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Renaming a Street “Dead Indian” to “Mother Earth”

I will be talking about the Chumash people, a Native American population who was located in present-day Santa Barbara, California, and how they have experienced much violence, death, and displacement with the arrival of trespassers. As time passed, a street was named after a dead Chumash man, “Indio Muerto”, dead Indian, and in recent years it was changed to “Hutash”, Mother Earth. There is a problem with renaming something that has an original background and history. It matters to understand why names of places are changed and who wanted the change. Names of places have often a moral, story, or history behind them that was once valued by someone. That is why understanding whether the prior story can still survive with the new name is important. I will start by introducing who the Chumash people were and how their identity was shaped by their land. Then, I will show the arrival of countries to Chumash land and identity loss. Later, explain the upbringing of “Indio Muerto” in Santa Barbara and how it changed to “Hutash” in recent years. Lastly, I will show how the rename covers up history. Changing the original street name from “Indio Muerto” to “Hutash” makes it complicated to remember the violence committed against the Chumash peoples, their land, and their identity.

The Chumash people belong to the Santa Barbara land; their identity was created through adapting to the resources of the land to make the innovative Chumash lifestyle centered on survival through common language, trade, homes, fishing, and canoe making. Some 13,000 years

ago, the Chumash Indians first started living and adapting to the coast of California. More particularly, they lived between what we know today to be San Luis Obispo trailing down to Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains in Southern California (Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 2022). Over the years, their population grew immensely due to their success in working with the resources of the land. Imagine, more than 25,000 Chumash people came to prosper off of the land. Due to the rising population, the Chumash moved further from the Santa Barbara coastline. Walking under the sunny days, they spread out to take up a good portion of central California. Many even made their way to the Channel Islands. This Native American community did not attempt to modify the regions they inhabited; instead, they adjusted themselves to the area. The groups of Chumash people that had no close access to the sea or coastal areas settled near vibrant and colorful blue rivers and clear lakes. Their survival was not solely based on the land's resources but on their ability to be an organized Native community. They separated themselves into several clans with leading chiefs. Three to six Chumashan languages were spoken; they were all closely related under the Hokan language family. All Chumash communities got along, which permitted occasional trade amongst clans. Since the Native people did not alter the land to yield to their needs, they did not participate in agricultural practices. They were fishers, hunters, and gathers. By using land resources, they made different-sized canoes called tomol. The firm wooden tomol ranged from eight to thirty feet long and could hold about 10 to 18 people. This advanced community skillfully catch different fish with their techniques and found fresh wet clams and muscles to eat. They also hunted regional animals for their nutritious meat and warm fur. The Chumash gathered roots, berries, mushrooms, and nuts. Their domes, homes, were built with whale bones and still willow branches. They adapted to chilly winter by making warm garments like fur robes out of animal

skins. Not only were they able to survive, but their lifestyle also involved various joyous and loud moments like playing games, religious rituals, ceremonial dances, and teaching their youth about honoring each other and the land. Their fascinating way of life would continue for centuries until intruders interfered.

Chumash's identity is tied to their land; when Spain, Mexico, and America trespassed to steal their land, Chumash's identity and power were slowly lost. Thousands of years ago, the Native American Chumash people first settled in the Santa Barbara coastline. They adapted to the land and made a home with meaningful traditions they all shared. In 1542, a Spaniard, Juan Cabrillo, stumbled across the Californian Indians on his arrival to Alta California. He journaled about the Chumash community and wrote about the villages and population size. Although Cabrillo passed away in Alta California, his journal made it to Spain. The Spaniards then claimed Alta California. The Spanish left the Californian Indians alone until they returned in 1769. They began settlement and missions in San Diego. The Chumash were safe until Spanish soldiers and missionaries crept up to their territory in 1770. European diseases killed about 80 percent of the Native Californian population. Destruction of the Chumash sciences, philosophy, traditions, and way of life soon crumbled. With many Native deaths, the decreasing numbers in clans made it hard to survive and continue their united ways of life. Due to this reason, the remaining Chumash took the forceful offer of joining a mission between 1772 - 1817 (Oberg, 2017). Spain wanted to make California Christian and use Natives as free labor. Cruelty roamed the Natives. The soldiers committed sexual abuse against Chumash women and children. In 1821 Mexico received freedom from the Spanish colonizer. However, the Chumash continued to be exploited for their work on ranchos, or they would try to harvest on their own. In the following years, many immigrants worldwide, especially Americans, moved to Alta California. After gold

was found, many rushed to the area. A war would occur between 1846 - 1848 and ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Alta California became California, the 31st state of the US in 1850. As if disease, sexual abuse, mission prisons, and exploitation weren't enough violence against the Chumash, California too committed violent acts against the tormented Native people.

In 1850, California open and violently exterminated the diminishing Native people, leading Native survivors to lose their identity and sense of belonging to the land. After California was founded, the government would plot to legalize Native Californian genocide (Humboldt PBLC, 2019). Having taken the east side of the U.S., Americans continued westward expansion. The few remaining Chumash people would have their plot of land stolen by Americans. In 1850, in California, a law was made to supposedly govern and protect the existing Indian population. It was not at all what it was portrayed to be. If a Native American was found not working, they could be captured and sold with the approval of this new law. After being sold, they would have to work without pay for at least four months (American Experience). The government used the excitement of the Gold Rush to legalize and compensate mass murder of Indian people. The government framed it so that Indians would be thought of as menacing devils who must be exterminated in order to have safer mines and a safer state. The Californian government publicly supported this because they were trying to remove the actual owners of the land to exploit the land and its resources more comfortably. The Native people were fearful for all the right reasons. The land that was once theirs was out of their reach. The Chumash would see the death of their people all over the land. Their villages would be burned down. White bands of Indian hunters would search for Indians and shoot them down to receive an award. The community would pay well for Indian heads, ears, scalps, and other Native American body parts, 25 dollars per man and 5 dollars per child or woman (American Experience). California gave millions during these times

to pay Indian hunters back for the money they wasted while killing Native people. In 1851, The Indian Appropriations Act was created. This Act funded the movement of Native people into reservations in hopes of controlling them. They were forced to stay on the reservations and were not allowed to leave. California could comfortably name and rule over their land by putting Chumash people to death and away in reservations.

In Santa Barbara, Ca. the era of violence against the Chumash people, in 1851, was witnessed and served as a street name. After California became part of the United States, a city grid had to be created. The city of Santa Barbara appointed Captain Salisbury Haley to survey the land. He was to map streets out and draw property boundaries. Then after 52 streets were created, three prestigious Santa Barbara residents were given the honor of naming the streets. Joaquin Carrillo, Antonio Mandela Guerra, and Eugene Lies were these three residents set to the task. Unlike other cities, Santa Barbara wanted the street names to be uniquely tied to the region and its history. So, the streets got named after early settlers, governors, the land's features, and the Native Chumash people (McHugh, 2021). One day in February, in the year of 1851, Joaquin, Antonio, and Eugene were walking around the city streets pondering on what to name them when they came across a dead man's body. The man was a Native American man, potentially a Chumash tribe member. Unfortunately, the man was found dead and alone. This is just one of many Chumash people who died isolated from loved ones due to extermination laws in that era. After witnessing the man in the street corner near a field, they named the street "Indio Muerto". Indio Muerto is Spanish for dead Indian. The majority of streets were named in Spanish since a large percentage of the city spoke Spanish. Even many of the legal documents were in Spanish at the time since California had just become part of the United States after being under the rule of Spain and then Mexico. "Indio Muerto" was one of ten street names that were related back to the

Chumash people. The dead Chumash man served as a street name, but the Chumash people were never denied nor advised permitting the name.

Santa Barbara decides to change the street “Indio Muerto” to another word after all the harm against the Chumash people, land, and identity have been done. The street name “Indio Muerto” has caught many people’s attention ever since it was put up. Many community members and even the Barbareno Chumash tribal council had been demanding the city of Santa Barbara change the original street name. On September 30, 2020 city council held a meeting. The council members started to compare what if it would have been called dead child instead (Welsh, 2020). As the council members thought about it, they found the street to be very offensive. A prominent topic of the meeting was changing the street name. In the meeting, there were both people who wanted the street name to be changed and others that wanted to keep the street name. Some Chumash people wanted the change others did not. Majority of people who lived near the street and had grown up seeing this street name also wanted it changed. On the other hand, there were few Chumash that did not want it changed and one local historian, Neal Graffy. The opposing side, which was mainly Neal Graffy, explained that the street name was the only monument the deceased Chumash man received. He saw it as a way of honoring so many other Native Americans that died alone like warriors (Santa Barbara News-Press Editorial, 2020). No one on the board leaned towards Neal’s viewpoint. The board was more captivated by the Santa Barbara lifelong residents and Barbareno Chumash council who said the street name was hurtful, offensive, and aids in putting the Native community down (Molina, 2020). The council members finally decided to remove “Indio Muerto”. Frank, a resident at the meeting, mentioned to be happy about being “on the right side of history” (Molina, 2020). The Chumash council wanted to change the street name to "Hutash," a Chumash word. In contrast, other Chumash

people disagreed with the meaning of Hutash. The Chumash argued over Hutash, meaning God or Mother Earth. Ultimately, ten council members voted to change the street to "Hutash" while 0 voted on keeping "Indio Muerto". Residents and some Chumash saw this as healing justice. Many residents thought of this as a new era that would bring Native Americans true justice and honor by removing "Indio Muerto" from Santa Barbara. In the end, 1,500 dollars were given to replace nine street signs. The city also made it clear that if anything was spelled wrong or the meaning of "Hutash" seemed disrespectful to anyone, it was not their intention to offend the community. Santa Barbara aimed to be respectful towards everyone with the name change, but how did the dead Chumash man receive respect?

"Hutash" offers a different story to celebrate, which drives away from the violent history of "Indio Muerto". The replacement name for "Indio Muerto" is "Hutash". Hutash means Mother Earth. The Chumash council proposed it symbolized the beginning of the Chumash people because Mother Earth made them. They connected this to focusing on how important women are. They aimed at bringing attention to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The Barbareno Chumash council views the new street name "Hutash" as a way to heal the past, present, and future (Edhat Santa Barbara, 2020). In the meeting, it was mentioned that the street should be renamed but instead to something that would still honor the death of the unknown Chumash man. The replacement of "Indio Muerto" drifted too far from the original celebrated story. After installing the nine "Hutash" signs, the city of Santa Barbara did not attempt to commemorate the Chumash deaths under their feet in any other form. The change made by the city does not help people remember this already unidentified Chumash death. Instead, it helped forget and erase the Chumash man's death from Santa Barbara history. Although the new name has good intentions of honoring the Chumash community, I see it hard to relate "Hutash" to the

original story of 1851. There seemed to be more possibilities of the Spanish speaking community to be interested in knowing why it was named "Indio Muerto" and looking it up rather than "Hutash" because many people might not know it is intentionally a Chumash word. The word "Hutash" symbolizing healing and awareness of murder is quite complex to digest by looking at it a couple of times while driving by.

In conclusion, the Chumash people adapted to Santa Barbara's resources by creating an organized lifestyle centered on survival through common language, trade, homes, fishing, and canoe making. Then, countries like Spain, Mexico, and America trespassed Chumash land and claimed it as theirs while declining the Chumash lifestyle, power, and population throughout time. Transitioning from power, under California, in the 1850s, used the Gold Rush to legalize and compensate for the extermination of Native people, which also slowly killed the Native Americans' identity and connection to the land. After California was founded in 1850, in February of 1851, Santa Barbara named a street "Indio Muerto" after encountering a dead Chumash man on the street corner. Until recent years, the City addressed it. In 2020 Santa Barbara city members came with opposing views but then settled on honoring the present Chumash population by removing part of Santa Barbara's history, the "Indio Muerto" street signs, and replacing them with "Hutash" street signs meaning Mother Earth. After changing the original street name from "Indio Muerto" to "Hutash" it makes it complicated for people to remember the violent history against Chumash people when "Hutash" offers a different story to celebrate. I challenge you to think about ways the city of Santa Barbara could honor the Chumash lives that lie below their feet. Do you feel like renaming the street brought sufficient healing, justice, and honor to the deceased Chumash people or the present-day Chumash people?

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Revision Explanation

I started off by making my thesis statement clearer. I added the aspects of land and identity and took out unnecessary wording. Next, I transformed my topic sentences to let the reader know what the paragraph is about and provide support for my thesis. Afterward, I

changed the concluding sentences of my paragraphs to transition sentences that helped my paper flow. Before this, my concluding and topic sentences were very similar. After my peer also mentioned that I repeated the word “would” multiple times in my third paragraph, I noticed I had nine or more “would” in one paragraph and deleted many of them, including others in my essay. Within my second paragraph, I also put additional words in my work in hopes of adding more description and imagery as advised by my peer. Seeing that one of my peers thought my first and second to last paragraphs were similar, I did not want to sound repetitive, so I made an introduction paragraph that was smaller, clearer, to the point, and not over-detailed like the prior one. I made my roadmap smaller because I realized that the reader was rereading the same thing since my roadmap was similar to the work I would present in my body and conclusion paragraph. For my introduction, I focused on targeting Dr.B’s comment. I tried to mention what I was writing about, where I would take my reader, and why it was important for them to read. For my second to last paragraph, I kept it, but combined it with my call to action to make one paragraph. I also aimed to make my conclusion paragraph flow better with transition words to not sound like my sentence are choppy or jump from idea to idea.