



# MUWEKMA OHLONE INDIAN TRIBE

OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA REGION

'Innu Huššištak Makiš Mak-Muwekma "The Road To The Future For Our People"

TRIBAL CHAIRPERSON  
CHARLENE NIJMEH

August 14, 2020

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Paul Fine, Chair

TRIBAL SECRETARY  
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GOMEZ

Building Name Review Committee  
University of California, Berkeley

TRIBAL TREASURER  
RICHARD MASSIATT

Horše túuxi (Good day) Prof. Fine and Building Name Review Committee,

TRIBAL COUNCIL  
JOANN BROSE  
FRANK RUANO  
SHEILA SCHMIDT  
CAROL SULLIVAN

**The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area supports renaming the University of California, Berkeley Anthropology Department building to Muwekma Ohlone Hall, currently named after Alfred Kroeber. This would pay respect to Muwekma, the contemporary identity and legal successor of the Verona Band of Alameda County, as well as the largest Indigenous tribe of the central San Francisco Bay Area. Muwekma Ohlone tribal members are directly descended from several East Bay tribal nations of this region. This decision would represent a powerful symbol acknowledging the survival, achievements, and continuous existence of the Muwekma Ohlone people, against the colonial machinations of the "Politics of Erasure" enacted by elements of the dominant society.**

TRIBAL ETHNO-HISTORIAN  
ALAN LEVENTHAL

Alfred Kroeber worked extensively with the ancestors of the Muwekma Ohlone people, and his words in *The Handbook of California Indians* continue to have a particularly detrimental affect on Muwekma Ohlone sovereignty in the East Bay. It was Phoebe Apperson Hearst, founder of UC Berkeley's Hearst Museum, who invited Kroeber to visit and interview members of the Muwekma/Verona Band community residing on, and adjacent to, the Hacienda del Pozo de Verona property in Pleasanton, which was built on the Alisal Rancheria, already long established by Muwekma/Verona Band families after missionization at Mission San Jose. Kroeber, along with other UC Berkeley anthropologists, had interviewed a number of the Muwekma/Verona Band community for the various languages spoken on both the Alisal (Pleasanton) and El Molino (Niles) rancherias, including identifying the linguistic term "Muwekma" meaning "the People" published in the Chumash and Costanoan Languages in 1910 (*UCPAAE*: Vol 9., No. 2). While interviewing our ancestors, who adapted to immense change throughout sustained violent colonization, Kroeber wrote:

*"The Costanoan [Ohlone] group is extinct so far as all practical purposes are concerned. A few scattered individuals survive, whose ancestors were once attached to the missions San Jose, San Juan Bautista, and San Carlos, but they are of mixed-tribal ancestry and live lost among other Indians or obscure Mexicans." — Alfred Kroeber, Handbook of California Indians, 1925*

After writing such a sweeping statement, Kroeber backtracked, decades later however, Kroeber and Robert Heizer later included in their testimony the survivorship of the Mission San Jose [Muwekma/Verona Band] Indians in their testimony during the California Claims hearings in San Francisco which was published under the title "Continuity of Indian Population in California from 1770/1850 to 1955", *University of California Archaeological Research Facility, Contribution No. 9, pp. 1-22, 1970 (Berkeley), but it was too little, too late.*



*Kroeber's untruthful declaration of our peoples' extinction was taken as fact by an agent from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Lafayette Dorrington, who declared in 1927 that our people—federally recognized as the Verona Band of Alameda County—needed no land.* This declaration was despite the fact there were Muwekma Ohlone people still living on the land in Pleasanton, where Kroeber visited, met, interacted, recorded language, stories, and other aspects of traditional culture from our Muwekma ancestors.

As a result of a loss of land post-1927, following Kroeber and Dorrington's actions, the federal government began to systematically ignore Muwekma's existing federal recognition, and the generation on the Pleasanton Alisal Rancheria was forced into a society with extreme anti-Indian bias in the midst of the Spanish flu, a deadly pandemic that was heavily impacting our people. During that time of heavy disenfranchisement, the University preyed on the moment and destroyed ancestral shellmounds that ring the Bayshore and flatlands, removing our ceremonial items and the ancestral remains of nearly 7,000 Ohlone and Mewuk people that our Tribe descends from.

The Muwekma Ohlone people still feel a direct impact of Kroeber's words, and Lafayette Dorrington's subsequent actions nearly 100 years after these egregious sins occurred. The generation affected by Kroeber's declaration of extinction were people who our living tribal members knew and love—parents, grandparents and great-grandparents—good people who should have never had this harm inflicted on them; but they were strong and they never accepted Kroeber's, or Berkeley's untrue decree of extinction. One member of our Tribe, *Capitan* Hank Alvarez, is the only surviving member born into the Verona Band who is also a member of the contemporary Muwekma Ohlone Tribe; someone who is alive today that was directly impacted in his lifetime by Kroeber's bad deeds and untruthful words. *Capitan* Hank Alvarez is 98 years old today; he was three years old when Kroeber wrote that our people were extinct, and *Capitan* Hank Alvarez was five years old when Lafayette Dorrington wrote that our people did not need land. The undeniable strength of that generation who survived struggle allows the current generation of Muwekma Ohlone people to exist today, and to continue to protect our culture and sovereignty.

Muwekma is the Chochenyo word for *the people*, Chochenyo is the Indigenous language of Berkeley, which for eons has been spoken on this soil, and continues to be spoken — long before any other foreign idiom arrived on our lands. **We are requesting the University of California, Berkeley rename Kroeber Hall to Muwekma Ohlone Hall, named after the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, which represents every surviving lineage of the Indigenous people on where the University of California, Berkeley sits.**

Additionally, as the Indigenous Tribe of the land where Berkeley sits, we would like to be informed and included in all steps of the re-naming process of Kroeber Hall. We also strongly suggest the overdue naming of prominent campus landmarks in the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's Chochenyo language, to represent the permanence of our Chochenyo language, and to give greater visibility for the Indigenous stewards of the unceded land where the university has been established. These changes would be implemented in a spirit of contemporary standards in higher education. Acknowledgment of the permanence and persistence of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco, the contemporary identity and legal successor of the federally recognized Verona Band of Alameda County. The renaming of buildings on Berkeley's campus is an issue of justice for our Muwekma Ohlone tribal members, and for our ancestors who were impacted by Kroeber's harmful actions and declarations.

'Úni (Respectfully),



Charlene Nijmeh, Chairwoman for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area  
*The Contemporary Identity and Legal Successor of the Federally Recognized Verona Band of Alameda County*

CC: Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council