

The bells and bell towers of California missions dominate our visual cultural landscape. But for many California Native peoples, they evoke the state's violent mission history and symbolize colonial regimentation and widespread land theft, environmental devastation, and genocide. Seeing the bells can trigger painful and traumatic memories of colonial history, echoing the ways in which the mission bells instructed their ancestors' everyday lives. They rang in the mornings to awaken them, told them when to work, when to eat, and when to get back to work, reminding them they had to follow the missionaries' instructions. Many tribal nations and communities, including the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, are now working toward their removal.

Valentin Lopez, tribal chair of the Amah Mutsun, has dedicated his life to resisting and healing from the colonial impact of the Spanish, Mexican, and United States nations on his people. Chairman Lopez worked with University of California, Santa Cruz, administrators for the elimination of a mission bell that is a symbol of the California missions. I first met Chairman Lopez a few years after I became a professor at UCSC in 2000. Director of the American Indian Resource Center Dennis Tibbetts, an Ojibwe/Shoshone, was the one who first met with Lopez and the local Indigenous people, the Amah Mutsun, encouraging him and tribal members to work with us at our university. I began collaborating with Chairman Lopez as a member of the Amah Mutsun Speakers Series Board at UCSC, along with other Native American staff, faculty, and students and allies. I labored even more closely with Lopez as a co-principal investigator for the Critical Mission Studies grant funded by the university's Office of the President. First Lopez was a member of our Critical Mission Studies advisory board; he later became a California Indian Research Partner—an important collaborator on the same level as me as a co-PI. Indeed, this essay reflects an example of our collaboration. We discussed writing this essay together, and I followed Chairman Lopez's lead. He determined the topic, what

aspects of his activism to highlight, and he shared with me his writing and articles endorsed and/or written by Amah Mutsun Tribal Band members. I compiled his writing along with my text too. He carefully read my gathering together of our prose and gave me his thorough feedback, which I incorporated. I shared with Lopez my overall goal and hope as a Ho-Chunk/Ojibwe scholar and ally for us to work on this article together in order to honor his and Amah Mutsun tribal efforts to fight back against colonialism.

This essay will examine Lopez's activism and anticolonial efforts to heal from the deleterious effects of the colonial California missions and dominant perspectives on California Native history. His activism and intellectual work involves contesting colonial heritage symbols and sites that overpower California's visual cultural landscape.¹ His efforts include the removal of the mission bell at UC Santa Cruz, his challenge to attempts to make the famous highway "El Camino Real" a World Heritage site, and his anticolonial response regarding Governor Newsom's apology to California Indians for the state's genocidal impacts on Indigenous peoples. First, our essay will discuss some historical context regarding the Spanish, Mexican, and American colonization, the California Missions, and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. Then, it will describe the history of the dispersal of the mission bells throughout California, and finally the essay will examine Lopez's activism.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

California was Spain's northernmost colonial settlement in the Americas. In 1769, Junípero Serra, a Spanish Franciscan missionary, led the colonial effort supported by the Spanish military to create a network of twenty-one missions spanning the length of Alta California, the name of the colonial province extending from present-day San

1. Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, *California Mission Landscapes: Race, Memory, and the Politics of Heritage*, Architecture, Landscape, and American Culture Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

Diego to San Francisco. These church-fort garrisons founded the basis for the Spanish colonial control of California. The Spanish government sent a battalion of Spanish soldiers to guard the priests and to discipline and control the Indigenous peoples.² They built the missions to exploit Indigenous people's labor, including forcing Natives to build the missions. California Natives lived in close proximity, and this encouraged the swift spread of deadly disease.³ The missions were a site of mass death. At eleven missions, missionaries baptized 10,575 California Indians and buried 3,576 from 1769 to 1788.⁴ However, according to Chairman Lopez, 3,576 is a low number, because the Spanish only allowed converted Natives to be buried in the cemetery, so the number of deaths would have been much higher (Valentin Lopez, phone conversation, March 10, 2020).

The missionaries' important goal was the conversion of Indigenous peoples to Christianity. Missionaries closely controlled Natives' activities in order to compel them to accept Spanish work habits, clothing, and Christianity. Franciscans rang the mission bell bringing Natives together and leading them to work, church, and all of their activities from sunrise until sunset. Missionaries would force California mission Natives to line up for examination.⁵ Charles Sepulveda (Tongva and Acjachemen) discusses how missionaries would place Indigenous unmarried girls into a barracks called a *monjerio*—cage-like rooms with barred or absent windows—to stop their escape or interaction with others.⁶ When Natives resisted, the Spanish would punish them by putting them in stocks and other means of punishment, including "... flogging, whipping with the cat-o-nine tails, hobbling with the coroma, and beating with the cudgel."⁷ Soldiers both captured Indigenous who ran away and regularly raped Native women. As a consequence, Natives revolted and

resisted this brutal Spanish treatment.⁸ Mission Santa Cruz was where Natives murdered Father Andres Quintana in 1812, and his killing was successfully covered up. It was an Indigenous woman, Fausta, who led the murder of this abusive priest. The mission was a place of Natives attempting to poison their colonial captors, subsequent arrests, and Natives running away.⁹ Even with Spanish surveillance, amid death and the Indigenous experience of dislocation inside the missions, Native artists, translators, and traditional and new leaders utilized Indigenous power, authority, and knowledge, while pursuing redress and maintaining community.¹⁰ Deborah Miranda (Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation / Chumash) uses the term "bad Indian" to examine Native resistance and her own family/tribal history and the missions.¹¹ Similarly, archaeologists Lee Panich and Tsim Schneider (Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria) emphasize resistance and Natives' experience in the California missions and beyond, using the terms *persistence* and *Indigenous landscape*,¹² building on the work of Kent Lightfoot.¹³

When the Mexican-American War concluded in 1848, the ideology of Manifest Destiny motivated Anglo Americans to colonize California and settle.¹⁴ The Spanish had developed colonial agricultural and religious networks integral to the missions, and Anglo Americans took them over. Consequently, California missions became pivotal to the growing California cities. Anglo Americans also exploited Indigenous peoples for their labor. The Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians (1850), for example, forced California Natives into servitude.

8. Martin Rizzo, "No Somos Animales': Indigenous Survival and Persistence in 19th Century Santa Cruz, California," 2016, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9dt646bz>; Miranda, *Bad Indians*.

9. Rizzo, "No Somos Animales."

10. Rizzo; Lisbeth Haas, *Saints and Citizens: Indigenous Histories of Colonial Missions and Mexican California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 29; Yve Chavez, "Indigenous Artists, Ingenuity, and Resistance at the California Missions after 1769" (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2017).

11. Miranda, *Bad Indians*.

12. Lee M. Panich, "Archaeologies of Persistence: Reconsidering the Legacies of Colonialism in Native North America," *American Antiquity* 78, no. 1 (2013): 105–22, <https://doi.org/10.7183/0002-7316.78.1.105>; Lee M. Panich and Tsim D. Schneider, *Indigenous Landscapes and Spanish Missions: New Perspectives from Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014).

13. Kent G. Lightfoot, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

14. Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*, Yale Western Americana Series 35 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

2. James J. Rawls, *Indians of California: The Changing Image*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984); Renya K. Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

3. Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873*, Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); Ramirez, *Native Hubs*.

4. Madley, *American Genocide*.

5. Madley.

6. Charles Sepulveda, "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7, no. 1 (2018): 40–58; Madley, *American Genocide*.

7. Deborah A. Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2013), 12.

While the name of the law sounds benign, it was a way to steal Indigenous labor. Under this law a white person could say that any Native walking around who was not employed was a vagrant, and a justice of the peace could then force them to labor for four months without any compensation.¹⁵

Amah Mutsun Tribal Band

Chairman Lopez discussed how the Amah Mutsun's tribal territory historically included all of San Benito and parts of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey Counties, and they lived there for thousands of years before Spanish colonization (Valentin Lopez to Governor Gavin Newsom, letter, October 21, 2019). Lopez also emphasized how his ancestors were very effective and sophisticated resource managers of the plants, and the land overall (Valentin Lopez, phone conversation, March 10, 2020). His ancestors resided in one of the most plentiful environments in the Americas, with a rich supply of plant and animal life. All of this rapidly changed with the arrival of the early colonizers, the Spanish. Indeed, according to Lopez, they were often forcibly kidnapped and taken to Mission Santa Cruz and Mission San Juan Bautista.

Overall, the state of California has a horribly dark history regarding Indigenous peoples. Before the Spanish came in 1769 there were over five hundred tribes and a population of at least three hundred thousand.¹⁶ Moreover, at Missions San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz, where the Amah Mutsun trace their lineage, the percentage of baptized Indigenous people who died from the missions' founding (in 1797 and 1791, respectively) to when they closed around 1835 was between 85 and 90. At San Juan Bautista Mission, there were 4,434 Native baptisms and 3,086 burials, which equals an 85.8 percent death rate. At Santa Cruz Mission, there were 2,289 baptisms and 2,078 burials, which equals a 90.8 percent death rate (Martin Rizzo, personal correspondence, March 10, 2020). This 85–90 percent death rate means that most Natives who lived and labored at these two missions ultimately died there from diseases, malnutrition, and/or killing by the Spanish.

Historian Benjamin Madley recorded the number of killings of California Natives between 1846 and 1873 by

15. Kimberly Johnson-Dodds, "Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians," report prepared at the request of State Senator John L. Burton, President Pro Tempore, 2002).

16. M. Baumhoff, *Ecological Determinants of Aboriginal California Populations*, 1963.

non-Indians to be at least 9,400 to 16,000, mostly occurring due to three hundred massacres, including of largely unarmed Native men, women, and children.¹⁷ Many assumed that California Indigenous peoples would be totally wiped out.¹⁸ In 1851, Governor of California Peter H. Burnett told the legislature that "a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the two races until the Indian race becomes extinct."¹⁹ Governor Burnett ordered white hunting expeditions to find and kill California Indigenous people for bounty. They raped Native women, enslaved them, and forced them off their land, causing thousands of California Natives to become landless and to fight to survive during a time when they were being shot and killed like animals.²⁰

Even though the Amah Mutsun have suffered from the legacy of this extremely difficult and colonial history, they as a tribal nation are continually fighting back against colonialism. The following discussion of the history of the dispersal of mission bells throughout the California landscape explains how the mission bell system contributed to a violent and oppressive visual culture for California Indigenous peoples.

HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY SPREAD OF MISSION BELLS ACROSS CALIFORNIA

At the beginning of the twentieth century, civic boosters, developers, and automobile promoters worked together to increase tourism and settlement in California by encouraging a nostalgic and positive remembering of California's Spanish colonial past.²¹ The promoters picked a mission bell with a shepherd's staff to mark and memorialize the route of a California state highway that followed the mythical trek of El Camino Real ("Royal Road"), that connected the twenty-one California missions and four presidios (military forts), and several pueblos from Mission San Diego de Alcalá in the south to Mission San Francisco de Solano to the north, turning the missions into money-making tourist destinations. Chairman Lopez

17. Madley, *American Genocide*.

18. Rawls, *Indians of California*.

19. Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 121.

20. Ramirez, *Native Hubs*.

21. Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, "Amah Mutsun Announce Removal of El Camino "Mission Bell" from UCSC Campus," press release, June 14, 2019. <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2019/06/14/18823955.php>.

discussed how El Camino Real followed a California Indigenous trade route that was shared among various tribes throughout California (Valentin Lopez, phone conversation, March 10, 2020). Colonizers giving an Indigenous trade route a colonial name is not only inaccurate, but also integral to colonialism, working to take ownership of Indigenous land through the renaming process.²² In 1906, the mission bell marker system was created on the historic El Camino route.²³ In the original system, mission bell markers were to be placed one mile apart along the entire length of El Camino Real.²⁴

Eventually the California Division of Highways was required to provide upkeep of the mission bell system. Caltrans continued to maintain the system when one hundred of the original bells remained, and exact replicas were installed to replace damaged bells. The Caltrans Landscape Architecture Program worked to restore the historic mission bell system.²⁵ By late 2012, the entire mission bell system as originally imagined had returned to its original condition. This restoration had a price tag of more than \$2 million with over five hundred mission bell markers placed one to two miles apart.²⁶ This mission bell system enacts a colonial visual cultural imaginary,²⁷ as non-Native drivers and their passengers pass by each mission bell and can imagine themselves in Junípero Serra's shoes, making the same long journey, visiting mission after mission, and learning history from a colonial point of view. Furthermore, mission bells are inextricably linked to the cultural identity of California, including their colonial aesthetic and artistic legacies of the popular iconic

symbol of Taco Bell, using a mission bell to sell tacos and other “fake” Mexican food. These contemporary mission bells can evoke a colonial fantasy of a kindly Franciscan missionary and his docile, brown, Indigenous labor force, who supposedly “welcome” their captivity.²⁸

In contrast, Chairman Lopez and other California Indigenous peoples view the mission bell as a settler colonial and racist symbol that glorifies the killing, dehumanization, forced labor and imprisonment of their ancestors.²⁹ The UC Santa Cruz mission bell is one of hundreds that scatter the California landscape in order to encourage the public to remember the missions from a colonial point of view. Valentin Lopez said, “These bells are deeply painful symbols that celebrate the destruction, domination and erasure of our people.” He continued, “They are constant reminders that our people and our history continue to be disregarded to this day. The true history of the California mission system has never been told,” stated Lopez. “It is shameful that the history of these places where our ancestors were enslaved, whipped, raped, tortured, and exposed to fatal diseases have been whitewashed and converted into tourist attractions.” The mission bells are a powerful symbol of the domination of the Catholic Church and the Spanish, Mexican, and US nation-states, who have oppressed the Amah Mutsun, stolen their land and forced them to labor while listening and viewing the mission bells. Chairman Lopez said, “Our Tribe, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, objects to all symbols that attempt to honor and glorify the persons and institutions that were responsible for the capture, enslavement, abuse, and killing of our ancestors and the theft of our land.”

Lopez astutely compared the activism involving the removing of Confederate statues—another public memorializing from a dominant and colonial perspective—to the decision to remove a mission bell at UC Santa Cruz. These two examples are not benevolent public history markers, but instead represent colonial heritage symbols and sites that attempt to memorialize and hide

22. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203932933>.

23. Bob Pool, “Saga of the Bells Comes Full Circle,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 2006.

24. Kryder-Reid, *California Mission Landscapes*; Max Kurillo, *California's El Camino Real and Its Historic Bells*, 1st ed. (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, 2000).

25. Pool, “Saga of the Bells.”

26. Jonathan Farrell, “California Mission Bells Mark the Spots of the ‘King’s Highway’,” *Digital Journal*, March 9, 2013. <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/345281>.

27. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; Marita Sturken, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Deana Dartt-Newton, “California’s Sites of Conscience: An Analysis of the State’s Historic Mission Museums,” *Museum Anthropology* 34, no. 2 (2011): 97–108, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1379.2011.01111.x>; Renya Ramirez, “Healing, Violence, and Native American Women,” *Social Justice* 31, no. 4 (2004): 103–16.

28. Kryder-Reid, *California Mission Landscapes*.

29. Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409; Renya K. Ramirez, *Standing up to Colonial Power: The Lives of Henry Roe and Elizabeth Bender Cloud*, *New Visions in Native American and Indigenous Studies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press and American Philosophical Society, 2018); Benjamin Madley, “California’s First Mass Incarceration System: Franciscan Missions, California Indians, and Penal Servitude, 1769–1836,” *Pacific Historical Review* 88, no. 1 (2019): 14–47, <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2019.88.1.14>.



FIGURE 1. Removal of mission bell on UC Santa Cruz campus. Photo by Martin Rizzo, with permission.

past crimes against Indigenous peoples and African Americans and distort how history is told, encouraging a colonial retelling. Lopez and the Amah Mutsun have discussed two ways to dispose of the mission bell. One would be to place it in a museum and properly contextualize it from an Amah Mutsun perspective or to melt the bell down and recycle it for peaceful purposes.³⁰ Lopez hopes that the removal of this El Camino Real bell—the first removal of its kind, according to Lopez—will lead to the elimination of all of the hundreds of mission bells that dot the California landscape and as colonial symbols that act to remake Indigenous land into a nostalgic rendering of land for colonial, tourist, and money making purposes.³¹

The removal of the mission bell occurred on Friday, June 21, 2019 at 9:30 a.m., with Chairman Lopez, Amah Mutsun tribal members, UC Santa Cruz administrators,

faculty, students, staff, and Native community members in attendance (fig. 1).³² Many newspapers, including local and national news outlets, covered this powerful event (e.g., CNN and the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*). It was a moment of celebration, healing, and decolonization for the Amah Mutsun, Indigenous people overall, UC Santa Cruz administrators, faculty, and staff. Eliminating a colonial mission bell serves to decolonize a violent visual culture that otherwise oppresses and has the power to awaken traumatizing memories for the Amah Mutsun and many California Indigenous peoples. The bell's removal is also a forceful act of Indigenous resistance, resilience,³³ and assertion of Indigenous presence,³⁴ and a sign of a strong Amah Mutsun tribal nation exerting their power and

30. Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*.

31. Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, June 14, 2019.

32. Amah Mutsun Tribal Band; Jessica York, "Call for Historic Mission Bell Begins at UC Santa Cruz." *Santa Cruz Sentinel* June 21, 2019.

33. Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*; Chavez, "Indigenous Artists"; Ramirez, *Native Hubs*.

34. Panich, "Archaeologies of Persistence"; Panich and Schneider, *Indigenous Landscapes*.

authority for their future and how history should be interpreted. Lopez not only advocated for the removal of a mission bell at UC Santa Cruz, but also challenged transforming El Camino Real—a mission bell network—into a World Heritage site.

LOPEZ'S CHALLENGE TO THE MAKING OF EL CAMINO REAL AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Chairman Lopez has fought against the proposal by the California Mission Foundation to name El Camino Real a UNESCO World Heritage site, arguing that it would honor and glorify the colonization of Indigenous lands. El Camino Real as a mission bell network supports an extensive violent and colonial visual culture mechanism that continues to oppress California Indigenous peoples by supporting the telling of the colonizer's view of history, while ignoring the stealing of Indigenous lands and death of tens of thousands of Natives. In other words, the colonial violence of one mission bell is multiplied by over five hundred as cars pass by each one; their occupants can either imagine colonial perspectives of history or, for California Natives, experience traumatic memories of the death of many of their ancestors. Lopez said, "Our tribe and many other California Tribes impacted by the California mission system oppose this effort." Similarly, Antonio Gonzales, the regional representative of the American Indian Movement, joined in the opposition, arguing that frequently the California Mission Foundation has ignored Indigenous peoples' original ownership of the land, and they supported the sainthood of Serra without considering the colonial violence and impact of the California missions on Indigenous peoples. Lopez said, "All were forced into the missions by Serra and Franciscans who brutally ruled over the missions." Lopez has estimated that there were more than one hundred forty thousand who tragically died in the missions. When Pope Francis declared Serra a saint in 2015, Lopez sharply criticized the Pope's determination. Earlier the Pope had apologized for Spain's sins, crimes and offences, and involvement in the destruction of Indigenous peoples and their environments. Afterward, Pope Francis canonized Serra, who, according to Lopez, was one of greatest enemies of Indigenous people, causing terrible harm and death. Lopez stressed, "This is the true history of the El Camino Real and this is the story that the California Mission Foundation endeavors to ignore, erase and deny in their efforts to

declare El Camino Real as a UNESCO World Heritage Site."³⁵

Letter to Governor Gavin Newsom: A Call for Healing and Decolonization

Chairman Lopez discussed his decolonial methodology of healing for both Natives and non-Natives in a October 21, 2019, letter to Governor Gavin Newsom—a challenge to his apology as a spokesperson for the state of California for the genocide of Native peoples. In this letter, Lopez as a representatives of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, refuses to accept the apology from the governor, seeing it as an empty gesture without taking real action to acknowledge the truth of the horrific historical treatment of the state of California toward Indigenous peoples. Lopez wrote:

When Governor Newsom offered an apology, through executive order, to California Native American Peoples, my first thought was that this apology will not be accepted by our Tribe. Our Tribe has a policy that we do not accept apologies. When our Tribe hears apologies, we see it as an attempt to sweep the horrific truths of Native history from public view. It is as if to say, "Yes, some terrible things happened to California Native Americans in the past, but let's just move on." We believe there can be no effective change in how the State of California acts toward its native population going forward, without acknowledging the whole truth regarding what happened historically to the native peoples of California AND specifically understanding how it continues to impact us today. (Valentin Lopez to Governor Gavin Newsom, October 21, 2019)

In this same letter, Lopez argues for the decolonization of our state's history and colonial heritage sites and public landmarks, including California missions, eliminating colonial names of parks, schools, and roads that glorify white leaders who killed and deeply harmed Indigenous people, such as John C. Fremont. These public history landmarks are filled with colonial and violent visual culture, including colonial names on placards and signs, as well as colonial architecture and statues.³⁶ California

35. Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, "California Mission Foundation Tries to Declare El Camino Real a UNESCO World Heritage Site," Open-Publishing Newswire, August 22, 2016, <https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2016/08/22/18790330.php>.

36. Dean Rader, *Engaged Resistance American Indian Art, Literature, and Film from Alcatraz to the NMAI* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Kryder-Reid, *California Mission Landscapes*.

missions include much colonial art, such as miniature mission bells and missions, and tiny statues of Junipero Serra available for purchase in gift shops. Lopez argues for a healthy relationship where the state of California tells the truth about Native history and works to decolonize the California missions and public history landmarks. Lopez wrote:

To have a healthy relationship both parties must be honest, trustworthy, and honor the relationship. How can we have a healthy relationship with the state of California when it turns the missions, which were responsible for the death of nearly 100,000 of our ancestors, into tourist attractions and State Parks for monetary gain; when Sutter's Fort State Historic Park, is named after an Indian slave trader, when Fremont Peak State Park is named after John C. Fremont who is responsible for the largest one-day massacre of Indians in the United States . . . (Valentin Lopez to Governor Gavin Newsom, October 21, 2019)

In this letter, Lopez expresses interest in the governor's idea of a truth and healing council. He emphasizes Amah Mutsun knowledge and expertise regarding truth and healing by discussing the healing power of his tribe's wellness gatherings, where tribal members can share their truths and stories, feel heard, and psychologically process the impact of historical trauma.³⁷ Part of healing for Native people, according to Lopez, is to acknowledge the colonial impact on their ancestors and how these colonial effects continue to the present day, including poverty, land loss, family separation, alcoholism, drug abuse, and the inability to live in one's tribal territory. Lopez discusses that Indigenous people need to heal from the legacy of colonialism. He also asserts that, perhaps even more importantly, so do the perpetrators of colonial violence against Indigenous peoples. They need to be truthful about what really happened, own their part in harming Natives, and develop concrete amends and restitutions regarding the damage the state of California has caused.

37. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Josephine Chase, Jennifer Elkins, and Deborah Altschul, "Historical Trauma among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Concepts, Research, and Clinical Considerations," *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs: Growing Roots: Native American Evidence-Based Practices* 43, no. 4 (2011): 282–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02791072.2011.628913>; Joseph P. Gone, "A Community-Based Treatment for Native American Historical Trauma: Prospects for Evidence-Based Practice," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 77, no. 4 (2009): 751–62, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015390>; Eduardo Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*, SUNY Series in Transpersonal and Humanistic Psychology (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995)

He emphasizes the Amah Mutsun's distinct experience as a federally nonrecognized tribe, which includes much land loss (Valentin Lopez to Governor Gavin Newsom, October 21, 2019). Being federally nonrecognized is a common experience for many California Natives; eighteen treaties were never ratified by the federal government in the 1850s. Other factors include the determination of Alfred Kroeber, a classic anthropologist, that many California Natives were "extinct" and no longer Native because they lived amongst other racial and ethnic groups, and the almost impossible process of becoming federally acknowledged.³⁸

In conclusion, Valentin Lopez and Amah Mutsun tribal members have struggled courageously and tirelessly to fight back against the colonial impact of the California missions and their related violent and oppressive visual culture, including mission bells across the California landscape, and attempts to make El Camino Real—a mission bell network—a World Heritage site. His dream is that all mission bells placed along El Camino Real and throughout California be eliminated and/or then contextualized properly in museums, including telling an Indigenous perspective of their use and colonial effects.³⁹ He offers a decolonial methodology of truth and healing for his tribal nation, as well as for those who maintain a colonial mentality and refuse to tell the truth about California mission history, mission bells, public history landmarks, symbols, and other colonial heritage sites. He argues that it is only by acknowledging what really happened in Native history can we move toward healing from colonialism. His activism with the support of Amah Mutsun tribal members in removing the mission bell at UC Santa Cruz is a powerful message about what can happen throughout California, transforming colonial heritage sites into places of decolonization, truth, and healing for both Natives and non-Natives.

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38. Ramirez, *Native Hubs*.

39. Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to thank Tsim Schneider, Yve Chavez, Martin Rizzo, Amy Lonetree, Charlene Villaseñor Black, Emily Engel and Jennifer Schepher Hughes for their editorial and substantive feedback on this essay.

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Valentin Lopez is chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and president of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust (est. 2012). The Amah Mutsun are active in conservation and protection efforts within their tribal territory. He is a Native American Adviser to the University of California Office of the President and the National Alliance on Mental Illness.