

# UC San Diego

## UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

K'yip Nah (Listen Up!): We Are Still a Coastal People

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/84v4695t>

### Author

Connolly, Michael

### Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

K'yip Nah (Listen Up!): We Are Still a Coastal People

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Michael L. Connolly

Committee in Charge:

Professor Paul Goldstein, Chair  
Professor Dredge Byung'chu Kang  
Professor Rihan Yeh

2024

©

Michael L. Connolly, 2024

All rights reserved

The Thesis of Michael L. Connolly is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2024

## DEDICATION

To the Kumeyaay ancestors of Mat Quolahoyl.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	iii
DEDICATION .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vii
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS .....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 BACKGROUND.....	6
2.0 SOVEREIGNTY’S SYNCRETICITY, A DUALITY OF DEFINITION .....	14
3.0 SETTING & SCENE .....	18
4.0 SYNTHESIS .....	29
CONCLUSION .....	34
REFERENCES.....	39

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Traditional Kumeyaay Lands.....	6
Figure 2 Kumeyaay Constellations.....	27

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Professor Paul Goldstein, as Chair of my committee, as well as, Professor Dredge Byung'chu Kang and Professor Rihan Yeh as committee members for their invaluable guidance in multiple drafts.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance in reviewing my early drafts by Professor Ross Frank of the Ethnic Studies Department and Ash Cornejo, a fellow anthropology student. Professor Margaret Field from San Diego State University provided helpful insights. The editorial support of Stephanie Connolly, my wife, has been immeasurable.

This paper would not have been possible without the speeches of Dr. Paul Cuero of Campo, Dr. Stan Rodriguez of Santa Ysabel, and Councilman Jamie LaBrake of Sycuan who all supported my efforts. My thanks also go to Mary Munk for providing me the recordings of the speeches and providing the setting where they were made.



## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

K'yip Nah (Listen Up!): We Are Still a Coastal People

by

Michael L. Connolly

Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California San Diego, 2024

Professor Paul Goldstein, Chair

After 275 years of domination and disenfranchisement from the coast of the San Diego – Tijuana region, the tenuous threads of Kumeyaay coastal identity, spirituality and community are reinvigorated through nested acts of participation and public speaking in non-Indigenous ceremonies. But how is this done without undermining the equally important sovereign identity that underlies the reality of Indigenous existence as political states within the United States?

What appears to be simple acts of participation and sharing can also represent a complex effort to reforge a relationship with a place that holds tremendous spiritual importance. The type and level of each Kumeyaay contribution in such a setting represents both collective and individual expressions of sovereignty and individual expressions of personal identity. Representations of the Kumeyaay by urban populations have often been orchestrated by interests hostile to Kumeyaay and, at

times, the physical existence of Kumeyaay people, since the earliest Spanish settlements. Only recently have challenges to many of the historical truisms of Indigenous identity been able to find expression within the dominant culture. A public event can provide an opportunity to confront aspects of historical subjugation while finding common ground and teaming up with other groups over shared values. This formation of identity and cultural allegiance can also serve to educate the public regarding the nature of Kumeyaay sovereignty and identity as a modern people.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2022, at a public event in a San Diego coastal community, the keynote speaker looks over the attentive crowd and begins speaking.....in Kumeyaay. After a short pause he looks upon the crowd and says “....I can see that not all of you understood what I said. I was speaking in American....I will now translate it into English.” The crowd’s reaction includes a mix of persons smiling and some puzzled, not quite sure if they’ve missed something in the speech as he goes on to restate his introduction in English. (Connolly 2022)

With this start, the speaker, Dr. Stan Rodriguez, has defined his presence at the event, not only as a guest of the organizers, but also as an Indigenous person in his own land. By appropriating the word “American”, a term he uses as more fitting to describe the Indigenous language of the Kumeyaay than English, he steps outside of the framework and role constructed by the dominant society. And in so doing, he invites the listeners to reframe their roles as audience into that of newcomer in a land of much Indigenous history. Yet, his co-opting of the term “American” was done in a relatively non-threatening, or even humorous, way.

The public event, in this case, is for Dr. Walter Munk, a groundbreaking oceanographer, graduate and early researcher at Scripps Institute of Oceanography (SIO). (Scripps Institute of Oceanography 2024) The location is Kellogg Park in La Jolla Shores, San Diego, known as Mutt Qulahoyl to the Kumeyaay. The subject of this paper is Walter Munk Day October 14, 2023, with some references to the previous year’s event on October 8, 2022. Walter Munk Day grew out of Ocean Awareness Day,

October, 2020, which memorialized Walter's passing in February, 2019 and became an annual event. In 2023 it was formally named "Walter Munk Day".

As a Kumeyaay citizen, former tribal Councilman<sup>1</sup> and a long-time co-educator with Dr. Rodriguez, I understand how important this framing of experience is to the introduction of the event and also how the significance of his words may be lost on many of the audience.

There are also two primary audiences in attendance, the non-Kumeyaay and the Kumeyaay. Neither group is homogeneous. Many of the thirty-plus Kumeyaay are young people, who are only now forming their understanding of the Kumeyaay relationship to the ocean. Others are members of the Kumeyaay community who came out of respect for the Kumeyaay speakers and educators and wanted to show their support for the efforts of the Kumeyaay participants. Most of the Kumeyaay are active in cultural or educational programs in the community. The non-Kumeyaay are local La Jolla residents and people from other parts of San Diego who generally were drawn to the event from a collective respect for ocean protection or to hear specific topics covered, or those who stumbled upon the event while visiting the beach area. Many of these people were educators or researchers who were participating to highlight their research or support for ocean research and protection.

The annual event is organized by the "Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans" led by Walter's widow, Mary Munk. At her request, Kumeyaay were invited to open the 2022 event and provide traditional songs. Scheduling conflicts and a rushed agenda forced the Kumeyaay participants to curtail their role. In what follows, I will relate how the organizers responded, inviting a much more Kumeyaay driven agenda for 2023. I

---

<sup>1</sup> I served 17 years as an elected tribal Councilman for the Campo Kumeyaay Nation.

returned to the 2023 event with a clear desire to watch the event unfold as a Kumeyaay participant observer.

In this paper, I approach the La Jolla event as a ritualized performance with a standard format of speakers, presentations and ceremonial acts, centered on specific agendas related to the Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans' (Foundation) mission to support ocean conservation, research and researchers, and outreach and educational programs. A bathymetric sculpture of the on and offshore terrain, including an image from Kumeyaay cosmology, was also scheduled for an unveiling at the event. Nested within this performance, Kumeyaay participants sought to structure their involvement to bring Indigenous perspectives to the event, through the use of elements of language, location, culture, and history, while still endorsing the mission of the Foundation. Volunteers from Kumeyaay cultural organizations developed signs and banners combining Kumeyaay symbols and words to showcase the Kumeyaay's relationship with the ocean. In this case, the very site of the event has extensive archaeological and historical significance. One early archaeologist of the San Diego region, Dr. Malcolm Rogers, stated that the richest archaeological site of the San Diego coast was in the La Jolla Shores area prior to being bulldozed for development in the 1920s. (Gallegos 2017) The motivation and benefit of involvement for the Kumeyaay may be very different from the stated purpose of the event organizers, even when there is a shared view on the official theme. In many ways, their participation itself notifies the observers of the fact that Kumeyaay are not only historical, but part of contemporary society, while also being a distinct, sovereign people.

For the Kumeyaay, reasserting their presence in the dispossessed coastal region is part of a broader reclamation of identity that extends to place names, highways, public art, land, education, cultural resources and ethnoecology. Reclamation of identity is, in and of itself, a nested undertaking within the broader context of exercising sovereignty. These broad actions challenge the assumed authority of the colonizers to write the history. What are the impediments to Kumeyaay re-emergence as viable participants in the regional social structure? What are the potential negative consequences to Kumeyaay reasserting identity? How do the tools of re-emergence manifest themselves? In this context, it is the Kumeyaay who seek to analyze and understand the sociocultural framework of subsets of American people in order to best communicate a non-assimilationist position without provoking defensiveness, indignation or retaliation. It is here that the Kumeyaay become the ethnographer, carefully peeling through the composite structures of non-Kumeyaay social interaction.

I will lay out the colonial framework regarding Kumeyaay, in the context of a government structure with roots in the self-proclaimed legitimacy of the dominator, and describe how the mere presence of Kumeyaay at contemporary events serves to undermine a narrative that was cobbled together over 100 years ago to serve California commercial and religious interests. (Lorimer 2016) In addition to presence, the Kumeyaay are challenging the “right to define” who they are as a people in both historical and contemporary contexts. (Smith 2012)

The use of the coastal zone for traditional practices, like tule boat launching, fishing, shell fish collection and gatherings, is part of a communal utilization of traditional lands that reinforces the spiritual connection of the community members to each other,

and to the land. This is not a pathway to assimilation like those suggested by the civil rights movement in the 1960s, when many liberal white Americans viewed integration into the mainstream of U.S. society as a liberating process. (Deloria 2007, 143) Most tribal nations are, in fact, seeking liberation from colonialism which, under the present legal structure, relates to sovereignty and the powers to self-govern as a distinct people, rather than assimilation through “civic inclusion” (Temin 2017, 359)

Also, it should be noted that there are Kumeyaay people who choose not to participate in non-Native events for a variety of reasons, including a lack of desire in assuaging what they perceive as “white guilt” by accepting an invitation. For those people, participation would provide a type of absolution that cannot be segmented from the professed themes of the event.

In what follows, I will focus on how discourse highlights the depths of Kumeyaay connection to land and, specifically, coastal lands and the historical dispossession that followed colonization. Recognition is sought for the right to continued existence as a distinct culture, within the framework of contemporary San Diego / Baja California societies. How ways can be created for Kumeyaay, as distinct and separate people, to share common ground with others who feel a love for and obligation to the ocean, and its inhabitants, is demonstrated in the actions and dialogue. The Kumeyaay social relationship could be construed as the “mutuality of being” of kinship bonds as defined by Sahlins (2011) and, as such, will be protected even at the cost of non-acceptance by the dominant society. The engagement of participants is dynamic for the Kumeyaay individuals as well, as they weigh their personal comfort level in this conditional sharing of social bonds with mostly strangers.

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

The traditional territory of the Kumeyaay includes most of San Diego and Imperial Counties, as well as northern Baja California. The territory has dramatic variations in ecosystems and climate, from coastal to inland chaparral, to mountain pine forest, and high desert to low desert below sea level. Kumeyaay Sh'mulls, or clans, controlled resources of specific drainages in the watersheds and maintained an extensive network of alliances through inter-Sh'mull relationships. (Connolly-Miskwish 2007)



Figure 1 Traditional Kumeyaay Lands

Three waves of colonial intrusion, Spanish, Mexican, and American, each impacted the Kumeyaay in a variety of ways. The entry of the colonial mission structure in Cosoy (San Diego) in 1769 marked the start of a long-term restructuring of the traditional alliance systems. Initially, resistance to the Franciscan Mission in San Diego



and the Dominican Mission in Baja California followed similar but distinct pathways. The Baja Kumeyaay negotiated agreements for religious freedom in return for military support to the San Miguel Mission. (Connolly-Miskwish 2020) In 1775, the Kumeyaay in San Diego launched a large scale attack destroying the Mission temporarily, effectively halting the eastward expansion of the mission system at 30 miles from the coast. (Connolly-Miskwish 2007)

The fierce, armed, resistance of the inland clans enabled the Kumeyaay to hold large sections of their traditional lands beyond the control of the Spanish and Mexican governments. The Alta California missions were a variant of the colonial process of “reducciones”, which attempted to strip native culture and identity completely away and move people to central locations “congregaciones”, where they were indoctrinated into their roles in Spanish or Mexican society. (Stern 1993) This process was hindered in the colonial mission system by the autonomy and independence of most Kumeyaay and was never fully implemented. Kumeyaay adaptability even allowed for trade and commerce, at times, between the occupied lands and the inland Sh’mulls during periods of intermittent peace. The Spaniards eventually established six missions or extensions in the Kumeyaay lands, and all but one was close to the coastline. Mexican independence brought promises of equality, but ended with years of battles for control of the interior lands. Many Kumeyaay were able to survive due to the need for Indian labor, the capability and willingness to use force to protect themselves and their families. (Connolly-Miskwish 2007)

By the time of the American presence, starting in 1846, Kumeyaay could be found working on most of the ranches of the area and in domestic roles in the coastal

communities, making them central to the labor force. (Shipek 1991) A significant portion of the population maintained independence into the 1860s while small groups, in the rural back country, escaped notice into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Kumeyaay camps near the coastal communities became a critical part of the early American coastal economy from 1850 -1915, providing sources of labor to whaling ships, docks, construction and domestic help. (Carrico 1984) Lacking citizenship, many Kumeyaay found themselves in the untenable position of lacking protections and subjecting them to summary eviction by city officials or incoming homesteaders. At times, gangs of brutalizing whites would raid urban Kumeyaay encampments, raping and pillaging for entertainment. (Carrico 1987) Survival, at times, was tied to becoming invisible, avoiding the gaze of the State (in all its manifestations, local, federal, California). The United States, in 1852, brought promises of treaties for the Kumeyaay and other California Indians, protecting their sovereignty and existence through the creation of 7.5 million acres of Reservation land in 18 treaties. The treaties were voted down in a Senate committee and California began a widespread effort to dispossess or destroy any populations in the way of white profits or settlement. (Connolly-Miskwish 2007)

Laws specifically targeting Indians as unpaid labor in California were not repealed by the California legislature until after the Civil War, and then it was to comply with the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and its provisions protecting against the taking of "...life, liberty, or property without due process of law," nor to deny any person "the equal protection of the law". (Johnston-Dodds 2002) However, California continued with its own version of the southern "Jim Crow" laws that were selectively

enforced, such as “vagrancy” and boarding school “outing” of unpaid labor. Bondage contracts were continued to be enforced even after the passage of the 1867 Anti-Peonage Act by Congress. The boarding school system continued the practice of unpaid Indian labor into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by integrating the practice into the educational process. (Pfaelzer 2023)

Reservations for Kumeyaay (Iipay and Tiipay)<sup>2</sup> eventually began to be created by Executive Order starting in 1875 and continuing through 1893. Three Reservations were created in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century bringing the total to twelve.<sup>3</sup> As large numbers of eastern U.S. white citizens began to alter the demographics of the region, the idea that the Indians had disappeared into the mission and rancho structures was incongruent with the existence of Indian villages. Kumeyaay people were forced to either extricate themselves from a redefined world, where their very presence was incompatible, and move inland to retain their cultural identity or find ways to assimilate into the dominant society.

Even into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, small pockets of Kumeyaay were being evicted, relocated or became “invisible”. Small coastal villages in Chollas Creek, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Lake Murray and Rose Canyon broke apart to avoid violence from American migrants to the area from 1850-1900. (Carrico 1984). In 1904, six Kumeyaay families from Coronado Island were relocated to Mesa Grande Reservation and Kumeyaay hunting parties were reported using the fresh water spring on the Island as late as 1914. (Coronado Times 2023) Kumeyaay were evicted from Balboa Park in 1915 as a part of

---

<sup>2</sup> Iipay and Tiipay are the two major language groups. Some Kumeyaay prefer to politically identify with their language group, others use the Mexican designation of “Diegueño” or the general American term of “Mission Indian”.

<sup>3</sup> Mexico create four Indigenous Ejidos in northern Baja California for their Kumeyaay population.

preparation for the San Diego Panama Exposition. Many hidden rural communities became known when a famine struck in the 1897-1904 time frame and Kumeyaay people were forced to seek aid to avoid starvation. (Corona Courier 1904) Many of these Kumeyaay populations were relocated to reservations. All of the Kumeyaay Reservation lands are removed from the coastal area, many situated on marginal lands, over 50 miles from the coast in mountainous terrain. (Shipek 1987)

The fate of the coastal Kumeyaay villages was to ultimately be destroyed in the public consciousness by the crafting of a historically fictitious California as a legacy of a genteel, pastoral Spanish/Mexican utopia concocted by the railroads, chambers of commerce and city boosters. (Thompson 2011) This major rewrite of California history started in the 1880s as white Californians searched for the proper lure to bring in migrants from the eastern white population centers of the U.S. Romantic notions of Mexican ranchos, popularized in novels such as *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson, (1884), captured the imagination of white Americans. Visitors were enticed by restored mission structures, building “old town San Diego”, erecting monuments, changing names and creating architectural styles such as Mission Revival (c.1890s) and Spanish Revival (early 20<sup>th</sup> Century). In this new narrative, the Kumeyaay became a fictional footnote of passive acceptance and conversion into the Mission structure and eventual absorption into mainstream society. This narrative was incorporated into the California elementary school curricula where children would, and continue to, study California history by re-enacting scenes of priests and passive, compliant flocks of neophytes. (Lorimer 2016) This narrative also served to place Kumeyaay out of the “present” by the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The lack of ratified treaties eventually became a rallying point for California Indians in the 1920's. In southern California representatives from most of the Reservations united under the banner of the Mission Indian Federation (MIF), to challenge the authority of the United States over Indian<sup>4</sup> lands in the State. Ultimately, the MIF lost that fight in the face of changing laws, widespread support within Indian country for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and token settlements by the courts. Faced with efforts to terminate the existence of Reservations in the 1950s, many were in a fight to simply exist.

With the passage of the Indian Self-Determination Act (1975), tribal governments were restored, to a significant degree, in their authority over their Reservation lands. Through this law the Kumeyaay, like many tribal nations, sought to regain economic security, regulatory control of the land, control over the child welfare system, health care authority, and improved education. Coastal connections, at this point, had dwindled to sporadic individual efforts to harvest resources.

The twelve Kumeyaay Reservations in San Diego County, each recognized as a distinct sovereign nation<sup>5</sup> under U.S. law, which evolved out of this erratic history of conflicting social policies, are now each based on some type of democratic process which elects leaders who can speak on behalf of the Reservation community. The old clan system of the Sh'mulls no longer exists as a formal structure after decades of fragmentation, encroachment, violence and the geographical rearrangement. Existing within the Reservations are oftentimes several different Sh'mulls, where the network of alliances and assistance still exist informally. While a limited type of sovereignty is

---

<sup>4</sup> "Indian" in this paper refers to American Indians or Native Americans.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term "Indian Nation" when referring to the sovereign political states of American Indians.

exercised by the Indian Nations on the Reservation lands in the United States, extending the reach of that sovereign authority beyond the Reservation boundaries has been severely limited until relatively recently. Through the development of Reservation environmental standards under federal law, the Indian Nations have enacted standards that must be acknowledged and, in some cases, complied with by the State to maintain environmental quality. This does not expand sovereignty in relation to the U.S. as it is a delegation of federal power. However, the political power gained by Indian Nation governments, through delegation, does create a more equitable relationship with the State regulatory structure. In the last few years the State of California has opened itself to discussions regarding the enactment of water quality standards based on indigenous beneficial use for non-Reservation lands. The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board is actively engaged with regional Indian Nations to determine how tribal utilization concerns can be addressed for all waters under State jurisdiction. (California Water Boards 2024)

Since the early nineties, efforts by Indian Nations in California, and their allies, have borne some success in getting federal and State laws enacted, which acknowledge an increasing role for Californian Indians to participate in decisions regarding religious or cultural archaeological resources on lands outside the Reservations. Kumeyaay have begun reasserting their public presence in traditional coastal and important inland areas. Oftentimes, these assertions are done in conjunction with existing events not organized by the Kumeyaay communities. Other times, the Kumeyaay actions are by specific invitation or cooperative engagement such

as the non-voting representation of Indian Nations in the SANDAG (San Diego Association of Governments). (SANDAG 2024)

The expanded role of Indian Nations in economic, social and political settings, that have only recently become receptive to formalized Indian Nation participation, makes events like Walter Munk Day an opportunity to define what could become a new standard of ritualized observance.

## 2.0 SOVEREIGNTY'S SYNCRETICITY, A DUALITY OF DEFINITION

Kumeyaay opportunities to affect the perceptions of the dominant culture regarding sovereignty are not as common as one might think. When Kumeyaay are invited to ritualized events or ceremonies in the San Diego region, it is usually in a supporting role to do an invocation, opening song, or more recently, to participate in a "land acknowledgement". (Stewart-Ambo & Yang 2023) When the event does have an Indigenous educational or sociocultural orientation the audience is more likely to include participants who already have some grounding in Indigenous cultural perspectives. Being invited to speak to a different segment of the non-Kumeyaay community carries additional import. In this paper, I will focus on a ritualized performance where the audience included scientists, oceanographic researchers and ocean environmental activists, combined with residents and students from the local region.

Sovereignty has a range of meanings to individual Kumeyaay people. The most foundational decisions in U.S. law are premised on the decisions of the Marshall Court (often referred to as the Marshall trilogy from 1823, 1831, 1832) that created the definition of Indian Nations as "domestic, dependent, sovereign nations" with a remnant of the complete independence that existed prior to colonial intrusion. (Canby, William C., Jr. 2004,14-17) The Standing Rock Sioux theorist Vine Deloria advised that sovereignty must be redefined by native people or it becomes a confining concept. (Temin 2017) Certainly, the relationship of Kumeyaay to their lands has more to it than either "property" as a set of individual rights or imperial rights of "sovereignty" allowed by a people over a political state. (Locke 2021). Within the Kumeyaay community, I have seen that individuals have acted as Deloria suggested by blending the exercise of



sovereignty with traditional relationships to land and resources thereby going beyond the Western definitions.

The reciprocal responsibilities and intimacy of Kumeyaay people's relationship with the land has been described by some as e'Muht Mohay, or "love of the land" in contemporary Kumeyaay usage. (Connolly-Miskwish 2021) It is the basis of Kumeyaay people's incentive to participate in public events before a non-Kumeyaay audience, hoping to make them aware that this connection is part of a different world view that should be honored and respected. Beyond property titles and legal definitions of ownership is a relationship built on the history of human ancestors to the ancestral plants and animals of those Indigenous species that still inhabit the region. E'Muht Mohay includes the responsibility to the ancestral remains that are ubiquitous to the region; these relationships extend into the submerged landscape off the coast where Kumeyaay once lived when the sea level was much lower. From the Kumeyaay perspective, to relegate the land to a commodity diminishes its identity and, indirectly, the spiritual wholeness of Kumeyaay identity. This belief then becomes the duality of sovereignty definition which is both the legal concept that must be used in the federal/State relationships and the deeper non-Western definition that intertwines traditional understandings and beliefs.

Sovereignty carries with it a paradoxical identity. It is a claim of autonomy that is dependent on others for recognition. Without the recognition of others it is a claim in a vacuum. (Rutherford 2012) How do you maximize the expression of sovereignty without diminishing that autonomy through actions perceived as obeisance or patronage? How can one avoid being perceived as seeking validation when, in fact,

sovereignty needs validation to exist? For the singers, dancers and other Kumeyaay participants, simply being present is meaningful as a social act of collective positionality. The audience is invited to share the Kumeyaay perceptions of important topics by making those topics visible through the format of a language (English) and social event that carry their own relationships of hierarchical structure.

Historically, there were many times when such visibility was not sought and, in fact, was avoided. Even today, there are many who question the desirability of participating in non-Kumeyaay events. This is compounded by the fact that there were decades of active efforts to erase the Kumeyaay presence by the outside community. The negation of Indigenous history is nothing unique to Kumeyaay. As noted by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012, 31), such historical negation of Indigenous perspectives was "...a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization."

Indian Nation sovereignty has been more of an ephemeral concept through most of U.S. history, useful to the government when wanting to impose paternalistic policies and restrict personal freedoms, but limited as an effective tool for tribal benefit until it became the backdrop for positive structural changes in the tribal-federal relationship after 1960 leading to the development of economic bases such as gaming in the 1980s. However, the indigenous relationship with the world continues from before the first contacts with colonial powers to the present where it is now reflected in emerging modern perceptions of sovereignty. It is this complex definition sovereignty which

underlies the Kumeyaay presence, participation, and discourse at Walter Munk Day 2023.

### 3.0 SETTING AND SCENE

Organizing for Walter Munk Day, October 14, 2023, started as soon as the 2022 event concluded. New permits were applied for and, within a few months solicitations went out to mailing lists and social media for reservations for display booths. On the event day, booths were being set up at Kellogg Park in the La Jolla Shores neighborhood by participants as early as 9 am. Many booths were staffed by people from schools, environmental organizations, companies and museums. Four booths, staffed by Kumeyaay volunteers, were dedicated to Kumeyaay topics: cosmology, education, crafts, and land conservation. Most of the Kumeyaay in the crowd were attending as participants in either the booths or in the boat-building tent. Many of the Kumeyaay came by personal vehicle but carpooling was available for those who needed it.

The day was sunny with the temperature around 70° F. Over 20 pop-up canopies were lined up in two rows with about 20 feet of space between the rows for attendees. People in beach-wear were interspersed with casual dress and the occasional Kumeyaay person in native regalia or native themed hats and t-shirts promoting their visibility through their attire. At the southern end of the canopy rows was the speaking area with a podium and around 75 white folding chairs. Next to the speaking area was the bathymetric sculpture, covered with a tarp for the grand unveiling. The opening ceremony started with a Kumeyaay elder from the Jamul Reservation burning a sage bundle and speaking of the history of the area and his personal connection to the Jamul Reservation. The elder then spoke a prayer in the Kumeyaay language. Afterward, the crowd applauded and he was followed by

Kumeyaay singers and dancers. For the audience, applauding is a sign of respect, a courtesy for the gift of his time and blessing. But few in the audience had even a partial understanding of the words spoken.

The start of California statehood in 1850 brought a range of laws directed toward the social and, in many cases, physical, destruction of the California Indians who were folded into a category of non-citizen subjects of U.S. law and policy. Laws directly applicable solely to Indians affected liberty, children, property and due process protections (or lack thereof). Many Kumeyaay were conversant enough in Mexican culture and language to pass for Mexican, at least to most white American eyes. Using the Kumeyaay language in public, under the power structure of the non-Kumeyaay, was an invitation to violence, enslavement or death. Language then was both a key aspect of cultural identity but was also a vulnerability that had to be suppressed in many settings where visibility was a liability, especially in the early American period. (Shipek 1991) In the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the use of native language was seen as a hindrance to the assimilation process and therefore prohibited or, at the least, discouraged under U.S. policy, especially after the creation of boarding schools. (Newland 2022, 92)

It is not unknown, even in present day, for Kumeyaay to be chastised by white Americans who hear speakers conversing and telling them they should speak American [referring to English] in America. (Of course, the Kumeyaay are much more likely to respond vocally to such an act nowadays). By speaking publicly, it is recognized that the alterity of Kumeyaay speech may be overheard. Should the white American attempt to take the words as foreign and unacceptable to “real” Americans, a claim to greater

temporal legitimacy is manifest in the Kumeyaay rejoinder identifying the indigeneity of the speech. The white American is the “listening subject” who is then reframed as the “immigrant”, undermining the embodiment of “real American” they seek to project. (Inoue 2003, 21)

While I was not aware of any such incident at this event, the historical experiences showing that such a reaction could occur makes the usage of Kumeyaay, (even to those who don't speak the language) a resistant speech act, regardless of the meaning of the words. Social action, as defined by Silverstein (1998), such as participation in public events, can be a venue to produce identities, beliefs and particular senses of agentive subjectivity and intersecting cultural allegiances. Both Drs. Rodriguez and Cuero were introduced in the program with the honorific “Doctor”. Immediately, this indexes both speakers in a western academic hierarchy, laying the groundwork for and expectation from the audience for something more than a normative speech.

Another aspect of the opening prayer was the lack of translation. The audience, with few exceptions, had to defer to the speaker that the content was acceptable. For a short time, the audience was in the position that native people had often found themselves, looking to the carriage and appearance of the speaker whose words were many times unknown or subject to different interpretations. Through this act, alterity is amplified, but, framing the outer bounds of alterity for this event allows the convergence of thought that participants hope to achieve. (Strathern 1988)

Hearing Kumeyaay in words or songs is more than a symbolic opportunity to defy a historic suppression. It is also e'Muht Mohay, in the broader sense, a sharing with the

earth, plants and animals and a type of spiritual nourishment that helps to make whole what has become fragmented. The late Kumeyaay elder Jane Dumas was a great teacher of Kumeyaay ethnobotany. In her lessons she often conveyed the need to express gratitude (preferably in Kumeyaay) to the plants being harvested. The language itself carries familiar energies to which the plants can benefit. In this way, singing is not solely a human activity; it is also a sharing with the land, ocean and living organisms, breaking their alienation from Kumeyaay relatives.

Next at the event, Kumeyaay songs were sung by a group of four singers led by Dr. Paul Cuero of Campo Reservation. After singing, Dr. Cuero spoke on the Kumeyaay geography and the cultural ties to the ocean.

...and we did trading, there were villages here at the ocean, there were villages in the mountains and the valleys and there were villages in the desert. And we would trade with all these things...here at the ocean...it's the very essence of who we are, and we're missing that. A lot of our people have a hard time coming down here, coming to this area cause it feels like it's not a part of us because we've been chased away for so long. It's just now that we're starting to celebrate again, coming here, being a part of this ocean. (Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans 2023 00:10:50)

With these words, Dr. Cuero is emphasizing the importance and connection of Kumeyaay people to the coast. Kumeyaay people had been pushed inland for so long that many had to overcome alienation to reconnect.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Cuero's perspective on alienation from the coast is influenced by his role as one of the founding members of the Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee (KCRC) which was organized in the early 1990s and registered under California law in 1997. It serves as an extension of

---

<sup>6</sup> This disconnect was not only within the Kumeyaay community. Before the passage of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act, (1990), most excavations in the coastal area were done with little or no consultation with Kumeyaay communities.

the 12 Bands of Kumeyaay in San Diego County through resolutions from each Band to provide for the repatriation of NAGPRA related remains or artifacts.

In 2013, three Professors brought suit against the University to block the repatriation of human remains found at UCSD Chancellor's House. (White, et.al. v University of California, et.al. 2013) The KCRC eventually won but the victory followed months of acrimonious challenges to Kumeyaay identity and association with the coast. (Scientific American 2012) In the suit, arguments were made that changes in the Kumeyaay language and archaeological artifacts showed the Kumeyaay as recent arrivals despite the fact that many archaeological sites show evidence of continuous occupation through these periods of linguistic or cultural transition, making a melding of populations a much more reasonable explanation. The lack of current Kumeyaay presence was also invoked to substantiate the argument against Kumeyaay having a coastal affiliation. (Dalton 2012) This argument was made despite the documented fact of Kumeyaay displacement from the coast in historic times.

No doubt the participation of Dr. Cuero in the Chancellor's House repatriation battle has influenced him on the importance of making people aware of the reality of the coastal aspect of Kumeyaay lifeways.

Following Dr. Cuero, Sycuan Councilman Jamie LaBrake spoke. He spoke of the previous year's event and how he had not really felt a part of it. He provided effusive praise to Mary Munk, the event organizer, for her efforts to allow the Kumeyaay to plan their level and manner of participation in this year's event. LaBrake also expressed his sentiment that the Kumeyaay have their own type of scientists and science which are tied to the location, the songs and stories.



...last year we were here at the event...as we opened up for the songs I expressed to the people that we are scientists too...the creator gave us the language, and the songs and the philosophies, to know how to read the currents, and know which plants to use for medicinal or diet uses, he gave us everything, to be good human beings... (Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans 2023 00:14:54)

The concept of native science has been gaining broad acceptance in recent years. Works by Cajete, *Native Science*, Anderson, *Tending the Wild* and Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, have highlighted the experiential knowledge over time that provides a legitimate corollary to Western science. Climate change, and the broad search for conventional and unconventional approaches to addressing it, has opened the door to many aspects of traditional ecological knowledge being revisited for potential solutions. LaBrake's comment, though brief, acknowledges the common ground that Western science seems willing to consider on an abstract level. Yet, when it comes to actually integrating native science considerable obstacles still remain. (Kimmerer 2013)

Next, Dr. Cuero returned as the first of two keynote speakers. Once again, he reiterated the connection of Kumeyaay to the coast.

Good afternoon everybody. I'd like to say that again we're happy to be here at the ocean, it's such a healing area, you know for us our creation story, our creators come out of the ocean, out of the womb of mother earth, that our two creators come out of and created us and it's always good to come back to where they come from because there's a lot of healing, and that ocean breeze, and it feels good inside, that's why so many people flock always to the ocean, you just don't know it but it's really because it brings you [draws you in] and it's refreshing, it's like cleansing and, you know, today we were invited to be here for this program with one of our organizations that helps preserve our heritage and so they [the event organizers] welcome us here today to be a part of the celebration, today, and we're happy to be here.

...in today's world a lot of people just see native people as a past and not as a presence and we're very much here, still here alive and thriving, or trying. and you know there's still so much that we could give to each other to live in this beautiful place.

When our creator came, he says we're equal, to the animals, to the plants, all those things have spirits, they're just like us, you can't just go there and destroy it, because they're part of who you are, you need them. You need them and they give, they sacrifice for us.

...and that's why we live in that world, we try to, but like I said, things are changing, and we're [Kumeyaay] forgetting those things as well cause we're trying just to live and survive every day.

...We were chased from place to place, told we couldn't stay here. That's why none of our people [are here], we don't have [a] home here at the ocean, and one day I hope to see that we have a home here at the ocean. A place ... where we can come and celebrate, my people, cause we need it as part of our healing and I hope that someday we'll have that.

...And I'm glad that we could sit together today and laugh and share, it's a good thing, it's really good, for both of us. Thank you. (Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans 2023 00 41:56)

Dr. Cuero admonishes those who don't try to work with the natural world, admitting that even Kumeyaay forget, at times, in order to survive. He evokes a spiritual connectedness that is beyond scientific rationality and, by its imprecision provides space for the audience to identify with their own sense of connectedness. This is the creation of textuality in the sense of Silverstein (2004, 634) where the audience can bring their personal knowledge into relevance in their roles as social event audience. He asks the audience to recognize the Kumeyaay as a presence and not just something from the past and certainly not a presence to be pushed away.

Here, Cuero is looking for common ground with the non-Kumeyaay population. He acknowledges those aspects of both cultures that he sees as overlapping while also requesting that Kumeyaay be seen as a visible culture of the present. He expresses a desire for acceptance collectively as one community alongside another community. This is not a desire to merge or be subsumed into the La Jolla community, but rather, to be recognized as distinct sovereign people with legitimate, unextinguished spiritual, social and political roots to the area. Initially, his use of the term "we" refers to the

Kumeyaay people present and he is expressing gratitude on their behalf, then he begins using “we” collectively toward the middle as he looks for common ground and finally as he reaches the end of his speech, “we” brings all the audience into the shared community of the event. The use of the term “we” also implies the authority of the speaker to speak on behalf of the Kumeyaay. Moving between the use of “we” in an authoritative usage to the collective “we” helps to blur the distinction between the uses which allows for acceptance by the audience of Cuero as also speaking for them. As noted by Yeh, (2017), “... projections of “we” and its world sometimes echo into each other, while other times they shove and thrust among themselves.”

A second Kumeyaay speaker was then introduced to the podium. Dr. Stanley Rodriguez, who had spoken the previous year (2022), returned for this year’s event. Dr. Rodriguez is an educator in the Kumeyaay community and, for this event, organized a tule boat building demonstration and participation. Dr. Rodriguez’s style of speaking is to engage the crowd which he does in this case.

But I want to talk about education, you’re all here and where are we at right now? Here, let me move my hat so I can see you better. Okay, ladies and gentlemen, where are we today. [voice from crowd Stan repeats back] In La Jolla. And what does La Jolla mean? [voice from crowd, Stan repeats back] the jewells, beautiful, huh. How many of you like bling? Isn’t it beautiful out here? [gestures to the ocean] Look at this. But for our people, La Jolla was a corruption of a Kumeyaay word, Mutt Qulahoyl, the place of the caves. And this is what we talk about. (Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans 2023 01:18:39)

Dr. Rodriguez goes on to speak about the creation story, and speaks the Kumeyaay names of ocean animals. He speaks of the Kumeyaay presence reflected in the fact that village sites in some places are deep beneath the ocean’s surface and that the culture is no stranger to climate change. He speaks of three waves of

encroachment and how people were pushed back further and further into the interior of the County. He spoke of the ocean as a supermarket, a hardware store and a pharmacy. He ends with a point about the word “tolerance”.

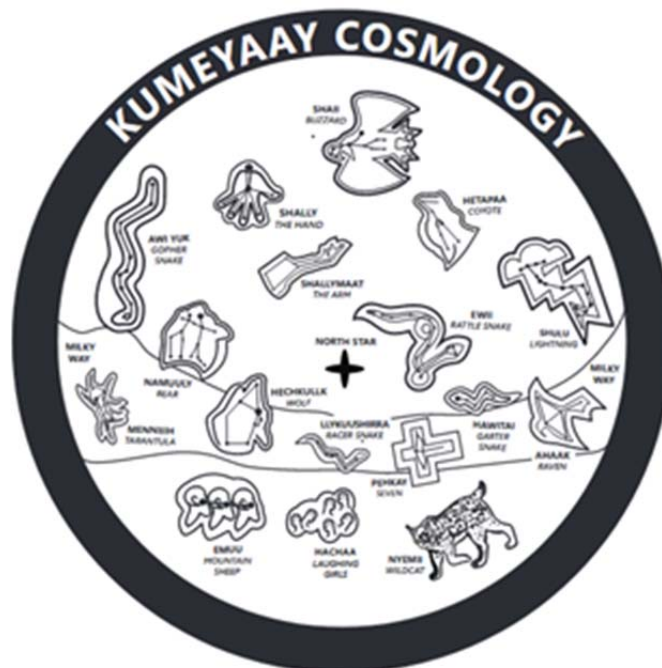
...many times you may hear the saying about being inclusive and bring an era of tolerance but I just want to bounce back on that. When we talk about tolerance, even the term tolerance denotes negativity, like I tolerate this mosquito bite or this inclement weather. But when we come together in a place of mutual respect and learning from each other and sharing with each other and when we bring a celebration of diversity and we come together and we celebrate that diversity and we value each other and we're all strong. (Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans 2023 01:32:01)

Dr. Rodriguez centers his discussion on the colonial impacts which he labels three waves of encroachment. He use of Kumeyaay words throughout his speech is not only the political act of reaffirming the Kumeyaay coastal connections but also by giving deference to what he implies are the legitimate names. In his closing he expresses his hopes that the Kumeyaay participation on this day is not predicated on notions of “tolerance” or something that is being grudgingly put up with for some politically correct expedient. Rather, he wants people from all communities to look for the benefits of differences in each other and to value those differences. In contrast with Dr. Cuero, Dr. Rodriguez’s use of the pronoun “we” is much more inclusive from the beginning, describing a common ground of perception where he seeks to form a combined identity performatively through repetition and emphasis of common perceptions.

From Rodriguez and Cuero we can see two distinctions in approach to the audience. Rodriguez challenges the non-Kumeyaay audience through questions, eliciting responses that he can use to challenge preconceived ideas while educating through the answers. His words can seem provocative, yet his stylistic manner is very non-confrontational. Cuero, in contrast, emphasizes a shared emotional and spiritual

connection while also educating the non-Kumeyaay audience. Though there is much in common, the educator style of Rodriguez and the spiritual style of Cuero bring two nuanced approaches to the same topics of culture, history and connection with the ocean.

The official program concluded with an unveiling of a bronze sculpture of the bathymetry of the La Jolla coastline. In developing the sculpture, the organizers had



**Figure 2 Kumeyaay Constellations**

sought feedback from the Kumeyaay community on what would be a fitting addition to the sculpture. After internal discussions with the Kumeyaay Historical Preservation Council, it was determined that a picture of the Kumeyaay constellations would be suitable.

Bringing the sky into the fusion of ocean and land inherent in the sculpture was a physical way to inform the public of the holistic perception of the region by Kumeyaay. As Obeyesekere notes, agency can be vested in the inanimate, in the form of power

and connection, in ways that may not be recognized by the dominant society. (Obeyesekere 1981, 393) In this way the inanimate plaque is vested with agency to add the dimension of sky to a sculpture of the land and sea through symbology related to Kumeyaay cosmology. Just as the sculpture itself is vested with agency to make people see the ocean as more than the water surface, the constellation display becomes an agent for Kumeyaay presence, knowledge and spirituality. In the sense of Latour's "parliament of things" it is an expression of the interlocks between human and nonhuman actors, (Latour 1993), which shares much in common with Kumeyaay spirituality.

## 4.0 SYNTHESIS

Anthropology, in the post-modern world, has been seen by some as a way of “giving voice” to the Indigenous people. Nancy Oesterich Lurie contributed to the concept of “action anthropology” (Lurie 1969) as a way for anthropologists to go beyond the extractive, exploitive relationship characterized by Vine Deloria, Jr. in *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969). This exploitive relationship can become a trap that views Native peoples as objects for experimentation and manipulation. (Arndt 2023, 471) But “giving voice” will only reify the standing of the dominator in the exchange without understanding of the nuance of discourse and intent of the Indigenous people.

As a participant-observer and a Kumeyaay researcher, I aim to take the elements of the event to an additional level of messaging and understanding beyond the “reading over the shoulders of natives” (Geertz 1973) or the subsequent “reading alongside natives”. (Lassiter 2001) Through personal relationships comes a shared understanding of the depths of expression that are being invoked. Can we strengthen sovereignty without appearing as supplicants looking for approval? How we, as individuals, perceive ourselves and our relationship to the world are key parts of pushing back against colonial domination, (Thiong’o 1981, 16) or what Freire (2018, 152) would call the colonization of ‘the mental universe’ of the colonized.

It is the Indigenous people, in this context, who are analyzing the culture of the colonizer, recognizing the fact that visibility can carry with it the seeds of repercussions that may run counter to any gains made in trans-boundary relationships. All of the elements of the event, from the participants, to the venue, to the speakers are all part of the consideration. Agency, granted through the openness of the organizer, must be

implemented with assessment and adaptation in real time, based on the cultural flux of social media, mood and exigencies.

As noted by Strathern, (1988, 13), “Social life consists in a constant movement from one state to another, from one type of sociality to another, from a unity (manifested collectively or singly) to that unity split or paired with respect to another.” The internal differentiation between Kumeyaay people is extensive and reflects both the traditional independence of the clan social structure and the history of political, religious, economic and societal fragmentation and rebuilding. This internal differentiation may be associated with the resistance to assimilationist efforts which can interfere with engaging in collaborative efforts with non-Kumeyaay groups. Suppression of internal differentiation then becomes a tool to create, temporarily a path toward a unity of perception.

Kumeyaay speakers are cognizant of the eclectic nature of the audience, which is not conducive to deep discussions on the meanings of sovereignty. None of the Kumeyaay speakers read from a script. They must contend with important aspects of controlling how they are being perceived by adjusting to the feedback from the audience. Smiles, nods, frowns, looks of interest or impatience are all cues that guide the direction of the speaker. The non-Kumeyaay audience is the hearer of topics and is being requested to perform an acknowledgement through a shifting of their personal understandings of the Kumeyaay people and their history in the region.

When Dr. Rodriguez asks the question of the audience regarding the origins of the name of La Jolla he is clearly expecting the commonly held view that it is from Spanish for “the jewel”. The Kumeyaay in attendance, as well as non-Kumeyaay



educated on the true origins, stay silent, understanding the performative nature of the dialogue and the desire of Dr. Rodriguez to hear the wrong answer so that his response can have greater impact. In this way, also, he is tacitly collaborating with those who are knowledgeable about the name, even non-Kumeyaay, who then becomes part of the group in-the-know.

When Dr. Cuero invokes the cultural connections of the Kumeyaay to the ocean through the creation stories and speaks of the pain that many Kumeyaay feel from returning to an area which was once so intrinsic to Kumeyaay identity; it is a celebration with pain. An emotional rebirth where, for a moment, there is a recapture of a part of the land connection that once was eternal but became transitory. He calls it a cleansing, but it is in the cathartic sense that Kumeyaay people can shed the negative historical microshackles that have been internalized over time. By continuing to reconnect and rebuild that connection, Dr. Cuero sees the ocean connection as once again being a continual part of Kumeyaay cultural identity.

A favorite story of Dr. Cuero and Dr. Rodriguez is of the pottery novice. In this story, a novice is working to make a clay pot, or “askay” and is firing it in a pit when the askay, as can happen frequently to beginners, shatters. The novice is disappointed as much work went into the askay. The Kuchamayo, or teacher, consoles the student and takes him (or her) aside with the fresh shards. Carefully placing them in a mortar, she grinds them to powder and adds fresh clay to the mixture. She then instructs the student to remake the askay. “Nothing is lost here except a little time. The clay is still the clay and can once again be formed as long as you don’t give up.” This story is told as a metaphor for the Kumeyaay culture which has undergone many “fracturing” periods

and yet the people find a way to reconstitute the culture and reformulate the identity to persevere. Although not told at this event, it is important to understanding the view of both Cuero and Rodriguez as agents of revitalizing and holding together Kumeyaay cultural identity.

Within the event on the coast there was the implicit expression of sovereign identity, which pushes back against efforts to suppress and eliminate the Kumeyaay identity. The presentations are intended to educate by doing many of the very actions that historically were prohibited or suppressed. For most of the non-Kumeyaay people present, the idea that the act of speaking the language or singing the songs is somehow an act of liberation may be lost. What the Kumeyaay bring to the event is more than diversity in the ethnic or racial sense. They bring an Indigenous world view, ways of thinking and acting. The Kumeyaay attend as educators, but educators in the traditional interactive sense that values the cognitive understanding of the recipient far more than the ceremonial action of making a statement or getting “on the record”.

This is a key aspect of Indigenous scholars who see the Western academic world as salvageable, from its history, as an institutional apparatus which historically reinforced the colonial oppression that the Kumeyaay speakers are resisting. (Mihesuah and Wilson 2004, 6-7) Diversity of thought can be brought to the forefront in this setting. What makes the setting especially fitting is that many of the non-Kumeyaay people concerned with the fate of our oceans and the impacts of climate change are participants in the Walter Munk day event. Many of them are activists or academics who feel they embody an ideal of inclusive collaboration. There is a general openness to new ideas that provides a gateway for long-standing Indigenous ideas into the

present day discourse. The potential exists for future alliances or collaborations that provide benefits to all sides, especially if an appreciation for sovereignty can be inculcated in the non-Kumeyaay participants.

Following the event, a traditional gathering of Kumeyaay people ensued on the adjacent beach. There, Kumeyaay people engaged in storytelling, tule boat launching, language lessons and singing while enjoying surfside barbeque. Clearly, the Kumeyaay did not see the park event as a substitute for a community gathering, in fact this was notably a pivot of footing as the locational frame shifted from the event to the adjacent public beach. (Goffman 1959, 124-159) The difference here was that the park event was directed toward the non-Kumeyaay community. Speakers could now engage their audience from a common ground of cultural understanding, and concerns of non-Kumeyaay perceptions became irrelevant.

For the ocean gathering (Ha Silsh Matayuuum) the non-Kumeyaay beachgoers were consciously ignored. Even though many were curious and looked at the gathering, and some even came to meet the Kumeyaay and listen to the speakers and singers, they were outsiders.

In its own way, this lack of acknowledgement was also a message that, in terms of the practice of culture, concurrence or acceptance was not sought but treated as an expectation. English was interspersed with Kumeyaay as a code-switching way to further isolate this cultural bubble within the population of beachgoers. There was no pretense of seeking acceptance from the non-Kumeyaay beachgoers. As the Indigenous people, if any acceptance is sought it should be the other way around.

## CONCLUSION

This event provided a rare opportunity for Kumeyaay people to exercise agency in the overall representation of content. Part of this was no doubt due to the scheduling limitations of the previous year when Kumeyaay participation was cut short and the desire of Mary Munk, the organizer, to be gracious and to ensure that the Kumeyaay felt they were not slighted. Organizers from the Kumeyaay community, such as Jamie LaBrake in his opening speech, expressed genuine affection for Mary and respected her for her efforts to fully engage the Kumeyaay.

The audience, itself, seemed friendly and, perhaps, viewed the event as a refreshing change from the usual community events. The non-Kumeyaay audience and performers were not culturally homogeneous and the referential context for their actions and reactions may be based on different indexical perspectives. Yet, even in a diverse population there would be an expectation of discourse within a familiar range of past experiences. The work of Bauman & Briggs (1990) defines the duality that can occur and present different realities for different elements of a population. They also note that Malinowski's claim to present "the native's point of view" tends to ignore the fact that there can be other perspectives based on gender and social class. In this case, it is the diversity of both populations which must be accommodated. Cuero and Rodriguez both approach this from similar footings but with subtle differences. (Goffman 1959) Follow-on speakers to Cuero and Rodriguez expressed common ground by repeating words or phrases they found notable. Follow up invitations from other groups in attendance also showcased an approachability enticement created by the style of both speakers.

Taking this perspective further, the participation of Kumeyaay, can certainly carry implications for alternative contexts and purposes that fall outside the familiar range of discourse to the general public. One reality, of course, is that seeing Kumeyaay at a seashore event was simply a novelty and nothing more to some. Equal to the performance aspects toward the non-Kumeyaay audience was the communication to the Kumeyaay in attendance. Most all Kumeyaay have heard leaders and educators speaking in the framework of native events. Not all have heard speakers in a non-tribal forum where the speakers are a structural part of the event.

The settler-colonial mindset may see opening the door to Kumeyaay participation as a type of “civic inclusion” that may not be in the interest or objective of the Kumeyaay generally. (Temin 2017) Many of the Kumeyaay, particularly from the very successful gaming tribes, could afford to live in the wealthier neighborhoods like La Jolla, yet they continue to live in their tribal communities. Civic inclusion can be based on the presumption that the settler-colonial society is permitting the Kumeyaay to be accepted as one of them when, in fact, most Kumeyaay are not interested in becoming Indigenous versions of upper middle class white society.

It’s a narrow path that must be walked to garner recognition without supplication, or overt confrontation, and to gain acceptance on a level that does not seek individual civic inclusion. There are many lessons from the past that encourage invisibility. In recent years, gaming has made it important for tribes to manage perceptions and has made “invisibility” difficult, even impossible, to achieve due to the need to advertise for patrons. The language of the termination period<sup>7</sup> has also reappeared in recent years

---

<sup>7</sup> Starting with the House Concurrent Resolution 108 (1953), Congress started an effort to terminate the existence of tribes in several States, including California. It was not officially ended as policy until 1970.

with the increased visibility of Indian Nations. This has included comments by one Supreme Court Justice that the foundational legal constructions of the relationship of the U.S. to Indian Nations should be revisited. (Balanda 2015)

Speakers from four different Kumeyaay Reservations spoke at the event. Each brought individual perspectives but many common themes were evident. Kumeyaay are here in the present, they want visibility as a modern culture with a right to presence. Trying to create a better world is a common ground between Kumeyaay and supporters of the work of Walter Munk. Kumeyaay presence at this event was not orchestrated nor strategized to make a specific point. The topics of discussion developed organically out of the shared cultural backdrop and concerns.

There are often Kumeyaay events that are responsive to acts or actions perceived as affronts or harmful. Kumeyaay have rallied to support the Standing Rock opposition to a pipeline (Nita 2017), to oppose the placing of statues honoring conquistadors (Radin 2019) or others whose supported racist or destructive policies toward native peoples. These events were directly in opposition to an action being taken.

In contrast, the Walter Munk event was a sharing of cultural perceptions and connections with the non-Kumeyaay community that was intended to enhance the standing and ability of Kumeyaay to coexist within the framework of the dominant social order. As such, the physical act of reasserting place on the Kumeyaay coast is not orchestrated or rehearsed but comes from the common understandings of relationships within the community and shared perceptions of how Kumeyaay are seen by the outside community.

The Kumeyaay Bands often work in tandem in an intertribal framework without a central authority or platform of directed expression. The fact that the twelve Reservations and four Ejidos can effectively project a cohesive picture of spirituality within the framework of their political existence in both Mexico and the United States is testament to the underlying resilience of Sh'mull structure and the commonality of experiences at the hands of colonial governance.

This event was a few hours on a fall day of 2023. I have laid out the motivations for participation as a “nested expression of sovereignty” and re-enfranchisement within a ritualized event with thematic commonality to Kumeyaay beliefs. I discussed how my role as a participant-observer and a Kumeyaay “insider” was part of the procedure I utilized for data collection on the event itself, giving me insights into the deeper meanings behind the speeches. The relevant elements of history that led to particular expressions were explored. I also showed how the Kumeyaay approach these types of events, both as an indigenous expression of culture and as ethnographers in their own right, in order to create context and expression that fit the particular make-up and mood of the audience.

Time will tell regarding the effectiveness of the participation. Historical paradigms are unlikely to be unseated in a few hours of presentations. Creating an opening for a Kumeyaay perspective, although incremental may, in itself, be an encouraging sign. As Austin (1975) says, is there felicity in the expressions?

For myself, in breaking down the background of the motivations leading up to the event, I am discussing many facets of Kumeyaay existence that may not be known to the general public. Hopefully, detailing the complexity of Kumeyaay participation will

have a positive effect on those who read this. I think I've shown that participation was truly based on shared values with the mission of the Foundation. But perhaps the greatest interpersonal gains may lie with the incremental successes in personal friendships, finding of mutual interests and opening lines of communication and participation. In the sense of Granovetter's "weak ties", these new social networks may ultimately bear the greatest fruit in creating liaisons and bridges between communities. (Granovetter 1973)

Walking among the participants and audience afterward I didn't hear any negativity over what had transpired. In fact, most were pleased and supportive, Kumeyaay participants felt they were allowed to express what they had sought and contacts were made for continuing dialogues. At the closing, the organizers offered an invitation for the Kumeyaay community to return in 2024, and many gave an emphatic yes.



## REFERENCES

- Anderson, M. Kat. 2005. *Tending the Wild: Native American knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Arndt, Grant. 2023. "Joining the Ongoing Struggle: Vine Deloria, Nancy Lurie, and the Quest for a Decolonial Anthropology." *Journal of Anthropological Research*. 79:4
- Austin, J.L. 1975. *How To Do Things With Words*. Harvard University Press.
- Balanda, Gabriel S. 2015. "Back to the Future." *Indian Country Today* September 9, 2015.
- Bauman Richard & Charles L. Briggs. 1990. "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19:59-68. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2155959>
- Cajete, Gregory. 2000. *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Clear Light Publishers.
- California Water Boards. 2024. "Tribal Beneficial Uses – Designations to Surface Waters" Accessed June 15, 2024. [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water\\_issues/programs/basin\\_plan/tribal\\_beneficial\\_uses.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/water_issues/programs/basin_plan/tribal_beneficial_uses.html)
- Canby, William C., Jr. 2004. *American Indian Law, In a Nut Shell*, West, a Thomson business.
- Carrico, Richard L. 1987. *Strangers in a Stolen Land, American Indians in San Diego, 850-1880*. Sierra Oaks Publishing Co.
- Carrico, Susan Hunter. 1984. *Urban Indians in San Diego; 1850-1900*, A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in History, University of San Diego, San Diego.
- Connolly, Michael. 2022. Field Notes, Walter Munk Day October 8, 2022
- Connolly-Miskwish, Michael. 2007. *Kumeyaay, A History Textbook, Volume 1, Precontact to 1893*. Sycuan Press
- . 2020. Hut Nyilshs; "The Black Dog Nation", *News From Native California*. Summer, 2020.
- . 2021. "Emut Mohay", *Ecesis* 31:1 15-19.

- Corona Courier. 1904. "Succor on the Way for Starving Indians." *Corona Courier* December 3, 1904.
- Coronado Times. 2023. "Coronado's Underground River." *Coronado Times* January 21, 2023.
- Dalton, Rex. 2008. "No burial for 10,000-year-old bones." *Nature* 455.7217: 1156.
- Deloria, Vine, Jr. 1969. *Custer Died for Your Sins: A Indian Manifesto*. Macmillan.
- Deloria, Vine, Jr. 2007. *We Talk, You Listen, New Tribes, New Turf*, Macmillan.
- Freire, P. 2018. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 50th anniversary ed. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gallegos, Dennis R. 2017. *First People, A Revised Chronology for San Diego County*, San Diego: StorySeekers.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Chapter 15 / Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. "Ch3 Footing, Forms of Talk" In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 124-159. New York: Doubleday.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 78:1360-80.
- House Concurrent Resolution 108. 67 Stat. B132 (1953).
- Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. No. 93-638.
- Inoue, Miyako. 2003. "The Listening Subject of Japanese Modernity and His Auditory Double: Citing, Sighting, and Siteing the Modern Japanese Woman." *Cultural Anthropology* 18(2): 156-193.
- Jackson, Helen Hunt. 1984. *Ramona*. Boston: Roberts Brothers.
- Johnston-Dodds, Kimberly. 2002. *Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians*. California Research Bureau, Sacramento, California.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2013. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, Milkweed Editions.
- Lassiter, Luke Eric. 2001. "From 'Reading over the Shoulders of Natives' to 'Reading Alongside Natives' Literally Toward a Collaborative and Reciprocal Ethnography." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 57:2 137-149.

- Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Harvard University Press.
- Locke, John. 2021. Chapter V & IX, *Second Treatise of Government*. Edited by A. John (Alan John) Simmons, First edition. W.W. Norton & Company, 2021.
- Lorimer, Michelle. 2016. *Resurrecting the Past: The California Mission Myth*. Temecula, California: Great Oak Press.
- Lurie, Nancy Oesterich. 1969. "What the Red Man wants in the land that was his." *Saturday Review* (October 4): 80-81
- Mihesuah, Devon Abbott & Angela Cavender Wilson. 2004. *Indigenizing the Academy*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Native American Graves and Repatriation Act of 1990. No. 101-601.
- Newland, Bryan. 2022. *Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report*, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- Nita, Ana. 2017. "Kumeyaay Bobby 'Walking Stick' Wallace at Standing Rock and Beyond." *The Californian* February 1, 2017. Accessed June 15, 2024. <https://eccalifornian.com/kumeyaay-bobby-walking-stick-wallace-at-standing-rock-and-beyond/>.
- Obeyesekere, Gananath. 1981. *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience, Part 1*, University of Chicago Press.
- Pfalzer, Jean. 2023. *California A Slave State*, Yale University Press
- Radin, Danielle. 2019. "Should Balboa Park Have a Statue of Its Namesake?" *NBC 7*. Accessed June 15, 2024. <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/should-balboa-park-have-a-statue-of-its-namesake/39049/>.
- Rutherford, Danilyn. 2012. *Laughing at Leviathan*, The University of Chicago Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 2011. "What kinship is (part one)." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 17:1
- SANDAG- San Diego Association of Governments. 2024. Board of Directors. Accessed June 15, 2024. <https://www.sandag.org/meetings-and-events/board-of-directors>.
- Scientific American. 2012. Who Owns the Past. April, 2012.
- Scripps Institute of Oceanography. 2024. "Scripps History." Accessed June 15, 2024. <https://scripps.ucsd.edu/about/history>.

- Shipek, Florence Connolly. 1987. *Pushed Into the Rocks*, Alpine, California: Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians.
- . 1991. *Delfina Cuero, Her Autobiography, An Account of Her Last Years and Her Ethnobotanic Contributions*. Ballena Press.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1998. "Contemporary Transformations of Local Linguistic Communities." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 27: 401-26.
- . 2004. "Cultural Concepts and the Language-Culture Nexus." *Current Anthropology* 45:5.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Dunedin, New Zealand: University Press.
- Stern, Steve J. 1993. *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn 1988. "Anthropological Strategies" In *The Gender of the Gift, Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, University of California. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppj9n.5p.13> Retrieved on 19May2024
- Stewart-Ambo, Theresa, and K. Wayne Yang. 2021. "Beyond Land Acknowledgment in Settler Institutions." *Social Text* 39.1 21-46.
- Temin, David Myer. 2017. "1970, Custer's Sins: Vine Deloria Jr. and the Settler-Colonial Politics of Civic Inclusion." *Political Theory* 46:3 357-379.
- Thiong'o, N. W. 1981. *Decolonizing the mind. The politics of language in African literature*. James Currey & Heinemann.
- Thompson, Mark. 2011. *American Character, The Curious Life of Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Rediscovery of the Southwest*. Arcade Publishing, New York.
- Walter Munk Foundation for the Oceans. 2023. *Ceremonies Walter Munk Day 2023\_1014*. mp4. Available by request to Walter Munk Foundation, <https://www.waltermunkfoundation.org>.
- White, et.al. v University of California, et.al., 2013. Accessed June 15, 2024. [https://www.narf.org/nill/bulletins/federal/documents/white\\_v\\_university\\_of\\_california.html](https://www.narf.org/nill/bulletins/federal/documents/white_v_university_of_california.html)
- Yeh, Rihan. 2017. *Passing: Two Publics in a Mexican Border City*, University of Chicago Press.