

## **Gratitude for Diversity**

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The importance of gratitude has been at the forefront of wellness. And while we are entering the month where gratitude is celebrated with Thanksgiving, it is also important to remember that it is Native American Heritage month. Southern California has a rich indigenous history and deserves time during the month to be recognized for its contribution to many of our traditions, cultures, and lessons in equity. One way to do this is by learning how the indigenous community's home became our home.

- California is home to more people of indigenous heritage than any other state. While there are currently 109 federally recognized tribes in California<sup>1</sup>, in the late 18th century that number was approximately 500.



- Unlike other indigenous communities in the plains of the country, California Native Americans were largely separated by natural land borders creating this large number of tribes. Communities numbered in the hundreds to thousands.
- The Chumash tribe was one of the largest that existed. They were skilled fisherman whose perspectives and appreciation of the region gave us the names of cities we know today<sup>2</sup>:
  - Malibu “Humaliwo”: Where the surf sounds loudly
  - Simi Valley “Shimiyi”: Little white clouds that dance on the wind
  - Ojai “Awha'y”: Moon nest

Learning about the history of California's native people is one way to appreciate the diversity of the area we live in. Another way is through a land acknowledgement.

A **land acknowledgement**<sup>3</sup> is a formal statement that recognizes the indigenous peoples as traditional stewards of the land and the enduring relationship that still exists between indigenous peoples and their traditional lands. It serves to help us reflect on what it means to have the privilege of living on indigenous land and begin the practice of showing a mindful respect for the communities that existed prior to colonization.

*When should land acknowledgements be done?* There is no right answer or limitation to when an acknowledgement can be done. Though generally, the beginning of community wide events, gatherings, or discussions are appropriate times.

Examples include:

- Sporting events
- Graduations
- Invited speakers
- First day of school

*How are land acknowledgements done?* The acknowledgement can be read by the host or collectively as a group. Ultimately, it is important to say the name of the host Nation out loud, express gratitude towards their community, and allow for a brief meditation on the statement.

For example: “We acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory and homelands of \_\_\_\_\_ who we are grateful to for cultivating the land we are gathered on today.”

While Thanksgiving and gratitude are still deserving of our time and celebration, taking a moment to shift this gratitude from things to people can help us continue to appreciate the diversity of the place we live in and continue to learn and grow from each other.

#### References:

1) “California Tribal Communities.” California Courts Judicial Branch of California, [courts.ca.gov/programs-initiatives/tribalstate-programs/california-tribal-communities](https://courts.ca.gov/programs-initiatives/tribalstate-programs/california-tribal-communities).

2) Los Angeles Almanac, “Map of Territories of Original Peoples with County Boundaries in Southern California” (2019). Located at: <http://www.laalmanac.com/history/hi05.php>

3) Gilio-Whitaker, D. “Settler Fragility: Why Settler Privilege Is so Hard to Talk About.” August 21, 2019, from <https://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2018/11/settler-fragility-why-settler-privilege-is-so-hard-to-talk-about.html>