Native American Heritage Month
Dr. Jennifer Taylor-Mendoza
November 22, 2022

Campus Community,

In this month of November, we honor and recognize Native American Heritage—the many tribes, cultures, religions, languages, lands, and contributions of Native American peoples.

We acknowledge that the land upon which we work and thrive is the unceded homeland of the Ramaytush. Locally and originally, the Ramaytush people inhabited the San Francisco Peninsula. This area still is their home, and their history and culture have been preserved by contemporary tribal members. We are grateful to count them as part of our community in San Mateo County, and on our campus. In honoring Native American Heritage month, we express to them our respect and thanks. I encourage us to make time this Thanksgiving holiday to learn about the Ramaytush. I have included some helpful, informative links as a starter:

- The Association of Ramaytush Ohlone
- The First People to Call the Peninsula Home
- Ohlone-Portolá Heritage Trail Project
- Native Land

Personally, I enjoy the Coastside for its nature and trails. How do we connect to the natural environment, the sand, the ocean, the hillsides? The Native American connection to the land is an ideology inspired by the spirit of nature in appreciation for the breath of nature, and further ritualized to harmoniously live on the land.

In acknowledging Native American legacies, let us acknowledge the spirituality, wisdom, and integrity of the Ramaytush people and their profound respect for all living beings, the natural environment, and stewardship of the land, for their deep reverence for nature and community. No role is too small, no one person is too important, and we always have opportunities to learn. Our connection to Earth makes us better human beings. Over this break let us connect not just with family and friends but take a moment
to reflect on our own connection (or lack of one, even) to this land upon which, again, we live and thrive.

The holiday as we may know it, with turkey and gravy and a food coma in front of the TV, is one way to experience this holiday. Reflecting in sorrow and a sense of loss or regret for colonization may be another. Whatever the case may be, the miseducation of so many Americans and the dark history of the systemic genocide of indigenous peoples are real.

Can Thanksgiving be about the thanks we owe and ought to give? Can it be about a reimagining and reawakening of what is pure and sacred in all of us, and an acknowledgement of the human condition and the strength of the human spirit with its boundless potential? We honor the Ramaytush as a model for how we all can be better human beings. While we take time in November to acknowledge their land and legacy, and honor their presence in our community, I hope we also take November to learn from them as we can apply their lessons for living to every day of the year.

Here’s to hope, unity, learning, and humanity this holiday,

Jennifer