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Lafayette unveils two projects honoring the city's indigenous roots

By Sora O'Doherty



Lafayette Vice Mayor Wei-Tai Kwok and John McCormick, chair of the city's Land Acknowledgement Task Force, unveiled a utility box wrap honoring indigenous people. Photos Sora O'Doherty

commitment to honoring indigenous heritage," Kwok said, "and to recognize the long and rich history of this land well before we arrived here." The task force was composed of McCormick, Steve Kalogeras, Mary McCosker, Janet Thomas, and Lafayette City Manager Niroop Srivatsa, who consulted with indigenous elders in the community.

The acknowledgment reads: "We acknowledge that Lafayette is part of the unceded, ancestral homeland of the Bay Miwok people. The Bay Miwok and neighboring Ohlone people have lived in and moved through this place for thousands of years. They stewarded and shaped this land for hundreds of generations. We express our appreciation and gratitude for this profound legacy, which enhances and contributes to our lives to this day. We will strive to honor this land and strengthen our ties with the Indigenous communities that continue to live and work in our East Bay region as our neighbors and community members. We acknowledge and honor them and their ancestors, elders, and next seven generations."

According to Danielle Gallagher, the artwork reproduced on the utility wrap was painted by the artist Louis Choris in 1822. More information is available on the City of Lafayette website, at www.lovelafayette.org/why-lafayette/land-acknowledgment

An acknowledgment that Lafayette occupies unceded indigenous land is featured on a utility box wrap, alongside artwork portraying women of the Saklan tribe. The new utility box wrap was unveiled on April 8 on the corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Lafayette Circle, adjacent to the Bank of the West building.

The event was presided over by Lafayette Vice Mayor Wei-Tai Kwok and John McCormick. McCormick served as chair of the city's Land Acknowledgement Task Force, and was appointed this year to fill the vacancy on the City Council left by the resignation of Teresa Gerringer.

In addition to the utility box wrap, the city also unveiled a new street sign that incorporates both the current name of the street, Mt. Diablo Blvd., and the name of the mountain used by the Ohlone, "Tuyshtak," which means dawn of time.

The utility box team included graphic designer Danielle Gallagher, council member and former mayor Carl Anduri, members of the Lafayette Historical Society Mary McCosker and Andree Hurst, and members of the Public Art Committee: Erling Horn, Yukie Fujimoto, Janice Peacock, and Christy Mack.

In his remarks, Kwok explained that the city "had a year-long exploration of our city's past, including going further back than 175 years to ensure that we understood and honored the original settlers of this land, the indigenous people whose land was taken from them." A task force was appointed to consider an official land acknowledgment statement to symbolize "our city's



Photos Sora O'Doherty

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