Indigenous Survivance in Words and Land:
Countering Culturecide in Northern California

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Abstract

This article explores repertoires of Indigenous survivance practices in Northern California in the face of historic and ongoing culturecide, meaning cultural genocide, or the intentional destruction of the culture of a specific group of people. The central research question is: how, why, and under what conditions does Indigenous cultural survival happen in public, institutionalized spaces outside of Indigenous control? Specifically, how have white-majority/Indigenous minority agreements in public domains bolstered Indigenous cultural autonomy and strengthening in Northern California? In other words, in what ways can white majority arenas of control, particularly off-reservation spaces like public schools and local government policies, can be included in tribal projects of cultural resilience and restoration?

Case studies include the impact of Yurok language electives in two public high schools in Northern California, as well as the return of Tuluwat Island in Humboldt Bay to the Wiyot Tribe. The Yurok-focused portion of this project uses collaborative methodological design with the Yurok Tribe Education Department, school district administrators, teachers, and staff, to ensure that the project is grounded in stakeholder interests. Data from fieldwork over three years, from 2017 to 2019, is sourced from classroom and community observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys. For the Tuluwat Island case study, data is drawn from discourse analysis of media coverage of the land return process over the last fifteen years. Overall, findings show that both Yurok language access and narratives around land return of Tuluwat Island disrupt patterns of culturecide for Indigenous peoples in the region. Ultimately, the article shows the way that acts of Indigenous voice-raising and place-making constitute a form of resistance to ongoing erasure of Indigenous peoples.

Introduction: Home of the Loggers

The school mascot stands on a wide expanse of lawn on a concrete pedestal outside the main entrance to Eureka High School: a grizzled logger with an axe over his shoulder and a round tin of chewing tobacco pushing through his back denim pocket. Colonized in 1850—the town's slogan "I have Found It!"—Eureka, California captures the Gold Rush frenzy that swept the area. During the mid-19th century, early white[1] settlers decimated huge swaths of old growth Redwood forest in Humboldt County in the name of progress, and tried to wipe out the original inhabitants as well.

The now-infamous 1860 murder of as many as 250 Wiyot women and children in what is commonly known as the Indian Island massacre is one of numerous regional examples of outright genocide towards Indigenous people in Northern California. State-sponsored white settlers used manifest destiny rhetoric to cover a range of grotesque human rights violations in the region, including outright assassination, landgrabs, human trafficking of Indigenous people, and their enslavement (Magliari, 2020: 3-5; Norton, 1979: 65-77). Such genocidal tactics in the nineteenth century transitioned into culturecide – cultural genocide – as white mob attacks on Native villages changed to the forced recruitment of Native children to attend a range of California boarding schools in the late 1800s and twentieth century. Culturecide describes the

[1] I have not capitalized the term "white" in this article, but acknowledge debate about the capitalization of racial and ethnic terms is ongoing.

destruction of culture that operates genocidally, with the intent to destroy a particular group of people through assimilation. Following the example of the notorious Carlisle Indian School, in operation from 1879 to1918, boarding school teachers throughout the United States attempted to "Kill the Indian, save the man," a clear example of culturecide in education policy (Adams, 1995: 52; Bear et al., 2019).

I use the terms Indigenous, Native American, and Native interchangeably in this article when referring to people from more than one tribe of the original peoples of what is now the United States. Many terms used to talk about Indigenous people are fraught with racist origins. I generally follow the preferences of interviewees in their own quotes and analyzing their quotes, and also try to speak specifically about people's identities rather than using generalizations whenever possible. I only use the term "Indian" in citations or quotes from people who identify as such, or when referring to named Indian Reservations or laws that use the term. There is no consensus in the United States about which terms should be used in which context (McCarty, 2008: 180), and I attempt to be sensitive to individual and group preferences.

In this article, I present two case studies of Indigenous cultural survival, or survivance, as it has been termed by Native scholar Gerald Vizenor (2010: 1) . Both cases are in Northern California, and I have been documenting survivance through a range of methods, including political ethnography, formal and informal open-ended interviews, focus groups, and surveys over the last fifteen years. First, I document the impact of adding Yurok into language elective curricula at two public high schools in the 1990s and 2010s. This section also briefly analyzes school mascots and the impact of representation in regional public schools. Second, I look at the return of Tuluwat[2] Island in Humboldt Bay in 2019 as a materially and symbolically important moment of apology to the Wiyot Tribe. Overall, I argue that each of these turning points show the way that acts of Indigenous voice-raising and place-making constitute forms of resistance to ongoing erasure of Indigenous peoples.

Research puzzle

This article documents resistance to Indigenous culturecide in California, and shows how a variety of community members, including education administrators, teachers, government officials, and tribal staff work together to promote Indigenous cultural survival. Such survival, which some people prefer to call restoration in order to maintain a focus on healing something that still exists (B. McQuillen, 2017), names the many ways that Indigenous resilience to forced assimilation has been practiced over generations.

The research puzzle centers on the question: how, why, and under what conditions does Indigenous cultural survival happen in public, institutionalized spaces outside of Indigenous control? Specifically, how have white-majority/Indigenous minority agreements in public domains bolstered Indigenous cultural autonomy and strengthening in Northern California? In other words, I investigate the ways that white majority arenas of control, particularly off-reservation spaces, can be included in tribal projects of cultural resilience and restoration.

Cultural survival as an umbrella concept can look like many things. Such survival certainly takes place at the individual level, where people make choices about how they engage aspects of their cultural identity, including decisions about daily language use and other cultural practices. Yet here I focus here on cultural survival as an institutional process in order to see how non-Indigenous run spaces in Northern California, such as school districts and city councils, take

[2] Tuluwat is also sometimes spelled Duluwat. I follow the spelling found on the Wiyot Tribe's own webpage: https://www.wiyot.us/186/Tuluwat-Project.

some responsibility for furthering Indigenous cultural survival. Such indicators of institutions doing survival work might look like the Yurok Education Department advocating for Yurok language access in public schools, or the official correcting of historical injustice through apologies, reparations, or other forms of restorative justice like truth and reconciliation commissions. Correcting the official record about Indigenous peoples by shifting from silencing of Indigenous communities to acknowledging them in formal spaces such as government and the education sector is another indicator of institutional roles in cultural survival.

At the macro-level this research puzzle is bound up with questions about the fate of pluriethnic democracy and engaged citizenship for a diverse demographic. As ethnic and racial divisions and politicization continue to wrack states around the world, how can ethnic majority-dominant spaces, in this case local government and public education, best provide interculturally competent interventions to promote respectful coexistence? Culturecide is the process of targeting a specific culture for destruction through a range of means and timelines, rather than persecuting the physical bodies of people themselves. Such cultural destruction may be but is not exclusively ethnically linked, meaning that it may pertain to people from shared ethnic groups, but also religious, regional, or lifestyle-based groups. Culturecide is conceptually broad and encompasses the contemporary erasure of Native Americans in formal and informal spaces of the United States through intentional silence. In the context of this article, every-day erasure includes indicators like the naming of physical spaces with white names instead of Native names, the use of mascots to guide cultural norms in schools, and the use of curricula as a tool to perpetuate white myths of greatness.

Like physical genocide, culturecide does not stop on its own. Instead, it requires external intervention. As is clear from many social movements, including anti-racist ones in the United States over much of the twenty-first century, it is problematic to always turn to historically marginalized people to do the educating of privileged white majorities. This article examines how white administrators in institutions such as formal education sector and local government have played a role in promoting intercultural competency and Indigenous cultural survival. The case studies here show two examples where institutions assume some responsibility for assisting in Indigenous cultural survival projects in in Northern California.

I argue that land re-appropriation and Indigenous language access both constitute forms of resistance to culturecide for Indigenous people. Both of these forms of resistance are rooted in the reassertion of cultural memory and community narratives. Resistance comes from Indigenous peoples' desire and demand for cultural continuity, even in the face of a genocidal state that has sought to assimilate by force through territorial appropriation and education. By seeking out, demanding, and manifesting the continuation of Indigenous culture, including traditional land stewardship, language transmissions, and cultural knowledge, Indigenous leaders send a message to policy-makers that they will not acquiesce to the white-majority assimilation agenda. At the same time, institutional leaders who are willing to own up to historically transmitted white privilege may be able to play a healing role in communities wounded by long-standing culturecidal agendas.

Methodology and methods

Research has too often been performed at the expense of, rather than a benefit for, people whose lives are documented (MacLean, Posner, Thomson, & Wood, 2018; U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Among Indigenous communities, information extraction by self-glorifying scholars has given academia a rightfully earned bad name (Deloria Jr., [1969]

1988: 78-100). I have written elsewhere about the importance of collaborative methodology, essentially arguing that researchers should engage people as actors with agency, rather than objects or subjects of research (Gellman, 2021, forthcoming). Such collaboration attempts to avoid the extractive frameworks of past and some current scholarship, instead acknowledging the responsibility of the researcher to share their access to knowledge with those affected by the puzzles under investigation in ways that are meaningful to stakeholders.

In this project, I worked closely with the Yurok Tribe in Northern California, along with district and school administrators as well as teachers, to craft the Yurok language-focused portion of the research puzzle and data collection. I iteratively consulted with the Yurok Tribe Education Department and other stakeholders to develop aspects of the research puzzle as well as the implementation process. However, for full transparency, my analysis of the Tuluwat Island case rests on data as a participant-observer in the community, including being both physically present at government-led hearings and events, as well as a consumer of local news in the area for a period of 25 years or more, rather than collaborative work with the Wiyot Tribe. As the secondary example offered here, the Tuluwat Island case study does not exemplify collaborative methodology the way the Yurok example does, but rather serves to expand the range of culturecide and cultural survival case studies documented in the Northern California region.

While the disciplines of anthropology and development studies have, through frameworks such as Participatory Action Research, already asserted a commitment to research with historically marginalized people, my own home-discipline of political science has lagged behind. Through this project and my larger body of work (Gellman, 2021, forthcoming), I seek to participate as a white researcher in decolonizing political science, conducting research about Indigenous communities that is in fact useful to that community. In doing so, I assert that positivist and theory-testing research need not omit a collaborative framework .

Case studies and data: My methodological approach fuses both causal analysis with interpretivist understandings from a wide variety of data types. In line with Blatter, I pursue both truth-seeking and sense-making claims at the same time, rather than the more traditional approach of taking one path over the other (Blatter, 2017: 2-7). This means that on one level of the project, I document empirically, through surveys and interviews, how the two case studies exemplify cultural survival. On another level, I also address how stakeholders made meaning of the processes, primarily through participant-observation, focus groups, and newspaper analyses.

In the first case study of Indigenous language access, I draw on select data from a larger project that follows the availability of Yurok at two public regional high schools in Northern California. Eureka High School (EHS) is a regional, majority white school in the center of Eureka, a town of approximately 27,000 inhabitants. In the aftermath of an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawsuit over racially based discrimination, which EHS settled in 2015, the school added Yurok language classes to the language elective curriculum as part of the school's attempt to increase cultural competency among students, teachers, and staff (J. McQuillen, 2019: 286). The school has approximately fifty percent ethnic diversity, referring to categories other than white, using the website's language[3] (EdData, 2020), with generally four percent Native American students in a given year in the late 2010s (DataQuest, 2020b). Prior to the addition of Yurok language classes to the curriculum, Spanish, German, and French were the

[3] The problematic way in which all white and non-white people are homogenously lumped together in the terms used by this particular data website is beyond the scope of this paper and does not reflect author preference.

offerings to fulfill the state language requirement, and French was dropped within a few years of adding Yurok.

Hoopa Valley High School (HVHS) is a rural school with a majority of the student body identified as American Indian, and has included the Yurok language in the curriculum since 1996 due to interest from the attending population. HVHS is situated on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation, which borders Yurok and Karuk Reservations, and its student body is mostly composed of Hupa,[4] Karuk, and Yurok-identifying students, with a small minority of white and Latinx students. While in some years HVHS has not been able to offer Spanish for lack of a teacher – the commute from coastal towns is more than an hour on extremely curvy mountain roads that are sometimes blocked by felled trees or mudslides in winter weather – its language offerings of Hupa, Yurok, and Spanish have been generally stable for the past twenty years.

EHS and HVHS are two of four regional high schools that offer the Yurok language as an elective, the only four such high schools in the world to do so. Two years of any language elective allows students to meet the California A to G college-readiness requirement necessary to gain admission to the University of California system. HVHS has offered the Hupa language for decades, and Del Norte High School offers Tolowa and Yurok as well.

From 2017 to 2019, I engaged a mixed methods tool kit that captures a range of data types at the two high schools and surrounding communities. Qualitatively, I spent more than 100 hours observing classes, in addition to dozens of hours mingling with students, teachers, and staff at lunch and break times, as well as on carpooling commutes to HVHS. The quantitative element of survey was useful in reaching a larger number of students than I was able to speak with in interviews as EHS, while the number of interviews and surveys at HVHS was almost identical. This variation is based on individual student and guardian choice in how study participation permission forms were completed. At EHS, more students chose to participate only in the survey, while at HVHS, those who were willing to participate in the survey also opted into the interviews.

School	Survey responses	Interviews with students	Interviews with teachers and administrators	Focus groups	Number of class periods observed
Eureka High School	87	55	10	2	70
Hoopa Valley High School	23	24	10	3	40

Table 1. Data totals for case study schools, 2017-2019.

The second case study is one that of Tuluwat Island's return to the Wiyot Tribe, assessed through a data set of North Coast Journal (NCJ) articles from their digitized archives.[5] The NCJ bills itself as a "Weekly of Politics, People, and Art, serving Humboldt County" and appears

[4] The Anglicized version of the name, Hoopa, is used to refer to the town and Reservation, but the people and language are referred to as Hupa.

[5] The archives are available for open access at www.northcoastjournal.com.

both online and in print in front of grocery stores and other central buildings in county life. Data for this case study consists of the set of more than fifty archived NCJ articles in response to key word searches including for "Wiyot," "Indian Island", "Duluwat," "Tuluwat," and "reparations." In addition, I surveyed articles from a Eureka-based newspaper, the Times Standard, and the Arcata-based Mad River Union to triangulate information when needed. In total, I analyzed 63 articles from all sources combined. For each journalistic data point, after determining that the article topic was focused on some aspect of Tuluwat Island, I then performed a manual, non-computer-derived discourse analysis of each article looking for key words as to how Indigenous and white people were described and how historical and contemporary events were presented.

The Tuluwat Island and Yurok language access impact data are not meant to be comparable but rather to serve as two examples of Indigenous cultural survival happening within one micro-region. These cases were selected from others because they are both hyper-local to the Humboldt County region while also having generalizable implications for other Indigenous communities. Language access and land reparations are both entirely plausible interventions for other settler-descendent communities to make with Indigenous communities elsewhere. Yet these cases have been scarcely studied by social scientists. Much of the literature on Native Americans in far Northern California over the past many decades has focused on cultural practices rather than the political implication of those practices. While local and regional journalistic coverage has been crucial to document that these interventions are happening at all, this article attempts to fill a gap by analyzing the Yurok and Wiyot examples as part of repertoire of resistance to culturecide in the United States. The following sections address both theory and empirical cases that relate cultural survival to language rights, land return, and above all, elevating narratives of resilience over those of silence and assimilation.

Theorizing nationalism and narratives of violence

Language rights are highly political and in many cases connected to a host of other political claims. I have written elsewhere about the claim to mother tongue education in Mexico (Tzotzil and Triqui languages), El Salvador (Nahuat and Lenca languages), and Turkey (Kurdish and Armenian languages) (Gellman, 2017). In these cases, claims are in no way limited to language itself, as the claiming of language includes the claim to cultural autonomy, which may implicate land rights, Indigenous governance rights, or systematic critiques of education institutions that force assimilation. However, as anthropologist Charles Hale once pointed out, language rights can fit into the category of "cultural work" where they are seen as less threatening (Hale, 2002: 520). While language rights may be passed off as unthreatening, in the United States, Indigenous language rights have been generally overlooked by the public education sector because any acknowledgement of contemporary indigeneity threatens to overturn to notion that "Indians are extinct" (Anonymous, 2018). Overturning that idea threatens white supremacy in ways that are deeply unsettling for those who benefit from it.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the Nigerian author and scholar, describes how language regimes – which I take to mean the institutions the institute language hierarchies, policies, and practices in a given state - shame minority citizens into furthering the interruption of language transmission in their own families and communities. Though speaking about his own experiences as a West African person losing his mother tongue, Thiong'o's social critique of colonizer and ethnic majority language dominance strongly resonates across other cases, including for those commonly referred to as the "lost generation" in countries like Australia, Canada, and the United States (Thiong'o, 1986: 217-222). The "lost generation" invokes the era when, after surviving

forced boarding schools as children, Indigenous adults then insisted on dominant language transmission to their own children and do not pass on an Indigenous language. This tended to occur because Indigenous survivors of the boarding schools themselves did not learn the heritage tongue well enough given their forced removal to colonial schools, or more typically because from social conditioning in the schools people learned to characterize Indigenous languages as not having value and therefore something that would harm, rather than help descendants if passed on (Thiong'o 1986: 217-222). As intergenerational language transmission was destroyed in many cases by forced removal to boarding schools, Indigenous students now attend school in the colonizers' language, where English is promoted as necessary to get ahead in a globalized world.

The internalization of ethnic majority values is bound up with culturecide, which in many countries takes place alongside cultural and economic globalization. The cultural hegemony of English in the United States, for example, plays a role in youth identity formation and participation. Many young people have no option to access Indigenous languages in the first place. Indeed, Yurok students at other nearby regional high schools in towns like Fortuna and Ferndale cannot access Yurok language classes in high school, because this cultural access has either not been considered, or been considered and rejected.

Mono-perspective education does great harm with politicized content when, for example, history is told only from one perspective (the victors), or when one language or set of cultural practices is elevated over differing minority practices. Native scholar Jack Norton writes:

> "What I deprecate is the rarity with which the historian acknowledges either his frame of reference, or the philosophical constructs that mold and direct his interpretations of the historical record. In the past, he has assumed an attitude of splendid isolation or a so-called impartiality, as he sifts through the stuff of history and selects the 'truth'" (Norton, 1979: ix).

Such sifting, when done by white historians producing textbooks for schoolchildren as part of assimilationist agendas, and silences some perspectives at the expense of others. The real story of what took place at Tuluwat–a racist and land-grabbing based large-scale murder of unarmed Wiyot women and children–was silenced in primarily white classrooms for generations and is not being corrected at the local level.

Curricular content is bound up with cultural relevancy, a concept that has received some attention in the field of education in the last decades (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015). Yet accommodation of minorities in education continues to butt up against a basic assumption of democratic life made by racial and ethnic majorities, who frequently occupy power positions in key institutions. For minorities to survive socially and economically, they must acquiesce to certain standards of the majority, including in cultural practices such as language choice. The English-only movement in the United States, which has manifested itself through numerous state-level referenda over the years, is emblematic of this phenomenon. In California, the battleground is most visible in terms of negating mother tongues in the schoolroom, predominantly, but not limited to, Spanish (Ballotpedia, 2016; California Department of Education, 2000).

Studies of nationalism recognize the central role that language plays in defining 'in' and 'out' group identities. Weber's classic study (1976) of how schools and the military consolidated French identity through language standardization articulates the way the education sector institutionlized assimilationist values to make modern French identity. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991) underscores the utility of a shared language for creating mutually held

national identity across large distances through the printing press, the early vehicle for newspapers that were intelligible to those who had language-assimilated to a given group. More contemporarily, May's work posits that language-based conflicts implicate the limitations of nation-state design, which are geared to homogenize through a common language and mass education (2012). My work aligns with Stepan, Linz, and Yadav's argument that nation-states are too limited a framework for today's pluriethnic composition, and that state-nation is a more accurate description of what contemporary political entities consist of (Stepan, Linz, & Yadav, 2011: 1-8). This terminological reframe allows territorially-bound political entities to be conceptualized in more culturally and linguistically plural ways than nation-state permits, while at the same time avoiding an essentialization of the language-identity link. Such framing may or may not be useful in conceptualizing membership within autonomous tribal territories, which vary significantly in ethnic composition from reservation to reservation.[6]

In the United States, homogenization efforts have decimated Indigenous languages, dropping the number of languages spoken at the time of colonial contact from 300 (Cohen, 2010) to 169 in the United States today (Coronel-Molina & McCarty, 2016: 5), although some Yurok language-keepers prefer to talk about language revitalization rather than language survival or rescue. Oppressed peoples have long figured out how to speak in covert ways. James Scott's foundational work on hidden versus public transcripts discusses the role of performance for oppressed communities as well as methods of political disguise that keep speakers safe as they voice complaints (1990: 45-58 and 136-172). In addition, in the Malaysia case study, Scott describes the "cautious resistance and calculated conformity" of village peasants towards their elite bosses by showing how publicly enacted behaviors differ from private ones (1985: 241-261).

Such performance can be likened to the behavior of some students in California boarding schools. While in some cases direct revolt against missionaries did take place, such as the 1775 Kumeyaay uprising at the San Diego Mission, children are not taught this version of history in the sanitized mission history units required by the State of California (Risling Baldy, 2017). Only in 2017 did a new California history curriculum update the mission unit from required to optional status – however, many teachers who taught the unit in previous years may include it in the years ahead, even as the controversies over how to teach mission history continues (Keenan, 2019: 1-4). Given that education is such a fundamental contributor to youth identity formation, the way that victors' versions of history are presented as fact should merit significant attention. In the following section, I turn to what it means for the Yurok language to be officially part of the curriculum in Northern California high schools. I also address broader concerns about how schools are preparing youth from a range of backgrounds for adulthood in a pluricultural world.

Yurok language access as resistance to culturecide

At the core of victors' history translated through the United States education curricula is the erasure of Native peoples as agentive and contemporary actors. From white myths of Thanksgiving celebrations to happy Indians in mission schools, the California curricula continues to present Indigenous peoples as part of a placid folkloric past that allows white students to grow up believing, as one EHS student told me, that "Indians were extinct" (Anonymous, 2018). What interrupted this highly problematic view, curated in the students' public education? Indigenous language access, as the following section shows, plays a key role in correcting such misinformation.

[6] See (Kessler-Mata, 2017) for more on federal design in relation to tribal governance structures.

Eureka High School (EHS) case study: EHS occupies several city blocks in the center of Eureka, a blue-collar town that boomed with the logging industry and busted with it too. Buildings are primarily one story—the two story central classroom building is the tallest around—and the soft yellow paint is trimmed with the red and green EHS colors, to evoke the flannel shirt of the Loggers mascot. In Humboldt County, drug use and participation in the marijuana industry and the black market in general form a counter-culture, outlaw backdrop that informs youth identity, dreams, and style. The reality of the drug market and use, combined with racial and ethnic diversity in the face of a majority white community, has led to a reputational issue for EHS. Even though EHS's test scores remain strong, there has been significant white flight of families moving their kids out of the district and into charter schools, which, in contrast to charters in many urban settings, have a higher percentage of white students than the public school alternative.

During the period of data collection for this study in 2017-2018, EHS enrolled 1,130 students with the following demographic profile: 53.8 percent white, 19 percent Hispanic or Latino, 12 percent Asian and Filipino, 4.2 percent American Indian, 2.3 percent African American, 1.6 percent Pacific Islander, along with 7.1 percent of students reporting more than one racial or ethnic identity (DataQuest, 2020b). In 201X, Eureka City Schools was sued by the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California over issues of racism and discrimination by school staff towards students. Yurok was added to the curriculum right around the time of the lawsuit, which was settled in 2015.

EHS has one Yurok teacher on staff, James Gensaw, a Yurok tribal member, who teaches Yurok levels I, II, and a combined III/IV class five days a week. Mr. Gensaw is part of a small cohort of Yurok people who actively participate in language revitalization efforts, trying to grow the language from its current base of roughly a dozen speakers. Instrumental in broader regional initiatives, from Yurok culture-focused youth summer camps to an annual Yurok Language Institute, Mr. Gensaw also represents Native American culture on the high school campus and teaches EHS students local history and the current reality of Native communities. While normalizing Yurok language in the school curriculum, his classes also offer readings of local history that differ from conventional victor's-history textbooks and therefore expand the cultural and historical knowledge of students.

Much research has already shown how youth identity and participation is formed by a range of factors, including language use (Bettie, 2014; Fishman, 1999; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). I look at Yurok language access as an indicator of culturally sensitive and diverse curriculum in the formal education sector. In that vein, Yurok language classes holds a large mandate: to correct silences and narratives of violence—victor's history—in the city school system. For the student mentioned in this section's opening who though that Native people were extinct, entering EHS and enrolling in the Yurok language class, where Mr. Gensaw makes clear to the class that Native Americans, including Yurok, Hupa, Wiyot, and Karuk people, not only still exist in the vicinity of Eureka, but are actively trying to grow the number of people who speak their languages and maintain Indigenous practices, was eye-opening.

The availability of Yurok language classes impacts students from different backgrounds in a range of ways. Students from heritage-speaking backgrounds, meaning those whose parents, grandparents, or ancestors spoke the language or were ethnically identified with it in some way, repeatedly told me they were taking the class to reclaim something their grandparents or other family members had lost through processes of colonization or external oppression, such as being

beaten in school for speaking their language, and that these elders had then internalized as knowledge that their mother tongue was worthless or a danger to its speakers.

At EHS, students talked about having much more demographically mixed social circles than their parents and grandparents, and they frequently made comments like "my grandparents were discriminated against for being Indigenous but not me" (C. Anonymous, 2018) or "my parents feel uncomfortable being immigrants in Eureka but I don't" (E. Anonymous, 2018). Indigenous language teachers like Mr. Gensaw have brought historical truths and contemporary culture not taught elsewhere into the Yurok language classroom, allowing non-Native students, especially white students, to undo problematic narratives about Indigenous people they had previously learned.

Hoopa Valley High School (HVHS): HVHS sits in a valley ringed by mountains and across the street from the Klamath River. Located in Humboldt County, it is part of the Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District, which has some of the highest percentages of Native American K-12 student enrollment in the state. During academic year 2018-19, when the majority of data collection took place at HVHS, the schools' student body was 82.7 percent American Indian, seven percent white, 6.6 percent Hispanic or Latino, 0.8 percent Pacific Islander, 0.4 percent African American, and 2.5 percent of students identified as being of two or more races (DataQuest, 2020c).

Carole Lewis, a long-time Yurok language teacher and Yurok elder, instructs levels I, II, and a combined III/IV class at HVHS, and is also the instructor for the first fall 2018 Yurok language class at the local Community College (College of the Redwoods-Klamath) Trinity campus. Like Mr. Gensaw at EHS, her classes similarly engage cultural and historical knowledge in addition to language. As HVHS is situated in a place where the majority of the students identify personally with Indigenous culture in some way, this curricular cultural recognition operates more as an identity confirmation mechanism than in Eureka, where revelations about Yurok existence and realities are often surprising for white students with little previous exposure to Yurok reality.

Many Indigenous students at HVHS talked about the emotional pain of identity loss for their elders based on these childhood experiences of physical and emotional violence. Indigenous language students of today who are heritage speakers see the connections between their own ability to study the language and their sense of self as Indigenous people.

Students at both EHS and HVHS show an enthusiasm for learning Yurok in ways that convey an appreciation for exposure to either heritage culture or culture of others. The impact on Indigenous students, who see their heritage language and culture reflected in the formal curriculum, is something that boosts self-esteem, identity confirmation, and participatory behavior. After generations of culturecide, access to Indigenous language classes is part of Indigenous cultural survival in northern California.

On mascots and meaning: It is not lost on HVHS students that they undertake Yurok language study on the same swath of land that previously held the Hoopa Valley Indian School, where their grandparents were beaten for speaking Indigenous languages. Nor are students ignorant of the historically fraught facts that if they excel and graduate from the home of the Warriors, they might continue their studies at the home of the lumberjacks.

Humboldt State University (HSU), part of the California State University system, has not changed its mascot, the lumberjack, which is flaunted beyond sports arenas, despite controversy

(Wood, 2019). HVHS's mascot, the warrior, is represented by feathers and a spiked H for Hoopa. Unlike many Native mascots at majority white schools or teams, Hoopa's majority Native demographic means that it has not come under scrutiny in debates about misrepresentation or appropriation.[7] Yet calls for changing both the HSU lumberjack and EHS logger mascots have not been heeded, and the imagery is confronting.

In 2019, a college recruiting event at EHS featured HSU's highlighting its policy to automatically enroll the top ten percent of the graduating class, hoping to bolster their waning local enrollment and degree completion rates through direct outreach. HSU's administrators came with the mascot, a jolly dancing lumberjack with his stuffed axe, and I couldn't help scanning the student faces sitting in the audience to see how they reacted. One of the only Native students invited to the event, whom I had previously interviewed, sat stone-faced directly in front of the lumberjack, representative of the white settler community. She knew her family's history and what intergenerational trauma meant. But here was the mascot in front of her, bound together with the promise of college success. How was she supposed to filter this experience through her own Native identity and history? Mascots are rarely simply funny images that students and their families can rally around. Such figures embody worldviews and power dynamics that decide who is included or excluded in a given community. The section below examines the way that memory politics are connected to culturecide and Indigenous cultural survival.

Apologizing for a massacre in Humboldt County

On October 21, 2019, the City Council of Eureka unanimously voted to return the entirety of Tuluwat Island, as Indian Island is named in the Wiyot language, to the Wiyot Tribe (Greenson, 2019). This represents one of the few moments of atonement in Humboldt County for the genocidal past. Tuluwat Island is the largest of three islands in Humboldt Bay, nearly a mile long and a half-mile wide. Tuluwat was home to two Wiyot villages, Etpidohl and Tuluwat, which served as the base for an annual World Renewal Ceremony. In 1860, villagers were preparing for the ceremony when white vigilantes invaded the island in the middle of the night, slaughtering up to 250 women and girls left to keep the camps while most the men were away fishing and hunting (Doran & McVicar, 2004; Norton, 1979: 65).

Over the last two decades, the Wiyot Tribe has fought to get Tuluwat back. In 2000, from the proceeds of a grassroots fundraising campaign, the Wiyot Tribe bought back 1.5 acres of the island from the City of Eureka, and began an environmental restoration project to address the contamination of the island from sewage and industrial pollution from a former lumber mill. In 2004, the City returned an additional forty acres to the Tribe, and the ceremony included members of the Wiyot Tribe sailing from the Adorni Center on the shore of the Bay, to the island in traditional boats after the paperwork was signed (Doran & McVicar, 2004).

The story of Tuluwat Island is in some ways emblematic of this remote corner of California, now popularly described as being behind the Redwood Curtain, meaning the part of Northern California ensconced in rainy redwoods, with bad internet and periodically cut off from elsewhere by landslides on Highway 101. The other nickname for the region, the Emerald Triangle, refers to the fertile marijuana-growing area of Humboldt, Mendicino, and Trinity

[7] Del Norte High School, an hour and a half north of Eureka on Highway 101, when Yurok and Tolowa languages are taught, also has the Warriors as its mascot. However, Del Norte High School is only thirteen percent Indigenous (DataQuest, 2020a). It is outside the scope of this paper to compare the role of mascots at the two schools, but would be of interest for future research.

Counties. From gold to marijuana, Northern California has been central to white dreams of land-based freedom and profit developed without respect for the traditional owners of the land.

The violence that characterized the colonization of Northern California was not at all unique, nor was the fervency of deliberately forgetting that past, and glorifying it instead. The particular uniqueness of Tuluwat, rather, lies in the fact that it was physically given back. In the ritual of land repatriation, words of apology were spoken by white settler-descendants, including the Eureka Mayor, for the unpunished crimes of their forbearers, and recognition for a wrong was made public (Greenson, 2019). The recognition this gives to Indigenous grievances in Northern California is vital, as such an apology serves to legitimate Indigenous versions of historical and present inequities. There have been other actions taken by white people in Humboldt County to acknowledge violence against Indigenous people in the region. One organization, Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County partnered with the Seventh Generation Fund to create a voluntary "Honor Tax" on landowners whose homes were within the traditional boundaries of Wiyot land as a way of acknowledging the history of land theft (Walters, 2009). The Tax was controversial–just see the comments pages of online articles about it – but it was an awareness-raising campaign even more than a financial one (Walters, 2009).

One of many conflicts over apologies for minorities for violence ranging from slavery to boarding schools is that any admission of guilt will open the doorway to rights demands (Coates, 2014; Nobles, 2008). This "shaming and claiming" pattern has been effective to get states to acknowledge atrocities that they could no longer publicly ignore because of public pressure, but what rights are actually being claimed varies dramatically from case to case (Gellman, 2017). I've previously written about cultural rights claims, especially the right to mother tongue education, as a demand of minority social movements wielding memories of violence as their proof that their states owe them something (Gellman, 2017).

Cases like the returning of Tuluwat to the Wiyot Tribe are so rare because giving land back to its traditional owners, something that many Indigenous activists think white people in the United States should do, is highly contentious. Many liberal white back-to-the-landers in Humboldt County who spent years building their homesteads on traditionally Indigenous land applauded the return of Tuluwat but made no move to turn over their own acreage. While the return of land remains the gold standard of apology to Indigenous peoples for white violence against them, such structural reparations strike at the heart of nationalist agendas and show a resistance to culturecide that such agendas entail.

While I was in the audience on June 25th, 2004, watching the celebratory dancing as part of Tuluwat was returned to the Wiyot Tribe, I did not understand at the time the larger context for what I was witnessing. I grew up white in Humboldt County and attended Eureka High School, and the Wiyot Massacre was never taught in my history curriculum, nor has it been added at EHS to date. I recognize that the story of Tuluwat has never been mine to tell, but, as anti-racist scholarship grows, there is also an increasing awareness that non-Native people have a responsibility to use their resources to amplify the stories of others and correct historical injustice when possible.

The politics of memory

Culturecide and cultural survival, at opposite end on a spectrum of cultural practice, are made up of both tangible and intangible processes that are both institutionally and non-institutionally manifested. For example white-dominant history books are institutionally sanctioned by school districts, while the norm of speaking English operates as a non-institutional

but nevertheless pervasive cultural norm throughout community spaces. In both culturecide and cultural survival, memory – from whose perspective and for what purpose – and language choice and use, are two spheres where white-majority institutions can engage in culturecide or supporting Indigenous cultural survival.

Memories serve as symbolic means to transmit ideas across people, places, and moments. People use a variety of symbols to link personal realities to communal ones across time (Eber & Neal, 2001: 6). Memory is also highly political and scholars have detailed how the act of forgetting plays a role in democratization and democratic consolidation and stability.[8] From Spain's dramatically legislated Forgetting Pact, accompanying an amnesty for those involved in Franco's civil war (Encarnación, 2008a, 2008b, 2014), to memory manipulation in Argentina (Jelin, 2003), and Chile (Hite, 2000), memory is highly political. State-mandated forgetting has also taken place through amnesty laws in numerous countries (Cobban, 2007), with courts and congresses playing key roles in legislating what will be officially remembered or recognized (Collins, 2008: 22-31).

The United States has been a stark example of institutionalized forgetting, with memories of Indigenous genocide silenced through government agencies, courts, and schools. One Yurok and Karuk writer lays out this silence:

> "We've never been apologized to for the loss of our people during the gold rush, we've never been apologized to for the theft of our land under the General Allotment Act of 1887, we've never been apologized to for the loss of language, and the attempted extinction of our culture by the boarding schools, and on and on and on" (McCovey, 2006: 291).

In 2009, President Obama signed the Native American Apology Resolution that apologized "on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native peoples by citizens of the United States" (Capriccioso, 2010). This resolution was tacked onto a defense appropriations spending bill that received little publicity, leaving one journalist to ask, "Is an apology that's not said out loud really an apology?" (Capriccioso, 2010). Yet Obama's apology has been the only federal-level apology of its kind, though California Governor Gavin Newsom has facilitated state-level recognition through Executive Order N-15-19, recognizing the wrongs of the state towards Native Americans, and also labeling past white treatment of Native people in the state "a genocide" (Hamilton, 2019).

While forgetting may bolster the self-perception of white people, including settler-descendants, denying the validity of Native Americans' collectively held memories about violence against them diminishes the identities of those who are memory-keepers. For Indigenous youth in the United States, stories about familial experiences of boarding schools or local massacres takes place mostly in oral contexts, as those stories have not been incorporated into K-12 curricula, nor has most of the stolen land been returned to traditional owners.

Conclusion: Indigenous cultural survival as resistance to culturecide

[8] There are models of remembering violence as an integral part of societal healing as well. Germany's intentional integration of a Holocaust curriculum following World War II set a high standard for how state-based atrocities can be sensitively conveyed to a range of age groups through the public education sector. Given the comparability of the United States to the German case in terms of resources and institutional capacity, the lack of political will in the United States to acknowledge the genocide of Indigenous people stands out all the more starkly.

This article has shown how resistance to culturecide as part of Indigenous cultural survival is intricately linked to white institutional spaces of power. In doing so, I challenge the notion that assimilation into dominant cultural frameworks is inevitable, In fact, dominant frameworks of white supremacy, as visible through public sector educational curricula as well as land control, will take collaborative labor across racial and ethnic lines to overturn. Indigenous language access in schools and land return to traditional owners are two concrete measures that antiracist allies can investigate in their own communities.

Education serves as the mechanism to interrupt problematic misconceptions of Indigenous peoples. Bringing Indigenous languages and culture into the public education sector is one way to begin reversing the history of misinformation youth receive about Indigenous peoples. Participation in language and cultural programming can serve as a means of resistance to culturecide for heritage speakers, and as an intercultural competency building tool for non-heritage speakers. Nationalism rests on a foundation of language politics, as well as ethnic majority control of memory and narratives. Ultimately, such narratives of Indigenous silence or erasure can begin to be challenged through the cultural knowledge that comes with Indigenous language access for young people at school. Though my research findings show that providing Indigenous language access is not a panacea for the many issues that Indigenous communities, and Indigenous students, face, such access can be included in education policy to reverse systematic culturecide of Indigenous peoples in the formal education sector.

The Tuluwat Island return shows the way that persistent culturally held memory of the massacre was a persuasive tool for issue framing in shaming and claiming the City of Eureka to return the Island. This example is the most fundamental kind of cultural survival – the reclaiming of traditional territory that enables so many other cultural rights to flourish. The Wiyot Tribe, like many other Indigenous groups in the United States, is working to maintain and support a range of cultural rights, including language rights for their communities (Wiyot Tribe, 2020), even as many of the last wave of native speakers have passed away, making intergenerational transmission all the more difficult. With the return of Tuluwat Island, Wiyot people can again hold their World Renewal Ceremonies on that space, transforming a place of genocide against Wiyot people into a place that showcases Indigenous resilience, resistance, and survival.

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