



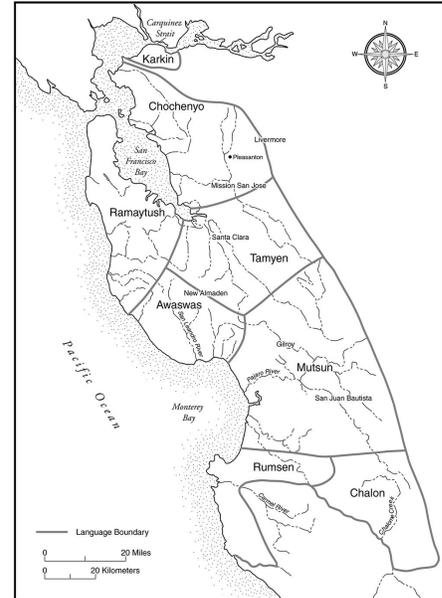
Mapping Your Location on Tribal Territories

Time needed: Take-home assignment with in-class discussion.

Purpose

Many Americans are not aware of which tribe's ancestral territory they are living within, or the work done by tribes currently, and historically, to steward and protect the land in their region. This take-home assignment challenges students to learn more about their place in the world and the cultural and ecological history of their homes by asking them to map the Indigenous language(s) that have been spoken there, nearby villages or named tribes, and a project currently being undertaken by a present-day tribe in their region.

Students will expand their understanding of not just who historically lived on the land they inhabit today, but also how Indigenous groups continue to work as stewards and protectors of their ancestral lands. In mapping these social histories alongside rivers and creeks, students will develop a deeper sense of place, gaining insights into the cultural significance of the ground beneath their feet.



Materials

- Paper and pens
- Access to the Internet
- Map: Native Peoples and Languages San Francisco and Monterey Bays ca. 1700 (attached below)
- Reference material: [Contemporary Ohlone History](#) article and the Ohlone Sacred Site Protection section of the resources list at the end of the article
- Reference material: *Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today*— by Randall Milliken, Laurence H. Shoup, and Beverly R. Ortiz. National Park Service, 2009. [Full PDF of publication](#) | Individual chapter PDFs [on NPS website](#).
- Optional addition: Map of the Outreach Areas of the Seven Missions that took in Costanoan-Speaking Populations (attached below)

Directions

Ask students to draw their own map of the broader community or region in which they live.* Ask them to include the following elements:

1. Where they live
2. Major rivers or creeks nearby to where they live (residents of the greater Bay Area can attempt to locate their river or stream on the attached *Native Peoples and Languages* map, which contains un-labeled waterways in the form of blue lines.)
3. The language(s) spoken by Native peoples in the region prior to colonization
4. Nearby village sites or named tribes that inhabited the area
5. The name of at least one present-day tribal nation that is active in their area
6. A current project or campaign undertaken by tribes in the area, such as protecting a sacred site, regaining access or stewardship rights to a place, or developing cultural centers, gardens, etc.

Additional activity: Students may write a paragraph to pair with the map outlining current work that a tribe in their area is undertaking.

7. *Optional:* Map the location of the closest historic Spanish mission established in their area.

Students can use the *Map of Mission Outreach Areas* (attached below) and information from the publication [Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula](#)* to delve deeper into local mission history, answering questions such as:

- What mission did the Indigenous people of your home area likely end up at?
- How many California Indians were taken in and baptized at that mission?
- What languages did the Indigenous people taken into the mission speak, and what regions did they come from?

* *Example: For Mission San Juan Bautista, the mission closest to Juristac, information can be found on pages 145-147. Other regional mission histories are found within Chapter 7, except Mission Dolores, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.*

When students turn in their maps, ask them as a class or in small groups to discuss the following questions:

- Did anyone know the names of the Indigenous languages or tribes in the area where they live, prior to doing this activity? If so, how had you learned the names?

- In doing this activity, what did you learn about current efforts of local tribes? Did it surprise you? What were your assumptions or expectations about local Indigenous people, before doing this assignment?
- How hard was it to find out about current campaigns or projects of tribes in the region? How does this inform our understanding of tribal advocacy and colonialism?
- Looking at maps without our contemporary cities, political boundaries, and roads can inspire new ways of relating to the place we live. Maps are subjective in that they identify and interpret what the author thinks it most important for the reader to focus upon. How did looking at the maps in this exercise change how you conceive of space?

** Alternatively, as a more advanced exercise, you can ask students to develop this map for the community where they grew up—or where they lived during high school.*

Supplemental discussion: The complexities of territorial maps

The instructor can read or introduce this information to students, then pose the questions that follow:

In contrast to today’s rigidly defined political boundaries, such as county or state lines, the boundaries between traditional tribal territories or language groups are less fixed or starkly defined. Boundaries between traditional use areas were typically marked by landscape features such as rivers and mountain ranges, with large areas of land held in common and utilized by multiple tribes or extended family groups. These boundaries also changed over time based on many factors, such as shifting relationships between tribes and family bands, shifting subsistence needs, and other cultural variables. It is also important to note that indigenous identities and relationships to the places they live have frequently differed greatly from colonial approaches to place, which have tended to emphasize land ownership, territorial boundaries, and mapping as a tool of reinforcing colonial power.

Even today, no matter how clean the lines are on anyone’s map, tribal territories are not fixed, often overlap with one another, and are conceived of differently by individual tribes—including neighboring groups. Not all local tribes agree with the territorial boundaries depicted on the maps used in this exercise. Therefore, it is important to understand that no map of tribal territories can be considered absolute or definitive. In interpreting a map it is necessary to ask questions about who prepared the map and what sources of information they relied upon.

For example, the *Native Peoples and Languages* map used in this activity provides a rough interpretation of the distribution of tribes and language groups in the time period when the missions were first established in the 1700s. The map was developed as part of a 350 page report by anthropologists based primarily on data collected from traveler’s diaries,

ethnographer's field notes, newspaper articles, census documents, Franciscan mission registers, and oral interviews with living tribal members. The interpretations in this report differ from those of previous mapping efforts. We can see the authors of the maps citing a key difference in the introductory chapter of the report:

“When we think of the Ohlone/Costanoans, we think of the people who once controlled all the lands from San Francisco Bay south to Monterey Bay, the Big Sur coast and the San Benito River drainage. In point of fact, those were the lands where six different Costanoan languages were spoken, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. Our eastern boundary for this Costanoan language family area is significantly different from the boundary portrayed in the standard references. Kroeber (1925) and Levy (1978a) placed the eastern boundary of the Chochenyo, Tamyen, Mutsun, and Chalon dialects and languages along the central crest of the South Coast ranges, giving Yokuts-language groups the watersheds that drained east into the San Joaquin Valley. We follow the results of the senior author's personal name distribution study that showed that the eastern Coast Range groups were probably Costanoan speakers (Milliken 1994). The history of language territory mapping, which has always been based upon very small amounts of data, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.”

Milliken et al. describe how in their mapping they extend the eastern boundary for the Costanoan language family beyond the interpretations of other historians and anthropologists.

Indigenous people have long disputed the validity of maps of tribal territories that have been published by anthropologists and other scholars, calling their methods and approaches to research into question. With the rallying cry, “nothing about us without us,” Indigenous community members have asserted the importance of centering their voices, traditional knowledge and perspectives on historical records in the process of interpreting tribal histories and territories.

Today there are numerous efforts to develop maps of Indigenous territories and/or language groups in the Americas. Take 10 to 15 minutes to compare and evaluate these three examples of mapping projects:

1. [Native-Land.ca](https://native-land.ca) by Native Land Digital
2. [First Nations Across North America Map](https://www.firstnationsmap.com/) by Brian Strome
3. [Tribal Nations Maps](https://tribal-nations-maps.com/) by Aaron Capella:

Discussion questions:

- What are the similarities and differences between these maps? Why do you think these differences may exist?
- What do the authors of the Native Land map state as a disclaimer before you can view the map? You can also read their blog on the question of border here: <https://native-land.ca/a-question-of-borders/>

- What do you think are important considerations for the methods or process of making maps of indigenous relationships to land?

Adaptations

Pair this assignment with a discussion of one or more of the following articles and chapters:

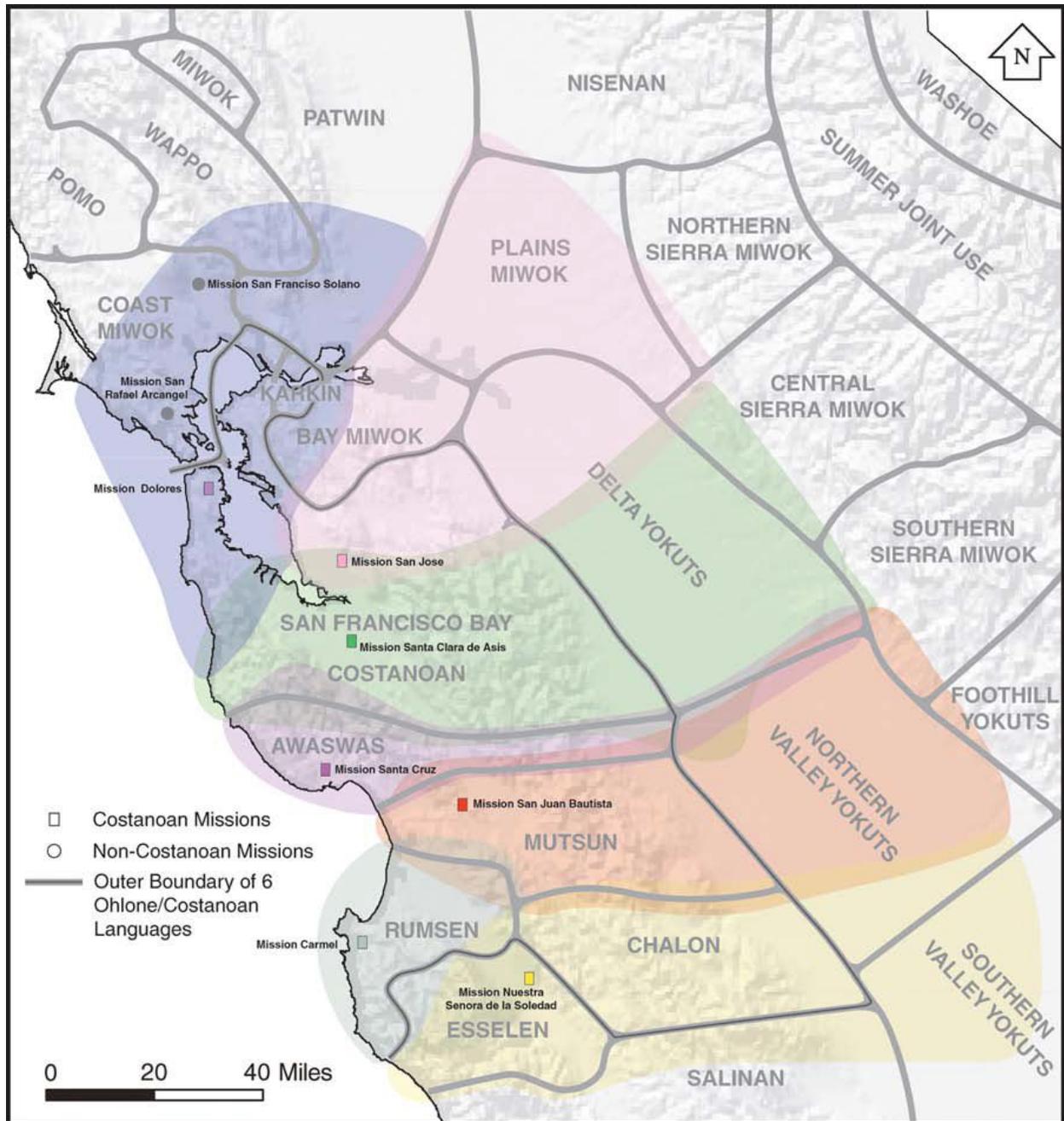
- [Appendix C: The Unique Social Formation of the Mission System](#) (By Laurence H. Shoup) from *Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today*
- [Chapter 2: Native Languages of West-Central California](#) from *Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today*
- [California's First Mass Incarceration System Franciscan Missions, California Indians, and Penal Servitude, 1769–1836](#). Benjamin Madley. *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 88 No. 1, Winter 2019
- [Contemporary Ohlone History article](#) on the Sogorea Te Land Trust website
- [Rekindling The Old Ways: The Amah Mutsun and the Recovery of Traditional Ecological Knowledge](#) article in Bay Nature magazine
- [Maps, Mapmaking, and Map Use by Native North Americans](#) (PDF of a chapter from *Cartographic Encounters: Perspectives on Native American Mapmaking and Map Use* by G. Macom Lewis)

Pair this assignment with a film:

- [Beyond Recognition](#)— “A film exploring the quest to preserve one’s culture and homeland in a society bent on erasing them”— directed by Michelle Grace Steinberg, 2014. 25 minutes. Available via streaming and DVD.
- [Here and Now](#)—by Bay Area Open Space Council, 2015. 18 minutes. Documents the work of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust and Tribal Stewardship Corps.
- [Standing on Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Tourists](#) - the first of a series of stories from eight indigenous cultures around the world as they stand up for their traditional sacred lands in defense of cultural survival, human rights and the environment. *Pilgrims and Tourists* features the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, another unrecognized tribe in California.

Maps (see the following pages)





Map of the Outreach Areas of the Seven Missions that took in Costanoan-Speaking Populations.

From page 7 *Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today*— by Randall Milliken, Laurence H. Shoup, and Beverly R. Ortiz. National Park Service, 2009. [Full PDF of publication](#) | Individual chapter PDFs [on NPS website](#)