They Tell A Story

Ya Nuunukne - “They Tell A Story” In Chochenyo

As we continue our work of Rematriation, we invite our community and supporters to listen to our stories from the land and our growing programs and projects, through our seasonal newsletter.

Sogorea Te’ calls on Native and non-Native peoples to heal and transform the legacies of colonization, genocide, and patriarchy and to do the work our ancestors and future generations are calling us to do.
Recently, we put out a call to help us buy our first house. We had an unexpected opportunity with a 14 day timeline. We at least had to try. So we asked for your support.

The response has been immense. You stepped up. You organized. You pledged. You gave.

We are humbled and overwhelmed with the amazing outpouring from our supporters. With hundreds of donations, pledges, and promises, ranging from $2 to over $200,000, we are stunned to have reached our goal before the deadline.

We bought our first house!!

We will be able to begin establishing permanent affordable places for urban Indigenous people to live and thrive in the Bay Area.

The world is ready for another way of being in relation to land and each other, and we are so grateful to be in building it together with you. Thank you to the ancestors, everyone whose work laid this path before us and all those building it forward together for the next generations.

This is only the beginning.
BEYOND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
Bay Area Cities Move To Support Indigenous Led Land Work

CITY OF ALAMEDA PAYS VOLUNTARY SHUUMI LAND TAX

Alameda became the first city in the country to commit to paying Shummi, a voluntary tax that recognizes the legacy of colonization while supporting Rematration and land return to Indigenous people!

The voluntary tax contributes to supporting Sogorea Te’s critical work including food distribution, establishing urban gardens, ceremonial spaces, and the dream of an alternative land base for Indigenous people in the territory.

CITY OF ALBANY PASSES REMATRIATION RESOLUTION

The City of Albany voted to recognize and work with the people whose land they are on and begin addressing some of the historical harms of colonization!

Developed with the Villages of Lisjan, and with the support of community, the resolution includes education, land access, historically and culturally accurate signage, and more!

Even more amazing... any city could do this. Hit us up.
As we dream of and work towards land return, we are happy to announce the launch of our new Rematriate the Land Fund. With the support of our community and the Shuumi Land Tax, Sogorea Te’ has been able to create new pathways to connect to land.

The Rematriate the Land Fund is dedicated to creating an alternative land base for urban Indigenous people, to support reconnecting to land, to gather, to have ceremony, and to heal.

We work to restore reciprocal relationships with this sacred land. We create opportunities for all people living in Lisjan Ohlone territory to work together to re-envision the Bay Area community and what it means to live on Ohlone land.

As we begin to do the work our ancestors and future generations are calling us to do, we invite those who have benefitted from stolen land and settler-colonialism to contribute to our vision of Rematriation, to help us build Indigenous Sovereignty, and support our movement to Rematriate the land.
Long before there was ever any paper that said it belonged to someone, the land was here. Rammay is the ancestral land of the tribe sometimes called Ohlone. This is the story of the land and its Rematriation.

Tucked away off from the hustle and bustle of San Pablo and Peralta, West Oakland or Rammay, meaning “west” in the Chochenyo language, is home to roughly 21,000 Oakland residents. Rammay always has been a community teeming with culture and resilience, pushing back and resisting against the multiple waves of colonization and forms of oppression.

It was first stolen and claimed as property under the Peralta Land Grant in 1820. Someone who never set foot on the land decided it was theirs and then gave it to settlers. Then it started being sold in parcels, passing through many hands. Now we are here today, the two houses hugging the garden on either side being built around the late 1990s and early 2000s. We don’t know much about who was here through all the years in between, but one reason this garden is still here is because of one of its caretakers, Inez Jones.

Inez Jones, a well known Jazz singer, lived here back when West Oakland was a thriving cultural center and 7th street was lined with famous jazz clubs. Inez married Paul Jones, a fellow Black Jazz musician and trumpeter. Together they made their home on Linden street in West Oakland and she was known for keeping a beautiful garden. From the Harlem of the West, the Boogie Baroness” was the resident singer at Harem Club and blessed many local clubs with her presence, during the 1950s.

Around this time, the Ohlone people in the Bay Area were mostly still in hiding. Other Native people were being relocated from reservations to urban areas through Termination and Relocation policies, a continuation of the colonial government’s oppression and forced assimilation. Our elders say many relocated intertribal Native American families were also setting up their homes in West Oakland through this time.

As Oakland entered the 1960’s, the city eminent domain destroyed more than 5,000 homes in West Oakland to create the freeway and BART systems, drastically altering the community.

Through the 70s and 80s, the area was impacted by economic decline. Inez Jones passed away in 1995 at 82 years old and public records show the house was foreclosed around the same time.

Stories we collected say the houses and the garden in between were abandoned, the neighborhood in “blight.” Over the years while the garden’s fruit trees continued to grow, various tenants squatted the buildings and one house was partially destroyed in a fire before being condemned, fenced off and left to rest.
Throughout the 1990’s the Internet and Silicone Valley exploded a new wave of settlers and development throughout the greater Bay Area. As land was snatched up by investors and buildings razed, remnants of Ohlone cultural, ancestral, and sacred grounds were increasingly disrupted, upturned, and destroyed.

A group Ohlone and intertribal Indigenous people began organizing around trying to save important cultural sites under the name Indian People Organizing for Change (IPOC). The price of land and housing skyrocketed and Oakland continued to transform.

The Return of Rammay

It was years and years later, a former volunteer from our friends at Planting Justice who had learned about Sogorea Te’ was working at a large nonprofit when they ran across the forgotten lease to the garden site. They suggested the site be turned over to Sogorea Te and the original people whose ancestral land we are on. They contacted the Northern California Land Trust (NCLT), and the process of return started.

Land Trusts hold land and share it under alternative ownership models and long terms leases. NCLT “owned” the garden and gave stewardship rights to Sogorea Te through a 99 year lease. The garden was officially rematriated and returned to Indigenous hands in December 2018. It was named Rammay, which means the West in Chochenyo, by Deja Gould, the language carrier for the Villages Lisjan tribe.

Today, Indigenous women are providing access and opportunity one square foot of green space at a time. Here in this small garden, our crew grows 12 different varieties of fruit trees and bushes, Native plants like Mugwort and Soap Root, and various produce crops. The fruit trees and raised beds supplement our food distribution program. There is a shed for seed saving and drying plant medicines. Plans are in the works for an outside classroom area and water catchment system. Small groups of youth are starting to visit, fruit is being preserved and medicines are being made from the plants.

While the world navigates challenges and changes, Sogorea Te’ continues to build new kinds of urban Indigenous access to land. While the garden is not yet open for visitors, We looking forward to seeing you there some future day.

2005 prayer walk for the sacred site Sogorea Te’

Around this time, some community gardeners who remembered Inez’s garden, saw the abandoned site and wanted save it. Collaborating with school garden programs, and Northern California Land Trust, they raised the money to buy the house and land in 2006. The homes on either side of the garden became permanently affordable and the garden was designated as a community space named the Paula and Inez Jones Garden. For many years Oakland Butterfly and Urban Gardens (OBUGS) stewarded the site with youth groups before their organization sunsettled. In the transition the garden was forgotten and again went into rest.
Originally inspired by the Honor Tax for the Wiyot Tribe created by the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous People, the Shuumi Land Tax is an invitation for non-Indigenous people who live on Lisjan Ohlone land to make an annual contribution to support the Rematriation work of Sogorea Te’. Since its launch in 2015, Shuumi has grown steadily and become a critical cornerstone of our work.

Thank you to everyone who has paid their Shuumi. To everyone who has told their family and friends, who has shared the story online, who includes a link on their email signature or website, who has put a sign in your yard, who has in so many ways stepped up to support our work.

We are deeply grateful. Sogorea Te’ has big plans for Rematriation and we’re just getting started. Thank you for building with us.
REMATRIATION

Indigenous women led work to restore sacred relationships between Indigenous people and their ancestral land. Honoring our matrilineal societies and lineage’s ways of tending to the land, in opposition of patriarchal violence and dynamics.

RETHE LAND WANTS US BACK TOO
BY VICTORIA MONTANO

The Land Wants Us Back Too

You allow me to be your student
Once again
I’ve been here before...
ancestral knowledge unfolding
organically
you teach me reciprocity
with patience
We can relate
I too want to snuggled by the soil
I too desire growth
I too need water
We compliment each other
My hands have never looked so
good before
I desire to be in relation with you
You’ve chosen me
Realization...
The land wants me back too

#LandBack
The Run 4 Salmon “A prayerful journey led by Chief Caleen Sisk of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe to restore our salmon runs, protect our waters, and our Indigenous lifeways.” It begins at Buliyum Puyuuk aka Mount Shasta and ends in Lisjan Territory at Sogorea Te delta aka Glen Cove in Vallejo. This year there was a special ceremony held in Coast Miwok territory at Muir Beach to pray for the whales and all ocean life.

Also, this year for the first time in over 150 years the Lisjan were in kayaks in their own water ways in prayer for the salmon to return home. It is said that during the Spanish invasion, at one point you could look into the creeks and see hundreds of salmon, so much so that you could probably walk across their backs to the other side. We don’t only fight for our sacred sites, we fight for our water ways, we fight for our future and our sacred way of life.

I wash my hands in Chochenyo
Kaanak huk’a ‘ek-iššuya

I am going to wash my hands
Kaanak huk’asin ‘ek-iššuya

I put water on my hands
Kaanak ‘akkapikne sii ‘iššuyatak

I put soap on my hands
Kaanak ‘akkapikne rawwen ‘iššuyatak

I wash my hands for 20 seconds
Kaanak huk’a ‘ek-iššuya ‘uṭṭin-‘iweš seconds

I put water on my hands again
Kaanak ‘akkapikne sii ‘iššuyatak ‘oyyo

I dry my hands
Kaanak kawhepe ‘iššuya
ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPDATES

Covid & Fire Safety - Distribution of care packages for houseless & community partners including face masks, sanitary napkins & more. Provided through funding with the First Nations Foundation.

How To Come Correct - Protocols, guidelines and invitations for how to engage us with respect. Check out our HTCC visuals featured on our social media platforms, and stay tuned for a full guide on our website!

Rematriation Resource Guide - Interested in more ways to get involved? Check out our Rematriation Resource Guide!

Volunteers - Reach out to volunteer@rematriatetheland.org for volunteer opportunities!

UPCOMING EVENTS

9/25 California Native Day

9/25 HSU LandBack

9/29 Queer Projects on Indigenous Land

10/11 Indigenous People's Day

10/16 Oakland Roots Game

10/28 Heyday Harvest

WISH LIST

Sewing Machine
Seed Sifter/Organizer
Macbooks
Hydraulic Press
THANK YOU!

For More Information:
Sogoreate-landtrust.org
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