

# November 26th is National Native American Heritage Day.

*Celebrate the rich history, culture, and traditions of the Tamien Nation, the First Peoples of Silicon Valley.*

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, November 25, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Quirina Luna Geary, Chairwoman for Tamien Nation begins to explain why her tribe, like so many Indigenous groups, are not widely known, "We are proud of our heritage and excited for the opportunity to finally share our story. As Indigenous people, we were raised to be invisible, away from the prying eyes of government agencies whose sole purpose was to eradicate Indigenous culture and force absolute assimilation. We were taught not to speak up or make waves. If people didn't hear or see us, we were safe. Today, we are free to share our experiences and openly advocate for our people. This gives us an amazing sense of freedom. We can practice our culture and language without fear of punishment or ridicule."

Silicon Valley is the aboriginal homeland of the Tamien Nation encompassing over 1300 square miles where Tamien people lived and continue to manage the landscape for thousands of years creating a deep connection with the land embedded with respect, trust, and reciprocity.

"As a child, I remember traveling with several generations of aunts, uncles and cousins to work the fields and to harvest our Indigenous foods. I clearly remember one time at the age of 6, we went to gather mushrooms. We were in a large field as my mother was teaching me about the color of the underbelly of the mushroom. I only picked a few when I heard someone scream. I looked up and everyone was running past us. My mother picked me up with one arm and my cousin with the other, ran for the fence and tossed us over. There was an odd moment of silence before everyone started laughing. It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized what happened that day. We were trespassing onto a farmer's land and a brahman bull was chasing us. This was



Tamien citizens continue to harvest seaweed on the California Coast, a cultural tradition that is thousands of years old.

our reality.”

Like many non-Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in California, Tamien Nation does not live or own lands within their aboriginal territory. This is a consequence of settler colonialism and the granting of Tamien lands to Spanish, Mexican and other immigrant families forcing Tamien people to migrate from Santa Clara Valley to Santa Cruz and then eventually to the San Joaquin Valley. “There are literally hundreds of Tamien people living in the San Joaquin Valley today,” Geary explains. Despite the disposition of their lands, Tamien people continue to have an inextricable connection to their homeland, “Our land is who we are. Our oral history tells us that humans were created by siri, saaray, yuu humuya (Eagle, Crow and Hummingbird). The three had a long conversation about how to create people and what we should look like. They began to create us from clay molded of the earth. We are literally the land.” Geary continues explain the consequences of land loss, “There’s the saying in English, ‘Home is where you hang your hat,’ But for Tamien people, we are not whole unless we are home. The removal from our homeland is devastating. It’s like taking our hands so we can no longer feed ourselves, removing our feet so we can no longer walk, and cutting out our heart as it’s the very essence of who we are. We are the land.”

The removal of Indigenous people from their lands has greater consequences beyond displacement. “When we do not have access to our lands, we cannot practice certain ceremonies or gather particular traditional foods. This loss includes the loss of opportunity for intergenerational transmission of cultural information that is vital for our very existence as Tamien people,” Geary explains. “I want to teach my daughters how to gather mushrooms like my mother taught me, but we need land to do it without fear of being hurt or arrested for trespassing.”

Despite these obstacles, Tamien Nation continues to display resiliency, hope, and courage. “There is so much work to be done and we cannot do it alone. We understand that we need partnership and resources outside our community.” Geary has worked with linguists, Natasha Warner and Lynnika Butler of the University of Arizona to help revitalize one of their heritage languages. “Our Tamien language only consists of a few wordlists, but Tamien people intermarried with the southern Mutsun people, and that related language is highly documented.” Geary is hoping to use Mutsun to help reconstruct the Tamien language. After 20 years of work on the Mutsun language, Geary, Warner and Butler coauthored an open-source



Tamien Nation Drying Seaweed on the California Coast

comprehensive [600-page dictionary](#), a first of its kind. Geary has also been teaching language classes to her people and neighboring tribes for over two decades. Geary explains her philosophy, "Language belongs to the people, not tribal governments. It doesn't matter which tribe they're enrolled in. If their people spoke the language, they have a right to learn it." Programming like the Tamien Nation Language Revitalization Program is carried out with little outside [support](#) and oftentimes personally funded by Geary, "My family didn't always have meat on our table, but we had language and that's what continues to feed us."

Tamien Nation continues to seek partnerships with organizations, institutions, and agencies to help build capacity to better serve Tamien citizens and the local community. "Our people deserve to have their basic needs met like food security, job opportunities and the capacity to live within our aboriginal territory. It's our basic human rights as Indigenous people. We also recognize our obligation to help the greater community who live and work within our homeland. There is much work to be done and we are committed for the long-haul."

The Tamien Nation is excited to announce the official launch of their website, [www.tamien.org](http://www.tamien.org) allowing the public, for the first time, the opportunity to learn about Tamien history, traditions, and their local grass-roots movements. Organizations and residences can support specific programs that are currently underway with the Tamien Nation such as the Language Revitalization Program, the Tamien Voluntary Land Tax, the Tamien Cultural Fire Program, Food Sovereignty Program, and Roundhouse Fund. Tamien Nation can be contacted at [INFO@Tamien.org](mailto:INFO@Tamien.org).

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