

As Seen Through Indigenous Eyes and Heard Through Indigenous Voices: A Storytelling Project

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Abstract

The purpose for this capstone project is to produce a web-based product which illustrates the intersection of story and tattooed forms of identity among Indigenous people in California. The title of this capstone project is, *As Seen Through Indigenous Eyes and Heard Through Indigenous Voices: A Storytelling Project*. This web-based product includes digital stories of tattooed individuals and is a place to access educational material on the practice, as well as California Indian history. My primary question is: Can an outward facing identity marker such as the traditional “111” tattoo be a foundation for educating the public and Native communities about political, social and historical issues facing Indigenous communities in California? This project will illuminate the stories of California Indians that currently have received their “111” tattoo or are considering receiving their “111”. Each story tells the personal journey of the individual in receiving their tattoo and discusses the impacts that have resulted after receiving their tattoo. These stories were edited into digital stories and are

available on the California Indigenous Chin Tattooing¹ website, to heighten awareness of the resurgence of this cultural tradition and the historical reasons it was lost. The website also features other Indigenous communities in the world where traditional tattooing practices have not been interrupted and where revitalization of lost tattoo practices are ongoing. In these communities, tattooing is valued as a marker of Indigenous identity. This project's purpose is multi-layered. Socially it is filling a void in cultural knowledge about the traditional practice of chin tattooing in California. For myself, as a bearer of a traditional "111" chin tattoo, it has helped me to grow as an activist in the revitalization of unconventional traditional arts and culture such as the "111" chin tattoo. Personally, in my journey of receiving my chin tattoo, I was disowned by my family; they have not spoken to me since I received my chin tattoo. This poignant experience demonstrates the need to educate even our own community members regarding the significance and importance of this traditional practice. The deeply personal stories that I have recorded and the educational material that is presented through this project serve to create bonds and strengthen knowledge about California Indians across public audiences as well as the Native community.

Overview

This project documents the traditional practice of chin tattooing in California, as seen through Indigenous eyes and told through Indigenous voices. As a descendant of two California tribes, the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation and the Mutsun Ohlone tribes, I acknowledge that there is a lack of information on the subject from an Indigenous point of

¹ www.californiaindigenouschintattooing.com

view. To remedy this, I have developed a web-based product which includes digital stories of tattooed California Indians and is a centralized location to access educational material on the practice of traditional tattooing in California, as well as California Indian history. I have conducted personal interviews with California Indians throughout the State to illustrate the range of this cultural tradition. I then edited ten of the oral stories, to include photos of these individuals, into digital storytelling videos that illustrate the traditional knowledge (TK) that is involved in earning the right to bear these distinguished tribal markings. TK methodologies, Indigenous methodologies, as well as decolonizing methodologies are employed to establish an educational product based on Indigenous place-based philosophy. Comparisons with other Indigenous communities that are revitalizing these traditional forms of identity are also highlighted.

The practice of cultural tattooing is a practice that was common among most of, if not all the tribes in California prior to colonization (Rose 1979). The chin tattoo is an important marker of identity and coming of age within the Indigenous communities of California. The application of this indelible identity marker came with ceremony, song, ritual practices, Protocols², and responsibility as a wearer. During the multiple phases of colonization of California, whether it be Christianity, the Gold Rush, assimilation or any other period that affected California Indian culture, this practice was banned and nearly lost. Prior to it being banned, only sparse ethnographic information was collected on the topic of chin tattooing. The

² Protocols with a capital “P” are not just “manners” or “rules”, they are a representation of a culture’s deeply held ethical system. Protocols differ vastly from one Indigenous culture or community to another, and they can be highly complex and multi-layered.

limited amount of ethnographic information and the fact that the Indigenous people passed information orally, make the revitalization effort difficult but not impossible.

In response, this project has employed visual storytelling (digital storytelling) and combines traditional ways of passing knowledge with modern technology. Using this form of storytelling, along with the capabilities of social media, this visual storytelling project has the ability to educate thousands of people on the history and revival of this indelible marker of tribal identity. A visual narrative (also visual storytelling) is a story told primarily through the use of visual media. The story may be told using still photography, illustration, or video, and can be enhanced with graphics, music, voice and other audio. The return of passing information through oral means is a way to decolonize the process of ethnographic documentation, while simultaneously respecting Indigenous ways of passing knowledge. Through interviewing Indigenous women and men in California, we can learn more about the importance of this traditional practice across different Native communities of California. As a Native scholar and cultural practitioner, I was able to obtain interviews from the interviewee's personal perspective and highlight the tattoo revitalization that is currently happening in Native California.

Tattoo

What is a tattoo? What is the significance of a tattoo? In Western ideology a tattoo is an indelible cultural expression where pigment is permanently inserted into the epidermis of the skin using a sharp object. The Indigenous practice of tattooing historically is seen as a utilitarian practice and not as an art form. Native and Indigenous communities have not traditionally seen

the aesthetic qualities in created items as art, or in the Western sense of fine art. Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips state, “When speaking of historical Native objects, the statement is often made that Native languages have no exact equivalent for the post-Renaissance Western term ‘art’” (Berlo and Philips 1998: 9). The same is true with the use of tattooing and tattooing practices among Native and Indigenous communities. California Indian communities historically have used tattooing as a cultural practice. Tattooing is used as an identifying marker of tribal affiliation and position within the tribe. L Frank Manriquez stated during her interview that the tattoo was applied by a tattoo doctor, which relates this practice to medicine instead of art. As we move further into the revitalization process of cultural tattooing, the practice is becoming more artistic in nature. As Indigenous people continue to assert their Indigeneity and become more involved with contemporary arts, the line between cultural practice and art is becoming blurred depending on who you talk to. For most of the people I spoke with, it can be seen as both art and cultural practice. The ceremonial aspect that occurs during the application of the tattoo helps it remain a cultural practice but the skill in application and the beauty that results can be considered art. Either way you see the tattoo, as art or cultural practice, it is a personal preference, one that should be left up to the practitioner/artist or the wearer to determine for themselves. Whether you see the tattoo as a cultural practice or art, this practice is one that has been around for thousands of years and is recently being revived with both Indigenous communities and contemporarily.

Tattooing is a global practice that has been in use for at least 5,300 years based on the radiocarbon dates of Tyrolean Iceman known as Ötzi (Deter-Wolf et al. 2016). Although the practice of tattooing can be seen historically throughout the world in antiquity, the significance

of these indelible markings in many cases is absent, indiscernible or based on theory. In more recent Indigenous history, the tattoo is said to be a visual language on the skin, telling a story of tribe, family, status and history. In some communities the tattoo has had negative connotations. It was a marker of a slave or a criminal. In the case of Ötzi, it is believed that his tattoos were for therapeutic purposes (Deter-Wolf et al. 2016). Tattooed Egyptian female mummies have been found. Initially, it was speculated that these tattoos were the marks of prostitutes (Lineberry 2001), but based on the placement of the mummies near the burial chambers of royal family members, it is now speculated that these tattoos may have provided women with protection during childbirth, based on the symbolic designs and their location on the body (Friedman 2007).

The tattooing of California Indians signifies a marker of identity within a particular tribal group as well as coming-of-age. In most areas of California, the practice involved a coming-of-age ceremony. The “111” chin tattoo was applied to both women and men depending on which tribal group you were from. In many areas of the State, as in many areas of the world, the traditions of tattooing were lost due to colonization, religion and assimilation. The practice of tattooing spans the history of humanity, every habitable continent, and numerous cultural communities. It permanently marks social rank and identity and is making a huge comeback in contemporary Western society. With the rising interest in contemporary Western tattooing, traditional Indigenous tattooing practices are also becoming more popular. Understanding the importance and significance of cultural Indigenous tattooing will bring about a better understanding of Indigenous communities who need to apply these traditional markers of identity.

My Journey

My journey to receive my California Indigenous chin tattoo began on October 17, 2014, when I went with my friend Puyan to get her moč (chin tattoo in the Chumash language) or “111” chin tattoo. Personally, I have a lot of tattoos that have very special meaning but the thought of getting such a visible indelible mark that represents my Indigenous heritage was new to me. I grew up with a mother that hated tattoos of any kind and I work in a field where all visible tattoos are unacceptable. I knew in contemplating getting my chin tattoo that there would be some huge challenges ahead of me. The following year I attended the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA) annual gathering in Northern California with my friend Puyan. While we were there, we met about seven or eight women who also had their “111” chin tattoo. I got to talk to some of the women that were there, both tattooed and non-tattooed and there was an immediate connection. From this time on, the need to get my chin tattoo was inescapable.

I got to meet two women during the CIBA event one that was tattooed at the time and another that wasn’t. They have been paramount in my decision to finally get tattooed. Sage LaPena, Tiffany Adams and I talked about the pros and cons of getting your chin tattooed and Tiffany mentioned that she was going to get her tattoo when she turned 50. I expressed that I was looking for someone to tattoo me using more of a traditional technique and allowing more traditional protocols during the tattooing. Sage told me about a Filipin cultural tattoo practitioner near me, Elle Festin who had tattooed some of her work and that she thought would fit with what I was looking for. A whole year went by and I again saw Sage and Tiffany in

Northern California. Again, we talked about the chin tattoo but this time when I went home I called Elle at Spiritual Journey Tattoo for a consultation based on the referral from Sage. Two weeks later I was having my consultation with Elle and the whole situation seemed surreal, but I made an appointment to have my chin tattooed anyway. I scheduled some time off work to heal as I knew that covering up a fresh tattoo would impede the healing process. A month later I was getting my chin tattoo. The night before my appointment I spoke with Sage and her first comment was, "You're not backing out, are you?". I said, "no, but I knew that my family was going to be upset".

I went to get my tattoo anyway, without telling my family, my fiancé or my close friends, but being there, getting my tattoo, I never felt alone. In hindsight, I had hundreds of years of ancestors with me when I got tattooed. The sound was unusual not the sound of a tattoo machine but a "flick flick" sound of the skin as each individual mark was made. I chose to have my tattoo done using a traditional technique instead of a machine. The technique that was used was a stick and poke or handpoke method that my ancestors used. For my tattoo Elle used a contemporary tattoo needle without the machine, to simulate traditional tools. I could not see as he was tattooing me on my face, but I recall the flick flick sound, as the ink was deposited under my skin. The smell of freshly burned sage was still in the air from the prayers I said before getting tattooed. No songs or other ceremony were performed except the actual tattooing, which I consider a ceremony in itself. As I laid on the table the feelings of anxiety began to well in my stomach. The whole process took only about twenty minutes, but I couldn't help but think about the consequences that I knew were going to come from my actions. After the tattooing was done, I looked in the mirror and couldn't have been prouder of the new indelible me! I kept

thinking that I would no longer have to explain my ethnic identity, it was apparent on my face. In my mind, this was a form of artistic resistance and reclamation of what was oppressively and violently taken from my ancestors. I was not only doing this for myself but for the generations that had not yet had the strength to reclaim this tradition.

When I came home, my immediate reaction was to see if I could cover it for work. I had prepared for this day, by buying several types of cover-up hoping to get the best coverage I could. I was able to cover it up well enough for it not to be seen at work and I was happy about that. Next, was to see what my fiancé was going to say. I sat on the couch anticipating his arrival from work, watching every car that went down the street. As he opened the door, I was standing in the walkway. His reaction was simple, "That's going to take a little getting used to!" He followed by asking what made me decide to do that and when did I decide to do it. I explained to him that I had been contemplating it for a while and I explained to him the basic meaning of the chin tattoo. This was really the end of the discussion about it for him. My next challenge was my best friend, which wasn't going to be as big of a deal as the others. I was meeting Jaime for breakfast the next day, but I knew she would be the most accepting of all my family. As I walked up to her house, she came outside, all she asked was, "is that real"? I replied, "yes" and she said, "that is so you". To my surprise, she actually went home and did her own research on chin tattooing and was able to really articulate the general meaning of it. Jaime has really been one of my bigger supporters since receiving my tattoo.

The last person that I was very nervous about telling was my mother. My mother hates visible tattoos, especially ones that could possibly impede the prospects of work or reflect negatively on an individual. For her, making yourself standout as an Indigenous person was not

right, you needed to fit in and assimilate to the mainstream culture. I was trying to prolong telling her as long as possible and was even avoiding seeing her after receiving my tattoo. The point of interaction with her came sooner than I had anticipated. Three days after getting my tattoo, she showed up unannounced at my door. I immediately ran into the bathroom and had my fiancé answer the door. As I stood in the bathroom, I remember thinking that Creator is putting me in this position to tell her NOW! So, I came out of the bathroom and walked right up to her to show her. Her reaction was much worse than I had anticipated. She said, "What the Fuck!", and turned around and slammed the door and walked home (she lives around the corner). About 15 minutes later I got a phone call from her stating that I had 30 days to get my house out of her name or she was going to sell it. About an hour later I saw that on social media she had posted that she no longer had a daughter and that I was dead to her. All I could do was cry, I never thought that her reaction would be this severe. My mind was racing about why she didn't understand. She is where I get my California Indian ancestry, how could she not understand the importance of this tradition. My Nana, her mother had raised me to be a proud Acjachemen Indian and that was what I was doing, wearing my identity on my face for everyone to see. Over the next 30 days or so we battled back and forth over changing the title of the house, all the time she only spoke to me through a proxy. She vilified me to other family members saying that I was going to lose my job, that I directly disobeyed her in getting my tattoo and tried to sabotage my upcoming wedding. I tried, to the best of my ability to continue my journey of resistance and revitalization of my tribe and other California Indians, without the support of my mother.

For four years she did not talk to me, not for my wedding, not for my college graduation and not for acceptance into graduate school. In retrospect, I think that this lack of knowledge on part of my mother has fueled my education path. I have realized that most people in my tribe have lack of knowledge on the cultural practices of our people, the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation. It was never so apparent as it has been with me, revitalizing this indelible marker of my tribal identity. As a non-federally recognized tribe, we often lack the legislative and financial support to revitalize our traditions and historic information. This lack of understanding and knowledge of even the sources of ethnographic material have encouraged me do this project, in a manner that is more cohesive with oral traditions and expresses the perspectives of California Indians involved in the revitalization process. As I began my capstone project, my mother was not talking to me but recently our relationship is on the mend and she has informed me of how proud she is of me. Her concerns were that I would be perceived negatively within today's society and within the work environment. Her view of tattoos has not changed but she sees that in the cultural context, they have empowered me to become educated and to educate others on the traditions of our people. My chin tattoo has also empowered me to become an advocate for social justice issues regarding California Indians. Some of these issues revolve around Native foods, the return of ancestors to their tribes of origin, the return of stolen land, and the empowerment of California Indians to learn to traditional tattooing, just to mention a few. Giving back to my community in all areas has become the central tenet in my life.

Literature Review

The historic literature on the subject of California Indian tattoo practices, for both men and women, dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At this time, salvage anthropology/ethnography³ of California Indian communities was



Figure 1. Indians from the Bay area of San Francisco (Choris 1816).

commonplace. During this time period, information collected on the subject of tattooing was fairly minimal and fragmented at best. Several literary works dating to this period mention the practice of tattooing in general terms, but more detailed accounts of this indelible practice, including information on pigments, tattooing implements, and associated ceremonial practices or the traditional philosophy behind the practice, are largely missing (see Boscana 1946; DuBois 1908; Kroeber 1925; Waterman 1910). The writer/ethnologist/anthropologist A.T. Sinclair (1909) provides an early and fairly comprehensive compilation of tattooing practices across North America. This compilation provides a synopsis of various authors, but the article is not comprehensive and is based on armchair ethnography, not fieldwork. However, it does provide a useful summation of bibliographic sources. Louis Choris, a French explorer and illustrator, was one of the first to sketch the Indians of California in 1816. His depictions of San Francisco Bay

³ Salvage ethnography is the recording of the practices and folklore of cultures threatened with extinction, including as a result of modernization. It is generally associated with the American anthropologist Franz Boas; he and his students aimed to record vanishing Native American cultures.

Indians clearly show chin tattoos, reminiscent of the facial tattooing mentioned by later visitors. One of the drawbacks of this literary reference is that is written in French and a translated version was not found. Throughout the early twentieth century, photographer and ethnographer Edward Curtis took photographs of Indians across North America, including a tattooed Tolowa woman of northern California ca. 1900 and copyrighted in 1923. This is believed to be one of the earliest photographs of a tattooed California Indian woman. Earlier depictions were hand drawn sketches and illustrations that captured the likeness of the traditional California tattoos, but nothing as powerful as the images created by Curtis. The issue that I have continually run into with these historic literary and photographic works is one of access. Many of these resources are archival and take the form of field notes created by early ethnographers. These documents are not published, and therefore are difficult to access even

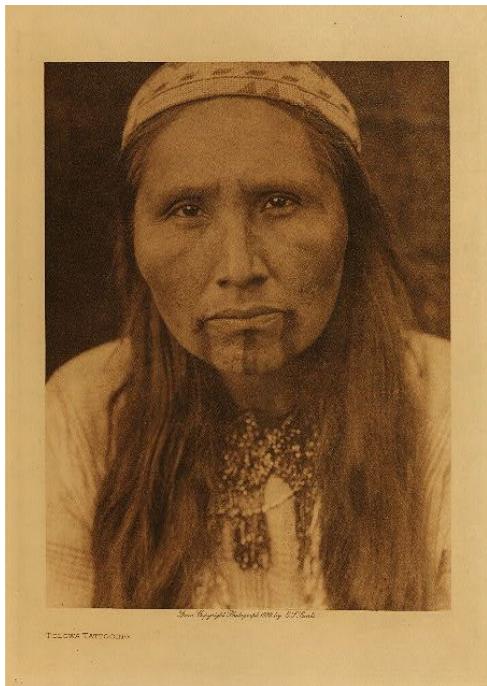


Figure 2. "Tolowa Tattooing" (Tolowa woman) (Curtis ca.1900).

for the most skilled researcher (Shepard 2016). Most have not been digitized and if they are located within a database or library, most of the time they are not in the stacks for use. For this reason, compiling a complete list of resources has been difficult. My other critique of these early ethnohistorical resources is positionality. All of these literary works come from the perspective and interpretation of the ethnographer. They give no authority or agency to the Indigenous people that they are documenting. In most of these works they rarely even

identify their informants by name, making it hard to authenticate the ethnographic material.

Although the information is limited and skewed in view, they do provide substantial evidence that chin tattooing has historic roots among California Indians. These ethnohistoric resources may not offer insights into beliefs, purpose, diversity, or meaning, but they do give historical credibility to the revitalization effort.

More recent literature provides a broader perspective on the practice of Indigenous tattooing around the world and its importance to culture and cultural identity. *The Handbook of The North American Indians, Volume 8* (Heizer and Sturtevant 1978) is an ethnohistory of the Indians of California. Many of the tribes of California are represented within this text, with contributions from many of the anthropologists conducting research at the time. The majority of the contributors to this publication were in their day, considered specialists within a particular tribal area in California. As outlined above, the characterization and description of the practice of tattooing in this publication remains vague, limited to one or two sentences acknowledging that the practice of chin tattooing was practiced by women and men of some tribes. Heizer and Sturtevant do a good job of compiling historical documentation into one resource, eliminating many of the issues of accessibility with some of the aforementioned works. My frustration with the contributors to this volume is that they continue to provide little to no authority or agency to any of the Indigenous individuals they interviewed or extracted information from, making it difficult to authenticate the information presented. Although this resource and other handbooks like *The Handbook of the Indians of California* (Kroeber 1925) were never meant to be sourcebooks on California Indian culture, this is, in fact what they have become. When originally written these handbooks served as encyclopedias of Indian culture, they were never intended to serve as basis for revitalizing or reconstructing cultural practices.

Given the lack of existing cultural documentation and the degree of cultural loss at the hands of colonization, my own tribe (Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation) and others are using these handbooks as a resource to revitalize culture. This sentiment is supported by California Indian scholar, Cutcha Risling Baldy when she states, “Kroeber’s *Handbook of the Indians of California* is still used today to build expert opinion, theories, and ideas about California Indians” (Risling Baldy 2018: 77). These handbooks are incomplete, inaccurate, lack authenticity, come from a colonizer’s world view, and give no agency to the informants who contributed the information. These compilations have been used by academic and others outside the Native community to develop ideas, theories and opinions, that many times do not actually coincide with the Indigenous groups they speak for. This is why it is important for me, as a Native scholar, to return to traditional ways of passing knowledge and give agency back to the individuals, tribes and ceremonies I seek to document.

Contemporary literature and web-based media resources have identified the resurgence of global practices of Indigenous tattooing, relating it to cultural revitalization, cultural connectedness and the reclamation of cultural identity. Anthropologist Lars Krutak’s published work (2014, 2007) and website⁴, provide an extensive look at Indigenous tattooing practices around the world, and the resurgence of these practices within modernity. Krutak provides considerable insight and access to the illusive archival materials that are important resources for this research, and he also includes primary testimony from Indigenous California women who bear the “111”. Allie Hostler (2006) offers a recap on the modern revitalization beginnings of the practice of the “111” in Northern California. As a tribal member herself, she stresses the

⁴ www.larskrutak.com

importance of not only revitalizing the practice, but of revitalizing the tribal practitioners to carry out these practices. Hostler provides an excellent Indigenous tattooing revitalization resource, seen through Indigenous eyes and told through Indigenous voices. She gives agency and ownership to the communities she serves, providing a level of accountability not found in most 20th century documentation. Stephen Pritchard (2000) identifies the use of *ta moko* as a distinctive marker of identity within the Maori culture. Pritchard also addresses the appropriation of these identity markers by non-Maori. The appropriation of cultural tattoos is one of the ethical concerns that needs to be addressed, especially as the revitalization of the “111” continues to gain momentum across Native California.

There is a plethora of material on Indigenous tattooing and tattooing in general. This material is contained in both historical and contemporary literature. The problem with older literature is the cultural perspective from which it was generated. Much of the information on traditional tattooing contained in ethnographic accounts, originates from non-Indigenous analysts who, for the most part, did not speak local languages nor were they properly enculturated within the communities they explored. Therefore, the traditional knowledge they recorded was not entirely accurate, culturally nuanced, and certainly not complete. However, there is a paradigm shift occurring today, which focuses on the importance of the Indigenous voice and Indigenous authorship. These works reveal new insights into the future of traditional tattooing practices in Native California and are the focus of my research and capstone project.

One of the more recent publications that imbues Indigenous voice and Indigenous authorship is *First Families* by L Frank Manriquez and Kim Hogeland (2007). For this publication L Frank travels across California, and gathers personal stories, carefully researched historical

and cultural stories, and photographs from and of California Indians to revive and inform readers about California Indian history. Recent works authored by Indigenous authors such as *Mau Moko* by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (2007) and *Tatau* by Sean Mallon and Sébastien Galliot (2019) are brimming with Indigenous acquired knowledge. This information is shared by Indigenous people, on Indigenous practices, and from an Indigenous worldview. The Maori, Hawaiian, and Samoan Indigenous communities are making huge strides in revitalizing their tattoo culture that had been nearly lost to colonization. As Hawaiian traditional cultural tattoo practitioner Keone Nunes so eloquently put it at the 2019 Ancestral Ink symposium in Santa Fe, New Mexico, “In the right hands these tools are magic (tattoo tools), and sometimes we don’t give ourselves enough credit because we don’t believe. The narrative is changing, but we need to control the narrative. We as Native people have to control that narrative because if we do not control it, if we don’t take it to heart, it will be lost for our children and for the future generations forever”.

Additional literature that has informed this project has to do with the form of implementation of the project. These forms are oral history, Indigenous methodologies and decolonizing methodologies. The Oral History Association (2010) defines oral history as “way of collecting and interpreting human memories to foster knowledge and human dignity.” By using oral history, it is my attempt to return this human dignity to a group of people who have historically been seen as unable to correctly tell their own story. Early ethnographers and colonizers have expressly viewed Native Americans as “savages” or “sin razon” (California Mission Records meaning “without reason”) and unable to tell our own story. Oral historian Linda Shope states that, “oral history interviewing is historical in intent, that is, it seeks new

knowledge about and insights into the past through an individual biography” (Shopes et al. 2011: 454). Linda Shope also quotes Allen Nevins definition of “oral history” as, “oral history implies a recognition of the heroics of everyday life, a celebration of the quotidian, an appeal to the visceral” (Shopes et al. 2011: 451). This information focuses on the salience and importance of oral forms of knowledge. By using this form to transmit stories, I am returning agency to my interviewees to tell their own stories, through their own voice and worldview. Other Indigenous cultural tattoo practitioners that are reviving tattoo traditions are also using alternate forms of sharing knowledge in addition to written academic forms. These forms follow a more Indigenous methodology such as storytelling and oral tradition. Salish practitioner Dion Kaszas is reviving Nlaka’pamux traditional skin stitching and hand poking methods of tattooing. He has developed a YouTube channel to share his work. Dion says on his YouTube channel⁵ that, “Storytelling is a major way in which, we, as Nlaka’pamux, share our cultural teachings and our lives with other in an entertaining way”. Dion supports the right of Indigenous people and often quotes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a powerful piece of literature which helps Indigenous people reclaim and control cultural heritage and intellectual knowledge. Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states:

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control,

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWbSoHz6WUD kZXwMdfjIK9g>

protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions (UNDRIP 2007).

This one piece of literature synthesizes the rights of self-representation, reclamation and control asserted by Indigenous people around the world to aspects of their culture that have been misinterpreted by prior colonial history, anthropology, and ethnography.

Methodology

Transforming personal interviews into publicly accessible digital stories is the methodology of this capstone project. This methodology creates a skillful intersection between oral history transmission and Indigenous ways of acquiring knowledge within Native communities in California. I interviewed nine California Indian women and one California Indian man who have received their traditional “111” chin tattoo, to illustrate the resurgence of this cultural identity marker and in order to understand their role in the revitalization of this tradition. I also held a workshop for California Indian women to empower them to become traditional tattooing practitioners in their own communities. This workshop was then transformed into a digital story segment on reviving the practice of tattooing among California Indians. This one-day workshop was held at Spiritual Journey Tattoo Shop in Stanton, California. It was attended by six Indigenous women, five of which are California Indian and one that is Filipina working on her doctorate in American Indian Studies. As a participant observer, I then took the skills I learned at the workshop and visited Aoteroa (New Zealand) to utilize these new cultural tattooing techniques. While there, I identified other communities around the world

that are currently reviving facial tattooing practices. I have compared their trajectories to the revitalization process that is currently taking place in California and have seen many similarities.

Historically, the reasoning and intent of the chin tattoo in California has, for the most part, only been expressed as an outsider's interpretation of the practice. The use of orally transmitted knowledge is important to California Indians and employing this type of knowledge transmission in my project returns authority and agency back to the Indigenous community and individual. *As Seen Through Indigenous Eyes and Heard Through Indigenous Voices: A Storytelling Project* creates a sense of authenticity not seen in other forms of documentation on the practice of "111" chin tattooing. As Opaskwayak Cree author Shawn Wilson states, "I present this information in this study in a way that is more culturally appropriate for Indigenous people by taking the role of storyteller rather than researcher/author" (Wilson 2008: 32). As a California Indian scholar that sees the value of Indigenous methodologies, I also see the value in revitalizing storytelling and oral transmission of knowledge in reviving cultural practices and returning agency back to individuals and communities.

Storytelling, oral history and oral transmission of knowledge are exemplary Indigenous methodologies to use, as the paradigm is shifting to include these methods as valid within the academy. Many Indigenous academics have begun to do research using these methods. Margaret Kovach says that, "Indigenous methodologies developed by Indigenous scholars, researchers, and community members have an authenticity, even if they are carried out within the parameters of research language" (Kovach 2015: 60). The use of storytelling within Indigenous communities, has provided information and learning from generation to generation. William Bauer Jr. states that, "California Indians used their creation stories to articulate

Indigenous identity, sovereignty and land” (Bauer 2016: 11). Returning to using oral history and storytelling can also correct misinterpretations that have occurred with ethnographies that have been interpreted by those outside the Indigenous community. Oral historian Donald Ritchie says, “Recurring stories within a community that emerge in oral history collections also reveal what people consider to be key aspects of their of their historical experience” (Ritchie 2015: 38). As we as Indigenous people assert our self-determination, we are doing what decolonizing scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls “researching back”. Tuhiwai Smith asserts that Indigenous and decolonizing scholars need to, “realize in the myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the Other in scholarly and popular works, and in principles which help to select and recontextualize those constructions in such things as media, official histories and school curricula” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 8). *As Seen Through Indigenous Eyes and Heard Through Indigenous Voices: A Storytelling Project*, does just that. It is a collection of overlapping interviews recontextualized by the individuals directly involved with the revitalization process, without interpretation by the interviewer. In fact, the interviewer has not asked for ownership of the stories and acknowledges that these stories are owned controlled by the interviewee in perpetuity. The participants have given final authorization of all visual and audio products displayed on the website. This authorization is also ongoing, if at any time a participant wishes to modify their story for any reason, that accommodation will be made in order to make sure that the correct representation is being given to the public.

These digital stories are accessible via a website⁶ devoted to Indigenous tattooing practices, featuring the revival of the California Indian “111” chin tattoo. As a

⁶ www.CaliforniaIndigenousChinTattooing.com

researcher/storyteller I recognize that much of the historic literature on the subject of California Indian tattoo practice is virtually inaccessible and by making this information available on a website promotes a better understanding of the practice. The process of putting this information on an open access website that is free to use, promotes an accelerated approach to learning about California Indians and acknowledges the breakdown of scholarly privilege that has largely defined indigenous research in the past.

Decolonization

Native Americans have been survivors of physical genocide, cultural genocide and forced assimilation since the time of colonization in 1492. Besides genocide and forced assimilation, we have also been subject to relocation, termination, federal recognition not to mention the misinterpretation, inaccuracies and false information resulting from documentation of Native American culture and religion. These misinterpretations occur when anthropologists, ethnographers, and historians, use ethnocentric, colonizing methods of gathering and transmitting information about Indigenous people, instead of allowing the Indigenous people to speak from their own perspectives. The same is true with tattooing and the documentation of tattooing practices among California Indians. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith so poignantly states, “It angers us when practices linked to the last century, and the centuries before that, are still employed to deny the validity of Indigenous peoples’ claim to existence, to land and territories, to the right of self-determination, to the survival of our languages and forms of cultural knowledge, to our natural resources and systems for living within our environment” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 1). For revitalization to be successful, we as California

Indians must decolonize and breakdown what little information there is and bring the truth to the surface from an Indigenous perspective. This process needs to take place outside the colonizing constructs that viewed our people through an ethnocentric Christian lens that set out to assimilate us into Western culture.

As I, an Indigenous woman, reflect on the reasons and conditions the ceremonial practice of tattooing was nearly lost, I can only see myself and my elders among those that have been colonized by our oppressors. It is this system of oppression that continues today and seeks to oppress and deny Native Americans their rights as Indigenous people. My sentiments parallel those of Linda Tuhiwai Smith when she says, “It appals us that the West can desire, extract, and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 1). As Indigenous people of California begin to revive our traditions, we need to keep in mind the words of California Indian scholar Cutcha Risling Baldy,

It was Native survivance that disrupted the settler colonial narrative of “extinction” and instead demonstrated a refusal and resistance through every historical period aimed at the dissolution of Native feminisms. This shows how decolonization relies on the **(re)writing**, the **(re)righting**, and ultimately the **(re)riting** of Native feminism through ceremonial praxis like women’s coming-of-age ceremonies (Risling Baldy 2018: 54-55).

The definition of a **rite** is a ceremony or formal act to observe a religious, custom or other procedure. When we as Indigenous people **(re)rite**, we are taking this colonized form or interpretation of a ceremony or custom and returning it to a form that is in line with Indigenous worldviews. The definition of **write** is to trace or form (characters, letters, words, etc.) on the surface of some material, as with a pen, pencil, or other instrument or means. When we as

Indigenous people (**re**)write, we are taking that writing instrument and using it to record these stories from Indigenous hands through an Indigenous worldview. The definition of **right** is to be correct. When we as Indigenous people (**re**)right, we are correcting the colonizers incorrect assumption with the correct qualities, with an Indigenous worldview.

To begin to decolonize, we must acknowledge the waves of colonization that entered Native California, under the auspices of westward expansion, land acquisition and religion. The systems that colonized the Indigenous peoples of California came in several colonizing and genocidal periods. Due to the size, topography and limited access to some communities, the longevity of traditional practices is drastically different in different parts of the state. Due to this fact I will be reflecting on the two major genocidal periods that caused the loss of traditional tattooing in California, the mission period and the Gold Rush. It is in these two periods that tattooing practices were virtually eliminated.

The Mission Period

The mission system began the colonization process in Southern California in 1769 with the founding of Mission San Diego de Alcalá. The Franciscan priests led by Father Junipero Serra were motivated primarily by the opportunity to convert California Indians to the Catholic faith. The priests discouraged all aspects of Native religion and culture as part of the Native's assimilation into the Catholic faith. Father Serra and his Franciscan priests believed that the Indigenous people of California believed in a religion based on paganism, witchcraft, mysticism and demonism and that the only way to rectify this was through a Christian baptism. Through the process of Christianization, most of the traditional ways of life previously practiced by

California Indians became outlawed due to their new religious beliefs. The practice of tattooing and the ceremonies that were practiced in conjunction with tattooing were also outlawed due to this process. Jean-Chris Miller reiterates this fact in his book when he states that, "Just as occurred in other cultures with tattoo traditions, when these pagan tribes were 'converted' to the Christian religion, their spiritual and cultural rites (which included tattooing, piercing and scarification) were outlawed" (Miller 2008: 9). Tattoos were seen as going against the Bible and Gods law. Leviticus 19:28, says, "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:28). Terry Watkins of Dial-the-Truth Ministries states on his website⁷, "Throughout history the tattoo bears the mark of paganism, demonism, Baal worship, shamanism, mysticism, heathenism, cannibalism and just about every other pagan belief known. The tattoo has NEVER been associated with Bible Believing Christians. And whenever and wherever, in history Christianity appears – tattoos disappear" (Watkins 2003). A good historical example of this occurrence is presented in *Tattoo History: A Source Book* by Steve Gilbert (2000: 99) where he states, "When Cortez and his conquistadors arrived on the coast of Mexico in 1519, they were horrified to discover that natives not only worshipped devils in the form of statues and idols, but also had somehow managed to imprint indelible images of these idols on their skin. The Spaniards, who had never heard of tattooing, recognized it at once as the work of Satan". In order to keep from getting beaten and to follow Gods law, the Indigenous people of California had to forgo the traditional and ceremonial art of cultural tattooing, thus the tradition was lost. In addition to being against God's law, California Indian women's ceremonies were seen as being sexual in nature. Since the chin tattoo was part of the

⁷ <http://www.av1611.org/tattoos/pagan.html>

coming-of-age ceremony for many tribes in California, it was recognized by the colonizers, as a time when a young girl had become sexually mature. Virginia M. Bouvier writes, “The depiction of Indians as heathens who are sexually loose, unfaithful spouses, and polygamists made the California conquest a moral crusade” (Bouvier 2004: 108-109). This is one of the reasons that this practice was forbidden by the church. In addition to its being forbidden, the chin tattoo also signified to the soldiers protecting mission properties that these young girls were at a proper age to have sexual relations with them, whether it be consensual or forced. Elias Castillo (2015: 168-169) documents some of these cases in his book stating that, “The actions of Spanish soldiers, among them the rapes of Indian women, were causing serious unrest among the Indians. In one case, an Indian chief whose wife had been raped by a Spanish soldier was killed. The sexual assault occurred in the late summer of 1771”. The coming-of-age ceremony was specifically targeted by the missions. As articulated by California Indian scholar Cutcha Risling Baldy (2018: 56) “Because the missionaries focused so intently on Indigenous sexuality, it stands to reason that they would view women’s coming-of-age ceremonies in this context, believing that these ceremonies were about “fertility” or “reproduction” and that Natives should be forced to end these ceremonies along with their ceremonies and teachings about pregnancy and childbirth”. This is the basic premise behind the loss of chin tattooing and culture in Southern California.

Gold Rush

The circumstances in Northern California were much different than in the Southern California. The tribes in Northern California held onto their tattooing traditions much longer

because colonization and assimilation were initially focused in the South, with the Catholic mission system. Northern Tribes also were able to retain their traditions longer due to the remoteness of many of the tribal communities. The main reason that influenced the loss of chin tattooing in Northern California was the discovery of gold and the resulting “gold rush”. The influx of people into Northern California in the search of gold and land had genocidal impacts on California Indian men and specifically women. “The targeting of women and women’s coming-of-age ceremonies would ultimately influence the continued practice of these ceremonies, and while many tribes would maintain the public practice of ceremonies that primarily features men dancing and singing, women’s coming-of-age ceremonies would become more secretive and little practices” (Risling Baldy 2018: 52). The tattoo was one of the ways that settlers identified a young girl that was now of womanly age and thus having the tattoo made her a target. “Even women’s facial tattoos (known colloquially as “111” because of the three bars on the chin that looked like the number 111), which at one time had become a mark of beauty, were now a way for settler men to target Native women” (Risling Baldy 2018: 62). These systematic inequalities were sanctioned by the government and used to enslave and oppress California Indians, in order to eliminate them completely or to assimilate them into culture of the colonizers. These two epochs in California history and the assimilation periods after, have all but erased the chin tattoo and the ceremonies that pertain to coming-of-age. In order to decolonize and heal from this trauma, we need to understand these past atrocities, in order to revitalize tattooing practices in a positive and productive manner.

Language Influences

Language plays an important part in the revival of the indelible cultural practice of tattooing. In many tribal groups, the mere status of having a word for “tattoo or tattooing” and no other definitive documentation is enough to begin the revitalization process. In some communities, there is a word for “paint,” but no distinction of it being permanent or temporary. Since there is little documentation on the practice in most communities, it is safe to assume that if there is a word in the language then neighboring tribes that do not have any words related to tattooing in their vocabularies perhaps they tattooed as well. There are many similarities within California Indian communities and most tribes share one of two religious’ philosophies, Kuksu or Chinigchinich. After discussions with linguists, culture bearers, and tribal community members, it is a collective conclusion that if one tribe practices tattooing that at some point it filtered into other tribes within the same religious sphere. Tattooing is a documented practice in both the northern and southern religions and is recorded in the language of these tribes. In many cases, each tribe possessed several words related to the practice of tattooing, for the tattooed marks, the tattoo practitioner, the plants and pigments used to tattoo and so on. A good example of this happening currently is with the Barbareño

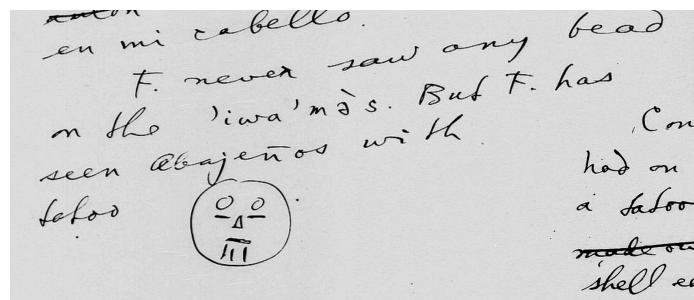


Figure 3. Excerpt from J.P. Harrington's Note (Woodward 2019)

A handwritten note in Spanish and English. The text reads:
"Concepcion, chd. name —, V. Iud.,
had on her left cheek or cheekbone
a tattooing in blue slus. ~~had~~
~~made out~~ She also wore mussel
shell earrings of same size & shape.
And Eusebia, a friend of Conc.,
made herself earrings of same
size, shape & material.
et cetera".

Figure 4. Excerpt from J.P. Harrington's Note (Woodward 2019)

Chumash. There is a word in Šmuwič Chumash, sumoč which means “tattooing” and the shortened word moč which refers to the chin tattoo. The only other historic documentation refers to tattooing among the Ventureño Chumash. This piece of documentation is a very small excerpt in J. P. Harrington’s field notes provided by Dr. Lisa Woodward who has worked on digitizing J. P.

Harrington’s field notes as part of her doctoral dissertation with assistance from the Native communities who the notes refer to. Since the Ohlone tribes to the north



Figure 5. Barbareño Chumash women's chin tattooing (Festin 2019)

(Salinan, Chalon, Rumsen, Mutsun and Esselen) tattooed the chin and, the Yokut to the west and the Tongva to the south also practiced chin tattooing, and the Barbareño Chumash have a word for tattooing, it is believed that they had a tattooing tradition as well. In fact, based on this evidence a group of seven Barbareño Chumash women recently received the chin tattoos. Another good example is with the Chemehuevi tribe. For many years Tiffany Adams believed that the Chemehuevi had a tattoo tradition because there is a word in Chemehuevi for tattoo. She could not find any other documentation on the practice with the Chemehuevi except the word in the language and the knowledge that the Mohave tribe to the south chin tattooed, but

since she is also Konkow Maidu she decided to have her tattoo done in the patterns she dreamt. One day while on the reservation one of the members of her Chemehuevi tribe commented that her tattoo looked like kitty cat whiskers and stated that, “We didn’t tattoo our chins only the Mohave did”! Shortly after Tiffany found a passage in the book, *The Chemehuevis* that states, “On this night, the moonlight is so bright that it reveals the tattoo marks on the women’s faces: some of the younger wear only a single dot, like a Hindu caste mark, in the middle of their foreheads, but most of them also have lines radiating like cats’ whiskers from the corners of their mouths and running vertically down their chins”(Laird 1976: 20). This information solidified Tiffany’s belief that the Chemehuevi’s did indeed have chin tattoo tradition like neighboring tribes. The correlation between language and the practice of Indigenous tattooing in California could realistically be a whole capstone project in itself, but for this project it is just one more source of information leading to sustainability and the revival of the practice in the future. The following words are in reference to the practice of tattooing in some of the tribes in California prior to contact. All of the words were received through personal communications with California Indian tribal members involved in language revitalization.

“Tattoo” in California Indian Languages

1. Mountain Cahuilla- chíshxinill - tattoo marks
2. Šmuwič Chumash- sumoč-for tattooing
3. Samala Chumash- močič- to be painted
4. Mutsun Ohlone- hica- tattoo
5. Luiseño/Payomkawichum- túuhulu-tattoo
6. Acjachemen/Juaneño - túuhulu-tattoo
7. Chukchansi- shepwash- tattoo or basket pattern
8. Wukchumni- wapaasi ochoi'l- chin tattoo/paint
9. Yowlumne- awash sep- chin tattoo

10. Western Mono- náwoowin- tattoo
11. Maidu- čawám báltibom- chin tattoo
12. Tongva- tovuushey - type of tattoo
13. Northern Wintu- ylta- chin tattoo
14. Hupa- wiltuch'- tattooed
15. Tolowa- yii-ghee-le' ghvtlh-t'e'sr- chin tattoo
16. Kumeyaay- uukwiich- tattoo
17. Hupa- wiltuch'- tattooed
18. Pit River (Ajumawi)- chíp- tattoo
19. Karuk- thúkina- tattoo

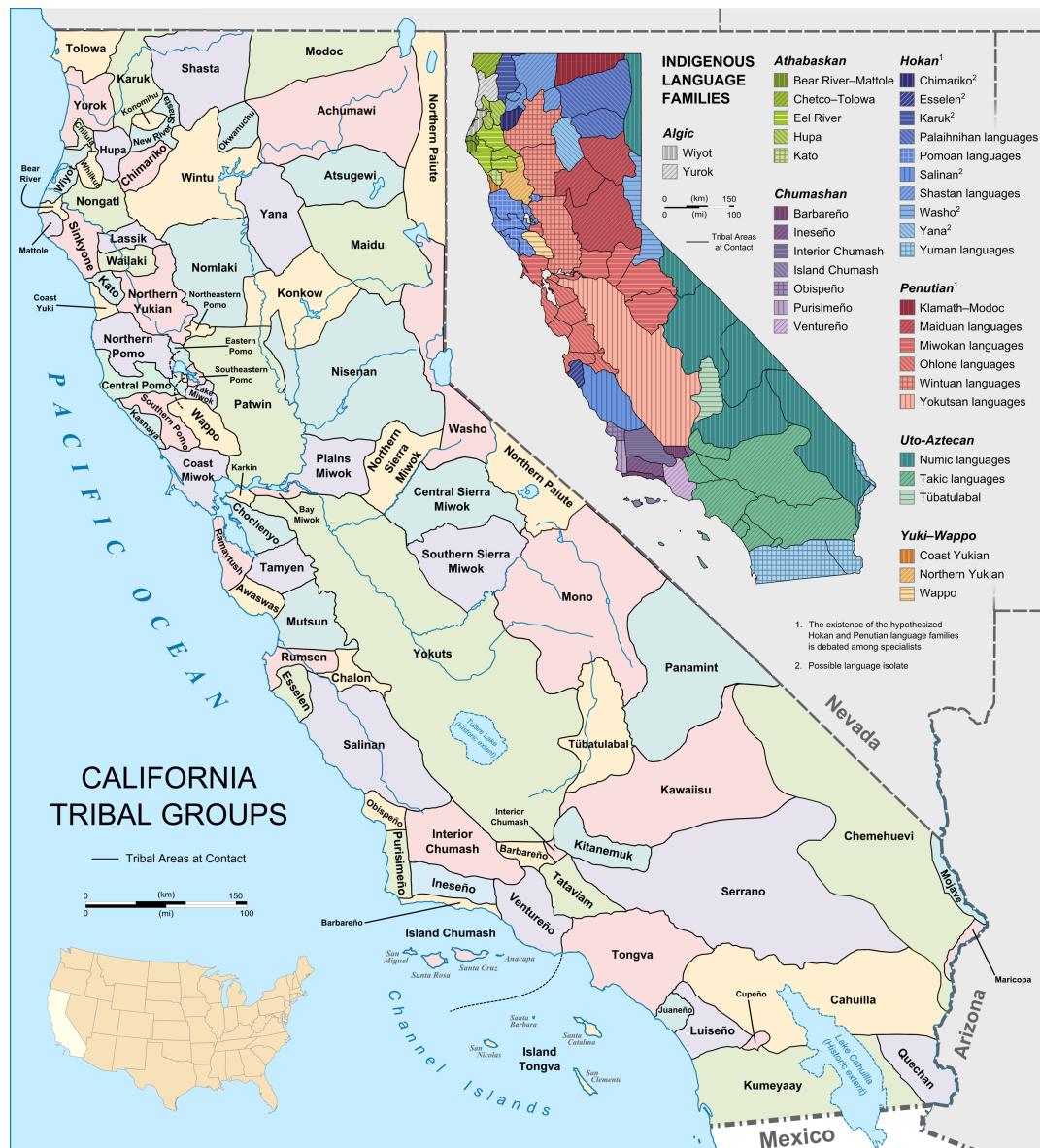


Figure 6. Map of California tribal areas and languages at the time of European contact (Concerto 2013).

Reflections on Revitalization Interviews

As I began the process of reaching out to my community members to conduct interviews, I began with the women that had influenced me the most in getting my tattoo. These were the women I felt most comfortable asking to share their deeply personal experiences with me. Since we first met, Tiffany Adams, Sage LaPena, Alicia Adams, and I have developed a sisterly bond and I felt very comfortable talking with them about their process and journey of getting chin tattooed. Since L Frank and I belong to the same tribe and have had discussions about language and culture for many years, I knew that she would be extremely open to sharing her story with me as well. At this point I knew that four stories were not going to encompass this revitalization in its full magnitude, so I reached out to Lena Bommelyn for her participation. I had met Lena on a panel that we had both participated in called, "Returning to Grandmother's Beauty: The Indigenous Women's Journey of Tattoo", as part of the exhibit "Tattoo" at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and facilitated by Lars Krutak. To my surprise she agreed and offered to help me find other participants to interview for the project. So, the plan was set-up that I would travel to Northern California to do the four interviews and to let the Creator guide me in finding others. Some of the key concepts that came from the interviews were the importance of ceremony, the healing of individuals and communities, beauty ideals, aesthetics, outsiders' interpretations, beliefs and assumptions, responsibilities, walking in two worlds, understanding of core values, gender roles, and many more. Each of these stories is very individualistic and not one of them completely defines the practice or the revitalization as a whole. As you will see, each person's story comes from their tribal perspective and from their personal worldview. The process of interviewing these

individuals has created a connection far beyond what was ever intended or expected. It has created a bond not only because of our indelible marks of identity but of our deep connections to our culture and community. These bonds only solidify my need to stay true to my methodologies and continue to give back to my community in a way that is compatible with our ways of being in the world.

Tiffany Adams

Tiffany Adams comes from two California Indian communities, Konkow Maidu from the Sierra foothills and Chemehuevi from the Mojave Desert/Lake Havasu regions. Both of these tribes have traditions of chin tattooing that are in the process of being revived. When I first met

Tiffany four years ago, she had mentioned that she was going to get her chin tattoo when she turned 50 but it wasn't until she turned 52 that she received it.

Some of the reasons that she waited were: getting the support and understanding of her family that she needed, doing research on the pattern

and historic information on the



Figure 7. Tiffany and Riazel after receiving her chin tattoo (Lucero 2018).

practice, and understanding the responsibilities that go along with wearing this type of cultural tattoo. Some of the reasons that Tiffany received her tattoo were: she dreamt about this tattoo on her for over twenty years, because this indelible visual marker tells “who we are”, and it is

an artistic reminder of carrying yourself with respect. There were also important components that needed to be in place when Tiffany received her tattoo. One was the cultural practitioner and the other was that it was done in ceremony. During the interview she explained about her decision to use cultural practitioner Riazel Festin. Riazel is an Indigenous Filipina cultural tattoo practitioner who is very meticulous about lines and symmetry and works in a shop that focuses on the traditional and spiritual practices of tattooing. Tiffany explained in her interview, the importance of having an Indigenous woman tattoo her and that all of her tattoos have been



Figure 8. Kaijah Tiffany's daughter singing the Flower Song for Tiffany during her tattooing (Lucero 2018).

done by women. Riazel came highly recommended from other community members and her understanding that ceremony, the burning of ceremonial herbs, song and community would be part of the tattooing process, made Riazel the right cultural practitioner for Tiffany. She also explained the

importance of the “Flower Song” sung by her daughter Kaijah. Kaijah was unable to attend the actual tattooing but it was important that Kaijah be there to sing for her mom. On the way to get her tattoo, Tiffany received a call from Kaijah who was very upset and crying at not being able to attend the tattoo ceremony. Tiffany then told her that she would Facetime her so that she could be part of the ceremony. While Kaijah was on the Facetime call, her and Sage LaPena (in attendance) sang the “Flower Song”, which is traditionally a song sung during the girls coming-of-age ceremony. The ability of Indigenous people to use this type of technology, shows

the ability and resilience of Indigenous people to walk in both worlds and still honor the protocols and traditions of their Indigenous roots. Some of the concerns Tiffany had about getting the tattoo were aesthetics and not adhering to western beauty ideals and how going against these norms could possibly impede her job prospects in the future. It is these social justice concepts that not only Tiffany has considered but other interviewees have considered as well. One of the ways that Tiffany is facing this obstacle is as an artist. Her recent portrait project for her BFA at the Institute of American Indian Art (Santa Fe, NM) was based on women with chin tattoos, whether they currently had them or not. He teacher commented that all these women couldn't be that beautiful, Tiffany answered, "actually they are"! This is just one way that Tiffany is confronting these obstacles such as rejecting Western beauty standards and educating the public about the revival of this beauty marker.

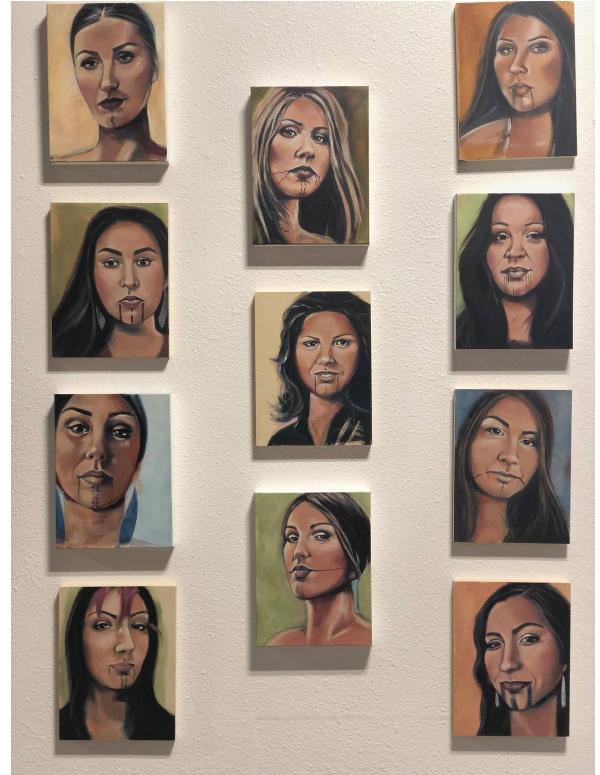


Figure 9. Tiffany's BFA portrait project (Adams 2018).

Lena Bommelyn

Lena Bommelyn is Karuk, Shasta and specifically grew up on the Salmon River in Northern California. Lena and her husband Loren Bommelyn have dedicated their lives to reviving ceremony and language in their Native communities in Northern California. She has also accepted a position within her tribe as a medicine woman. Lena talks about the tattoo being

one of the last pieces of her life that hadn't been met. When you listen to Lena's story, you get a good understanding of her worldview as it relates to everything she does in life and that



Figure 10. Lena Bommelyn with her husband and spiritual family at ceremony (Tuttle 2019).

everything revolves around ceremony. Her life is guided by the gifts the Creator sends her, but she says, "you have to be open (in your heart) to those gifts". The Creator brought her and her husband together, brought her to becoming a medicine woman, and brought

her Native Hawaiian tattoo practitioner Keone Nunes to tattoo her "111". One of the core values that Lena expressed is that she never planned to get her chin tattoo, it was an opportunity that came to her through the Creator and she took it. She said that this was the same with becoming a medicine woman, she never asked for it, it just came to her and she accepted it. She explains that we don't choose these paths, they choose us. One of the statements that Lena made during her interview still resonates within me and seems to be one of the unstated feelings encountered by many of the recipients of the chin tattoo. This statement is one that shows that this tattoo is not just a visual marker, but part of a cathartic journey of the healing from intergenerational trauma and genocide within the California Indian communities. Lena says, "as they were tattooing, I felt that pain lifted off me... I was freed, I was no longer that lesser of a human person..." This was such an eye-opening statement, as it

really shows the social justice component of the chin tattoo revitalization. Lena continues on in her interview and talks about who was at her tattoo ceremony and about her “Spiritual Family”. Her “Spiritual Family” is composed of people that might not be biologically related but are individuals who walk in the world on a similar path as you do. One of her “Spiritual Family” members commented after Lena got her tattoo saying, “you know it’s always been there, it’s that now, everyone can see it”. This is very powerful because by putting these marks on our face, we are visually putting the story of who we are out there to the public. Lena talks about how her spirit used to leave for a period of time when she was a child, in order to deal with difficult situations. Out of this came the ability to trust her spirit to guide her in decision making and leading her through life.

Lyn Risling

Lyn Risling is a member of the Hupa tribe, and a descendant of the Yurok and Karuk tribes of Northern California. She is an accomplished artist and is involved in the revival of language and culture in her communities. She received her tattoo around the age of 55. Like Tiffany, Lyn uses the chin tattoo in a lot of her artwork as a way to share this cultural identity marker and to enculturate outsiders about this practice. Lyn makes an impassioned statement about her



Figure 11. Painting by Lyn Risling "Becoming Who We Are Again" in honor of the grandmothers who came before me and the daughters and granddaughters who will come after (Risling 2008).

identity, when she says,” it has reinforced my commitment to my culture and my whole identity. It’s given me confidence actually, in who I am as a Native person”. Lyn talks about how her chin tattoo is helping her navigate and create a balance in walking in two worlds, the world of her Native community and the Western world. One of the things that Lyn said during her interview was that, “if things are handed to you, they don’t have as much meaning,” and are not appreciated as much and that the pain of the tattoo was part of the process of appreciating what your ancestors went through. She said that by going through this, and our children seeing this marker as something normal, we are preparing them to go to the next level of cultural revitalization for future generations. Lyn too mentioned a time period shortly after receiving her tattoo when she saw Native women with their tattoos (even though they didn’t have them) and remembered someone telling her that, “they’ve always been there, they’ve just been waiting to come out.” This statement is a common abstraction among all the interviewees and connects all of us in the revitalization of this indelible identity marker.

Ruby Tuttle

Ruby Tuttle is politically affiliated with the Yurok tribe but culturally she is affiliated with the Karuk tribe. Ruby received her tattoo at age 18, and knew she was going to receive it after having her Flower Dance ceremony. Ruby was comparatively young when she received her tattoo. I felt it was important to include her perspective in the project. Ruby explains how it was very difficult to find someone to tattoo her, especially on the face and because of her age. She wanted the tattoo after her coming-of-age ceremony, but she was not of legal age. Her solution

was to wear a henna tattoo on her chin in the interim, during the time she was out of school



Figure 12. Ruby Tuttle, her mother Cheryl Tuttle and daughter Hune Bommelyn at ceremony (Tuttle 2019).

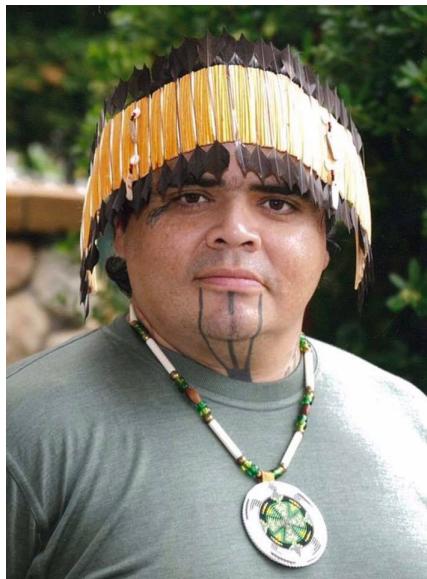
and participating in ceremony. Her actions demonstrate the duality that we have to live in as Native people in California and something that Lyn talks about: having to find a balance between both these worlds. The use of a henna tattoo is something Ruby suggests for women contemplating getting their

chin tattooed. For Ruby, the coming-of-age ceremonies were a vital part of getting her chin tattoo because as she says, “they set you up spiritually for the rest of your life. They give you a group of women who you go to and who you rely on and it really teaches you about yourself”. Ruby’s whole life is immersed in the culture, whether it is teaching language, participating in ceremony or working with Native plant medicine. One of the comments she mentioned was that her family was concerned for her future, in terms of employment. Again, this statement is mirrored in many of the interviews. In fact, in Ruby’s case she was fired from both of her jobs after receiving her chin tattoo. Shortly after being fired, she gained employment with Lyn Risling, who also has her chin tattooed. As I talked to Ruby one thing really stood out and surprised me, and that was that she did not feel the need to educate people about her tattoo. She states that, “if you want to know, you can research and look up the information yourself”. This goes for both non-Native and colonized Native people. When I listen to Ruby’s story, she is

very resolute about what the tattoo represents for her and how it is just part of her culture and about normalizing and revitalizing cultural practices.

Jack Potter

Jack Potter Jr. is Kunitsu Miwok, Nor Rel Muk Wintu, and Winnemem Wintu. Jack is the



Chairman of Redding Rancheria and is involved in both political and cultural tribal activities. Jack Potter was the only man that I interviewed for this project. The reasoning behind this is because the tattoo is mostly being revived by women. I felt it was important to interview him and get his perspective because more men are starting to revive the tradition of chin and face tattooing. One of the themes that I encountered with Jack, is that this tattoo is about identity.

Figure 13. Jack Potter in traditional flicker feather dance regalia (Potter 2017).

This identity is not only about living in the physical world, but

about being able to be recognized by the ancestors when we cross over into the spirit world. One of the comments that Jack made reverberates through many of the interviews and is one of resistance. By having this definitive marker of California Indian identity, you can no longer pass yourself off as a more accepted member of a particular culture such as Mexican or Latino. Jack said that for so many years our people hid their identity just to survive, and by getting his tattoo it was an affirmation that the colonizers didn't get rid of us and that we are still here. Jack talked about the responsibility that goes along with this tattoo and how at a younger age he was not ready for the responsibility of the chin tattoo. It wasn't until later that he realized

the need to become more responsible and stop, as he says “partying” and become a role model as a political and cultural figure in his tribe. It was at this time he decided it was a good time to receive his chin tattoo.

Sage LaPena

Sage LaPena is Nomtipom and Tuni Wintu. From a very young age Sage was being educated as a traditional herbalist by traditional healer Mabel McKay. This training has given Sage her perspective on how to be in the world and how she knew when it was time to receive her chin tattoo. When she received her tattoo, she was one of only three women in California that had received this indelible marker of identity and was one of the women that has really given momentum to the revitalization of the chin tattoo. One of the things that she explains about getting her tattoo is in terms of



Figure 14. Sage on a Native plant walk for "Tending the Wild" (KCET 2016).

education of both Native and non-Native people. She says, “you become a culture keeper whether you want to or not. So, you need to know what it represents, it represents the strength and vitality, of us and our culture.” Sage has had her tattoo for 23 years and it wasn’t until the revitalization of this tattoo was going strong, that she realized the impact that she had on other women and that she had become an inspiration and role model, for other to receive theirs tattoos. One of the concepts that is woven through many of the interviews is receiving

guidance from the Creator during our dreamtime. Because Sage was one of the first women to receive a facial tattoo, the documentation on the chin tattoo wasn't readily available, so she relied on her dreams to gain information and permission from the Creator before obtaining it. Moreover, Sage talks about the fact that tattooing was practiced by many Indigenous communities around the Pacific Rim, and this creates a connectedness no matter where you live in this region. This fact connects us as Indigenous human beings on Mother Earth.

Pimm Allen

Pimm Allen is Karuk and Yurok. Pimm's interview is one that was organized by Lena Bommelyn and over the phone I think she had some reservation about doing the interview. She didn't quite understand why or what I was going to do with the information. As soon as I walked into Pimm's house and introduced myself, all her reservations were gone. It was an



Figure 15. Pimm bringing baskets home (Tripp Allen 2017).

instant acknowledgement that we had similar core beliefs and values and she recognized that she would just be sharing her story, from one California Indian to another. As many of the interviewees have stated it was an instant connection. As we sat in the kitchen talking before the interview, she said to me, "I don't really have much to say". But Pimm's interview ended up being one of the longer ones,

and it revealed some interesting insights into the individuality of the practice. One of the things that Pimm spoke about in her interview is, that cultures are always dynamic. I asked Pimm about the pattern she chose, and she said she chose a pattern that was right for her and not her family pattern. This reminds me that we, as Indigenous people, have the right to self-determination and to decide how this process is going to be for us on an individual basis. Pimm even stated that her reasons might be different than someone else's and that many times we are not following historical traditions, but that we can create our own traditions to conform to contemporary times. One of my assumptions was that this marker of cultural identity would make most people feel more connected to their community. I was wrong in that assumption; most people are already very grounded in their community and in culture. Pimm made it very clear when she said, "It makes me feel more connected to my commitment to a certain way of being, it's about my personal commitment to something but not to my community".

Alicia Adams

Alicia Adams is Koyom:k'awi/ Tynku Nisenan/Chemehuevi Nüwüvi. Alicia was 50 when she received her tattoo and she had wanted to get her tattoo since her early twenties. Alicia is an acorn maker, a riggings (regalia) maker, traditional dancer, a gatherer and much much more. Alicia attended ceremony for three days prior to receiving her tattoo



Figure 16. Alicia at Nisenan Heritage Day teaching kids to process acorns (Lucero 2019).

and on the day she received her tattoo songs were sung. Her cultural tattoo practitioner was Samoan, and he shared Samoan tattoo ceremony with her as well. Not all of Alicia's family could be in attendance but everyone was telephoned right before, and as she states, "so that they were all present with me, just not there." One of the important statements that Alicia made revolves around identity, not in the present but when we go to the other side. She says, "how are they going to recognize us if we can't speak to them", the marks on our face are that language that transcends oral language. The marks on her face make Alicia feel good about who she is and helps her keep perspective on the need to be respectful of who she is and where she came from. When I asked Alicia about the need to educate others on the meaning of the tattoo, I was surprised at her response. She explains her initial, "NO!" answer, explaining that she can catch people's energy and then she decides how much she is going to explain. For the most part she tells non-Natives it is a traditional tattoo and doesn't elaborate because it's not their business and she is worried about cultural appropriation. Alicia has such a connection to where she lives and the culture of her tribe. She encourages tribal people to start living a traditional life and learn traditional way, for the health of the earth and the health of Native communities.

L Frank Manriquez

L Frank is Tongva and Acjachemen. She received her chin tattoos the first time when she was about fifty. She is a traditional canoe builder, activist, and has dedicated her life to serving California Indian communities. She is involved in Indigenous language revitalization in California

and a founding member of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS), a



Figure 17. L Frank Manriquez working on her ti'at (traditional canoe) in her backyard (Sullivan 2016).

group that helps revive California Indian languages. She explains the responsibilities of the wearer of traditional marks. During her interview, when she talks to people considering receiving the tattoo, she tells them,

“Something is going to change, I don’t know what it will be for you, but this is what it was for me. So, when you get your tattoo all of a sudden there it is, you are responsible, you have announced you are a member of this society and that means you are responsible for that society”. One of the important things that L Frank talks about is how exciting the revitalization is and that the tattoo has made her who she is. She states, “I’m more afraid of not being who I’m supposed to be, than not getting a job. I’d rather starve to death being who I am, than be rich and be somebody else”. She explains that what she has gained by having her tattoos is important. A sense of freedom is what L Frank feels about having her tattoos the feeling that you are showing the world that you people are not extinct. You really understand this with her expressive statement: “It’s almost like the slavery has ended with the marks. It’s almost like I am not oppressed with the marks”. L Frank really wants other people to feel the way that she does and accept those feelings as the gift of having these marks. Like most of the other interviewees L Frank see this tattoo as an identifier in the afterlife as well as in this life but understands that it is not for everyone. We discussed the topic of cultural appropriations and I was surprised at her answer. She said, “There are more important forces than me that will deal

with it. ...I understand people have longing and need...I always tell them to long and need in the direction where their people come from. Everyone's got something. So, go get it!" L Frank believes that there are forces bigger than her that will handle those issue and that she didn't feel it was her responsibility to deal with them. I think that L Frank really downplays her role in the revitalization. Regardless of how she sees herself, one thing is for sure, she had consulted with many of the women that currently have their "111" or has physically been there when they received them. This shows me that her role in the revitalization is much bigger than she realizes.

Practitioners Workshop Reflections

In March 2019, a hand poke tattoo workshop was held in Southern California. This workshop was part of empowering Indigenous people to be active participants in the revival of traditional tattooing. For many of the individuals who have received their "111" chin tattoo, finding a cultural tattoo practitioner that understood why they wanted the tattoo was part of the challenge to acquiring their tribal identity marker. I had a conversation with Elle Festin, owner of Spiritual Journey tattoo shop in Stanton California, to see if he would be interested in teaching and hold the workshop at his shop. He thought it was a great idea and shop manager Nicolette Torres and I organized the event. The workshop was attended by six California Indian women and one Filipina woman, representing Northern and Southern California Indian communities. The idea behind having women practitioners, was that this practice was traditionally done in conjunction with the girls coming-of-age ceremony and we wanted to empower women to revive the traditional cultural art of tattooing. The practitioner's workshop

was less than traditional. The cultural practice and art of tattooing are in a paradigm shift as culture is dynamic. In building a workshop we had to consider and include the dynamic changes that have evolved over time when it comes to tattooing practices. We also needed to consider contemporary concerns as well. We learned about bloodborne pathogen procedures, how to make stencils, needle selection and station set-up before we could begin tattooing. Shop apprentice Joseph Ash allowed all of the participants to tattoo him to learn the proper technique of handpoke tattooing. This method was comparable to the method used in most areas of California but now we are using tattoo needles instead of bone and cactus spines. The workshop was very successful, and we have been asked to conduct another one for those California Indian community members that could not attend. In fact, three of the women that attended the workshop, have continued tattooing and one has plans to tattoo her mother with her "111" when the time comes. Tiffany Adams who attended the workshop and I have plans to tattoo in Aoteroa (New Zealand) in order to demonstrate the revival of tattoo practices in Native California.

Laws

One of the issues that has arisen during the interview process, is the idea of conforming to what the Western world sees as acceptable, beautiful and professionally aesthetic. One of the interviewees had lost both of her jobs due to her tattoo, several others had concerns about obtaining jobs outside their Native communities, and this is one of the main concerns of family members. There are two pieces of legislation that facilitate and acknowledge the rights of Native and Indigenous people. In the United States there is the, Native American Religious

Freedom Act and globally there is the, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The Native American Religious Freedom Act of 1978 protects the rights of Native Americans to exercise their traditional religions by ensuring access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites (AIRFA 1978). This act provides an avenue of defense, to those who have been terminated or denied employment, due to the application of ancestral tattoos which is a traditional rite. The organizations that have terminated or denied employment can be held liable in a court of law. There is one issue with the Native American Religious Freedom Act of 1978, and that is that the act only applies to tribes that are federally recognized. In California this law protects the individuals that belong to one of the 109 federally recognized tribes. It is important to recognize that there are also 78 tribes in California that are seeking federal recognition that fall outside the protection of this law, until they achieve federal status. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People was adopted in 2007 and based on their website⁸, "establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of indigenous peoples" (UNDRIP 2007). In 2007, the United States voted against the declaration, but in 2015 they voted for the declaration and it was adopted by the general assembly. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affords us as the Indigenous people of California the ability to revive and practice the "111" chin tattoo. These two pieces of legislation serve to advocate for Indigenous

⁸ www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html

peoples as they move forward in reviving ceremonial practices and other areas of culture that are needed to keep marginalized Indigenous communities alive.

Global Practice

Indigenous cultural tattooing, specifically chin and face tattooing, is a practice that historically occurred on a global scale. Colonization seems to be the common link in the reduction or loss of the tattooing practice. Indigenous communities around the world are reviving traditional tattooing practices as the practice of contemporary tattooing becomes a more acceptable practice in the world today. Lars Krutak identifies a multitude of global Indigenous communities that are continuing or reviving cultural tattooing practices on his website⁹. Some of the Indigenous communities that Krutak identifies are the Kalinga of the Philippines, the Paiwan of Taiwan, the Iban of Borneo, the Unangan, Alutiiq, and Inupiaq of Alaska, and the Canadian Inuit to name a few. On a trip to Aoteroa (New Zealand) for the 2019 Tattoo Extravaganza, I had the opportunity to visit and share culture with some of the practitioners and recipients involved in revitalizing cultural tattooing in their communities. I met and spoke with Ta Moko practitioner Turumakina Duley as he finished tattooing a full face moko (tattoo) on a young man. There were practitioners from areas all over the Pacific Rim including Coast Salish cultural practitioner Dion Kaszas, Tlingit cultural practitioner Nahaan, Tahitian cultural practitioner Purotu Moorea, Paiwan cultural practitioner Cudjuy Patjidres, Hawaiian cultural practitioner Keone Nunes, Filipino cultural practitioner Elle Festin, Nathaniel Abarquez, and Joseph Ash, Stormy Kara and Raniera Ellison representing the Cook Islands,

⁹ www.larskrutak.com

Samoan cultural practitioner Tyla Vaeau and several Maori cultural practitioners including Julie Paama-Pengelly, James Webster, Anikaaro Harawira-Havili, Pip Hartley and Que Bidois. The week prior to the Tattoo Extravaganza was filled with what the Maori call wānanga Indigenous or the sharing of Indigenous culture. It was here that I truly understood the magnitude of the revival globally and felt a kinship with other Indigenous communities that share tattooing traditions. Indigenous tattooing, whether it be on the face or other areas of the body is making a rapid comeback and is part of the process of Indigenous communities decolonizing and reclaiming ancestral traditions in a dynamic world.

Themes

The primary research question for this project was: can an outward facing identity marker such as the traditional “111” tattoo be a foundation for educating the public and Native communities about political, social and historical issues facing the Indigenous communities in California? To my surprise most of the answers were pretty split down the middle. The participants that stated no, were very matter of fact in their answers. Some even explained that it depended on how they were feeling that day or how the person approached them, as to how much detail they would give. Most of the no answers were specifically directed to the education of the non-Native community, who feel entitled to have an answer.

As part of my methodology, I did not want to interpret any of the interviews, since historically this has been a downfall of the ethnography of California Indians. However, some clear themes emerged during the editing portion of the project that were so consistent across interviews I have gathered them in order to highlight these connections. The first is that this is definitively a marker of identity that acknowledges the individual as a California Indian, which

for many years has been hidden. These individuals are now making a proud stance, claiming their California Indian identity for the public to see. Second is that this identity marker was not only for identification in the present day but a marker of identity in the afterlife or with ancestors. Third was that EVERYONE that was interviewed is immersed in cultural and community on a daily basis. This lifestyle is one of walking in two worlds whether it be tribal politics, art, herbal medicine, native plants, ceremony or language. Their decision to receive the tattoo came from years of involvement in tribal practices. Fourth was the attention to dreamtime by most of the participants, prior to receiving their tattoo. In most cases, and for most individuals, the idea of the chin tattoo, the timing to receive it, or the pattern itself came to them during a dream. Lastly, I was surprised by the answers to this question: does having your tattoo make you feel more connected to your tribal community? The overt answer was “no”, it just solidifies my commitment to my community and to my culture. Although every individual’s story is unique, these themes seemed to resonate with all the participants. I do not wish to interpret any of the information gleaned from these interviews, only to share some of the common details that I observed as the interviewer.

My work on this project and within the fields of American Indian Studies and Cultural Sustainability, have showed me that there is more than one way to assess this project in terms of cultural sustainability. First is how does this capstone project serve the community of individuals that have received their “111” chin tattoo in a culturally sustainable manner? Second is based on the evidence gathered during the project, is the chin tattoo something that is culturally sustainable for future generations? The project itself is a very powerful, community engagement project that is useful in highlighting the revitalization of the chin tattoo over a 25-

year period. Looking deeper into the project, I find that it also has given agency back to the individuals who have shared their deeply personal stories. As California Indians, with a genocidal history, this project affords the participants the ability to overcome the intergenerational trauma and share their stories in a form that is more felicitous than past methods. Digital storytelling fits into the practices of cultural sustainability because it is meant to help people share personal stories and be an accessible form of media that everyone in the community can benefit from. By amplifying the voices of community members in an academic manner, we are allowing these individuals to assert their right to self-determination and allowing them to decide what the future of this artistic ceremonial practice will look like, without any outsider interpretation.

The revitalization of the cultural practice of “111” chin tattooing has gained momentum over the last 25 years. The revival of this particular practice also involves the revitalization of numerous aspects of Indigenous culture in California, because they are intrinsically related. As Native communities in California build economic stability, revive all areas of culture and work on environmental issues, we are setting the stage for future generations to bring back culture at a level we never conceived. By reviving our tattooing practice, one which involves ceremony, language, land acknowledgement, environment and the understanding of the economic effects related to employment, we are teaching our children to be culturally aware and culturally competent individuals. Although this practice is not the same for any one person, we must remember that California has an extremely diverse group of Indian tribes with varying ceremonies and varying historic documentation. That being said, we are seeing the impacts of the revitalization and are seeing the future direction of this important cultural practice. In terms

of cultural sustainability, we see the impact that this practice is making on our children. The normalization of this process and the fact that the children are already seeking to receive the chin tattoos, is an affirmation of the cultural sustainability of this practice. The bearers of the “111” chin tattoo have become teachers of this culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris 2012), whether they intended this or not. As I worked on this project, I received another affirmation about the sustainability of this practice, with eight individuals receiving their chin tattoos and another twenty-three scheduled to receive it. California Indians are taking back their rights to identity, language, ceremony, land, art and cultural artistic practices in order to seek social justice and bring back traditions that for so long have been intentionally absent in Western education.

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Appendices

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Appendix C- Photo Log

Figure 1.- Indians from the Bay area of San Francisco by Louis Choris, 1822.

Figure 2.- "Tolowa Tattooing" (Tolowa woman) by Edward Curtis, ca. 1900, copyright 1923.

Figure 3.- Excerpt from J.P. Harrington's Notes on the Chumash from the Harrington Project by Dr. Lisa Woodward, 2019.

Figure 4.- Excerpt from J.P. Harrington's Notes on the Chumash from the Harrington Project by Dr. Lisa Woodward, 2019.

Figure 5.- Photo taken after the Barbareño Chumash women's chin tattooing ceremony where seven Chumash women received their moč. Photo taken by Elle Festin, 2019.

Figure 6.- Map of California tribal areas and languages at the time of European contact by Concerto, 2013, sourced via Wikipedia.

Figure 7.- Tiffany and Riazel after receiving her chin tattoo at Spiritual Journey Tattoo. Photo taken by Heidi Lucero 2018.

Figure 8.- Kaijah Tiffany's daughter singing the Flower Song for Tiffany during her tattooing. Photo taken by Heidi Lucero, 2018.

Figure 9.- Tiffany Adams BFA portrait project of California Indian Women's Chin Tattoos. Photo taken by Tiffany Adams, 2018.

Figure 10.- Lena Bommelyn with her husband and spiritual family at ceremony. Photo provided by Cheryl Tuttle, 2019.

Figure 11.- Painting by Lyn Risling "Becoming Who We Are Again" In honor of the grandmothers who came before me and the daughters and granddaughters who will come after. Photo from lynrisling.com, painted in 2008.

Figure 12.- Ruby Tuttle, her mother Cheryl Tuttle and daughter Hune Bommelyn at ceremony. Photo provided by Cheryl Tuttle, 2019.

Figure 13.- Jack Potter in traditional flicker feather dance regalia. Photo provided by Jack Potter, 2017.

Figure 14.- Sage LaPena on a Native plant walk for the filming of "Tending the Wild". Photo provided by KCET, 2016.

Figure 15.- Pimm Tripp Allen bringing baskets home. Photo provided by Pimm Tripp Allen, 2017.

Figure 16.- Alicia at Nisenan Heritage Day teaching kids to process acorns. Photo taken by Heidi Lucero, 2019.

Figure 17.- L Frank Manriquez working on her ti'at (traditional canoe) in her backyard. Photo taken by Rachele Sullivan, 2016.