

RECLAIMING PLACE: MAPPING ERASURE AND CULTURAL SITES OF THE  
MUWEKMA OHLONE TRIBE USING ARCGIS STORYMAP

A Project Report

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Alexandra Alderete Garcia

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Alexandra Alderete Garcia

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

Reclaiming Place: Mapping Erasure and Cultural Sites of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe Using

ArcGIS StoryMap


By

Alexandra Alderete Garcia


APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY


May 2023

DocuSigned by:  
  
9CDDDC475D2942E...  
Jan English-Lueck, Ph.D.

Department of Anthropology

DocuSigned by:  
  
337D5E307A8E416...  
Roberto J. González, Ph.D.

Department of Anthropology

DocuSigned by:  
  
1CDE3721D785495...  
Charlotte Sunseri, Ph.D.

Department of Anthropology

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCING THE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

Cultural and educational institutions such as New Museum Los Gatos (NUMU), have made efforts to transform their practices to work alongside the local communities they serve. In recent years, NUMU has attempted to introduce a larger audience to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's story of reclaiming their history and federal recognition status. The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe has worked to reclaim federally recognized status and revitalize their traditions among the members, especially between the elders and the younger generation. For my project, I partnered with NUMU, a public, non-profit art and history museum, Mosaic America, another non-profit organization working towards cultivating belonging in Silicon Valley, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, and San José State University Department of Anthropology. I collaborated with my partners to create a museum exhibition titled *Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*. And a virtual interactive cultural map in partnership with the Mosaic Cultural Atlas using ArcGIS StoryMap highlighting the cultural sites around the Bay Area with significance to the Tribe titled *Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*.

#### **Project Report Roadmap**

This first chapter provides context about the project's significance and the deliverable presented to my partners. Chapter one presents the introduction to the project and the steps leading to the proposed idea to develop a StoryMap using ArcGIS in collaboration with the Mosaic Cultural Atlas Project. This chapter also discusses the project background and the

formation of partner relationships with the New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, and San José State University. This chapter gave insight into building a collaborative project that includes various stakeholders and the applied significance this project has on decolonizing museum spaces that bring inclusivity to these cultural and educational institutions. Chapter two is a standalone article for *Practicing Anthropology* that gives more detailed information about the steps I took to create the collaborative StoryMap, the oral histories, and the process of putting all the content I collected for the exhibitions. Chapter three wraps up my project report and explains the outcomes, the impacts, limitations, the project take-aways, the recommendations for future collaborative exhibits and the anthropological significance of this project.

### **Project Background and Goals**

NUMU proposed these Muwekma Ohlone exhibitions to revitalize the previous relationship with the Tribe. In 2016, NUMU and the Muwekma co-created an exhibition titled *Cement Prairie: The History and Legacy of the 1952 American Indian Urban Relocation Program*. Since the Cement Prairie exhibit, there has not been another collaboration between NUMU and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. With new management at NUMU, there was a proposed plan to revitalize and maintain a collaborative relationship with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. This partnership emerged in preliminary meetings with Executive Director Ami Davis of New Museum Los Gatos. During the meeting, Davis and I tried to understand how the museum and I could benefit from this collaborative relationship.

At the time, I was a research assistant for The Mosaic Atlas Project, a collaboration between San José State University and Mosaic America, a nonprofit that strives to connect



communities and cultivate a sense of belonging in Silicon Valley. For the Mosaic Atlas Project, we created a StoryMap for Japantown San José at the time. The Mosaic Atlas Project is an inclusive tool by Mosaic America in partnership with San José State University. The atlas is a database that collectively includes over 120 culturally distinct groups, an interactive map, and a collection of StoryMaps about different communities in the Bay Area. In short, a StoryMap is a collective of stories, visual media, and mapping of different communities or cultural groups in and around the Bay Area. As the meeting progressed, some objectives and goals came up for this exhibition. We had similar objectives when closely collaborating with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

A meeting was set for me to visit the museum to meet Davis and the rest of the staff in person and get a sense of the space for these exhibits. The day came when I drove to Los Gatos to visit NUMU in person. The museum was difficult to find as it was tucked away between a police station and a local library. Meeting the staff was nerve-wracking because it was my first professional meeting where I had to present myself as a potential partner. We sat outside, and I started discussing my project objectives. I know I wanted to be able to interview and create a relationship with tribal members and include them in the conversation of my project. We wanted to have an exhibition that created a strong collaborative relationship. The original idea was for me to interview youth members and tribal members about the process of reclamation and revitalization of their cultural heritage, whether that be their Chochenyo language, regalia making, or reclaiming their place in the Bay Area. My interviews informed the story panels that museum staff were placing alongside photographer Kiki Arnal's photographs of different moments in the lives of tribal members. As I became

more involved in developing of the exhibitions at NUMU, my objectives began to change, and I had a clearer sense of how I could contribute to the project.

My partners at Mosaic America were open to adding a StoryMap of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, especially having the map displayed at NUMU for a broader audience. NUMU was initially hesitant because of the change of trajectory of the original plan for the exhibition. Arnal was photographing contemporary Muwekma in their daily lives and photographing the revitalization of their ritual dances and regalia making. In May, I had a phone call with Vice Chairwoman Monica V. Arellano to express my interest in creating a map highlighting the sites initially proposed. I explained that the map would be able to include powerful quotes from the tribal member interviews, an interactive map, and, most importantly, it was a way to be able to educate the public on the reclamation and revitalization efforts of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. The concept of the map was to demonstrate that the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe is still present in the Bay Area, and they never left their ancestral homeland.

I developed this project with a few objectives: to create an exhibition that educates the public about the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council's efforts to reclaim federal recognition through educating our community about their public initiatives in the Bay Area. Mapping the politics of erasure happening to their landmarks and the resilience showed in public art initiatives, including the mural along the Thámien Rúmmeytak (Guadalupe River Walk) titled, *We are Muwekma, and We Are Still Here* by Artist Alfonso Salazar; and describing the process of inclusivity of museum spaces. The objective of creating an interactive atlas is to educate the public about the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council's efforts towards revitalization

and reclamation and amplify public initiatives in the Bay Area. This project draws on a collaborative anthropological approach for decolonizing and bringing inclusivity to museum spaces. One of the exhibition's goals is to advocate for those historically marginalized and left out of these educational spaces.

### **Project Deliverable**

The board and staff at NUMU set out to advocate for those communities that museums traditionally marginalize and leave out of art and educational spaces. Taking an anthropological approach, the museum exhibition creates a platform for these marginalized voices and prioritizes educating the broader audience on the Tribe's efforts for revitalization. The production of an exhibition amplified the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council's efforts to gain federal recognition by educating our community about their public initiatives in the Bay Area. With the creation of an interactive StoryMap that highlights the culturally significant sites of the Tribe, we can educate the broader public on the rich history of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. This project stands to renew the relationship between the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and NUMU, whose mission is to offer equal and inclusive representation in cultural institutions.

With the preliminary meetings with the staff at NUMU, Muwekma Vice-Chairwoman Monica V. Arellano and Ethnohistorian Alan Leventhal, Mosaic America, and my advisors at San José State University, we concluded that the lobby exhibition, *Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*, would include a detailed digital StoryMap. In collaboration with the Mosaic Cultural Atlas, the StoryMap would highlight the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and showcase the culturally significant sites in and around the Bay

Area. Our main objective was to have the exhibit be in the voice and narrative of the members of the Tribe. As a collective, we knew we wanted to convey to the public the narrative story of both history and contemporary Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

I worked collaboratively with Arellano and Leventhal on the contents of the StoryMap. We collaborated on various drafts of the map and the written content we wanted to include in the exhibition. We knew we wanted to present the rich history of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and their struggles to reclaim their federal recognition. We worked together on selecting quotes from different tribal members that would inform the Storymap. We knew the importance of having the broader audience hear the words of the tribal members speaking on the set of topics such as identity, reclamation, and revitalization of their cultural heritage. We selected powerful quotations to highlight themes the tribe itself selected. These comments addressed working towards reclaiming their federally recognized status and the difficulties of living with the politics of erasure. Youth spoke about their struggle with a sense of identity. Quotations highlighted that the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe are still here and never left their ancestral homeland.

ArcGIS StoryMaps creates an immersive experience that combines stories, an interactive map highlighting the significant ancestral sites, and provides narrative context to the rich history of the Muwekma Ohlone, told by the members of the Tribe. This StoryMap occupied a museum exhibit space, and it is also posted online on the digital Mosaic Atlas. The map highlights these culturally significant sites to demonstrate the steady reclaiming of place in a global city and cultural heritage for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. The exhibition also is an

example of collaborative anthropology and enacts the responsibility these institutions feel to provide a space for traditionally marginalized communities.

The inclusivity of museum spaces and amplifying the voices of the Tribe is a key component to the interpretation of the StoryMap and labels for Arnal's images. The stakeholders for this project understood the responsibility of having these exhibitions amplify the voices of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and tell their own stories about the past and their future as a sovereign nation. The exhibitions are a way of beginning the process of decolonizing cultural and educational institutions. Mapping the erasure and resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe was a key point for the StoryMap. It was important to educate the broader public on the erasure happening to the sacred ancestral site of the Tribe due to the growing economic development in Silicon Valley. Along with mapping the erasure, it was important to illustrate the resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. It was essential to highlight the contemporary Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and the efforts to revitalize their cultural heritage. The literature on inclusivity of museums informed the interpretation of the StoryMap and the labels for the exhibitions. It was necessary to include the voice and input of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe in the development of the exhibitions. The following literature helped frame my questions, inform the interpretation and analysis of the exhibitions, and help me construct the StoryMap and labels for the photographic exhibition.

### **Decolonization of Museums**

Museums have played a significant role in the colonization and appropriation of artifacts and collections from Native American Tribes. Amy Lonetree (2012) focuses on the museum exhibitions specifically on Native American history that has long been curator controlled.

Lonetree (2012) expresses the current shift in museum anthropology that is giving indigenous people a greater role in determining exhibition content. Lonetree (2012) explores how museums can understand the centuries of trauma as they tell the stories of these indigenous people. Museums can address the unresolved trauma and show the truth of colonization in Native communities (Lonetree 2012). It is important to start open dialogue between educational institutions and Native American tribes to begin resolving the long-standing issues regarding material objects and artifacts in museums.

Parezo (2015) explains that the discipline of anthropology can aid societies understanding and find solutions to key fundamental questions. Museums contract anthropologists to develop relevant activities and research to increase knowledge that matters to the communities they serve. Parezo (2015) suggests that museums also give anthropologists an opportunity to make claims on how the discipline matters and argue its own intellectual framework. Museum anthropology works towards doing public good and understanding community needs. Parezo (2015) gives an example of museums helping the Native American community finding artifacts so they can obtain federal recognition status. Museum anthropology is a site for social engagement and promoting intellectual inquiries. This idea helped construct the objectives used for the exhibitions such as highlighting the story of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and educating the public on their efforts to revitalize their cultural heritage and reinstate their federal recognition status.

Chip Colwell (2017) discusses the necessity for museums and tribal representatives to find a way to understand each other because the fate of the material objects in these educational institutions depends on those conversations. Colwell (2017) describes his

experience as a curator at the Denver Museum and the decisions made with local indigenous groups to begin repatriating the material culture under NAGPRA. Colwell also poses the question of who owns the past, museums that hold the material culture and artifacts or the communities whose ancestors made these objects (Colwell 2017). Colwell understood the importance of creating a space for conversations between indigenous groups and educational institutions to move towards decolonizing museum practices.

### **Mapping Erasure and Resilience**

Anthropologists and museums have not acknowledged cultural existence, language, tradition, identity, and even place names of the Ohlone Tribes of the San Francisco Bay Area (Field et al. 2013). Colonial practices have subsequently tried to erase and replace the presence of the social and cultural landscapes of the Ohlone Tribes. These colonial systems transformed the landscapes and maps of the Bay Area. The colonization played on the success of the mission system that resettled and dispersed the native populations into corporate communities (Field et al. 2013). Spanish officials and missionaries obscured native identity not just by giving them Spanish names but also by using terms to classify people and establish their place within the colonial order (Field et al. 2013).

The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe were scattered throughout the Bay Area with no sites other than homes to meet and revitalize their traditions, language, and dances exported from the Mission San José /Niles/Sunol/Pleasanton rancherias. The surviving Ohlone from the three Bay Area missions found refuge on several *Californio* ranchos after the missions were secularized in 1836 (Field et al. 2013). One of these major Muwekma Ohlone tribal settlements was called the Alisal Rancheria (aka Indian Town). Spanish colonial rule played

on the success of the mission system that resettled and dispersed the native populations into corporate communities.

Colonial practices have subsequently tried to erase and replace the presence of the social and cultural landscapes of the Ohlone Tribes (Field et al. 2013). Colonial rules transformed the changing maps of the Ohlone territories in the Bay Area. These colonial systems transformed the landscapes and maps of the Bay Area. The acceleration in urbanization led to sudden and significant demographic changes. Ongoing colonialism is one of the driving forces behind Ohlone's unrecognized status. In the past two centuries, political, economic, and academic forces have attempted to erase the existence of the Ohlone people of the San Francisco Bay Area (Field et al. 2013).

The present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe comprises all known surviving American Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region who traced their ancestry through the Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San José (Muwekma Ohlone Tribe n.d.). Enrolled families of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe are engaged in public education and art projects, including renaming their ancestral heritage sites to their Chochoeny language and being involved with public art artists, highlighting, commemorating, and honoring the Tribe's history and heritage. The term "Politics of Erasure" is the act of destroying and erasing cultural groups from their ancestral homeland. After suffering from the colonial process of "Politics of Erasure," where the dominant society sought to erase any traces of aboriginal place names, villages, and even the people, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's revitalization of their cultural, language, and way of life, are reinforced through the Tribe's reclamation of their ancestral heritage sites, sacred and educational places, and public art in San José (Muwekma



Ohlone Tribe n.d.). The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe is working tirelessly to reverse the politics of erasure. Some of the actions are developing the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe Language Committee that was established and began the quest to restore their Tribe's Native Muwekma Ohlone Chochenyo language. Since 2003 the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe Language Committee works with several linguists and prepared teaching materials and working dictionaries for the enrolled tribal members (Muwekma Ohlone Tribe n.d.).

The Ohlone people of California have not disappeared, and their efforts highlight the constant persistence to reinstate for federal recognition and the reclamation of their place in the Bay Area. Les Field and colleagues (2013) focus on nominative cartography, which is the power to erase, implant, and displace in the service of colonization. The author traces the map of the Ohlone home territories in Central California as it transforms because of the Spanish colonization (Field et al. 2013). Colonial practices have subsequently erased and replaced the presence of the social and cultural landscapes of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe (Field et al. 2013). The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's efforts to gain back federal recognition and reclamation of place have confronted the erasure from the map of the Bay Area (Field et al. 2013). The tribal efforts have reimplemented their presence into the landscape of the Bay Area as illustrated in the sites chosen for the StoryMap.

### **Inclusivity in Museums**

There is an ongoing issue with excluding Native American communities in contemporary cultural institutions and from their cultural heritage (Pohawpatchoko et al. 2017). In recent years, museums are striving for more inclusive programs to bridge these cultural institutions and Native Americans. Pohawpatchoko (et al. 2017) looks at the innovative project done by

the Denver Museum that brought on Native American high school students to create a proposal for an interactive digital space. The project could expand the inclusion of Native Americans through a digital voice (Pohawpatchoko et al. 2017). The Denver Museum has opened its door to the Native American community to input their advice and participation in their new exhibitions that finally stray from the stereotypical representation.

For many years, US museums and universities have held collections and material culture of Native American tribes (Hoerig 2010). Similar conversations are taking place in various museums and universities globally. For example, there is a current debate at the British Museum in London, UK, holding various artifacts and material culture from countries such as Nigeria and Greece for decades with no recent talks about repatriating those objects. These issues have sparked conversations about the improper methods institutions use to obtain and show the material culture and collections on display. Cultural and historical knowledge is necessary to create a meaningful and accurate exhibit in the communities of origin of those material objects (Hoerig 2010).

Non-native museums have utilized indigenous consultants to deepen the interpretive value of their exhibitions, but with limited reciprocity to the communities they receive the information from (Hoerig 2010). Tribal communities have strived to adapt to the concept of museums and places to highlight their history and heritage. However, many tribal communities cannot maintain their material objects held by non-tribal cultural and educational institutions (Hoerig 2010). In recent years, museums such as NUMU and Los Alto History Museum have been working alongside native communication, such as the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, to create meaningful exhibitions highlighting their story and

connection to the land and their efforts to reclaim and revitalize their cultural heritage. These exhibitions can display contemporary Native communities and their efforts to reestablish themselves in their ancestral homelands.

### **Methodology**

Since it was a collaborative project with various stakeholders, including New Museum Los Gatos (NUMU), Mosaic America, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, and San José State University Department of Anthropology. I drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which stated my roles and responsibilities for this project. It outlined what my collaborators expected of me for my final deliverable. It was essential to establish these boundaries before continuing forward with the development of my project. My final deliverable was the content of the interviews that would inform the story panels and the StoryMap. Since this StoryMap was also for Mosaic America, discussing the coordination with every partner involved was essential. For example, with the different partners on this project, we discussed sharing quotation excerpts with the Mosaic Atlas Story Map. As a collective, we agreed that I could use the quotations collected from my original interviews on the Mosaic Atlas. Once we all agreed on the project's objectives and deliverables, I began formulating the consent form and interview questions. The consent form was for everyone interviewed for this project, which conducted as oral histories, revealing all participant's identities. I explained that the information collected would be used on the StoryMaps.

I worked collaboratively with Muwekma Vice-Chairwoman Monica V. Arellano and Ethnohistorian Alan Leventhal on the contents of the StoryMap and selected the some of the

following sites: Eagle, Coyote, Hummingbird Park Ave Bridge, Alameda Creek Watershed Center by the Sunol Water Temple, Sunol, California Ruupaywa: Songs of the Watershed, *People's Park Berkeley (Muwekma Ancestors) Mural* by Jean LaMarr, and Alisal Rancheria. We collaboratively chose the following sites because of the significance and rich history of these cultural sites to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. Each tribal member had significant ties to the sites and was able to inform the StoryMap with their personal stories and experiences. For example, we chose the *People's Park Berkeley (Muwekma Ancestors) Mural* by Jean LaMarr because he painted it in Berkeley, the historic heartland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. The mural has different Muwekma Ohlone ancestors and elders representing various enrolled lineages in the Tribe. The mural also represents the ancestral storytellers bridging over the generations. We collectively chose Alameda Creek Watershed Center by the Sunol Water Temple, Sunol, California Ruupaywa: Songs of the Watershed because Alameda Creek and the Arroyo De La Laguna is part of the ancestral home of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

To collect data informing the StoryMap, I interviewed and spoke with seven Tribal members, from the chairwoman to different council members and youth members. The interviews were semi-structured conversational-based interviews. To recruit tribal members to interview, I spoke with Arellano, who helped me coordinate and schedule each person for three months. I conducted all my interviews through Zoom, which allowed me to schedule interviews with Tribal members who live all over the Bay Area. The interviews lasted about an hour or an hour and a half, and each person spoke about their experiences being in the tribe, their sense of identity, feelings towards working toward federal recognition, the

revitalization of the Chochenyo language, dances, and regalia, and their significant ties to the places shown on the map. With the interviews and speaking to members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe about their experiences and hearing their stories, I compiled this information into an interactive cultural map highlighting the important cultural sites in and around the Bay Area using ArcGIS. The StoryMap allows the public to engage with the information and hear the stories the members tell in their own words. The StoryMap map is a way to educate the broader public about the aboriginal and ancestral homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and spread awareness about their efforts to reclaim their federal recognition status.

Arellano, Leventhal, and I collaborated on various drafts of the StoryMap and contents. We needed to include the history and the contemporary Muwekma Ohlone Tribe as they work to reclaim and revitalize their cultural heritage. We selected quotes that highlight the powerful statement that the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe is still very much present and still reclaiming its cultural heritage and place in the Bay Area. We selected audio clips that would inform each site included on the StoryMap. For example, there are quotes from Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh about her feelings towards working to reclaim their federal recognition status and revitalizing their cultural heritage for themselves and future generations. Audio clips throughout the StoryMap share a powerful message about one of the main points of sharing their story to educate the public about Muwekma's presence in the Bay Area. The StoryMap is an ongoing project that the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe can continue to add new localities to and tell their rich stories to the broader public.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of the project's introduction and the exhibition's significance in educating the public on the history and future of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. It is important to emphasize the collaboration and co-creation of these exhibitions was various stakeholders including the New Museum Los Gatos (NUMU), Mosaic America, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, and San José State University Department of Anthropology. One of this project's objectives is to continue educating the public on the past and contemporary Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and maintain an ongoing relationship between the stakeholders to continue decolonizing and promoting inclusivity among educational and cultural institutions. Chapter two provides a detailed description of the process of developing the collaborative exhibition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RECLAIMING PLACE IN THE BAY AREA

#### **Abstract**

I partnered with New Museum of Los Gatos, Mosaic America, San José State University, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe to construct a StoryMap using ArcGIS to highlight the significant cultural and ancestral sites around the Bay Area that represent the Tribe. I conducted oral history interviews with members and youth members, to convey their significance to mapped sites more effectively. My project uses ArcGIS StoryMaps to create an immersive experience that combines stories, an interactive map, and narrative context to the rich history of the Muwekma Ohlone, told by the members of the Tribe. This StoryMap lived in a physical museum exhibit space and resides on a StoryMap webpage associated with the digital Mosaic Atlas Cultural Project. This article discusses the importance of mapping these culturally significant sites to demonstrate the steady reclamation process of place and cultural heritage for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. I also discuss the process of the decolonization of museums and the responsibility these institutions have to provide a space for traditionally marginalized communities.

#### Keywords

Decolonization, StoryMap ArcGIS, Collaborative Anthropology

In recent years, museums such as New Museum Los Gatos are beginning to strive for spaces that are more inclusive. They actively seek to work with communities to include the voices of underrepresented communities. They are actively seeking to include indigenous people in their program planning and production. Cultural institutions such as New Museum Los Gatos have played a significant role in including the voices of the local communities and their stories. The board and the staff of New Museum Los Gatos have made efforts to transform their practices to work alongside the community and introduce a larger audience to the Muwekma Ohlone story of reclaiming their history and federal recognition. Cultural institutions can utilize their resources to give marginalized communities a safe space to educate the public on their past and future and share knowledge about contemporary issues such as the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's efforts to reaffirm federal recognition status. In recent decades, with more projects using collaborative anthropological approaches, institutions such as museums and universities are developing a pattern of collaborative projects that include the input of various stakeholders in the communities they serve.

### **Primary Stakeholders**

The present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe comprises all known surviving American Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region who traced their ancestry through the Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San José (Muwekma Ohlone Tribe n.d.). About 600 enrolled families of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe engage in public education and art projects, including renaming their ancestral heritage sites to their Chochenyo language. Tribal members engage with artists to produce public art, highlighting, commemorating, and honoring the Tribe's history and heritage after suffering from the colonial process of politics



of erasure where the dominant society sought to erase any traces of aboriginal place names, villages, and even the people (Muwekma Ohlone Tribe n.d). The Tribe's reclamation of their ancestral heritage sites, sacred and educational places, and public art reinforces the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's revitalization of their culture, language, and way of life. Since May 2022, I have focused on the erasure of public art initiatives representing the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and the resilience shown to the ones that still stand.

As part of my collaborative graduate project, I collaborated with the New Museum Los Gatos (NUMU), a public, nonprofit museum in Los Gatos, California, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area for the two exhibitions currently housed at NUMU. The museum proposed these exhibitions to revitalize the previous relationship with the Muwekma Ohlone. In 2016, NUMU and the Muwekma co-created an exhibition titled *Cement Prairie: The History and Legacy of the 1952 American Indian Urban Relocation Program*. Since the Cement Prairie exhibit, there was not another collaboration between NUMU and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe until these exhibitions. Under new staff at NUMU, there was a proposed plan to reestablish and maintain a collaborative relationship with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

The photographic exhibition, which is collectively called *Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*, is set to highlight the voices of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. The exhibition creates a platform for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and prioritizes educating the broader audience on the Tribe's efforts to revitalize their traditions. The exhibition promotes the local indigenous art, culture, and history of the Tribe. The lobby exhibition *Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe* includes photographs of

cultural sites and the StoryMap I developed with strong collaboration with the Tribe. The StoryMap is part of an ongoing collaborative project called The Mosaic Atlas Project with the nonprofit Mosaic America, which strives to connect communities and cultivate a sense of belonging in Silicon Valley. ArcGIS StoryMap is an immersive experience that uses an interactive map and narrative context to tell the rich history of a community, neighborhood, or a cultural group. The lobby exhibit highlights the ancestral homeland of the Muwekma, including our collaborative StoryMap. The production of both exhibitions amplifies the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council's efforts to gain federal recognition through educating our community about their public initiatives in the Bay Area.

### **Preliminary Partner Meetings**

In January 2022, I first met with Executive Director Ami Davis of New Museum Los Gatos. We became acquainted during the meeting and sought to find a way for the museum to benefit from this collaborative relationship. I was still determining where my project was heading, but I knew I wanted to create something interactive that would educate the public. Before this meeting, I was a research assistant for The Mosaic Atlas Project, a collaboration between San José State University and Mosaic America, a nonprofit that strives to connect communities and cultivate a sense of belonging in Silicon Valley by mapping the cultural sites in the Bay Area. The original proposed joint project between NUMU, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, and San José State University was to present locations and educational information about places of significance to the Tribe. The exhibit's components also include photographs and interviews with Tribal members. As the NUMU staff presented this original project to me, I wanted to combine it with my work with the Mosaic Atlas Project.

I wanted the main priority to be a strong collaboration between the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and myself. I explained that I wanted my project, whether developing the story panels for the exhibition or the interviews itself, to reflect the narratives of the tribal members. Davis and I agreed that it was necessary to begin decolonizing the museum space and educational institutions. Especially in Los Gatos, an affluent community, we wanted this collaboration and exhibit to highlight the desire to decolonize museum spaces to be more inclusive of a once-forgotten community. This exhibit sets out to create an exhibition that educates the public about the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council's efforts to reclaim their cultural heritage.

### **Practicing Collaborative Anthropology**

After the initial meeting with NUMU, I attended meetings called Muwekma/NUMU Exhibit check-ins. These check-ins were chances to meet Vice-Chairwoman Monica V. Arellano and Tribal Ethnohistorian Alan Leventhal. In February, I first communicated with Leventhal to set up an informational meeting and introduce the potential of interviewing tribal members for the exhibition. Leventhal sent me additional publications and background information on the Tribe's history and heritage. He sent me various documents that identified the potential public art murals, architecture, and heritage sites that he initially proposed for the original concept of the exhibition. Leventhal introduced me to the Tribe's history and the contemporary issues surrounding the Tribe's efforts for the reclamation of federal recognition.

I knew I had to begin building a constant relationship with Tribal members, especially early in the planning and production of the exhibits. After initially meeting Arellano during

an exhibit check-in, she invited me to the Muwekma's dance practices for 1st Cali Native Nights, which was happening on March 11th, 2022. Cali Native Nights takes place during Mexica New Year in San José, CA. This event was significantly important because it was the first time the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe was publicly dancing in over 120 years. The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe gathered on their ethnohistoric tribal territory of the Thámien Ohlone to perform a ceremonial ghost dance for the first time in over 125 years, originating on the Alisal Rancheria, which was a community hub for the Ohlone people. This event illustrated that the Tribe's efforts for revitalization are linked to through the Tribe's reclamation of their ancestral heritage.

I first met the tribal members on February 6th, 2022, at ConXión, a community center in San José, CA. ConXión had become a central hub for the Muwekma. A sense of place where tribal members could go and reconnect with each other, and it was a safe space for them to practice their dance for Cali Native Night. Walking in was an overwhelming experience because it was my first-time meeting everyone, and I did not know what to do or whether I should be taking notes or just taking it all in. The first one I met was Arnal, who, at the time, was meeting everyone for the first time as well. Before he began taking the photographs that he would be exhibit eight months later at NUMU.

I then introduced myself to Arellano who became my primary liaison to the Tribe. She explained what would happen that day at practice, the significance of this dance, and in another room, they were all learning regalia making. Youth tribal members were learning the ritual dance outside, and tribal members were sitting down and learning how to make their

regalia from elder tribal members that were present. I made my way to the room where the tribal members were learning regalia making. People and supplies filled the room all over. A sewing machine is in the corner near where the outfits rested on the table. The tables held all kinds of beads, feathers, and shells. People would use them in making regalia. I made my way around the room, introducing myself and giving context as to why I was there. Everyone was very welcoming and appreciated that I was there to learn about their cultural heritage. While going to the dance practices, I learned about the tribal members' experiences. Tribal members expressed their feelings of honor to practice and perform a ritual dance sacred to their ancestors, as well as the pressure and peace they felt being able to learn the ritual dance. They expressed pleasure in having the opportunity to reclaim a sense of cultural identity that had been lost. Tribal members discussed the sense of honor they felt making regalia and taught by their elders. They expressed that performing this art form is a way to revitalize and reclaim their cultural heritage.

Leventhal guided Arnal and I around various places significant to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. Arnal planned to photograph each site we visited for the exhibition, and I came along to continue learning about the Tribe. We visited locations around San José; some sites included the recent mural along the Thámien Rúmmeytak (Guadalupe River Walk) on San Fernando Street, Eagle, Coyote, and Hummingbird Park Ave Bridge, and an archaeological site named CA-SCL-128 Hyatt Place Hotel Site. Each site was historically and culturally significant to the Tribe. Many sites were home to the Muwekma before the Spanish colonization, especially the river along the Guadalupe River Walk. The recent mural along the Thámien Rúmmeytak titled, *We are Muwekma, and We are Still Here* by Artist Alfonso

Salazar, is a collaborative piece of art prime example of the reclamation of place in the Bay Area. This mural symbolizes that the ancestors of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe are watching over the current members of the Tribe and offering them guidance. These depictions in contemporary works remind them of their ancestors' resilience and strength, sticking together during separation and attempts of erasure. The mural calls back the origin story of the eagle, coyote, and hummingbird. The painting is a visual storytelling device illustrating the oral history of the Muwekma and how their stories sustain and connect members. Salazar depicts Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh in the center, with an eagle headpiece and hummingbird warrior facemask portrait. I featured these sites on the StoryMap to be able to educate the broader public about these places in their local neighborhoods. Highlighting these sites shows the public that the Muwekma Ohlone are here and are fighting for their federal recognition to be reinstated by supporting the Tribe and teaching a broader audience about the Tribe's culture and history. I knew I could co-create a carefully curated StoryMap to convey these stories and the rich history of the Tribe.

Throughout building a collaborative relationship with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, I wanted to keep an open dialogue and revisit the original idea presented by Leventhal that highlighted ancestral and historical sites around the Bay Area that were significant to the Tribe. As my work with The Mosaic Atlas Project continued, I knew it was an excellent opportunity to combine that project with the NUMU exhibit. Co-creating an interactive StoryMap that narrates the rich history of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and highlighting the significant places seemed like an effective way to complete the objective of educating the public on the land they live on. To co-create the StoryMap for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe

meant combining various stakeholders into the conversation. For the StoryMap, I would need to communicate with Arellano and Leventhal throughout the process of collecting stories and images, selecting quotations, and writing accessible prose to give those sites cultural context. My partners include New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, San José State University, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

### **StoryMap of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe**

The first step in collaboratively designing the StoryMap was co-creating a list of the sites featured on the map. We chose specific sites for the project that held cultural or familial significance to tribal members. For example, we featured the mural along the Thámien Rúmmeytak (Guadalupe River Walk) on San Fernando Street because Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh is depicted on the mural. We chose the Almaden Creek Watershed center because youth tribal members worked on the archaeological sites, and we selected the Alisal Rancheria because Arellano's grandfather was born there. Each site was significantly important to the Tribe and its history. Next, we created a question guide for oral history interviews and began discussions on tribal members' experiences with specific sites and their sense of identity, tribal revitalization, reclamation of place, and the efforts to reclaim federal recognition. My partners and I co-created a set of topics that would inform the panels for the exhibition and the StoryMap. Leventhal and I worked on topics that would educate the broader audience on the past and contemporary Muwekma. These topics included the sense of identity, the politics of erasure, and the reclamation and revitalization of the Tribes' Chochenyo language, dance, and regalia. I spoke with Arellano, who suggested including questions highlighting the efforts for reclaiming federal recognition by the Tribe. Once we

collaboratively finalized a set of topics, one of the challenges for this project was scheduling everyone for an interview. I prioritized maintaining open communication and availability between the Tribal members and myself. I began my interviews in August because of scheduling conflicts. Leaving only a few months to co-create the content before the exhibit opened. Ultimately, that meant that my exhibition portion opened after the photographic exhibit.

I interviewed and spoke with seven tribal members, including the chairwoman, council members, and youth members. The semi-structured conversational-based interviews allowed me to get to know each tribal member personally during the interview. Each provided their experiences in the tribe, sense of identity, feelings towards working toward federal recognition, the revitalization of the Chochenyo language, dances, and regalia, and their significant ties to the places shown on the map. With my work and communicating to members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe about their experiences and hearing their stories, I compiled this information into an interactive cultural map highlighting the important cultural sites in and around the Bay Area using ArcGIS.

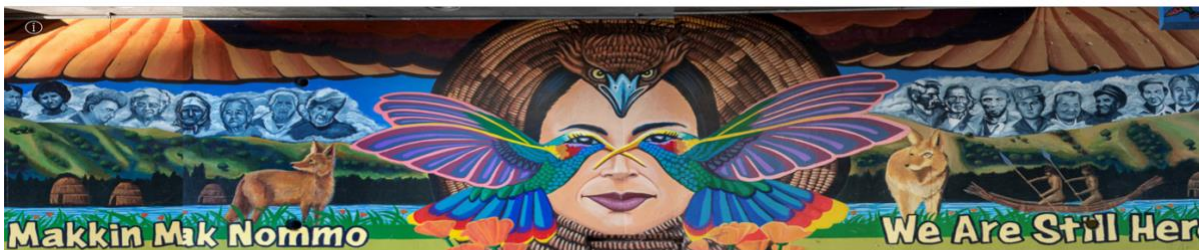
I worked collaboratively with Arellano and Leventhal on the contents of the StoryMap. We collaborated on various drafts of the map and the written content we wanted to include in the exhibition. We knew we wanted to include the rich history of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and their struggles to reclaim their federal recognition. We collaboratively worked on selecting quotes from different tribal members that would inform the Storymap. We collaborated on a set of topics to be conveyed. We knew the importance of having broader



audiences hear the words of the tribal members spoken aloud. We selected powerful quotes that spoke on reclaiming federal recognition, youth members speaking on their struggle with a sense of identity, the consequences of politics of erasure, and quotes highlighting that the Muwekma are still here and never left their ancestral homeland. For example, a quote from the StoryMap is from Arellano speaking on the Tribe's presence in the Bay Area,

*“The main point of sharing our culture, sharing our history and our language is that we want the public to know that we are still here, we've never left as I mentioned, our Aboriginal tribal area. We don't plan to leave. We're very proud of where we come from. The San Francisco Bay area, there's nothing like it, the weather, the people, and the landscape...”* - Vice Chairwomen  
Monica V. Arellano

We also understood the importance and responsibility of educating the public on those efforts to reclaim federal recognition while featuring the contemporary Muwekma. We included the efforts of the tribal members to revitalize their Chochenyo language, songs, dance, and regalia. We wanted to highlight that the Muwekma Ohlone is still reclaiming their cultural heritage and still fighting to reclaim their federal recognition. Below are images of the landing page of the StoryMap.



### StoryMap of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe

Figure 1: StoryMap of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe

Ultimately we decided to include the following sites: mural along Thámien Rúmmeytak (Guadalupe River) titled, *We are Muwekma, and We are Still Here*, Eagle, Coyote, Hummingbird Park Ave Bridge, CA-SCL-128 Hyatt Place Hotel Site, The Story of the Archaeology at Kaphan Húunikma The Three Wolves Site (CA-SCL-732), Alameda Creek Watershed Center by the Sunol Water Temple, Sunol, California Ruupaywa: Songs of the Watershed, *People's Park Berkeley (Muwekma Ancestors) Mural* by Jean LaMarr, and Alisal Rancheria. Using ArcGIS story maps allowed for more narrative context to the rich history of these cultural sites and the stories the members told of the Tribe. The StoryMap allows the user to engage with the information and hear the stories the members tell in their own words. This cultural map is a way to educate the broader community about the aboriginal and ancestral homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and spread awareness of the land we inhabit. The process of revitalization and reclaiming who they are is very empowering to the members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and a powerful statement that they are still here protecting their heritage and traditions for future generations. The StoryMap is long-lasting, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe can add new sites using the criteria we co-created. Below

are images of the map itself for context.

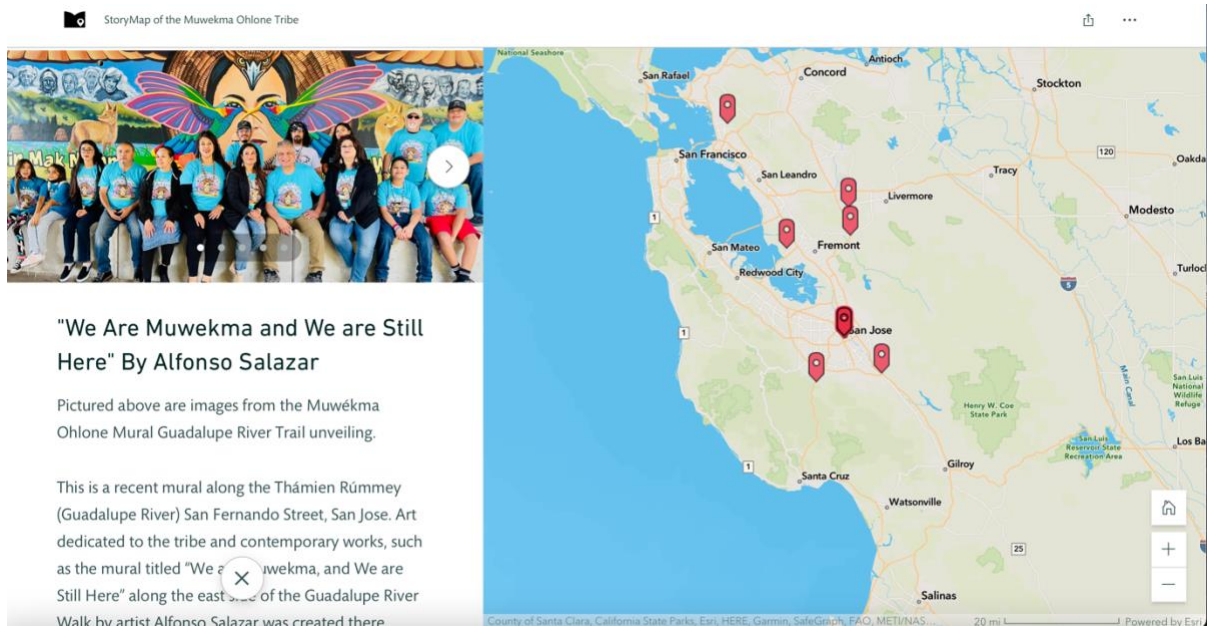


Figure 2: StoryMap of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe

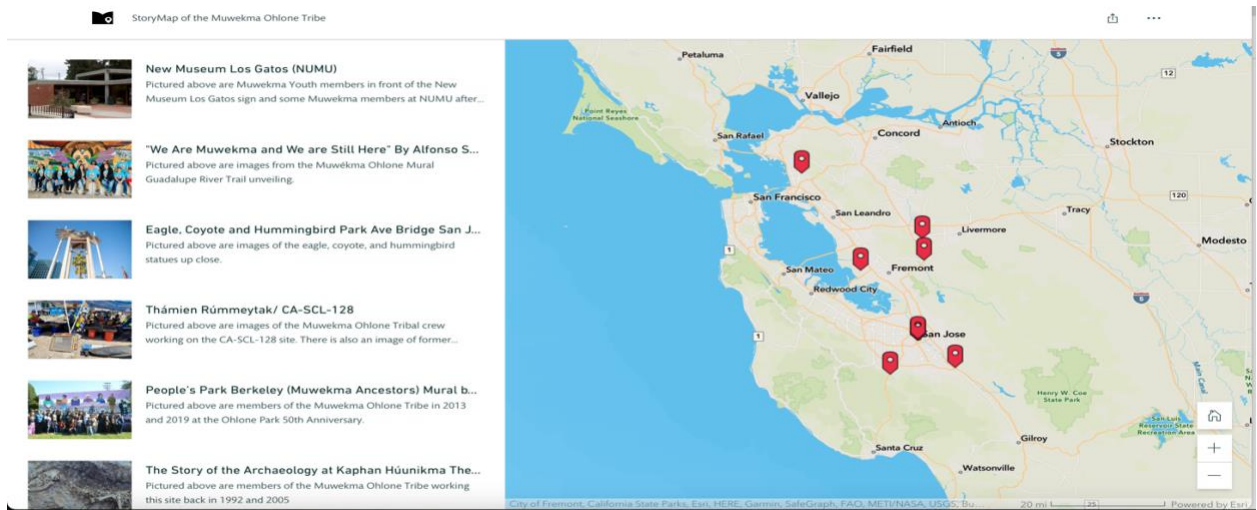


Figure 3: StoryMap of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe

### **The Future of Educational Institutions**

Educational institutions and museums such as NUMU have made efforts to transform their practices to work alongside the community and introduce a larger audience to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's story of reclaiming their place in the Bay Area. Other institutions, such as the Los Altos History Museum, collaborate to work with the local communities. Los Altos History Museum has a permanent collection titled *Making Connections: Stories from the Land* that creates an immersive experience for a broader audience to learn about the first inhabitants of the local area. Both NUMU and Los Altos History Museum are working towards decolonizing their practices to include the voices of local communities and cultural groups.



Some of the members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe after performing a traditional dance at NUMU in November 2022.

Figure 4: Some of the members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe after performing a traditional dance at NUMU in November 2022. Credit: Patrick Padiernos.

Working collaboratively with a museum, such as NUMU, demonstrates that it is possible to use such educational spaces to reach the public and give underrepresented communities a safe space to discuss their past and their future. During the opening reception for the exhibition, we conducted a survey to understand what the audience would like to see next from the growing collaborative relationship and, of course, the overall impacts of the exhibit itself on the community. The results concluded that 100% of the survey participants found the exhibit engaging and informative. When asked what they plan to do to support the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, 100% of survey participants stated they would continue to learn the history of the Tribe and start attending events hosted by the Muwekma. The exhibition has a significant impact on the community, and many people support the idea of more collaborative exhibits highlighting the Tribe, their heritage, and their land stewardship.

My deliverables drew on the anthropological approach of the inclusivity of museum spaces and mapping the erasure and the persistence of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe to reaffirm federal recognition. ArcGIS StoryMaps uses an interactive narrative to amplify the voices of those who traditionally have not had a space in educational and cultural institutions. The StoryMap is a collaboration between the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, Mosaic America, New Museum Los Gatos (NUMU), San José State University Department of Anthropology, me. The StoryMap is an example of successful collaboration with various stakeholders. It showcases what the future can look like for educational institutions trying to find ways to be more inclusive by creating a meaningful process for co-creation that includes early, frequent, and continuous conversations about the design and execution of physical and digital exhibit spaces, from selecting interviewees to editing labels to the overall content for the exhibition.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **PROJECT REFLECTIONS**

In this chapter, I reflect on my experience working with New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. I will discuss the outcomes of my partnerships and the impact this exhibition had on beginning the decolonization of museum spaces and the inclusivity of these spaces. I reflect on the limitations of this project and my recommendations for future collaborative projects for the New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, San José State University Department of Anthropology, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

#### **Outcomes of the Project**

With the information I collected from the oral histories conducted with members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, the data is present in both exhibitions presented by NUMU, *Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe* and *Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*. The oral history interviews I conducted informed the story panels for the photographic exhibition *Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*. I conducted seven oral history interviews with members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe that will look at identity, daily lives, the reclamation of place, and the revitalization of their traditions. I conducted oral histories with both older and younger generations of tribal members to understand their definition of identity, the process of reclamation of place, and the revitalization and reclamation of their traditions.

The information I collected from the oral history interviews and secondary research informed the StoryMap. The StoryMap is a collaboratively ongoing project with Mosaic America called the Mosaic Cultural Mapping Project. The StoryMap is on display for the

lobby exhibition *Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*. The lobby exhibition was a photographic exhibition by photographer Kike Arnal that highlighted the different ancestral heritage sites around the Bay Area that represented the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. This StoryMap is a collaboration between San José State University, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, Mosaic America, and New Museum Los Gatos (NUMU). The culture map highlights the culturally significant ancestral heritage sites around the Bay Area using ArcGIS StoryMap. The StoryMap also highlights the work to revitalize the Chochenyo language, dance, and regalia.

The StoryMap allows for additional narrative context to the rich history these cultural sites offer, and the stories told by the members of the Tribe. Some cultural heritage sites include archaeological and historic places, including the Alisal Rancheria, a major Muwekma settlement. Other sites include a public art mural along Thámien Rúmmei (Guadalupe River) by Artist Alfonso Salazar titled, *We are Muwekma, and We are Still Here*. Using ArcGIS StoryMaps allowed for a deeper context to the rich history of these sites, places of significance, and the stories told by the members of the Tribe. ArcGIS StoryMaps creates an immersive experience that combines stories, an interactive map, and narrative context to the rich history and the contemporary Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

The co-creation of the StoryMap allowed for building a collaborative partnership between New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, San José State University, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. The exhibitions also revitalized the previous collaboration between New Museum Los Gatos, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, and San José State University that faculty, students, and museum staff first established in 2016. It was essential to all the

stakeholders involved in this project that these exhibitions be co-collaborative and in the direction of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. It was important for the exhibitions to be in the voice of the Tribe and highlight their process for revitalization and reclamation of their cultural heritage. Our goal was to educate the public on the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's efforts to revitalize its cultural heritage and reclaim their federal recognition status.

Along with the exhibitions, NUMU created different webinar sessions on Zoom that gave the public more information and education on the exhibitions and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. An example of these virtual Zoom sessions was "The Making of an Exhibition: Reclamation of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's History and Heritage." The virtual session gave the public an insight into the making of the exhibition and told the story of the Tribe's history and heritage. Another virtual session coordinated by NUMU was "The Muwekma Ohlone Past and Present: Heritage Sites of Significance." The virtual session discussed the role anthropology and archaeology had in revealing the history of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and how these disciplines contributed to educating the public on the Tribe's efforts for the reclamation of federal recognition. These virtual sessions gave background information and context to the exhibitions. They highlighted the collaboration between San José State University Department of Anthropology, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, Mosaic America, and New Museum Los Gatos.

### **Limitations of the Project**

Working with various stakeholders on a collaborative project can have a few challenges. Most stakeholders have different objectives and expectations for graduate students. It was important in my project with New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, San José State University, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe to establish what I could do with the about of



time I was given to complete the StoryMap, oral history interviews, and story panels for the photographic exhibition. My role in the project became apparent during the first preliminary meeting with Executive Director Ami Davis. Still, my part became much more significant as the different stakeholders entered the conversation. My project timeline was approximately eight months to conclude my deliverables. Opening an exhibition, let alone two exhibitions, can usually take years to produce and develop. I had a relatively brief time to create my deliverables for both exhibitions.

For my project for the story panels and StoryMap, I conducted oral history interviews with seven members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. I co-collaboratively with my stakeholders on various aspects of the project that included the interview question guide, the list of significant ancestral sites, and the contents of the StoryMap. With my limited time, it often felt like a rushed process when it came to producing everything before the opening day of the exhibitions. Scheduling different individuals came with its limitations as well. It took about two to three months to conclude all the interviews because of scheduling conflicts with members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. Once I collected the data from the interviews, it was easier to compile the information into the overall StoryMap. When constructing the StoryMap, it was easier to schedule meetings and receive input from the stakeholders involved, including Vice-Chairwoman Monica V. Arellano and Ethnohistorian Alan Leventhal. Overall, the most significant limitation of this project was the time to produce and develop my deliverables.

**Impact of these exhibitions**

*Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and*

*Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and Reclamation: Resilience of the*

*Muwekma Ohlone Tribe* are impactful, especially in the space of cultural and educational institutions because it is a strong collaborative project that includes various stakeholders, their inputs, and objectives. The stakeholders include New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, San José State University Department of Anthropology, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's input was a critical aspect regarding the exhibition's direction and the stories told in the material shown in the museum. As a collective production, made by different stakeholders, we agreed that we wanted to change how cultural and educational institutions narrate and highlight native indigenous tribes in their local areas. Another project component was getting the public's input on how these stakeholders could continue doing collaborative exhibitions. During the opening of the exhibit *Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*, the staff at NUMU and I created a survey for visitors to participate in to understand better what the public would like to see next from the collaborative partnership. The analysis concluded that 74% of visitors would like to see the development of new exhibitions that highlight indigenous land stewardship, and 68% would like to see the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's personal connection to their ancestral homeland.

These exhibitions are a way to be inclusive and present the content in the voices and narratives of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. It was essential to create a lasting relationship between the stakeholders involved. With my project, it was an opportunity to discuss how we can maintain these relationships between different organizations and cultural groups. It was essential that once this project had concluded and my exhibit of the StoryMap had its run at the museum, we as a collective continue these conversations of inclusivity going for the next project and develop another collaborative exhibition with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. It

also gives the next graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at San José State University an opportunity to foster their ideas and contributions to collaborative and public anthropology conversations in these cultural institutions. To that end, I suggest the following recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

Exhibit stakeholders can consider the following ideas to engage the public, maintain the relationships that we co-created, and continue bringing inclusivity into their institutions.

1. Maintain monthly meetings with the stakeholders involved including New Museum Los Gatos, Mosaic America, San José State University, and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe
2. Continue to engage the public with cultural and educational events and workshops.
3. Connect with other organizations that foster inclusivity and a sense of belonging among the local communities.
4. Develop criteria for developing an exhibition with the local indigenous groups.
5. Appoint a liaison that is dedicated to foster conversations between local indigenous groups and their organizations.
6. Continue to engage the public through Zoom panels and in-person workshops.
7. Continue having conversations on the next steps for a new exhibition that highlights several aspects of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe
8. Continue to work with students from San José State University

## Further Impressions

Working closely with the New Museum Los Gatos gave me a better understanding of how these cultural and educational institutions are moving towards creating a new inclusive space for local cultural groups. NUMU is creating a space for cultural groups to express themselves and to tell their stories in their own words without the narrative of the dominant society. I took an anthropological approach to this project that allowed me to apply the skills I have learned to do collaborative research to help the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe to tell their stories in their own words. The development and execution of these exhibitions is a primary example of a successful collaborative project with various stakeholders involved. Some of these project accomplishments include coming together to educate a larger audience on the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's story, highlighting the efforts to revitalize their cultural heritage, reclaiming their place in a growing economic city, and the process of reaffirming their federal recognition status.

The StoryMap is a visual storytelling device in which the public can interact and engage with the audio and information presented on the map. Hearing the audio and quotes from different members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe is another powerful and unique component of the StoryMap. An example of a quote is from Arellano, who states,

*"We're reclaiming something that's been ours, say for instance, our language, we reclaimed our language, we re awoke our language, and we have it with us now. The same with our dances; it's something that our ancestors did, and we're able to reawaken that today. And to share it with the broader community, our culture is so beautiful, and it's so rich, and we are just have the honor and pleasure of being able to dance and to share and to have that for our members. It's so important that we continue on, that we teach our younger next generation, that they keep the stories and they tell them to their children. It's just having that and keeping that within our tribe and not losing it. And then continuing that same message, we're still here, we never left, we*

*still have our culture, we have our language, and it's beautiful, welcome to enjoy it." - Vice-Chairwoman Monica V. Arellano*

Having the experience of working with a museum like NUMU has shown the importance of utilizing educational and cultural spaces to give underrepresented cultural groups an inclusive space to educate a larger audience on their past and, of course, their future.

*Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe* give the tribe an opportunity to share their stories, and it provides the broader public a chance to hear those stories, reflect on the land they inhabit, and think about ways they can help in the effort to reaffirm federal recognition for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. This project stands to begin the process of decolonizing educational and cultural institutions and bring forth new collaborative projects that foster conversations about inclusivity for cultural groups and a sense of belonging among the local communities.

## **APPENDIX A: ASSOCIATED LINKS**

StoryMap of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b47aae8371d4eae96adbe563b3190ad>

Mosaic Atlas Project: <https://mosaicatlas.org/>

*Reclamation: Resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe*

<https://www.numulosgatos.org/exhibitions-2/reclamation-art-culture-muwekma-ohlone-tribal-council>

*Reclamation: Aboriginal Ancestral Homeland of the Muwekma Ohlone*

*Tribe:* <https://www.numulosgatos.org/exhibitions-2/reclamation-aboriginal-ancestral-homeland>

## **APPENDIX B: MUWEKMA OHLONE TRIBE QUESTION PROTOCOL**

### Muwekma Ohlone Culture Sites Mapping Project

**PART 1. IDENTITY AND ART** (Establish the person's cultural connection. With what culture(s) do they identify? What kind of role(s) do they have? Artist? Educator? Cultural Bearer? Advocate? Supporter?)

1. What is your full name?
2. Where do you currently reside?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. What places in the Bay Area were/are important to you and/or your family?
5. How do you identify yourself? When people ask you to identify your culture, what do you say?
6. What traditions do you celebrate today?
7. How did you first get involved in participating in these cultural traditions?  
     Probe: What are the key characteristics of the tradition? What is its history?  
     How has it traditionally been practiced? How has it changed or developed over time?
8. Would you describe yourself as an Artist? Educator? Cultural Bearer? Advocate? Tell me more about your role.  
     Probe: Do you have other roles?
9. How do you educate, share, and preserve cultural knowledge?

**PART 2. PLACE AND COMMUNITY** (Establish where the person has their ties to this place. What town, neighborhood, address, zip code, city? You can get this information beforehand and confirm it in the interview. How is the Muwekma represented? What are their specific ties to the place?)

Can you give historical context about the artwork/place?

10. What is the historical significance of \_\_\_\_\_?
11. What do you think is represented in this piece of artwork/place?
12. How is the location of this cultural site significant to you?
13. Does this artwork/place appear in your daily life?
14. How does this artwork/place connect you with your ancestors?
15. How do you think the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe shows up in this space?
16. How would you describe your connection to these artworks/places?
17. Probe: Tell me of a time when you felt or expressed this connection to another person
18. What things do you do to share your cultural knowledge with your community?
19. What do you want the next generation of people in your culture to take away from your work?

**Part 3. Revitalization and Federal Recognition**

20. Personally, what does Muwekma Tribal Revitalization and reclamation mean to you?
  - a. What does the phrase "politics of erasure" mean to you?
21. Right now, the Muwekma Ohlone are not federally recognized. What is the reality of not being federally recognized? What effect does that have on your life? Your family? Your community?
22. The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe is trying to reclaim its heritage. What does that phrase mean to you? What would you hope would happen for the next generation?

23. How would you like this location to be represented in a photograph?
24. If people were to see these cultural sites on the interactive atlas, what would you like them to know about it?
25. Now that you have answered my questions and have a better sense of the interview, is there anyone else you think we should talk to?
26. Finally, this is the last question. Is there anything you would like to tell me about your work, your art, or your life I have not asked about that you think I should know?  
Please tell me about that.



### **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Alexandra Alderete Garcia is a graduate of the Master of Arts Program in Applied Anthropology at San José State University. As an applied anthropologist, Alexandra research engages topics surrounding inclusivity in educational and cultural institutions, the reclamation and revitalization of cultural heritage, and amplifying the voices of cultural groups in and around the Bay Area. Alexandra's graduate project explores the process of decolonization of museum space and mapping the erasure and resilience of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe by highlighting the cultural sites significant to the Tribe using ArcGIS StoryMaps as they strive to reclaim their place in the Bay Area.

### CUMULATIVE REFERENCE LIST

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