

# Native People, the Anza Expedition,

# and the Settlement of California

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Joel Wellina and Maria Garcia (great grandmother of Ann Marie Sayers) at the Indian Canyon settlement, 1885. Photo by Cassie Crowe



Joe Wellina and Maria Garcia taken at Indian Canyon in the late 1880's. Eleven of Maria's children died from diseases such as tuberculosis and pneumonia.



This page, left: Joel Wellina and Maria Garcia, great-grandmother of Ann Marie Sayers, at Indian Canyon, 1880s. Photo courtesy of Ann Marie Sayers.

This page, right: The Anza Trail through San Luis Obispo.

Opposite page, left: Map of the Anza Expedition, by Ben Pease.

Opposite page, right: National Park Service historian Don Garate in his role as Juan Bautista de Anza at Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont.

Previous page: The Yuha Well. From here Sebastián Tarabal could see the pass through what are now called the Santa Rosa Mountains, and he was able to assure the Anza expedition that they could succeed.

*Sitting at her kitchen table in Indian Canyon, near Mission San Juan Bautista and just a few miles from where Juan Bautista de Anza and Father Pedro Font passed in March 1776, Ann Marie Sayers (Indian Canyon Ohlone) says: "It's hard to celebrate the start of your demise. And for the trail to be federally recognized before the Native people are federally recognized, that's kind of difficult. The truth from every perspective has to be out there."*



THE ANZA EXPEDITION of 1775–76, which brought three hundred settlers and their livestock from Mexico to the San Francisco Bay Area, was the beginning of California's settlement by European farmers, ranchers, and townspeople. The Spanish were meticulous record-keepers: we know how far they traveled every day; we know what hymns they sang; we know how much brandy Anza dispensed to the group on special occasions. But there is little record of the Indian viewpoint.

Spanish missions, presidios, and pueblos destabilized and destroyed Native ways of life in coastal California and affected the entire state; as many as one hundred thousand Native people died of disease, overwork, or broken hearts. Faced with what historian Randall Milliken calls a "time of little choice," individuals and communities resisted, retreated, and adapted. Some worked the cattle and baptized their children at the missions. Settlers and Native people intermarried, creating a unique California culture. The impact of settlement has reached down the centuries to the present.

In 1990 the U.S. Congress designated the Anza expedition's route through Arizona and California a National Historic Trail, administered by the National Park Service. As part of bringing the his-

tory to life, the Park Service distributes a hundred-page trail guide (available online),<sup>1</sup> and the trail's website ([www.nps.gov/juba](http://www.nps.gov/juba)) also guides readers to the journals of the expedition members. At events sponsored by the Park Service and historical societies, expedition descendants dress as Californios and re-enact highlights of the journey: crossing the Colorado, meeting the Chumash as the tomols were bringing in the catch from the Santa Barbara Channel, founding the San Francisco Presidio.

Many Native people, however, say that "Anza Trail" is a misnomer, since it was the Native people of California who guided the expeditions along trails they themselves had been traveling for centuries. The Quechan controlled the crossing of the Colorado River. The Kumeyaay knew where to find the water holes in the forbidding southern deserts. The Cahuilla controlled the canyons and the all-important pass through the Santa Rosa Mountains. When the expedition reached the San Gabriel Mission they traveled on Tongva land, and then moved up the coast through the Chumash and Salinan land between San Gabriel and Monterey, and eventually through Ohlone and Miwok lands around San Francisco Bay.

Charlene Ryan, cultural program director of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians, looks up from her desk: "Anza is credited with blazing this route, but in reality the Natives had been using these trails for years, centuries probably. They knew when to go, where you could get water, vegetation. He must have had all that information before he put one foot on that trail. People give him all the credit—'How did he know where to go? He didn't have a map, didn't have a compass...'—but he followed the old trading trails. I think that's the biggest gripe: so much credit is given to him when he was just following the people's trails that they used to do trading."

This is not a scholarly historical study, a literature review, a summary of official tribal opinion, or a survey of tribal members today. It is an essay based on research, consultation with scholars, and conversations with some of the culture bearers from tribes who live (or lived) along Anza's route. Today Native communities proclaim, "We are still here," revive traditional song and dance, crafts and language, and assert their role in the history of California. As much as possible, the story is in the words of the people whose cultures were most affected. This essay will have done its job if it

Charlene Ryan founded and directs Cham-Mix Poki', a cultural center of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians.

offers ways to think about the expedition from the point of view of the people whom Anza and the settlers met, the people whose lives were changed forever when the Europeans passed through and settled on their lands.

#### SPAIN'S GEOPOLITICAL AGENDA AND THE SETTLEMENT OF CALIFORNIA

By the 1760s, Spain had been colonizing in most of South and Central America, the Baja California peninsula, and northern Mexico, including what is now the U.S. Southwest, for almost two hundred and fifty years. Like all of the European imperial powers, the Spanish believed they had the God-given right to claim land for Christ and the King if it was not already claimed by a stronger power, regardless of who was living there. Missionaries moved up the Pacific Coast into Alta California (present-day California), founding a mission in San Diego in 1769 and continuing north, establishing missions for the next fifty-four years.

The early missions hugged the coast, battling the refractory winds that sometimes blew ships halfway to Hawaii, and were protected only by the handful of mission-stationed soldiers and by two presidios (San Diego and Monterey) that were located dozens, or even hundreds, of miles away. The missions received supplies from Mexico, but



the Spanish crown was eager for them to become self-supporting. It also wanted to establish civilian settlements that could hold the land against the expanding English colonies to the east and the Russian settlements farther north up the Pacific Coast. But the coming colonists first and foremost needed a land route from New Spain/Mexico to northern California; that was what the Anza expedition was about.

The Spanish brought their Christianizing missions and geopolitical ambitions to a California where an estimated three hundred thousand people already lived in dynamic, complex relationships with the land and with each other in hundreds of small tribes, each with its own language and creation story, each managing its lands and daily life.

By the time of the Anza expeditions, Spanish presence in the area was no secret: Coronado had explored the Southwest as early as 1524, and Spanish ships had navigated the coast since Cabrillo sailed in 1542. News of the men with beards, leather armor, muskets, and horses was certain to have traveled between tribes and along the trails.

Crosses at Mission San Juan Bautista, where there is acknowledgment of only one individual out of the thousands of Native people who built the mission and died there.

The missions, presidios, and settlements of New Spain were already becoming part of the landscape where Native people lived.

#### THE FIRST EXPEDITION

Captain Juan Bautista de Anza, a criollo (New World-born) son of a Sonora presidio commander, proposed an expedition to establish an overland route to the San Francisco Bay. Anza was well suited for this mission as he was loyal to the crown and experienced in communicating across cultures. Although his open-mindedness about Native people did not keep European settlement from destroying Native ways of life, his policy and personality were no doubt important to the success of the expeditions he led.

Accompanying Anza was Father Francisco Garcés, a chaplain and essential member of the first expedition. He had been a lone missionary in the Colorado River area since 1771 and was well liked by the people he visited. He learned local languages, ate with the Native people, and seems to have been genuinely interested in them and their ways of life.

At least as important to the success of the expeditions was the hospitality and advice of Native people along the route from Arizona to San Francisco, including the indispensable help of two





Quechan storyteller Barbara Levy with her granddaughter, Day Antone Duran, at the San Tomas Mission on the Colorado River.

Native people we know by name—Sebastián Tarabal and Salvador Palma—as well as many others whose names are lost.

Garcés had a relationship with Quechan leader Olleyquotequeibe (whom the Spanish christened Salvador Palma), and was able to introduce Palma and Anza in 1774. The Quechan controlled the all-important Colorado crossing at what is now Yuma, Arizona, and Palma was well aware of the value of his people’s goodwill to the Spanish.

Spanish accounts of the expeditions tell us that Salvador Palma made the decision to build an alliance with Anza and Garcés and ferry the expedition across the Colorado, which at that time was a huge wild river. The journals of Juan Bautista de Anza and the priests—Francisco Garcés on the first expedition and Pedro Font on the second—credit Palma’s leadership with gaining the cooperation of people along the river and in the deserts to the west. Although Palma could not have had a frame of reference with which to assess the magnitude of Spanish power, he went to Mexico City with Anza after the second expedition and addressed the viceroy as an equal with something

to offer and something to gain. Vladimir Guerrero, author of *The Anza Trail and the Settlement of California*, reading Palma’s remarks to Viceroy Bucareli, concludes that Palma decided to connect his tribe with the Spanish, a move that would boost his standing among his own people as well as bring a powerful ally into the area.<sup>2</sup>

Quechan storyteller Barbara Levy describes Palma as “tall, graceful, powerful, [and] magnetic.” She continues:

He had those qualities of leadership. When the Spaniards came, he wanted to see who they were; he met with them and talked with them. He had the ability to communicate with other people, besides speaking the language. He liked the Christians, he liked the mission, he liked the fathers.

But there were several tribes the Spaniards were trying to settle with, and some of them did not accept the Catholic Church and the mission. Before the Spaniards came to Quechan country, they were in Pima, Papago, [and] Maricopa territory. And then they came this way following the Gila River. They found the junction of the Gila and the Colorado. At that time there were many



The Colorado River once filled the entire flood plain to the distant mountains; today, its waters are diverted to the thirsty populations of Southwestern cities.

floods and the river was huge and mighty. People couldn't find that junction when it was covered with floods. Salvador Palma made friends with the Spaniards, the padres. When they first met Palma they found he was a way to protect themselves because he made peace with a lot of people, especially a lot of other Indian tribes.

Palma was the chief that went to Mexico City [with Anza] and he was the one who was talked about by our tribal members. He came back with a Spanish helmet and a vest. He was given many gifts from Mexico City from the viceroy.

Palma was a good man, with a good heart. He believed in Christianity [and] he saw the Spanish as allies to the Quechan. We were looking for someone to help us with our battles, so Salvador Palma thought we would get Spanish help and the tribes would leave us alone. But it didn't turn out that way.

Preston Arrow-weed with his partner, Helena Quintana, in the Yuha Desert.

Preston Arrow-weed, a Quechan/Kamia singer, playwright, and storyteller, had a different assessment:

The Quechan were not a unified people. We lived in our small groups with leaders. Palma had been leading his own little group, and the Spanish called him chief and bestowed this jacket and special gifts on him. The Spanish created Palma, who was one chief of many. By bringing him gifts they boosted his prestige, [and] also brought materialism to the culture. Palma was another one who was misled.

Sebastián Tarabal, a guide through the desert on the first expedition, was probably a Cochimi from Baja California, and may have gone with Portolà on his 1769 explorations. Others think he came to Mission San Gabriel (Los Angeles) in 1773 as part of a detachment of farm labor for the struggling mission. He was a Christian and spoke Spanish, but in 1773 he fled the mission with his wife and brother and headed home through the deserts. His companions perished and he was

rescued or captured by Quechan warriors, who turned him over to Anza. Tarabal guided the first Anza party through the southern deserts of the Kumeyaay; when he looked north from the Yuha Well and recognized the pass through the Santa Rosa Mountains, he was able to reassure Anza that the expedition could succeed.

Not much more is known about Tarabal. He tried to leave Spanish control, but when he was recaptured, he apparently decided to throw his lot in with the newcomers. He went with Garcés on further missionary explorations and, as far as we know, spent the rest of his life working with the Spanish.

#### THE SECOND EXPEDITION: SETTLERS IN ALTA CALIFORNIA

With the help of Palma and many anonymous Native guides, in the winter of 1775–76 Anza led an expedition of three hundred settlers, soldiers, vaqueros, muleteers, and their families, as well as a thousand head of livestock, from Culiacan, Sinaloa, to the San Francisco Bay Area. Many, and perhaps most, of the members of the expedition were mestizos, indigenous people, or

About the members of the Anza expedition, Quechan elder George Bryant said, “It [must have been] obvious they did not belong here.”

people of African descent who had been slaves in local mines. Their project, however, was not crosscultural adaptation but supporting the missions and establishing European-style settlements in northern California. It was a precarious project; even the military governor of California, Francisco Moncada y Rivera, opposed it, fearing that his soldiers would be taxed beyond their capacities.

The expedition reached the Colorado River by the end of November 1775. Again, the Quechan helped the expedition across the river and into the forbidding deserts at what is now the Mexico/California border, guided by local people who helped them find the scarce water supplies.

The expedition, consisting of as many or more people as most tribal villages and with a huge herd of foreign animals, was no doubt monitored by Native people every step of the way. The journals of Anza and Father Pedro Font often remark on villagers who welcomed them, but they are also sprinkled with references to anonymous observers. One entry reads: “We saw several Indians between the rocks high in the hills...[They were] reticent as stags.” At other sites, the journals note abandoned villages, which could have been the

Historic Quechan lands on the border between Mexico and the United States are now heavily fortified.





result of something as common as people moving to summer village sites or searching for water, but also could have been the aftermath of people fleeing from Anza's invasion or even dying off from the European diseases that were already spreading among Native people.

In the Yuha Desert at today's California-Mexico border, Anza split the expedition into four groups to stagger their arrival at the desert water holes. Expedition members dug out six wells, no doubt exhausting the water supply for a long time. From there the expedition traveled north, toward the pass through Cahuilla country, what is now called the Santa Rosa Mountains. They stopped at the San Sebastian Marsh. They deepened wells at what is now Borrego Springs, again depleting weeks or months of water while the livestock consumed a season's worth of seeds and grass. Then they moved into Coyote Canyon and camped at a flowing stream, where they surprised some women gathering seeds, who fled. Some Cahuilla finally met the expedition on Christmas Eve.

Contemporary Cahuilla elder Katherine Siva Saubel commented: "What did our people do

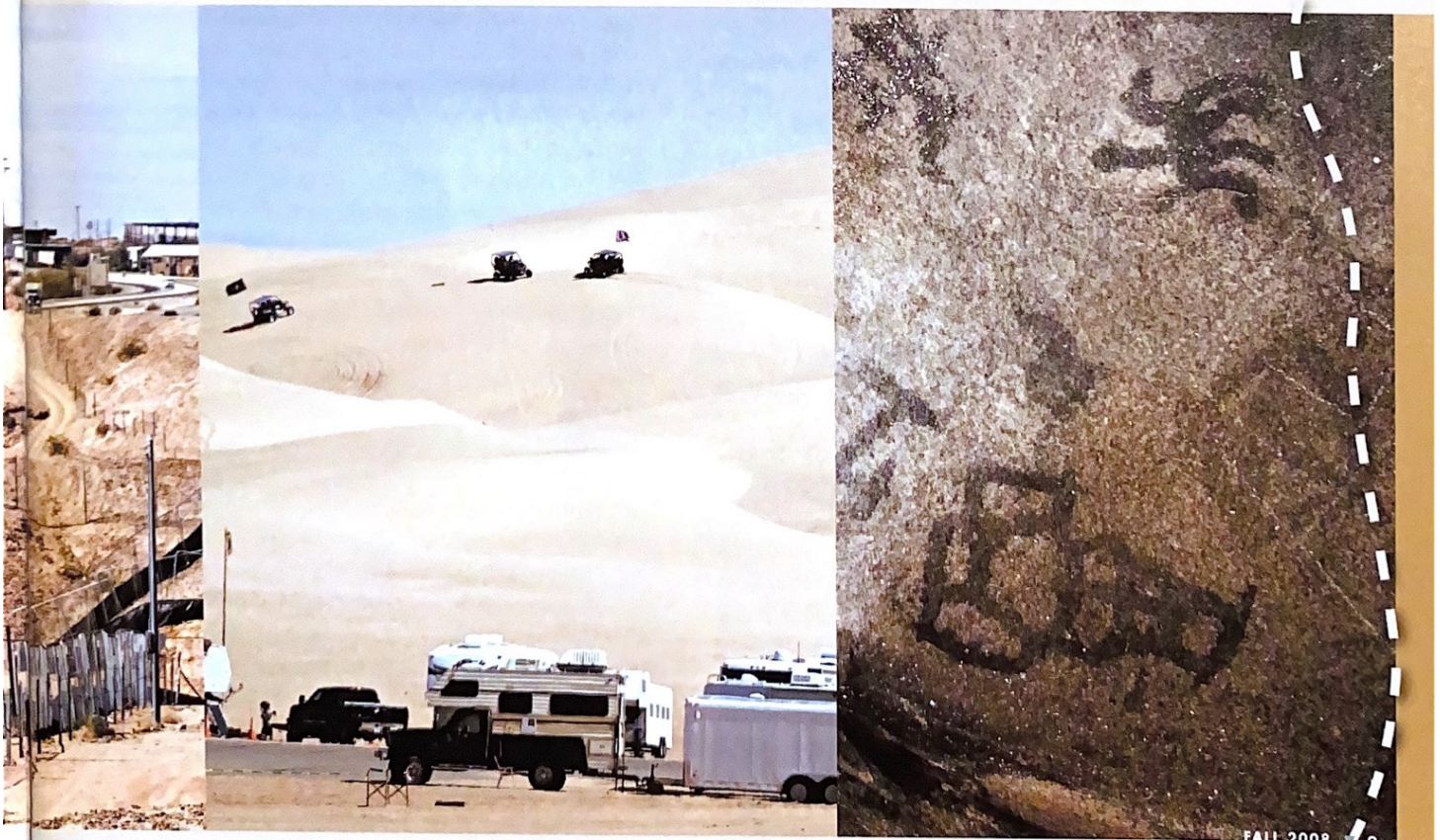
when they came across there? My dad was born in 1872, so he knew about it; old people had told him all about that. 'That was the saddest part of our lives when [Anza] came through here with all of these cattle and animals; they ate up all the food we were waiting for, and we were starving for about three or four years before the plants came back.' And I asked him what they thought about the people and he said they thought they were ghosts coming through because they were so white. The Cahuilla were all scared; they hid and wouldn't show themselves. When I worked with state parks I said you have Anza up there on the sign and you have us down below. I would like to have our people first and his name at the bottom, because we were here first."

On December 31, 1775, the expedition camped at the top of the canyon near the village of Powki (near the present Cary Ranch outside the town of Anza in Riverside County, California). Rock paintings in the area clearly show mounted travelers and what may be men with jackets and headgear.

From the top of Coyote Canyon it was only a matter of days until the travelers reached the San

The deadliest part of the Anza expedition was through what is now the Algodones Dunes. Directly on the Mexican border, some of it is now a California off-highway vehicle park.

Rock art at the top of Coyote Canyon near the Cahuilla village of Powki clearly shows a horse with rider, and possibly a mounted soldier with leather armor. The site is near Anza, California.





El Camino Real—marked by the mission bell—north of San Luis Obispo.

Gabriel mission, in present Los Angeles County. After that the expedition traveled on the Native trading trails between missions (renamed El Camino Real) and then to their final destination, San Francisco. They traveled through what is now the Santa Clara Valley, which was heavily populated with people, some of whom were friendly and others of whom expressed themselves, according to Font, “screaming and running like deer, and without being openly aggressive, gesticulating with their bows and arrows as if to stop us or keep us from going farther.”

An exploratory party of the expedition reached San Francisco in March of 1776, and the first settlers arrived on June 26, settling near the village of Chutchui. At last the elements of the Spanish imperial strategy had come together: the soldiers founded a presidio, the padres established a mission at San Francisco (and another soon after at Santa Clara), and settlers founded the pueblo of San Jose and began to ranch and farm the Santa Clara Valley.

The immediate impact of the expeditions was most pronounced on the people living in the villages surrounding the bay. The foreigners settled within the territory of dozens of existing villages

in San Francisco, San Jose, and the East Bay, pasturing their cattle and sheep where people had gathered seeds, plowing up the valleys to grow European crops, and exposing the locals to disease. These Natives, later grouped together by anthropologists under the name Ohlone, were actually fifty-seven different tribal groups from a large area that stretched from Carmel to San Juan Bautista and the San Francisco peninsula and East Bay.

The age of European settlement had officially begun: settlers transformed the land, and with it the material basis of Native culture; Catholicism challenged Native religious and spiritual life; disease and the stress of disruption laid waste to whole peoples. But the invasion also promoted a new level of political organization and resistance by California Indians.

#### AN OMEN OF CHANGE

Before the Spanish came, California’s peoples lived by hunting, fishing, and managing the land. M. Kat Anderson, in her book *Tending the Wild*, summarizes: “California Indians protected and tended favored plant species and habitats, harvested plant and animal products at carefully worked out frequencies and intensities, and practiced an array of horticultural techniques....



A statue of Father Serra stands near an Ohlone tule house in the Mission Dolores cemetery, San Francisco.

[T]hey encouraged desired characteristics of individual plants, increased populations of useful plants, and altered the structures and compositions of plant communities. Regular burning of many types of vegetation across the state created better habitat for game, eliminated brush, minimized the potential for catastrophic fires, and encouraged a diversity of food crops. These harvest and management practices, on the whole, allowed for sustainable harvest of plants over centuries and possibly thousands of years. In other words, California Indians were able to harvest the foods and basketry and construction materials they needed each year while conserving—and sometimes increasing—the plant populations from which they came.”<sup>3</sup>

The Spanish disrupted this long-standing relationship to the earth. They usurped traditional lands, planted them with foreign species, grazed animals adapted to European agricultural practices, forbade traditional techniques such as managed burning, and overran the lands that provided the people’s livelihood.

At the site of the Yuha Well, where Anza had watered the settlers and livestock for three days,

Preston Arrow-weed reflects on the impact of the expedition on the people it encountered along the way: “From what I know today I can see what happened. These strange creatures don’t belong here—something’s going to go wrong. They probably contaminated the well for a long time, probably some sickness from that—it’s an omen of a change, something coming—other creatures needed to eat these plants and then nothing will grow again because of what they eat—it was very destructive. But Native people were helping, they were generous—the settlers should have been thankful that they came through here.”

In a paper for the California Mission Studies Association in 1999, scholars Robert Jackson and Anne Gardzina write: “The Franciscans introduced cattle, sheep, horses, and other animals, and the size of the herds grew quite rapidly. Thousands of cattle and sheep ranged across Chumash territory, and the numbers of livestock rapidly increased after 1800. In 1800, four missions counted a total of 16,572 head of cattle and 20,215 sheep. A decade later, in 1810, the numbers had risen to 41,425 cattle and 37,786 sheep. The common practice was to place livestock at sites close to large centers of indigenous populations, which meant that the growing number of livestock destroyed plants that were traditional sources of

food in the immediate environs of mainland Chumash villages."<sup>4</sup> In this way, within a few decades the entire ecology of southern and coastal California was transformed. Native bunch grasses that were depended on by Native people as well as huge herds of deer, antelope, and elk were supplanted by European crops brought by design, or by accident, in animal feed and droppings.

Randall Milliken, in *Time of Little Choice*, gives us a detailed account of how the founding of Mission San Francisco, in 1776, and Mission Santa Clara and the pueblo of San Jose, in 1777, overturned the lives of the people living in the vicinity: "By 1780 the town of San Jose already had six hundred head of various large animals on the meadows between the Guadalupe and Coyote rivers. The livestock grazed the herb and seed meadows which belonged to the women of the surrounding native towns, causing extensive damage to both root and seed crops."<sup>5</sup>

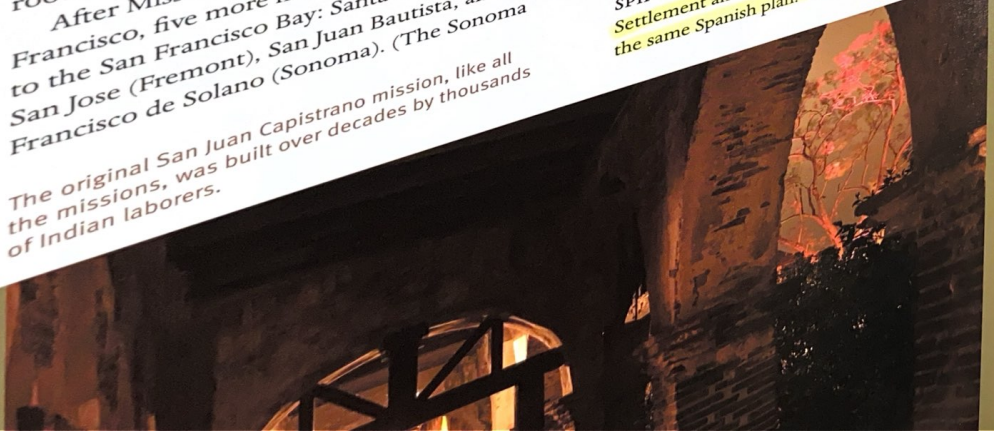
After Mission Dolores was established in San Francisco, five more missions were founded close to the San Francisco Bay: Santa Clara, San Rafael, San Jose (Fremont), San Juan Bautista, and San Francisco de Solano (Sonoma). (The Sonoma

The original San Juan Capistrano mission, like all the missions, was built over decades by thousands of Indian laborers.

mission was founded in 1823, after the land had passed to Mexican rule.) Once settlers had established the pueblo of San Jose they could grow European crops in abundance and pasture European animals. Ohlone villages subsequently disappeared or became rancherias on settler-held land, the residents now working as laborers in the crops and cattle. North of San Francisco, Coast Miwok lands were also taken by the missions; people there also abandoned their villages and moved north or became laborers on mission lands.

The missionaries also recruited Native people from farther and farther away. Gene Buvelot, a current member of the tribal council of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo), says that the Coast Miwok people were brought into the missions around the bay to replenish the labor force, and that Spanish soldiers destroyed shelters and baskets in the villages to discourage the people from returning. In southern California, mission influence spread inland through mission control of ranch- and farmlands.

**THE DESTRUCTION OF CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE**  
Settlement and the mission system were parts of the same Spanish plan. The missionaries came to



convert the Indians to Christianity, challenging thousands of years of cultural and spiritual practices, and between 1769 and 1831, when the missions were secularized, more than eighty thousand Native people were baptized (although mission records show that as many as seventy thousand people attached to the missions died in the same period). But Spanish ambitions were much greater: to transform the Native peoples into what the Spanish called "gente de razon" (people of reason), a society of Christian peasants working the land European-style, living in European-style settlements, working for European landlords.

Junipero Serra, president of the missions in Alta California from the establishment of Mission San Diego de Alcalá in 1769 until his death in 1784, insisted that not only must Native people be baptized but they must be moved from their traditional villages onto mission grounds. Native scholar Jack Forbes (Powhatan-Renape-Lenape) says: "It should be clear, then, that the missions of California were not solely religious institutions. They were...instruments designed to bring about a total change in culture in a brief period of time."<sup>6</sup>

Within the mission, missionaries believed that people who had been baptized had also assented to the discipline of mission life: a long day of

prayer and work, segregation of the sexes, and wearing mission clothes. When baptized people escaped to their villages, other missionized Indians and soldiers brought them back, by force if people did not come willingly.

The policy of moving people to the missions led to many deaths from epidemic diseases that erupted when people were crowded into mission quarters. Further, this policy set in motion the alienation of Native lands; the mission lands never passed to Indian control as promised, even though the mission period was only supposed to be a ten-year training phase after which the land was to be given to the mission Indians. Instead, the land was taken over by Mexican and then U.S. ranchers, with the Indians often serving as a captive workforce.

#### ONE GOOD STORY

The Mission San Antonio de Padua was established in Salinan territory (now on Fort Hunter Liggett between Monterey and San Luis Obispo) in 1771, implementing Junipero Serra's plan to move nearby Native people into the mission instead of leaving them in their own villages. By the time the Anza expedition came through, the Salinan people were already being absorbed into the mission system.

Statue of Junipero Serra at San Luis Obispo de Tolosa.





Santa Ynez Chumash elder Joe Talaugon and Salinan Manuel Segovia, Jr., honor the ancestors in Salinan territory.

Contemporary Salinan storyteller Gregg Castro talks about why he thinks people went to the missions: “People accepted the mission as one good story, not the only story. We didn’t have ideas of heaven and hell the way Christians did and do; [it was more like] good and bad, and bad tended to be something that wasn’t good for your community. [We] talked about animals that ate people. That was bad for people. But not evil in the European sense. We’re sad, but bear’s not evil for eating you. Some of [the Christian] dogma was very strange, like the virgin birth. But other parts had lots of appeal. Love one another; we’re good at that, been doing it for thousands of years. Living together in a communal setting, community. Been doing that too. Some of it wasn’t that different. I think it’s the attraction for some people today.”

Many Native people whose ancestors were taken into the missions profess Catholicism to this day. Traditional beliefs did not disappear altogether, however, but continued to be practiced in secret or combined with the new beliefs. David Belardes (Acjachemen/Juaneño), an Anza expedition descendant, has this to say:



David Belardes (Acjachemen/Juaneño) has developed his San Juan Capistrano museum, the Blas Aguilar Adobe, to showcase both his Spanish/Mexican and Acjachemen heritage, which goes back to the original mission.

Our people were called the star people—they kept a ceremonial calendar by the stars, named the Milky Way. Only a little of that knowledge is left.

Initial contact was devastating, wiping out lots of things we’ll never know, family and culture. The first generation was conquest, and there’s been an intermingling of cultures ever since. The resources are not all gone; plant knowledge has come up to the present. I know some of it. There are lots of introduced plants and foods, but also old ways—they are intermixed. My dad was into plants, my wife’s grandmother was into plants; *curanderos* [medicine men and women] had a poultice for everything. Dad would pick jackrabbit ears, pennyroyal.

Still, many Native people treasure their connection with Christianity. As Mission Dolores curator Andrew Galvan (Ohlone/Bay Miwok) said, “In my family we find it difficult to celebrate what we call the Spanish invasion; it was terrible because it



Mission Dolores curator Andrew Galvan (Ohlone/Bay Miwok) lectures about the role of Indians at the mission.

meant the end of the traditional way of life of the Indian people. But somehow you always need to find something good out of rough and difficult situations. And in our family we celebrate the faith. My older brother has been a Catholic priest for thirty-one years. Between this mission [Mission Dolores] and the Mission San Jose in Fremont, we can trace our family ten generations, and we're very proud of that. We have a real connection to these missions."

Chumash elder Ernestine De Soto fondly recalls working at the Santa Barbara mission: "I worked at the mission for six years and it was the most rewarding experience to work with the very same people who annihilated my people. I'm sure some of them loved my people and I came to think of them as my own family. It was a rewarding and heartbreaking experience. I love my religion. I have no malice; if they didn't get us we would have probably been speaking Russian. I only have malice when you don't recognize and respect us."



Ernestine De Soto, Chumash elder, at a plaque marking the village of Syuxtun in Santa Barbara, where her great-great-great-grandfather, Pedro Lihuisanaitset, was one of the last village leaders.

#### REBELLION AND ORGANIZED RESISTANCE

Before the Spanish came, California peoples lived in small villages with complex trading, marriage, and spiritual relationships with other villages, but few if any had what the Europeans thought of as political or military organizations. That changed rapidly in reaction to Spanish settlement, however, and the Spanish period was punctuated with revolts, some of them highly organized and involving warriors from many tribes.

In November 1775, just three weeks before Anza's second expedition crossed the Colorado, Kumeyaay warriors burned Mission San Diego de Alcalá to the ground and killed its missionary. Historian Richard Carrico has studied the rebellion and concludes that it was the outcome of six years of tension between the mission and the Tipai and Ipai (Kumeyaay) people. The missionaries began an accelerated process of baptisms in early 1775. Carrico writes: "Certainly local Indian people in general, and religious leaders in particular, increasingly felt the threatening presence of the European intruders as summer turned to fall." Rapes

of women were also reported. Carrico continues: "Yguetin, whose baptismal name was Mariano, told Lt. Ortega that he and others visited the mission and saw Kumeyaay from Rinconada working in the fields and that this raised the Indians' fears that they too would soon be subjected to the same work." The revolt was organized over the summer and fall. Father Garcés, with the Quechan at the Colorado River, reported hearing about plans for the rebellion.

Anza and some of his soldiers detoured from their own expedition and went to San Diego in January 1776 to reinforce its weak and demoralized military forces. Anza wanted to march on the rebellious villages and punish them, but the captain of the San Diego presidio prudently refrained, and Father Junipero Serra also opposed Anza. Carrico concludes: "Unlike some of the other missions, San Diego only held a tenuous grip on the Native population and then only in the region closest to the church. By no means did all of the Indians in the mission district come under the church's influence nor did Spanish hegemony prevail. The spirit that flared on that November night in 1775 was never extinguished."<sup>7</sup>

In 1781, a Quechan rebellion closed the Colorado River crossing. The Quechan had wanted the Spanish to settle among them (or at least Palma did), but when Spanish settlers finally arrived in December 1780, they were undersupplied and poorly prepared in experience and attitude to settle among people different from them. Unable to work out a cooperative relationship, the Quechan rose up in July 1781, killed the men in the settlement, and closed the crossing scarcely five years after they had helped the first settlers across. In doing this they were able to postpone the greatest impacts of European contact on their people until the United States took over California in the early 1850s.

Barbara Levy (Quechan) says the peoples' version of the story is different from the one told in history textbooks: "The settlers brought stock: horses, cattle, chickens. The visitors trampled the Quechan gardens. Started enslaving, raping. People got sick of it. Palma agreed to drive them out. They killed most of the settlers, spared some women and children. These were our stories. They weren't recorded in the history books. This is what our elders wanted to tell but they didn't have a way to talk to the people about the situation, so in the villages they kept the stories going and to this day our elders still say that we did not kill Father Garcés, that we did not lay a

hand on him, that someone else killed him, but in the history books it says that he was killed by the Quechan. Just to set the record straight, we did not kill Father Garcés. We spared him along with another Father that was there that they really had close connection with." Then she smiles: "Quechans are friendly, but don't make them mad."

In 1785, four years after the pueblo of Los Angeles was founded, an unsuccessful rebellion at San Gabriel was led by twenty-four-year-old shaman Toypurina. At her trial she declared: "I hate the padres and all of you [soldiers] for being here on my native soil—for trespassing on the lands of my fathers and despoiling our tribal domains."

Scholar Robert Heizer describes the Santa Barbara rebellions: "Perhaps the most spectacular Indian rebellion in California during this era was the 1824 revolt at Missions La Purisima and Santa Barbara. The reason for the revolt was ill treatment and forced labor imposed by the soldiers and priests upon neophytes in the area, but the immediate cause was a fight that broke out at the flogging of a La Purisima neophyte at Santa Ynez in February. Apparently no one was killed but a large part of the mission buildings was destroyed by fire. That same afternoon as many as two thousand Indians attacked and captured Mission La Purisima. It was not until March 16 that the Spanish soldiers attacked the four hundred defenders at La Purisima with hundreds of armed and mounted men and four-pounder guns."<sup>8</sup> The Indians who led the rebellion were punished. Seven Indians were put to death while many others were imprisoned and required to do hard labor.

In the missions people were subject to the constraints of mission life; we can guess that the lethargy, apathy, and indifference often ascribed to mission Indians were the signs of depression and hopelessness as people realized their old lifeways were gone forever.

Sickness also ravaged the Native population. Smallpox, measles, syphilis, and other diseases that Europeans had built up resistance to raged through the missions, exacerbated by the crowded living conditions. In the measles epidemic of 1806, one quarter of the population of the San Francisco Bay Area missions died between March and May. Professor Edward Castillo (Cahuilla/Luiseño) of Sonoma State University estimates that "about one hundred thousand or nearly a third of the aboriginal population of California



died as a direct consequence of the missions of California. Pioneering demographer Sherburne F. Cook conducted exhaustive studies and concluded that perhaps as much as 60 percent of the population decline of mission Indians was due to introduced diseases.”<sup>9</sup> Robert Heizer estimates that the population may have been cut in half, to one hundred and fifty thousand, by 1834.

Although the Spanish did consciously try to stamp out Native beliefs and lifeways, they did not intend to destroy the Native population. The church, the state, and many padres and settlers wanted the Indians to survive on the new terms and be labor and souls for the new European-dominated order. But as Coyote Hills Park naturalist Beverly Ortiz says, most Native people are more interested in outcomes than intentions, and the outcomes of European settlement were a Native population reduced by at least a third, displaced from their traditional land, and cut off from their traditional ways of living.

#### SECULARIZATION AND THE LEGACY OF THE MISSIONS

An exhausted and overextended Spanish empire was forced to grant independence to almost all of its western-hemisphere holdings by 1821, and by 1823 Alta California was part of the Mexican Republic. The new Mexican government wanted to break the power of the Catholic Church and coveted the wealth of the missions. Secularization, which was supposed to have given the mission lands to the Indians, became instead a way for Mexican and some American rancheros to acquire property, either by seizing it outright under Mexican land grants or taking it by force and fraud from its nominal Indian owners.

Mexican rule only lasted twenty-five years; in 1848 California was annexed by the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War. During this time, individuals from both settler and Native communities were marrying and creating a Californio culture that was nominally Spanish/Mexican but influenced by Native customs and lore. Many of the people who contributed to this article have mixed Native/settler heritage, including Richard Bugbee (Luiseño/Diegueno), Abel Silvas (Yaqui, Huichol, Juaneño, and Gabrieleno), David Belardes (Acjachemen/Juaneño), Gregg Castro (Salinan/Ohlone), Linda Yamane (Rumsien Ohlone), and Gene Buvelot (Coast Miwok). One of Silvas's forefathers may have been a servant to Father Pedro Font on the second expedition.

Many Native people married into other cultures. Richard Bugbee and Abel Silvas, like many Native activists, know about and value their mixed heritage. Bugbee's great-great-grandfathers were on the ill-fated Spanish expedition to settle among the Quechan in 1781, and part of Silvas's family came to the area with Anza. Expedition soldiers were themselves mixed—Spanish, and Mexican Juaneño, Luiseño—and Bugbee says that fewer than 5 percent of the mission-era Spanish soldiers were fully European; most were Indians from Mexico, mestizos, or of African descent.

Many Native people found it prudent to disguise or deny their culture. Gregg Castro tells us: “It wasn't a matter of actively masquerading as Mexican, but if people thought you were Mexican—and a lot of our people had intermarried with Mexicans, with the Spanish, had those Hispanic names—that was fine.”

He continues: “A lot of those families identified themselves as Native even when it wasn't popular. Today you hear people say you just want a casino, it's fun to be an Indian. Well, it wasn't fun for my dad. You had to keep it quiet. That mindset went into my dad's generation and to a certain extent into my generation.”

Tongva/Acjachamen youth worker Jimi Castillo tells this story: “When I was growing up in the 1940s we knew we were Native American, and I would constantly be teased as being Native American. My grandmother would make Indian food—payleelies [phonetic spelling], like fry bread. My brother and I liked to mix rice and beans and stuff it inside this thing and go outside and eat it, and my grandmother would warn us not to take it outside because people would think we were Indians. Later on I felt that it was easier to assume myself as a Mexican, especially with a Spanish last name. It was easier to go through life as a young person and not associate with being an Indian. But my grandmother and grandfather would teach me the cultural ways, as well as my father. I accepted that, but yet I would suppress the Indian self in public.”

#### REORGANIZATION AND RECOGNITION

The legacy of the Anza expedition echoes through two centuries to our own time. The destruction of tribal life by the missions was compounded by the grouping of different tribes together under the label “Mission Indians.” Later, when California had passed to U.S. control, anthropologists and government officials declared the peoples who had been part of the mission system “culturally

extinct.” Desert peoples along the Anza Trail—Quechan, Kumeyaay, Cahuilla, Luiseño, and Serrano—were fortunately able to maintain some of their land, culture, and tradition, and today are among the tribes recognized both by both the federal government and the State of California.

Yet even in the difficult post-expedition times, California Native people organized in new ways, across group lines. Professor Edward Castillo describes the best known of these organizations, the Mission Indian Federation: “The Mission Indian Federation (MIF) was southern California’s most popular and long-lived grass-roots political organization. Between 1919 and 1965, its membership wrestled with some of the most difficult political and legal questions of the twentieth century...Drawing its membership from reservation and non-reservation California Indians of southern California, the MIF could best be described as a quasi-governmental, pan-Indian organization purporting to represent the collective will of southern California’s reservation people.”<sup>10</sup>

In the former mission areas, six hundred miles between Santa Rosa and the border with Mexico,

Jimi Castillo (Tongva/Acjachemen), a member of Bear Clan, a statewide group of Indian spiritual doctors, and a spiritual advisor at the Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility in Chino.

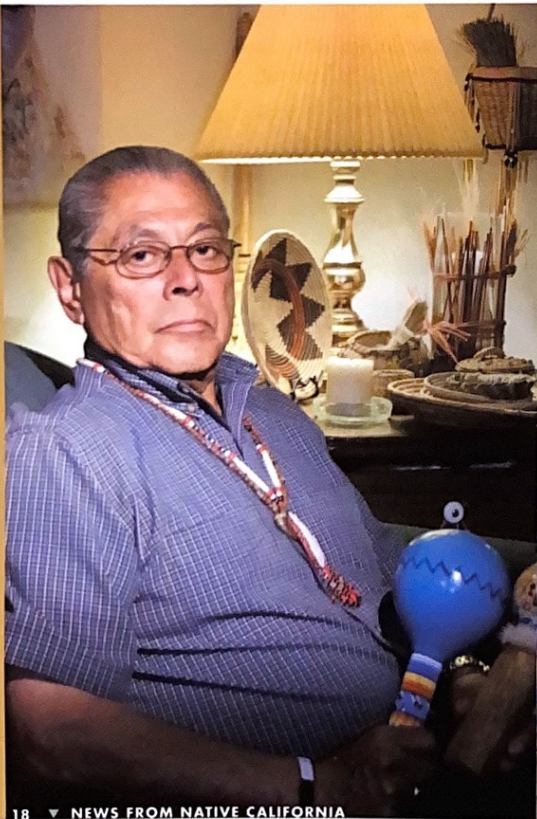
only two tribal groups who managed to hold on to tiny parcels of tribal land are federally recognized—the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash and the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo). But other groups are petitioning for federal recognition throughout California.

#### HOLDING ON TO CULTURE AND TRADITION

Native cultures in California never died out altogether, and those tribes outside of the mission sphere of influence and the gold rush fared somewhat better. Anthropologist J. P. Harrington started studying California Indians in the 1920s, and talked with many people who still knew their languages, stories, and songs. His notes have been mined by generations of scholars and Native culture workers in an effort to recover and preserve languages and traditions.

Thousands of Native people in California have confirmed their tribal lineage through John Johnson, curator of the Santa Barbara Natural History Museum and creator of a southern California mission records database.

Ruth Orta (Ohlone) near where her grandmother lived in Pleasanton.



The past fifty years have seen a revival of Native history and tradition not just in California but across the United States and around the world. Native voices were part of the democratic upsurge of the 1960s, when the civil rights movement paved the way for many peoples to claim their place in U.S. history and society. California Indians have been asserting their identity, struggling for unity, and finding ways to heal from a destructive history.

In the words of Gregg Castro, "The civil rights movement, and especially [the occupation of] Alcatraz, did a lot to wake people up. I was in junior high, but my mom's sister had married a man who was black and Cherokee and was involved in the black movement, and then there was the Brown Beret movement here in California, so in our family we were all stirred up. Even my mom, who was fairly conservative, was very interested in that, in having justice for people."

One of the first steps in claiming identity as California Indians has been to meet other Native people.

Rumsien Ohlone artist Linda Yamane explains: "Like myself, the Ohlone people I met hadn't

known other Ohlone people outside their nuclear and extended families. Twenty or twenty-five years ago we began discovering each other and started working on trying to pull cultural things together and getting to know each other. I see that as building community, and it takes time. You have to have a little history together by doing things together."

Ohlone elder Ruth Orta tells what spurred her to become an activist for her people: "In 1984 I was working as a bus driver and took a group of seniors to Tully Park in San Jose. They have a historical railroad museum. I went in and they had a newspaper article in a frame that said the Ohlones were extinct. I read it again. I went out and asked one of the other bus drivers, 'Do I look extinct to you?' I went home and told my mom. And she said, 'They never wanted to acknowledge that we were here. But you tell them that you're Indian and this is your place.'"

All over California, new generations are learning or relearning their languages. The Dorothy Ramon Learning Center in Banning is one example of this revival, offering classes that teach the Serrano and Desert Cahuilla languages to a new generation, publishing written materials and help-

Breana Sanchez (Chiricahua Apache), left, and Skylar Roybal (Chiricahua Apache/Mountain Cahuilla), investigate the demonstration garden at the Malki Museum, Banning.

Greg Redhorse (Maidu), foreground, and Josh Manzarantz (Tuolumne Miwok), Maidu/Miwok traditional dancers at Peralta Hacienda Historical Park, Oakland.





Jesse Henry (Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria) at his auto-body shop in San Francisco, where murals celebrate Coast Miwok history.

ing area schools develop curriculum about the Native people of the area. Many other tribes, both recognized and still unrecognized, teach language classes as well. Many individuals are studying the Harrington notes, learning language from elders, or participating in the Breath of Life workshops, which are focused on recovering languages that have no living speakers.

Songs and dances have kept language and culture alive and are being revived by many groups all over California. Ernie Siva (Cahuilla/Serrano), who sings the traditional Serrano and Cahuilla bird songs that tell the stories of how people came to live on their lands, learned the language from the songs and from the Harrington notes. Other groups perform traditional dances both for themselves and to educate others.

Everywhere, individuals are finding ways to express pride in their Native identity and draw strength from their heritage. Jesse Henry (Coast Miwok/Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria), owner of Superior Automotive in San Francisco's Mission District, has murals painted on the walls of his 16<sup>th</sup> Street body shop that reflect his Coast

Miwok heritage and its history. Ann Marie Sayers has dedicated Indian Canyon, her family land outside of Hollister, as a ceremonial place for people without their own land. She calls herself a kindling gatherer: "It's the kindling that starts the fire." Sayers says she has "an imaginary burden basket at the entrance to the canyon. When you come in for ceremony, leave your burdens in the basket. When you leave, you can take them with you or leave them there." People from all over California and elsewhere use the canyon for ceremonial purposes.

#### WORKING TOWARD UNITY

At the same time people are recovering the particulars of their Native identity, organizations and institutions are joining in to celebrate and promote the shared interests of California Indians. Following are a few of the most influential.

Since 1995, the California Indian Storytelling Association has produced local and statewide storytelling events open to all people. The annual California Indian Conference has brought Indians and scholars, both Indian and non-Indian, together to exchange views and information since 1985. *News from Native California*, a quarterly magazine founded in the mid-1980s, is "by



The road leading to Ann Marie Sayers's Indian Canyon home near Hollister, one of only three recognized Indian lands between Sonoma and San Diego.



Chester Miner (center rear), Eastern Band Cherokee, leads the annual rebuilding of one of the sweat lodges at Indian Canyon, a ceremony ground that is open to all Native people.

and about California Indians." The Malki Museum at Morongo, the "First All Indian Museum on a California Indian Reservation," not only houses a museum of Cahuilla history and culture objects but runs Ballena Press, publisher of dozens of scholarly publications on southern California Indians. The California Indian Basketweavers Association, formed in 1991, works "to preserve, promote, and perpetuate California Indian basketweaving traditions while providing a healthy physical, social, spiritual, and economic environment for basketweavers. [They] work to create a functioning network of basketweavers who support one another in their gathering and weaving activities, and who pass their tradition to the next generation."

#### A RICHER, MORE INCLUSIVE CALIFORNIA HISTORY

Many people say that teaching that the missions were built by Indian labor is a welcome first step to promoting a truer California history that includes the Native people as well as the settlers. Andrew Galvan makes sure that his tours of Mis-

sion Dolores always inform people that "Indians under the supervision of the padres built the mission."

Galvan and professor Edward Castillo, chairman of the Department of Native American Studies at Sonoma State University, conceived of a memorial to the people who died at the missions. The first such memorial, to the one thousand people buried under the homes and streets of central Sonoma, was dedicated at Mission San Francisco de Solano in 1999. Castillo says he would like to see similar memorials at all twenty-one California missions.

In December 2007 at the 190<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Mission San Rafael, the Most Reverend Francis Quinn, retired Roman Catholic Bishop of Sacramento, said, "We are beginning to acknowledge our past mistakes and serious misdeeds.... The Church this evening apologizes for trying to take the Indian out of the Indian."<sup>11</sup>

Galvan draws on history for lessons today: "The person who controls the present controls the past; and the person who controls the past controls the future. I have an influence on how

the past is understood in the future. If you are outraged at how Spaniards were mistreating the Indians two hundred years ago in the California missions, and you look around you and see people being degraded—homeless, needing medical attention—what are you doing about it today?”

Jimi Castillo has taken that philosophy to heart. He conducts sweat lodges at the Stark Youth Correctional Facility in Chino. The lodge is open to “whoever shows up at the door; no color lines,” and is used by California Natives as well as Pacific Islanders and many others. “Blood is never spilled on those grounds. We say that when you walk in here you’ve walked out of the prison and into sacred space. We grow indigenous plants at the institution; men get their hands in the earth. Every week they are anxious to go back and see the garden. They go back to weed the garden.”

A group of women from Ohlone, Chumash, and Apache backgrounds are creating a healing ceremony they plan to hold in 2009. They’re calling it the Thousand Hummingbirds All Nation Ceremony for the Healing of the Earth. Catherine Herrera (Ohlone) says: “You’re talking to people who have had to fight to find their family history

Mission San Francisco de Solano, in Sonoma, is the only mission to acknowledge the individual names of Native people who lived and died at the mission.

again. That doesn’t sound like free people to me. California school children are still being taught that same tired history. We’re not just healing our generation. It was so painful to have to tell my son that these painful things happened. This acknowledgment could be the start of a big healing.”

Some mainstream institutions—parks and museums—have also begun to enrich their understanding of California Native history and culture, and to work with Native Californians to bring this understanding to the general public. Some representatives of Native people participate in events and re-enactments along the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, and the official trail guide includes village sites, the music of Native people that the expeditions met, and other information about area tribes.

The Peralta Hacienda Historical Park, in one of Oakland’s most ethnically mixed neighborhoods, is an example of the effort to tell history as it happened to all the people involved. The park is on a homesite of the Peraltas, an Anza-expedition family who received a forty-five-thousand-acre land grant from Mexico. Park director Holly Alonso says the park tries to tell the many stories of the

Heirloom native corn raised by young wards at the Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility, Chino.



land: the Ohlone who lived here and worked for the Peraltas when they took the land and started running cattle on it; the life of Native and Mexican workers on the rancho; how the Peraltas lost their land after California became part of the United States; how these few blocks became a pocket park. Events at the park include dancing and craft demonstrations by Ohlone people. The park's motto is "Every Human Being Makes History."

#### "RIGHT HERE WHERE I'M STANDING"

Linda Yamane sums up: "The biggest thing I've learned from this is patience. You just keep working and you wait. I'd prefer to have empty pieces to the puzzle than have the picture not be right. If you just take your time, more things come. With the language, I've learned to take my time. I didn't force it, I let it evolve inside of me, and let it become a part of me."

She continues: "I was just asked to redesign a framework for an Indian exhibit at the Carmel mission. I don't want to come in with an agenda, I

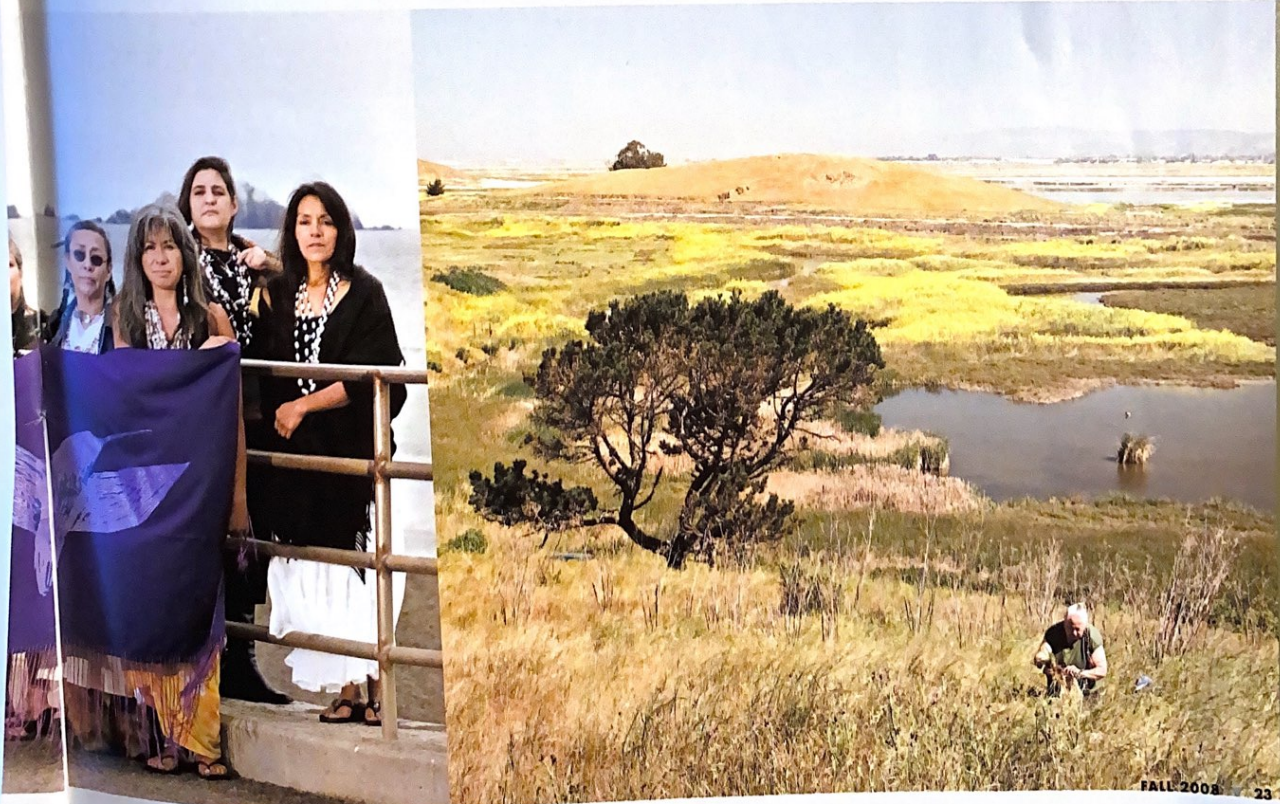
just want to tell stories. I know that the results of the missions are devastating. I have sat in the California Indian Conference crying and sobbing my heart out listening to the treatment of Indian people. I feel that painful reality, but I don't paint all the missionaries as bad. The result of them coming was bad, but the more you learn about them, [they are] human beings. Some of them were cruel, but there are cruel people, kind people, selfish people, the whole range of human personality in [any] group. The same is true for Indian people; some of them when they got to be mayordomo, they abused their own people. I don't like to just look at black and white, because there's always the gray that explains why people did things."

Domingo Belardes (Acjachemen), son of David Belardes, looks to the future: "I can't change what happened in the past, I can only learn from it and build off of it. They had a whole culture before the Spanish came here, a religion and culture. I try to make sure that the story doesn't die out. The story is ongoing, it never ends."

Jimi Castillo, who can trace his roots in southern California back to 1747, enjoys having the last word: "When people ask me if I'm a Native

Rear, from left: Catherine Herrera (Ohlone), Terry Reynaga (Chumash/Juaneño); front, from left: Carmen Saldivar (Mescalero Apache), Consuelo Ancona (Mescalero Apache), and Charlene Sul (Ohlone/Mexican), some of the creators of the Thousand Hum-

Ramona Garibay (Ohlone) gathering soaproot in the East Bay hills. Garibay frequently leads workshops to teach traditional skills, such as brush-making.





American, I say yes I am, and [when] they ask me where I'm from, and I say right here, and they say, yes, but where are you from?, and I say, right here. You mean right here where we're standing?, and I say yes." ▾

*Mickey Ellinger and Scott Braley are Oakland-based freelancers. They worked with Mrs. Alice Royal on Allensworth, the Freedom Colony: A California African-American Township, published in 2008 by Heyday Books. Mickey's last article for News from Native California was a profile of Modoc artist Ivan Jackson. Scott photographs for Bay Area non-profits and social justice organizations.*

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Above: Spanish metal helmet, Monterey Presidio.  
Above left: Linda Yamane (Rumsien Ohlone) holding baskets she made.

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