

Openings

On August 4, 2011, Native and non-Native activists extinguished their “sacred fire” at Glen Cove, near Vallejo, California. Three months earlier, the land protectors built the fire to protest the city of Vallejo’s proposal to bulldoze a burial site, which Ohlones call Sogorea Te, to make way for a city park. When the land protectors put out the fire, they marked the end of a long but successful campaign to claim Ohlone lands in the Bay Area. For twelve years, Bay Area Natives and their allies resisted the city of Vallejo’s proposal to develop the land. When city officials finally decided to consult California Indians, they contacted the Yocha Dehe and Cortina Bands of Wintuns, whom the Native American Heritage Commission of California identified as the “most likely descendants” of those interred at Glen Cove. City officials did not reach out to Ohlones, who have lived in the Bay Area since their creation, in part because the Ohlones are not a federally recognized tribe, as the Yocha Dehe and Cortina Bands are. In April of 2011, Vallejo city officials announced their intention to go ahead with plans to build a public park, with a parking lot, restrooms, picnic tables, and paved walking trails. Chochenyo and Karkin Ohlone Corrina Gould led scores of Native and non-Native People to occupy Glen Cove and prevent the city from building the park. The land protectors’ “sacred fire” burned at the center of tents and two tepees. Dozens of people kept up the vigil to protect the land and Ohlone ancestors. “Sogorea Te is one of the last burial grounds still on open land where we can actually touch our feet to the ground and say our prayers the way we’re supposed to and



FIGURE 1. Ohlone leader Corrina Gould at a protest of construction on top of a shell mound in Berkeley, 2016. Photo by Wendy Kenin. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-ND 2.0).

pass that teaching on to the next generation,” Gould said (see fig. 1). Protectors set up tables laden with food, sat down on the earth, and enjoyed one another’s company. After nearly one hundred days of occupying the site, the Yocha Dehe and Cortina Bands brokered a deal between the protectors and the city of Vallejo. The three parties agreed to a “cultural easement,” like a cultural right-of-way, that guarantees Yocha Dehe and Cortina Bands joint governance over the burial sites without transferring ownership. Protectors celebrated guarding one of the last visible burial sites in the Bay Area.

To many non-Indians, stories like the Ohlone protecting Glen Cove seem as if they came out of nowhere. Despite the long and rich history of Indigenous People in California, historians, anthropologists, and everyday people disconnected California Indian history from California history. Histories of California mention that Indigenous People lived within the current state boundaries and perhaps discuss the amazing diversity of languages, cultures, and political bodies. California histories recognize that Indigenous People lived in and worked at the missions established by Spanish colonists on the California coast. Yet California Indians often disappear from those histories after the demographic catastrophe of the California Gold Rush, in which the population of

California Indians declined from about 150,000 to 30,000. In the twentieth century, many people believed California Indians vanished. Some Californians expressed amazement, and sometimes anger, when California Indians seemingly reappeared on the political scene when fighting for gaming rights in Southern California, to protect land at Glen Cove, or to challenge cherished stories about the state's Catholic missions. Histories that ignore how California's Indigenous People lived within the state boundaries for centuries, maintained relationships with the land, and shaped the state's history undermine the sovereignty of contemporary California Indian communities. We hope this book contributes to efforts to correct the misperceptions that exist about California Indian, and California, history.

Rather than being peripheral to or vanishing from California history, Indigenous People are a central and enduring part of the state's history because of their relationship to the land. Before the arrival of Europeans, California's Indigenous People developed and maintained relationships with the land and other peoples across the region that was not yet California, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, or Mexico. When Europeans first arrived, California Indians sailed out to meet and trade with them, striving to incorporate these newcomers into preexisting social, political, and economic relationships. Beginning in the 1760s, though, Spaniards, Russians, Mexicans, and, especially, Americans attempted to control California and divorce Indigenous People from the land. All four colonial nations sponsored policies that uprooted Indigenous People and communities from the lands in which they were created, and all four deployed violence, in the form of slavery, genocide, and an administrative state bent on eliminating California Indian people. Yet California Indian people, nations, and lands remain. California Indians have built and rebuilt communities, developed practices to maintain ties with the land, and remade policies intended to separate them from their homes. At times, California Indians hid to survive, but they never left.

By titling this book *We Are the Land*, we do not mean to hearken back to antiquated beliefs about Indigenous People as an intrinsic part of the natural world. Rather, the title evokes the two parallel arguments we put forth in the following pages: California is both a place and an idea. As a place, California has always been and remains Indigenous land, and Indigenous People are central to the history and future of the place. Creators made Indigenous People at specific locations. Indigenous People ground their ways of knowing in those places. They developed strategies to work on, with, and protect the land. One cannot separate Indigenous

People from the land that makes up California. But as an idea—or, as it was often described, a dream—that colonial entities brought with them, “California” represented a natural abundance of resources to be exploited; it could not be Indigenous land. Spain, Mexico, Russia, the United States, and the state of California extracted resources from Indigenous communities and appropriated the land. Colonists took the abundant resources often associated with California from the state’s Indigenous People. In this sense, policies intended to dispossess Indigenous People of the land also directly attacked Indigenous Peoples’ identity and existence.

For many Californians, the region’s history stretches back only 150 years. People misunderstand the settler invasion of Indigenous California as California history rather than as an unsustainable and disruptive episode in it. This book recenters Indigenous People’s fight to retain their land in the place that is California, as a way of challenging the idea of California. When we take a less compressed historical view, we see the continuity and persistence of Indigenous communities as they adapted to dramatic changes. We see the people of a specific place changing as the place itself changed. As “California” becomes California, Indigenous People become California Indians. We see a different California, and we see a future those communities are building there.

We Are the Land is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 1 describes the creation of California. Rather than treating Indigenous People as isolated and historically static “tribelets,” this chapter examines how Creators made the land and the People, how the People worked with the land to survive, and how People lived with one another. Any examination of Indigenous Peoples before the arrival of Europeans is difficult. The chapter attempts to provide a holistic understanding of early California peoples by foregrounding Indigenous knowledge.

Chapter 2 explores the historical era commonly known as the “age of exploration.” Rather than retelling the romanticized first encounters between “civilized” sailors and “savage” Indians, or dwelling on the brutal exploitation of Native Peoples, this chapter positions itself on beaches, hillsides, and riverbanks to examine Indigenous People as explorers and discoverers cautiously observing and then engaging with European travelers. In the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Native Peoples studied newcomers to their land, such as Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, Francis Drake, and Juan de Oñate. Following these initial encounters, Native Peoples scrutinized Europeans indirectly, as European manufactured goods followed consumer demand into Indigenous communities via pre-existing trade routes that linked much of western North America. Dis-

eases also traveled these trails, harming Native People. Often, Indigenous Peoples left their homelands and joined other peoples in response to these new illnesses. The discovery of new technologies and sicknesses produced conflict as well as cooperation. Some Europeans captured Indigenous People, causing them to prey on others for captives to replace the dead or to trade with other peoples. In the dynamic process of adaptation and resistance, Natives expanded into the territories of other native communities in an attempt to secure marketable goods. Far from being a static period in California history, the period immediate to the creation of the Spanish missions featured pulsating trade networks, cross-cultural encounters between different Indigenous nations, and technological innovations far beyond the purview of European witnesses.

Chapter 3 explores the relationship between Indigenous People and Spanish colonists. It avoids the perspective of looking over the shoulders of Spanish priests and soldiers who came to the area in the late eighteenth century, in favor of considering the Spanish missions from the perspectives of Indigenous communities. Missions posed significant risks to Indigenous People and their relationship to the land. Priests brought strangers to Native communities, disrupting established and delicately managed political relationships and contributing to the spread of the diseases the missions hosted. The missions' domesticated livestock devoured the People's food and trampled the places where the People harvested plants for their baskets. Despite these dangers, Indigenous People sometimes left their communities and moved to the missions and other Spanish settlements. At other times, Spanish officials forced Indigenous People to the missions and presidios. Other Native People created new social, economic, cultural, and political relationships with the Spanish at missions, presidios, and pueblos. Spanish communities offered new kinds of food and trade items, which Native leaders used to provide for their people. The priests, who did not become sick when many Indigenous Californians did, preached a different religion with an obvious power. From the viewpoint of the countless Indigenous communities along the California coast, the Spanish missions offered a host of risks and opportunities.

Chapter 4 focuses on the period of Mexican independence from Spain and the drive to secularize the missions. It begins by describing Native Peoples' relationships with Russian fur traders, American merchants, and Franciscan missionaries in the emerging regional market for trade goods. These new markets increased the demand for Indigenous labor, natural resources, and new commodities. The dynamic relationships among these various actors created new spaces in which Indigenous

People asserted their power. Some leveraged political instability to resist the pressures placed on their communities, such as the Chumash, who rebelled in 1824. Others, such as Pablo Tac and Pablo Apis, two Luiseños who followed very different paths, acclimated themselves to the new cultural and economic landscape and the markets it created. Most California Native Peoples fell somewhere between these poles, leveraging their labor power to resist increasing attempts to limit their freedom. Growing American interest and presence in the area hinted at further drastic changes on the horizon.

It is exceptionally difficult to see the middle of the nineteenth century as anything but horribly destructive to California's Native Peoples. But it is also critical to resist the victimizing tendencies implicit in such a focus. Indigenous People suffered greatly, but they are more than just victims. Chapter 5 tracks how they resisted attempts at their wholesale destruction. Native Peoples ultimately survived the transition to American rule and the Gold Rush by creatively asserting what power they had through their labor, limited acts of violence, and—less frequently, but importantly—the law. Despite the dynamic political and demographic changes to California, Indigenous Peoples' land and labor remained vital concerns in the new state. The Constitution of 1849 wrestled with Indigenous Peoples' citizenship, labor, and rights. The 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians attempted to retain Indian labor while limiting Indian sovereignty and mobility through indenture. The State Land Commission and the eighteen federal treaties signed, but ultimately not ratified, in 1852 sought to quiet Indian claims to land in a way that advantaged settler society. The 1850s and 1860s were incredibly destructive times for Indigenous People in California, as they faced extermination campaigns and a system of slavery that eventually brought tens of thousands of them under its provisions. This chapter also focuses on collective acts of resistance, such as the Garra rebellion of 1851, and individual ones, such as Indigenous workers killing their employers. Other Indigenous People retreated from contact with Americans, turning the state's diverse geography into sites of refuge and resistance.

Chapter 6 explores the unmistakable direction of demographic changes that occurred in California in its first two decades after statehood. California would be an Anglo state. While California Indian labor remained critical in some industries, it declined in importance overall as Anglo interest shifted from *labor* to California Indian *land*. These changes forced Indians to deploy new strategies, such as pooling their resources to purchase land where they could resist and negotiate

the demographic changes in the state or leveraging non-Indian benevolence to their advantage. High profile evictions, dispossessions, and disputes, such as those at Temecula, Round Valley, and Capitan Grande, brought California Indians to the attention of reformers across the nation. Change meant actively seeking rancherias and reservations as sites for temporary forays into the local wage-labor economy and as refuges from reliance on it. It also meant fighting dispossession in the courts and on the ground.

Chapter 7 traces the growth in California Indian-led political and legal activism in the early twentieth century to illustrate the changing power relationships California Indians faced across the state. Increased non-Indian awareness of the challenges they faced, as well as growing interest in their languages and material culture, gave California Indians traction in their efforts to assert control over land, labor, and citizenship. The impulse to mobilize refracted through the distinct circumstances Indigenous People faced across the state, producing divergent outcomes. California Indians fought the allotment of their land when it cut against their own landholding patterns, as it often did in the southern part of the state. Where allotment furthered Indian claims for land, they tended to support it, as often occurred in the northern part of the state. Chapters 6 and 7 together trace the long arc of Indian activism before it emerged into the public eye.

Chapter 8 tracks the emergence of a legal, political, and cultural California Indian identity. The forces that brought California Indians from all over the state and nation into contact with each other, and the legal challenges Indians mounted, meant that California Indians actively created a statewide identity that built on local communities without subsuming them. The “Indians of California” collectively sued the federal government for the loss of their land. While the victories they won were tokens in terms of actual compensation, the organizational work in which California Indians engaged paid bigger dividends. The federal government, through its termination policy, sought to break apart that identity to diminish California Indians’ power.

Chapter 9 follows the experiences of California Indians from the onset of termination to the era of self-determination. It highlights the different path tribal nations—such as the Pit Rivers, Round Valley Indians, and the multinational protesters at Alcatraz—took to make claims on Indian land in California. Pit Rivers initially looked to the courts. Round Valley Indians hosted and negotiated with Governor Ronald Reagan to prevent a dam from flooding their reservation. Those at

Alcatraz occupied the former federal penitentiary, located in San Francisco Bay. Although all three groups experienced varying levels of success, they each influenced other California Indians as they argued for respect and self-determination. California Indians living on reservations and rancherias weighed the costs and apparent benefits of terminating their relationship with the federal government. The American Indian Historical Society, led by Cahuilla Rupert Costo, battled in the 1960s to alter the negative perception of California Indians that permeated statewide elementary textbooks. Pomo Tillie Hardwick successfully sued to reverse the termination of the Pinoleville Rancheria, winning a court decision that set a precedent for other tribes in the 1980s. Finally, a small, impoverished group of Indians in Southern California opened a bingo hall, ushering in a period of unprecedented political and economic growth for California Indians.

Chapter 10 examines the ways in which California Indians transformed their social, economic, political, and cultural practices after the development of Indian gaming. In 1980, the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians in Palm Springs opened a bingo and poker hall on their small reservation. This action produced two decades of conflict. State officials attempted to stop Indian gaming, while California Indians fought to expand their gaming operations. After successful lobbying, California Indians secured the right to operate casinos on their reservations. The resulting economic boom in California supported and expanded various programs of ethnic renewal, convinced many California Indians to return to their reservation homelands (reversing more than a century of diaspora), and enabled other groups to launch efforts to repurchase ancestral homelands. Meanwhile, other tribal nations have pursued the tortuous path of federal recognition to reclaim indigenous lands and assert their sovereignty. Yet the struggle over land continues. California Indians, recognized and unrecognized, have fought for indigenous land-use rights on off-reservation and off-rancheria sites across the state, such as the Ohlones' effort to protect gravesites at Glen Cove, which led to the establishment of the Sogorea Te Land Trust to act as a legal entity to represent Ohlone interests. As we move through the twenty-first century, empowered California Indian nations are returning to their homelands, invigorating their economies, and flexing their political power.

Spatial vignettes interspersed between each chapter make the California Indian presence more visible in some of the state's most populous, important, and iconic places. These short segments interpret Yuma, San Diego, Sacramento, Ukiah, the Ishi Wilderness, Riverside,

Los Angeles and the East Bay, and even Rome, Italy, as Native spaces across time. By emphasizing these places, we resist the erasure of California Indians. The vignettes connect the region's diverse geology, topology, ecology, climate, and flora and fauna to the institutions that wove the people and the land into a state.

Characterized by the twin themes of flux and abundance, the broad geological forces that formed California supported distinct forms of Indigenous life. In the Atsugewi, also called Pit River, creation story, Kwaw and Ma'Kat'da struggled with each other over the mist, the dough with which they kneaded a world. Kwaw created; Ma'Kat'da destroyed, and in that creative destruction, they created the California landscape. Thirty million years ago, the Pacific, North American, and Farallon tectonic plates collided and created the region's mountains and craggy coastline, as well as the region's climatic, topographic, and geological diversity. Mountains captured rain and served as barriers to migration. The interstitial spaces of the coast created refuges for peoples and animals. The climatic and topographic diversity facilitated and condensed seasonal rounds and trade routes, allowing Indigenous People to develop sedentary communities with distinct lifeways. In a Pomo creation story told by William Benson, Marumda formed the world out of wax, shaping specific habitats to support distinct life. Rivers served as thoroughfares for fish. Fire regimes regenerated oak groves and basket-making materials. The abundance of flora and fauna supported Pomo life. Scientists, however, point to the sedimentary settlement, which formed the Central Valley's rivers and wetlands and served as a source for food, as well as providing the grasses and forbs used for baskets. The grasslands and foothills nurtured the oak forests and acorns critical to native diets. Alluvial deserts in the south, and massive granite uplifts in the central and north, formed barriers to migration and shaped cultural patterns. The vignettes peel back the present to look into the past and examine how these forces shaped California Indian communities. They also bring the past into the present to emphasize California Indian persistence.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The language used to refer to people, any people, is both arbitrary and powerful. It is created, and it creates. Words sit at the center of the contested terrain of cultural sovereignty. As many have pointed out, the term *Native Americans* is only slightly more accurate than the term

Indians. What does it mean to be native to a place called “America,” a name imposed on an entire continent by a people who had never seen it, an appellation derived from the corruption of an Italian sailor’s name? Is that any more accurate than a different Italian sailor’s misidentification of a place as India, and its inhabitants, “Indians?” Likewise, what does the term *native Californian* mean, especially before the idea of California existed?

All aggregate or ascriptive names fail to capture the complexity of what they seek to name. The specific names all people have for themselves, however they define that grouping, capture the complexity and distinctiveness but fragment and disconnect the people’s experiences. As much as possible, we have used the names people used for themselves instead of ascriptive terms. In writing on Indians of the Spanish Empire, some scholars have carried over the terms used by the Spanish to distinguish those Indians who had relocated to a mission (“neophyte,” from *neófito*) from those who had not (“gentile,” from *gentil*). Spaniards understood a neophyte as a recently converted member of a church, usually in a probationary period. We use *Mission* (or occasionally “affiliated”) and “unaffiliated” because *neophyte* and *gentile* center the Catholic experience as the defining aspect of Indian life. Instead, we choose to emphasize, in many (but not all) cases, Indigenous People affiliated with a mission as a matter of strategy or choice.

Likewise, we have generally avoided using the word *California* and *Californian* to describe people, especially in the chronologically early sections of the book. The term is imprecise until California existed, sometime in the late eighteenth century. When we use the term, we do so in an inclusive sense, meaning all the people who live in and consider themselves members of the political or cultural entity of California. A big part of the story this book tells is about California Indians fighting to protect themselves and their land from settlers who tried to erase them. The settlers’ idea of California, mythologized as “the California Dream,” excluded California Indians. California Indians resisted that erasure and claimed a sovereign space for themselves within the state’s politics, culture, and economy.

When we refer collectively to the region’s Indigenous People, we have used that phrase, or variations on it. In the first few chapters of this book, we use the term *Indigenous People* or *People*. We have chosen these terms, in part, because the name that Indigenous People have for themselves is often some variant of *people*. For instance, Yukis call those who live in modern-day Round Valley *Ukomnom*, which translates into People in the Valley. They call their relatives who live near the Pacific Ocean