people can support the Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy is by becoming actively involved with their organizations; volunteer time, skills, share, educate themselves and others about local California Native struggles and issues; and donate resources, land, and monetary funds to support their land reclamation and cultural revitalization efforts.[269] I encourage the reader to research, educate

[269] You can donate to the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy here: https://tongva.land/. You can donate to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust here: https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/donate/.

themselves and others, advocate as responsible *Kuuyam,* and to engage and carry out these recommendations from Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy.

Glossary

- **L. Frank Manriquez** was born in the LA Basin, in what is now known as Santa Monica, L.Frank has spent her life remembering what it means to truly belong, to be Indigenous, to a place. Even when the songs are whispers, the words are scarce and the land is hidden under a city. In her work as an artist, writer, tribal scholar, teacher, cartoonist, and Indigenous language activist, she has forged connections, pathways and torches for Indigenous communities in California and around the globe to remember the ways they each intimately and essentially belong to their places. Homelands. Through her work establishing the *California Indian Basketweavers Association*, she is the start of the coil for hundreds of weavers. Through the founding of *Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival*, the land is greeted by thousands of words and songs, some of which have been sleeping for generations. Through her service to the Two Spirit community she has helped countless Native youth not only understand themselves but their gifts and responsibilities within a community. Through her books and art, she has opened Indigenous California in new ways to the world. She is the mother of a canoe family, Paxiiwovem, which extends the spine of the Pacific. Two generations of Indigenous leaders have been shaped by her vision, her work, and her service to remember and belong.
- **Corrina Gould** (Ohlone) is the tribal spokesperson for the Confederated Villages of Lisjan. Born and raised in her ancestral homeland, the territory of Huchiun, she is the mother of three and grandmother of four. Corrina has worked on preserving and protecting the sacred burial sites of her ancestors throughout the Bay Area for decades.
- **Kimberly Morales-Johnson** (she/her) Vice President, Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy. Kimberly is an active member and tribal secretary of the Gabrieleno / Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, where she maintains her tribal traditions and continuity and is dedicated to

the preservation and continuance of Native American culture and tradition through future generations. Kimberly is currently a PhD student at UC Davis in Native American Studies and a Native American community elected commissioner for the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission. Kimberly has been active in Native American politics and culture, maintaining her family traditions all of her life. Her father served as tribal chairman, and was one of the first to serve as a Native American Monitor for the State of California. She and her family have been featured in documentaries and several books, regarding the Native people of the Los Angeles Basin. Kimberly has given various presentations to several local colleges and universities about the Gabrieleno/Tongva and maintaining cultural traditions. She has consulted for many publications including, Harcourt Mifflin Social Studies Text Books and with William McCawley on his most recent book, "Oh My Ancestor." In 2010, Kimberly earned her Master's in Public Health and taught Diabetes Education with Riverside San Bernardino County Indian Health. Kimberly enjoys traditional basket weaving, preparing native foods, and keeping her Native American culture alive.

- **Wallace Cleaves** is an Associate Professor of Teaching, Director of the California Center for Native Nations, and Associate Director in the University Writing Program at the University of California at Riverside. His main responsibilities include First Year Writing and the TA development program and running the year long series of teaching practicum courses for new instructors in the writing program. His PhD is in Medieval English Literature, and he has taught courses in Medieval, Renaissance and Native American literature at Pomona College in Claremont at Cal State Fullerton and at UC Riverside. He is a member of the Gabrieleno/Tongva Native American tribe, the Indigenous peoples of the Los Angeles area, and has served in a variety of positions on the Tribal Council, on the board of the Kuruvungna Springs Foundation,

and is currently the president of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, a non-profit organization with an entirely Tongva board dedicated to cultural preservation and stewardship of land returned to our community. Recent publications include: coauthorship of the 13th edition of St. Martin's Guide to Writing, "Mission Project: Activism on a Smaller Scale" in World Literature Today, a Bloomberg CityLab article entitled "Native Land Acknowledgments Are Not the Same As Land" with fellow Tongva Tribal member Charlie Sepulveda, a pushcart nominated coauthored work of Indigenous speculative fiction titled "A Parable of Things that Crawl and Fly" in Pulp Literature, and the essay "From Monmouth to Madoc to Māori: The Myth of Medieval Colonization and an Indigenous Alternative" in the Indigenous Futures and Medieval Pasts issue of English Language Notes.

- **Charles Sepulveda** (Tongva and Acjachemen) is an Assistant Professor at the University of Utah in the Department of Ethnic Studies. He earned his PhD in Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Riverside in 2016. He grew up in California in the San Jacinto Valley, attended community college and graduated with a B.A. in American Studies from UC Santa Cruz. His fields of research and teaching include California Indian History, Ethnic Studies, Indigenous Feminist Studies, and Californio History.

  He is currently at work on his first book project tentatively titled, *Indigenous Nations v. Junípero Serra: Resisting the Spanish Imaginary*. His first book project analyzes the development of what he has named the Spanish Imaginary, as a play on Emma Perez's "colonial imaginary" – the historiography produced through the traditional discipline of history silencing and ignoring people of color, women and sexuality. It is within the imaginary that the atrocities against California Indians continue to be viewed positively and celebrated as is the case with Junípero Serra's canonization in 2015. His recent publication "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing

Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility" analyzes the desecration of the Santa Ana River in southern California and critically traces the logics of domestication that impact both Native peoples and our environments. In this article he also encourages the development of indigenous theorizations to disrupt settler colonialism and suggests that settlers can become Kuuyam (the Tongva word for guests) to the caretakers of the land.

- **Ariel Luckey** was born and raised in Huchiun/Oakland, California on Lisjan Ohlone land, Ariel Luckey is an interdisciplinary artist and activist whose people are Ashkenazi Jewish, Irish, Scottish, English and Dutch. Ariel is Development Director at the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an urban Indigenous women-led land trust, and was part of the team that created the Shuumi Land Tax. He is a co-founder of Jews On Ohlone Land, a vibrant multigenerational Jewish community that is learning together how to be good guests on Lisjan land. Ariel tells stories with roots in radical genealogy and community organizing, and creates and supports pathways of redistribution and Rematriation. He loves to play soccer with his sons, walk in the woods with his beloved, and indulge in dark chocolate and dancing outdoors.
- **Ian Schiffer** is an activist and spiritual resource mobilizer in Tovaangar. He's co-creating a radical real estate cohort and through relationship and on teams, he works to support release of resources and return of land in service of rematriation.

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