

For Immediate Release
July 20, 2022
Contact: 818-487-6646

Harvard-Westlake School and Fernand^eo Tataviam Band of Mission Indians Partner to Shine Light on History and Culture of the Region's Native People
River Park in Studio City to serve as home to historic displays and educational program

STUDIO CITY - Harvard-Westlake School and the Fernand^eo Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (FTBMI or Tribe) announced this week that they have entered into a partnership to develop educational displays and programs to highlight the history and culture of the Native People who lived near and continue to be culturally connected with the site of the school's proposed River Park in Studio City.

The school and the FTBMI will collaborate to develop and install educational monuments calling attention to the history and culture of the Tribe's ancestors who lived at and near Weddington Golf and Tennis, which Harvard-Westlake is proposing to transform into a community athletic center and public park. Tribal historians will collaborate with Harvard-Westlake students and faculty to conduct original research into aspects of indigenous life in the area that have not yet been fully documented. The school and the FTBMI will also partner with other community organizations to deliver educational programs at River Park to local schoolchildren.

"We are excited for the opportunity to share our history and culture, and that of the area, with students and visitors to River Park," said Rudy Ortega Jr., Tribal President of the Fernand^eo Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. "We look forward to teaming up with Harvard-Westlake teachers to develop curriculum about native life and peoples of the San Fernando Valley."

Harvard-Westlake officials are equally enthusiastic about the partnership and the opportunity to educate its student body about the area's first inhabitants.

"It is truly an honor to be able to partner with the Fernand^eo Tataviam Band of Mission Indians on this innovative project," said Rick Commons, Harvard-Westlake's President and Head of School. "Not only does this partnership demonstrate how we strive to uphold the school's mission of 'purpose beyond ourselves,' it will enable our students and many others to learn more about those generations who came before them and lived here along the banks of the LA River."

Prior to the founding of Mission San Fernando in September 1797, ancestors of the Fernand^eo Tataviam Band of Mission Indians lived in villages across northern Los Angeles County. Specifically, the land now occupied by Harvard-Westlake in Studio City was essential to the trade, intermarriage, economic, social, and cultural relations with the neighboring villages from which the Tribe descends. In the 1840s, FTBMI received land grants amounting to over 18,000 acres (10% of the San Fernando Valley), two of which are located within 3 miles from the site.

The present-day Fernand^eo Tataviam Band of Mission Indians is a voluntary coalition of lineages that are descended from the historical Fernand^eo tribe and bound by a Tribal constitution. FTBMI is recognized by the State of California and exercises its inherent sovereign authority over its 900+ tribal citizens and 2,371 square miles of territory.

In addition to the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, Angel City Sports has forged a partnership with Harvard-Westlake School to bring adaptive sports programs to the River Park campus.

Designed by Gensler and Studio-MLA, the Harvard-Westlake River Park will transform the 16-acre property on Whitsett Avenue into a community athletic center and public park. In addition to preserving and restoring the current Weddington clubhouse and café, putting green, and eight tennis courts, the project consists of a gymnasium, two soccer fields, a running track, and a swimming pool that will be available to students and local community residents, as well as six acres of park areas that will be publicly accessible from dawn to dusk.

The plans also include a system that will capture, clean, and reuse stormwater run-off from both the project site and the adjacent residential neighborhood to the north. As the first private system to treat public run-off at this scale in the City of Los Angeles, it is an example of the school's commitment to developing an environmentally responsible project.

For more details on the Harvard-Westlake River Park, please visit www.hwriverpark.com.

###