

Ancestral Homelands Reciprocity Program

FAQs

What has the impact of the gold rush been on the Ancestral Homelands and people of the Nisenan Tribe?

The Nisenan Tribe of the Nevada City Rancheria were the original inhabitants of the land we now call home – the Bear and Yuba River watersheds. They thrived for thousands of years here, uninterrupted, until the gold rush of 1848. The Nisenan were almost completely erased through murder, marginalization, starvation and disease. Those who survived faced a life of extreme hardship: children were taken from families and sent to boarding school to erase their Culture, their land was stolen, and the people lived in poverty.

The Nisenan are a strong and resilient people. They survived a near-genocide but have still never fully recovered: The land that was stolen from them was never returned; They remain unrecognized as a Tribe by the Federal government, depriving them of benefits to which they're rightfully entitled; Many of the remaining Tribal members still live in poverty and suffer from poverty-related illnesses i.e., the diseases typically found in suppressed people as a result of colonization (see work of Dr. Rupa Marya). Miraculously, Tribal members still remain here in their Ancestral Homelands but they have yet to recover any semblance of their once rich and wealthy cultural way of living.

“If you want to know the health of a land, look at the health of its Indigenous people” (Coastal Miwok Tribe Member). We cannot thrive if the land does not thrive. And the land will not thrive if the Nisenan are not thriving.

How can we as a community ensure that our Native Nisenan population is thriving?

Why is it important to offer support to the Native People? What does the wellbeing of the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan people have to do with me?

Living in the culture we live in and having been educated by dominant society in the United States of America, we've been brought up to believe things that we find out later in life are not true. Part of that is learning the true story of what happened to the Indigenous populations. The hard pill to swallow is the knowledge that we all live on stolen Nisenan homelands. Our right to be here, our ability to move here without anyone's permission, our freedom to enjoy all of the beautiful things this place has to offer is made possible by a system that privileges *some* at the expense of *others*. That system placed (and continues to place) the rights of non-native settlers over the rights of Native Peoples. We are here because other people were removed to make space for us/people like us. In other words:

We indirectly benefit from the continued injustices suffered by the Nisenan people. Had the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe not been forcibly removed from their land, they would still be the caretakers here. In that scenario, if we wanted to move here, what would we do? 1) Acknowledge the people who were here before us; 2) Ask their permission to make a home

here; and 3) [If they said yes] give an offering or make an exchange in return for the opportunity to be here. It's not too late to right the wrongs of the past and take these steps ourselves. We can't change history but we have the power to change our future. By contributing to the stability and restoration of the original people of this land we can begin to transform our community and our culture into one based on integrity and respect for the rights of all beings.

How much is appropriate to give?

How much do you benefit from living here?

Did you meet your partner here? Did you have and/or raise your children here? Do you farm or garden and enjoy fruits of the land? Do you take hikes and enjoy the nature here – the beautiful Oak and Cedar trees, the Yuba and Bear rivers? Did you start a business or are you employed by a business here? Do you love the place you live?

These are just some of the gifts we may have received by making our home here. And although their true value is impossible to quantify, we can allow ourselves to feel the magnitude of appreciation for all we've gained by living here. We can also begin to understand the immense loss the Nisenan have suffered, losing all they had known and loved for countless generations. This is not meant to make people feel guilty but to move toward the mindset of helping to stabilize the Tribe here in the 21st century. This place would not be the place that we love without their stewardship. And had they not been unjustly wiped away, we would not live here in the same way we do now.

A healthy cycle of reciprocity is fueled by an understanding that we should give to the same degree that we receive. Remember that no offering is too small (don't create a hardship for yourself and perpetuate the system of exploitation from which we are freeing ourselves in this process) but really....*No offering is too great.* Give big.

Is a one-time contribution acceptable?

One-time donations are welcome; however, the Ancestral Homelands Reciprocity Program requires a recurring monthly or annual contribution. Why are recurring contributions important?

If you're an individual or a business you can contribute a percentage of your income or give a flat amount monthly/annually. As a reference point, individual income tax in CA is anywhere from 1-13% of annual income, depending on your tax bracket. If you're a landowner you can contribute a percentage of the value of your property annually – just like you would pay property taxes (again a reference point: Nevada County property tax is 1% of current assessed value). These are just a few ideas about how and how much to contribute. It's really up to you.

Where does the money go?

All funds benefit CHIRP (California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project), which was created to preserve, protect and perpetuate Nisenan Culture. Some of the initiatives for which CHIRP needs support include

- Advocating for restoration of Federal Recognition as a Tribe
- Establishing a place of permanence for the Tribe, including a local cultural center, library and museum
- Land stewardship and protecting sacred sites
- Recovering their lost language and artifacts
- Educating the local community

How can I spread the word?

When you sign up for the Ancestral Homelands Reciprocity Program as a business, you can make your participation public and serve as a role model in the community. We offer a decal for your storefront, a logo for your website, a certificate to hang if you choose, and a packet of information for you to use and share. We also offer trainings for staff so that they can feel pride that their employer is part of the program, get informed about the program themselves, and help educate any customers that inquire.

As an individual, you can tell all your family and friends, post about it on social media, and share our website where recurring donations can be made:

ancestralhomelands.org or chirpca.org

You can also follow and share our social media pages:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HonoringNevadaCityRancheriaNisenan>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nevadacityrancherianisenan/>

Youtube: goo.gl/pUFpQf