



Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians

For Immediate Release

Historic Land Back Transfer in Los Angeles: Presbytery of San Gabriel Returns Ancestral Land to Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Council

San Gabriel, CA August 1, 2025

In a groundbreaking act of reparative justice, the Presbytery of San Gabriel has officially returned land to the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, led by the Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Council under Chief Anthony Morales. This marks the first-ever land back transfer by a church in California to an established tribal government, and the first of its kind in California and Los Angeles County.

The land, located within one mile of the historic San Gabriel Mission, the fourth mission built in California, is part of the ancestral village of Siban'gna, a sacred site for the Tongva people. For decades, the historic tribe of Los Angeles, the Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Council has operated its tribal office on this land, maintaining cultural continuity and stewardship despite centuries of displacement.

"This is more than a gift, it's a recognition of truth, history, and healing," said Chief Anthony Morales. "To receive land back on our ancestral village, near the very mission that symbolizes our people's colonization, is a powerful act of justice."

The Presbytery's decision comes at a time when Los Angeles is seeking hope and reconciliation amid recent challenges. This land back initiative is a direct action of reparation for past harms inflicted during the missionization and colonization of Native peoples in California. It reflects a growing movement among faith communities to confront their historical roles and make material steps toward restoration.

"The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it," said Rev. Wendy Tajima, Executive Presbyter of San Gabriel Presbytery. "We are honored to return this land to its original stewards and to stand in solidarity with the Tongva people in their journey of healing and sovereignty."

The site will continue to serve as a hub for tribal governance, cultural education, community and ceremonial gatherings. Its proximity to the San Gabriel Mission underscores the historical significance of this return, offering a tangible step toward reconciliation between Indigenous communities and religious institutions.

This historic transfer sets a precedent for churches and organizations across California and beyond to engage in land back efforts and reparative justice, acknowledging the enduring presence and rights of Native peoples.

About the Presbytery of San Gabriel: The Presbytery of San Gabriel is a regional body of the Presbyterian Church (USA), committed to justice, reconciliation, and community engagement. It serves congregations across Los Angeles County with a focus on spiritual growth and social responsibility. Learn more at www.sangabpres.org.

The San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians led by the Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Council has maintained community on their ancestral territory since time immemorial. Their focus is cultural preservation, education and visibility. Learn more at: www.gabrieleno-nsn.us.

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