

Gabrielino Tongva description  
Diversity Awareness Projects  
Culver City Equity and Human Relations Advisory Committee

For millennia, Indigenous people, also referred to as First Peoples, have inhabited the Culver City area and beyond.

They were here before Mexican ranchers were ceded the land, and long before 1917, when Harry Culver purchased the land and developed Culver City. Many First Peoples reside in the area today.

Five Gabrielino tribes are recognized by the [California Native American Heritage Commission](#) (NAHC), a nine-member body whose members are appointed by the Governor. They are: Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians—Kizh Nation, Gabrieleño San Gabriel Band of Mission, Gabrielino/Tongva Nation of the Greater Los Angeles Basin, Gabrielino-Tongva Tribe, and Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council (GTIOC.)

The Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribe is a direct descendant, traditionally and culturally recognized in the State of California as the aboriginal tribe to encompass the entire Los Angeles Basin area to Laguna Beach, extending to the Channel Islands of Santa Catalina, San Nicholas and San Clemente Islands.

Hundreds of Gabrielinos here and beyond the Culver City area were captured by the Spaniards, treated like slaves, and forced to do backbreaking work to create the beautiful missions that traverse California. Many others, who lacked immunity, were infected by the germs Spaniards had brought to this part of the world, and died.

Many of the Native Americans living here today are the descendants of those who survived during those harsh times.

The tribe now named [Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council](#) made its home along the banks of Ballona Creek, originally named Guashna. They erected a village, also known as Guashna, on the creek bank, near the wetlands. Guashna Village is considered an “origin village site,” as recorded in the San Gabriel Mission records.

Gabrielinos in this area were a seafaring people whose main source of food was fish. They built canoes, which they paddled down Guashna to the Pacific Ocean.

In 2021 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors commissioned a lengthy report that its Native American authors titled [“We Are Still Here,” a “Report on Past, Present and Ongoing Harms Against Local Tribes,”](#)

“First Peoples are a vital part of the Greater Los Angeles County community today and into the future,” the authors state. “Local tribes are still here, and they have not left their ancestral lands despite centuries of harm and systemic oppression.

“Harms continue to stem from land theft and seizure. Harms can not be discussed only as part of history.” The report organizes the ongoing harms into the categories of “Cultural Knowledge Denied,” “Continued Denial of Identity,” “Continued Denial of Existence,” and “Erasure Through Terminology and Word Choice.”

The report’s authors continue: “Throughout the 1800s, the U.S. was on a mission to eradicate Native American Tribes. Between 1851 and 1852, the U.S. Government Treaty Commissioners signed what would become

known as the “18 lost treaties.” The treaties set aside 8.5 million acres in California for Indian reservations and pledged to compensate Tribes for ceded land. Much of the land set aside was highly sought after by white settlers, and after increased pressure from California representatives, the U.S. Congress never ratified the treaties, and they were forgotten.

“These centuries of displacement, enslavement, incarceration, and genocide from successive waves of settlers—the Spanish, the Mexicans, and then Americans— mean that most local Tribes don’t hold the present-day titles to their ancestral lands.”

The [Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council](#) and other tribes continue to advocate for justice.

In 2024 the Culver City City Council adopted a Land Acknowledgement that the mayor reads at the beginning of each city council meeting.

### *Culver City Land Acknowledgement*

*The City of Culver City formally acknowledges that the land we inhabit today is the ancestral land of Indigenous peoples who have lived here for millennia. The tribes who have historically inhabited, and continue to inhabit, this region include the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation, the Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California, the Gabrielino Tongva/San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, the Gabrielino/Tongva Nation, and the Gabrielino Tongva Tribe.*

*This region holds profound historical and cultural significance for these tribes, who called it home long before the arrival of settlers.*

*The City of Culver City honors the Gabrieleño people—past, present, and future—and recognizes their enduring connection to this land as its original caretakers. We are committed to supporting and uplifting the Gabrieleño people and to fostering a deeper understanding of the histories and identities of all Indigenous peoples in this region. We encourage all residents and visitors to join us in respecting and caring for this land. The City affirms its support for the rights of these Indigenous communities and for the preservation of their cultural legacies.*

[For more information](#)

[Ballona Discovery Park](https://ballonadiscoverypark.org/) <https://ballonadiscoverypark.org/>

[Native American Heritage Foundation](https://nahc.ca.gov/) <https://nahc.ca.gov/>

[Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council](https://www.gtioc.org) <https://www.gtioc.org>

[Gabrieleno-affiliated tribes](https://nahc.ca.gov/cp/p14tongva/) <https://nahc.ca.gov/cp/p14tongva/>

[Gabrielino Tongva history](https://nahc.ca.gov/cp/tribal-atlas-pages/gabrielino-tongva-nation/) <https://nahc.ca.gov/cp/tribal-atlas-pages/gabrielino-tongva-nation/>

[“We Are Still Here,” a “Report on Past, Present and Ongoing Harms Against Local Tribes,”](#)