Voices from the Walk for Juristac

Time needed: 45 minutes

Purpose

This teaching tool introduces students to a cultural and political event that was organized by the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band in September 2019, the Walk for Juristac. Students will gain an understanding of varying perspectives on the meanings and importance of the place through transcripts of speeches that were delivered at the event.

Students can compare the perspectives of the Tribal Chairman, the Tribal Historian, tribal youth, a biologist supporter, and other tribal members. In addition to examining meanings, students can look at these speeches as forms of persuasive communication, asking questions such as, "what effect does the speech have on event goers or those who later hear or read their words?"

Materials

- Walk for Juristac Slideshow
- Speech sets #1-4 including speeches by Valentin Lopez, Tiffany Yap, Adalena Lopez, Roxanne Gaonna, Veronica Martinez, Quirina Luna Geary, and Ed Ketchum (see below)
- Benitolink article, 9/15/19: Community walks for Juristac
- Walking to Renew the Sacred article

Preparation

- Prepare for presenting the slideshow. Review the Benitolink article from 9/15/19: Community walks for Juristac and the Walking to Renew the Sacred update
- Send out or print out one story listed above for each group of 3–5 students. Use the list of ideas below to help you choose discussion questions.

Directions

1. Begin by familiarizing the class with the Walk for Juristac event with a brief lecture. Use the slideshow to provide students with a visual introduction to the event and read through the description found on the event poster. Use the Benitolink article to provide any additional details from the day that are needed. Ask students to reflect on Chairman Lopez's words: "Today's walk was historic. What you witnessed was our members coming together with the public. When have the people in this area stood and walked

with the indigenous people of this area?". Ask why students might think he describes the day as historic.

2. Divide students into groups of three to five and provide one speech set to each group (there are seven different transcripts divided into 4 sets of relatively equal length). Speeches could also be separated from the sets and each group of students could be given a singular speech.

3. Ask students to read the stories in their groups and then discuss them. Select questions students will discuss from the list of ideas below or come up with alternatives. Assign groups to select a person to record and a person to report back before beginning their discussion.

    - Values
        - How do you imagine that culture, religion, gender, socioeconomic status and geographic location have influenced the values of your speaker?
        - What values do the speakers identify with most deeply in relation to Juristac, or more broadly?
        - How might these values differ from proponents of the mine project?
        - How might the different parties be influenced by belief systems structured within capitalism, Judeo-Christian history, and/or the history of property in California?
        - Chairman Valentin Lopez describes the Amah Mutsun vision and values of restoring indigenous knowledge and practices to the land, knowledge that has been devalued and suppressed for over 200 years. Why do you think this knowledge was denied and devalued? Can you think of examples of changing trends in the present day towards respect for Amah Mutsun knowledge, values and vision?
        - What do you think the speakers mean when they describe Juristac as sacred land? What is your definition of sacred?

    - Knowledge and Power
        - How does the speaker situate themself in terms of knowing about, being an expert, or commenting on the proposed mine project and its potential impacts?
        - How is knowledge articulated in this speech? What forms does it take, and how are those forms legitimated? How does this relate to Chairman Lopez's concern that the true history of the tribe has never been told?
        - How do the tribe's efforts to reclaim their sacred grounds at Juristac empower tribal members and increase their capacity to affect social and political change?
        - Land ownership is fundamental to the accumulation of political power, wealth and influence in American society. Today, the Amah Mutsun do not own any land within their traditional territory and are excluded from

their sacred places, such as Juristac, by No Trespassing signs. According to Ed Ketchum's talk, how did the Amah Mutsun lose the rights to their own ancestral lands and what impact do you think this has had on the tribe's standing in the region?
        - What responsibility, if any, do governments, educational institutions, and general community members have to the Indigenous communities on whose ancestral lands they live and do business upon?

    - Organizing
        - What approach has the tribe and coalition to protect Juristac taken to organizing through the Walk for Juristac?
        - What are some of the key words or uses of language that set the tone for this form of organizing and how it is communicated?
        - What social, cultural, or economic factors do you think affect the choice of this form of organization?
        - What similarities do you see between the Protect Juristac movement and other social movements?

4. Bring the entire group back together and ask one person from each group to briefly describe the speech and then share their answers to the discussion questions. Help the group to identify any recurring themes and highlight the different perspectives based on the speech giver.

Adaptations

- Have students review social media posts from the protectjuristac Instagram or Facebook accounts that document the Walk for Juristac, in order to analyze how the walk was described and received.
- Ask students to prepare artwork or speeches that they would see as fitting with the Walk for Juristac.

Speech transcripts (found on the following pages)

Walk for Juristac speeches set #1

Valentin Lopez, Amah Mutsun Tribal Chair

Good afternoon and thank you all for being here. What a wonderful turn out. When were were planning this, we were hoping for 125 and I think we exceeded that (there were around 400 people in attendance that day). Our tribe, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, is comprised of the descendants of the indigenous peoples that were taken to Mission San Juan Bautista and Mission Santa Cruz.

Our true history has never been told. We've been ignored, forgotten and erased from history. Our history includes incarceration, slavery, brutality, genocide, and so much more. We suffered three periods of brutal colonization. In that colonization they wanted to destroy our Amah Mutsun spirituality, Amah Mutsun culture, Amah Mutsun environment, and Amah Mutsun humanity. There were very few survivors from the missions. Here at Mission San Juan Bautista in the year 1823 the superiors in Mexico gave a survey or questionnaire that was sent to each mission and one of the things they asked is "How many Indians have died at your mission?". The priest here answered that 19,421 Indians died here at Mission San Juan Bautista and that was after 26 years of the mission being here, and there were another 10 years to go before the mission closed. You read here that there are I 3600 or 800, I don't know the exact number, buried there, but only Indians that were baptized could be buried in the church cemetery. If you were not baptized you were buried elsewhere. We don't know where our ancestors are. That's horrible.

Our people who lived here, lived here for well over 15,000 years. And if you think of that in terms of generations that's 800, 900, perhaps 1000 generations or more. And our creation story tells us that we have the responsibility to take care of mother earth and all living things. And for those 15,000 years and 1000 generations plus our ancestors learned about the water, the bees, the four legged, the finned, the wind, the mountains, the places of power. They learned ceremony. They learned prayer. They learned how to keep balance in their world. That is what was lost with that colonization. In 2006 Tribal elders came to a tribal council meeting and they said we must find a way to get back to taking care of mother earth and all living things. That is our way to honor our ancestors who came before us. And that is also our way to fulfill our obligation to Creator. Creator never rescinded our obligation to take care of mother earth, never

rescinded that. That is our obligation today and the Amah Mutsun are going to fulfill our responsibility.

And we asked the public to join us. And that is why today on such a beautiful, beautiful today that you are here to stand with us and we thank you. I want to talk about Juristac for a moment. Juristac was our most sacred site— *is* our most sacred site. Juristac is where our Big Head ceremonies are held and Jursitac is also the home of our spiritual leader. There is no place more important. And then Jursitac, now known as Sargent Ranch, goes into bankruptcy and an investor group called the Debt Acquisition Company of America, they buy Juristac. And I talked to the person afterwards, he called me. He wanted to talk about what we thought about putting an Indian Casino at Juristac and we said, "No way, we could never consider putting that on a sacred site." Their goal is to monetize it as quick and as much as possible and then to flip it and sell it. They're just about making money as fast as possible. We are not going to allow that to happen. We say enough, enough of our spiritual and cultural sites have been destroyed. There will be no more free rides within Amah Mutsun territory. We are going to fight for every one of our cultural sites and spiritual sites and we ask you to please stand with us.

Once again we thank you for being with us here today. This means so much. We need to remember something that we can do is pray. We ask you to pray with us. Our tribe prays and that is what brought us to where we are today. Please pray with us. Ho.

Closing remarks at the conclusion of the walk

Today was historic. When have the people of this area ever stood and walked with the indigenous people of this area? I know we had, a number of years back, we had a gathering to oppose the canonization of Junipero Serra at Mission San Juan Bautista. And I bet you we had less than 15 or 20 of the local community join us. We asked people to come out, to stand with us, pray with us, and very very few came. But today, this right here shows that the times are changing and people are ready for healing.

You know, our tribe since 2011 has held bi-monthly wellness meetings, where we work to recover from historic trauma. And one thing we talk about in our wellness meetings is that for wellness it takes telling the truth—the truth is important for healing—and also, working to correct the past, and to tell the true history, and to change the laws that continue to dominate and discriminate against Native Americans. There's many, many laws on the books, and we ask you to join us to help us break those down. And then the other thing is, and this is the most

difficult one— is that perpetrators must heal. Perpetrators must heal. And by perpetrators, we're talking about the State of California, and all those laws they have on the books. The cities and counties that have those immoral laws on the books. The Catholic Church. We asked if we could park our cars in the Catholic Church parking lot today for today's event, and they told us, no. We could not park on Cathloic Church grounds today. Perpetrators need to heal, and we need to pray for the healing. I want to tell you, today was historic. What you witnessed was many of our members coming together, with the public.

Walk for Juristac speeches set #2

Tiffany Yap, The Center for Biological Diversity

Good afternoon. Thank you Chairman Lopez and members of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band for hosting this call to arms to protect Juristac and preserve these culturally and ecologically important lands. As a biologist at the Center for Biological Diversity I am honored to speak with you today about the thriving and rich biodiversity here in Juristac. And I want to explain why my organization is so concerned about the destructive plans of sand and gravel mining here. These beautiful lands are home to federally endangered and threatened wildlife including iconic state species like the California tiger salamander, the California red-legged frog, and the California condor. These species are symbols of California's wilderness. They need places to live, and if we don't fight to protect what little habitat remains, we could lose them forever.

Juristac's undisturbed grasslands, open riparian woodlands, streams and wetlands provide habitat for thousands of plant and animal species. Burrowing owls and golden eagles hunt their prey in the grasslands. Bobcats slink through oak woodlands and riparian corridors in search of food and mates. Western pond turtles bask in the sun after feeding in the ponds. Garter snakes feast on newts that have gathered in breeding pools. Bats and native bees pollinate the high number of native and rare plants throughout the area.

This area is also an important connectivity corridor for regional wildlife movement. Animals need to be able to move and venture to different habitats to find food, shelter and mates. But too often roads and development block in and isolate animals which threatens their survival. For example, loss of habitat for mountain lion populations including those in the Santa Cruz Mountains, has led to dangerous levels of inbreeding and low genetic diversity. Mountain lions in the area are now vulnerable to extinction.

But Juristac provides hope. The area serves as a much needed connectivity corridor between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. We can't allow further habitat loss and fragmentation in this important linkage.

Juristac is also an important stop within the Pacific Flyway, a four thousand mile stretch of land from Alaska to Patagonia that migratory birds use to follow food sources or move between their breeding and overwintering grounds. Tricolored blackbirds, white-tailed kites, and Least Bell's

Vireos are just a few of the migratory birds you may spot around here. These vibrant ecosystems make Juristac a truly special place.

They also provide life-saving services that we rely on. They help clean our air and drinking water. They protect our communities from mudslides and storm surges. They pollinate our crops and store carbon as climate change continues to threaten our health and safety. But California's wildlands continue to be threatened by human activities like the proposed Sargent quarry mining operation. Our state has already lost over 1 million acres of oak woodlands and over 90 percent riparian and wetland habitats.

We can't afford to continue plowing through and fragmenting lands with high ecological and cultural value. Instead we must preserve California's unique habitats, animals and plants while respecting the historical and spiritual significance of places like Juristac. The Center for Biological Diversity stands with Chairman Lopez and the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to protect and secure stewardship of their traditional lands. Thank you.

Adalena Lopez, 10 year old tribal member and youngest walker

My name is Adalena. My family is part of the Amah Mutsun Tribe. I'm 10 years old. I think the walk was very tiring, but also, I am glad to walk for mother nature, because she provides a lot of stuff that we depend on.

Walk for Juristac speeches set #3

Amah Mutsun Tribal Members

Roxanne Gaonna – Amah Mutsun Tribal Member, 16 years old:

Good afternoon family and friends. My name is Roxanne Gaonna. [Beside me are] Eric Zapata, Gabi Garcia, and Ajen Moreno. We are up here to represent the youth of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. All over the world, native people are fighting similar battles for our society to listen to them. To protect their land, their culture, and their sacred sites. Today we are gathered to bring awareness to our battle against a proposed gravel mine that would destroy our most sacred site: Juristac. Juristac is where our people gathered for our very sacred ceremony - the Big Head. But this was stopped when our people were brutally forced to leave their homes, including their land and our way of life, to be enslaved at the missions. Can you imagine that? Let's just take a moment to picture that. Being taken away from your parents, family, being separated, culturally and spiritually erased. Today is so powerful because we are finally coming home, and, we are not going anywhere. We will continue to fight, and as a youth it is our responsibility—it is your responsibility—to make sure Juristac is protected. Our dream as youth is to one day bring our own children here for the Big Head ceremony, as our ancestors did before us for thousands of years and hundreds of generations. Thank you for all your support and making this dream feel like a close reality. Ho

Quirina Luna Geary, Amah Mutsun Tribal Councilmember

Hello my name is Quirina Geary. I am Mutsun from the villages of Tomoy and Tomorough and I'm also a councilwoman for our tribe. I just introduced myself (in the Mutsun language) and talked about what line I come from. We want to think everybody for being here. Huris-tak means the place of the Big Head, and this is derived from our deity, whose name is Kuksui. Our religion is polytheistic, so we believed in many deities, many Gods. And Sargent Ranch is a special place, because many ceremonies happened there. And when that happens, you know, these Gods come together, to heal the land, the people— to keep our world turning. And so, to destroy this place, it's unconscionable to think what could happen. Because these are not renewable— once they're gone, they're gone forever.

It's important that we stand together, to protect this place. For our people, there's not many places that are in that pristine of condition still. And our Gods and our spiritual places are not

something tangible that you can touch or see, so a lot of people don't understand the value. But, we really need your support. We're happy that everybody's here and we hope that you spread the word. Anytime you hear of a meeting or any type of other gathering, we need your support. Like I said, and our Chairman Val noted, this is the most significant place for our people and this is all we have left. I really appreciate your time and thank you.

Veronica Martinez, Amah Mutsun Tribal Member

My name is Veronica Martinez and I am a member of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. We are so grateful to see all of you here. I have mixed emotions on a day like today. If you walk to the back of Mission San Juan, my great great grandmother is buried, her name is Ascencion Solorsano and if you go back, there's a big red marker. That marker was created by my grandpa. And when I see that, or when I look out into this audience, I see family, and that's good. But then I think about why we're here, why my ancestors are buried behind there, why we've gathered here today, and that's where the mixed emotions come in.

I get angry, I get sad, I get tired. Tired that we have to keep fighting for who we are. Tired that we have to explain, again and again, our identity, and what it means to be Amah Mutsun. And so, today is extremely important. And if we have to fight, I'm glad that we are fighting here together. I'm glad that we are doing this as one, not just as Amah Mutsun, but as neighboring tribes, allies to our tribe.

I'm so grateful to see so many of you out here, so that we can go at this together. We're not just doing it for the people who showed up here today. We're doing it for the people who couldn't be here today. We're doing this for our ancestors. We're doing this for future generations.

Specifically, we call attention to Juristac. But this is, like I mentioned, about people, and land, and spirit. This is about identity. This is much bigger than just this one cause, although this cause is extremely important. This is land that was ceremonial land. This is land that they want to take away, like they've taken so many other things away. And so, we are here today to talk about it, to connect with one another, to walk through it, and to continue this conversation as long as we have to, so that this does not happen, and so that we come together again, and again, every time we need to re-establish our identity.

Walk for Juristac speech set #4

Ed Ketchum, Amah Mutsun Tribal Historian and Tribal Member

I'm going to talk about the history of this area. This was known as Juristac. It is where the shamans lived. This is where the medicine grew. In the old days, tobacco grew wild here and other medicines all grew in this area. This is where the doctoras came to collect medicines. And this land, one league on each side of the river, was promised to the Indians. And so, after the secularization of the mission, there were a number of villages built along here.

One was called Pescadero, over where the Pescadero Creek is. One was called Isleta – that's where the San Benito and Pajaro River come together and that created a little island so they called it Isleta. The next one was called La Brea. It's where the water comes down from the hills and there's oil, tar pits in the hills. The next one is called Carnaderos because it's where they butchered the cattle. And then there was El Paredón which means the wall. The mountain here, we've had a landslide that was coming down as a wall, so they called the village there El Paredón. There were several thousand Indians living in this area.

And, there were four primary Ranchos that were created during the Spanish Period. This one here was called Lomerias Muertas, the little land of the dead. Across the Pajaro River was Juristac, the Big Head place. Then, north of that was Las Animas, which means the spirits, because some people called the shamans spirits, they called them more than that, but they called them spirits. And then there was Salsipuedes which meant "get on if you can." These were all the Ranchos.

When the Americans took over you, had to go up to Sacramento and give a testimony that you had this property during the Mexican Period. Well the German family went up to Sacramento and they said "oh, we own Juristac", and the judges said, "well it says here that that's supposed to be saved for the Indians." And the Germans said "all the Indians are dead, they're all gone and there's no Indians anymore," so they gave that title to the German family, who later sold the lands to the Sargent family, and that is how it became known as the Sargent Ranch.

But the Indians were still living there at the time. My family was living on Isleta and when they went to church and came home, the house was boarded up and all of their possessions were out in the front yard. They had to collect everything and they went to live on the Anzar property to

the west, near present day Aromas. So, these were our lands. And these were medicine lands. These were where the shamans lived, and, they weren't something you'd want to play around with.

One of them lived right to the north of where the San Benito and the Pajaro River came together and we are going to go right by there. And it was known because they had a sweat house and there was a leone, that was a flag that let the people know that they were there. And during the early Spanish Period and the Mexican Period, people didn't go up this way to go up the valley. They went all the way over to almost Hollister and then went up because this area was a high power area and you couldn't go here. Same thing I've read about "The Rocks". I don't know if you know where "The Rocks" are but it was another power area. So when you come here, know it was a power area.

When I was walking here I was remembering a game that used to be played here. It was called Gomé. They had balls and the runners would kick that ball running and see who would first get to San Martin. So, if you think you're tired going just to Betabel, remember you could be only halfway there if you were playing Gomé. Thank you very much for your time.