

Design Review: Reflection #1

Our critical customer for the project is the Muwekma Ohlone community, the Indigenous people native to the Bay Area, and the community whose ancestral home land Santa Clara University currently occupies. We aim to honor their cultural heritage through the creation of a renewable water feature in the Forge Garden at Santa Clara University. This project seeks to provide respectful and meaningful representation of their culture, ensuring that the water feature reflects their traditions and relationship with the land. Our community partner is Santa Clara University, specifically the Forge Garden, which serves as the setting for this initiative. Together, we aim to create an eco-friendly installation that both respects the Muwekma Ohlone's cultural significance and aligns with sustainable practices.

Our water feature is just a portion of the larger native plant project that is occurring at the Forge Garden. Becca Nelson, a program manager at the Forge, is our main point of contact for our water feature project, as well as our liaison for the Muwekma Ohlone tribe. The Forge Garden, being an educational space open to staff, students, and the public, makes it a place that is rarely quiet. There are many events hosted at the Forge Garden during the school year, and students and staff work in the garden throughout the day. We were lucky enough to cross paths with Maia Dedrick and Lisa Kealhofer during our last visit. They are Santa Clara University professors who will be working on the species of native plants that will be incorporated into the space. Although we haven't had the opportunity to communicate with the Muwekma Ohlone tribe directly, we speak with Becca consistently to ensure that our water feature is beyond acceptable to relay the tribe's symbolism of water into the space.

Historically, Native American communities, such as the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, have been marginalized and underrepresented. Due to their displacement, and lack of

support of their unique cultures throughout most of history, many native communities have lost parts of their culture, language, and traditions. Historically many of these communities had little to no representation in government or in the arts. Only relatively recently have these communities been acknowledged for their displacement from ancestral homelands. Institutions are now recognizing land acknowledgements, which pay respects to the native communities whose ancestral lands these institutions occupy, as well as commissioning art and features that are representative of the culture of these local native communities. To our knowledge, Santa Clara University has not commissioned any artistic features in collaboration with native communities besides this project. Today, these communities are regaining their voice and, through projects such as ours, gaining more representation through art and public works. Through public education and digital archives, these communities are able to preserve their unique cultures, language, and traditions for future generations.

Our water feature helps the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and community members create a culturally meaningful and sustainable garden experience by reducing reliance on external water and energy sources, while increasing cultural significance through the inclusion of traditional elements like abalone shells. Unlike other garden features, our design is closely tied to Indigenous traditions and powered by renewable energy, offering both aesthetic and functional value to the community. Currently, we are planning a vertical water flow, the inclusion of abalone shells, and the use of renewable energy (specifically solar panels). The goal is to create a small, aesthetically pleasing, self-sustaining fountain that aligns with the cultural values of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. We are still researching cost-effective solutions, but our current expected cost is around one-hundred-thirty US dollars.