

# Tu'un Na Savi :: Voices of the Rain

## Indigenous Language Justice in California

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# Collaborative Partners

## Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR)

### Community Advisory Committee:



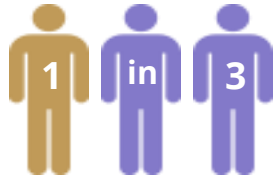
### Academic Committee:

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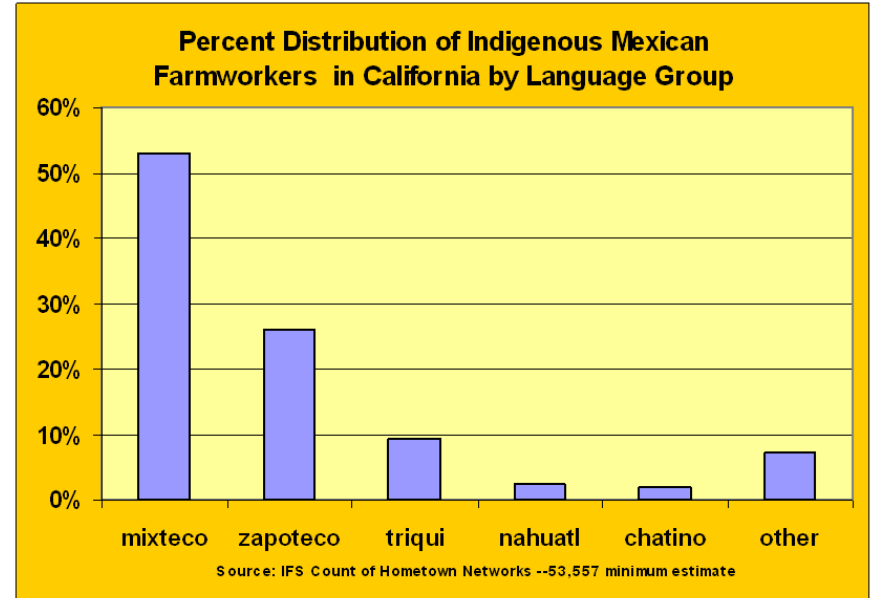
Dr. Ramanathan, Linguistics

# Indigenous Farmworkers



- CA farmworkers are from **Indigenous Mexican** communities (165,000); many speak little Spanish or English (Mines, Nichols, and Runsten, 2010)
- **Language barriers** lead to misdiagnoses, wrongful convictions, labor exploitation (Mikkelsen, 1999)

In Mexico there are  
**11 LANGUAGE FAMILIES**  
**68 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**  
**364 LINGUISTIC VARIANTS**



## Research Questions

1. What is the state of Indigenous language interpreting in California?
2. How can Mixteco communities overcome barriers to language justice?



# Methodology

- **23 Interviews** with subject matter experts
  - Leaders of Indigenous orgs/programs
  - Interpreter trainers
  - Linguists
- **2 Focus Groups** with 20 speakers of Mexican Indigenous languages in Oxnard
- **Surveys of 13 Agencies** serving Indigenous language speakers in Ventura, Kern, and Madera Counties
- **Policy Analysis** of CA and federal language access laws

## Key Finding 1: Anti-Indigenous Language-Based Harassment & Discrimination at Work

**“When I arrived here I also suffered sexual harassment** from managers because they think that we’re not intelligent... just because we only speak an Indigenous language.”

**“My coworkers and I started chatting in our language** and people started to make fun of us... The general manager arrived and told us to **speak Spanish because ‘people speak Spanish,’** and we can’t speak Spanish because our language is Mixteco. After that, people made fun of us and made us work more... Sometimes they send us into the freezer for three hours to clean vegetables and **they make us suffer more because we don’t speak Spanish.** The people who speak Spanish help each other out and the work isn’t as difficult for them.”



## Key Finding 2: Lack of Language Access in Workplace Safety Training

**“They give talks to the workers, but there are a lot of members of our Mixteco community Members that don’t speak Spanish....** So

there are times that they ask, ‘Did you understand the rules?’ and everyone says, ‘Yes.’ ‘Any questions?’ and everyone says, ‘No.’ Then the supervisor goes off thinking that everyone understood and everything is fine.

Some time passes and an accident occurs and they didn’t have appropriate clothing or shoes and the company says, ‘Well, it’s your fault,’ and they say, ‘Why is that? I didn’t know.’ Well, it’s because during the safety and training talks they sometimes give, **there’s no interpreter...** It would be great to also have an interpreter at the safety talks because it’s very important... Sometimes that health-related stuff isn’t understood... **we end up being impacted because we don’t understand.”**





## #1: STOP Workplace Harassment:

- Anti-harassment and discrimination programs must specifically address anti-Indigenous bias and language-based harassment
- Include safe reporting pathways for Indigenous language speakers

## #2: PROVIDE Language Access:

- Create formal **policies and procedures** that require using **trained and qualified interpreters** for workplace safety and training talks
- Ensure interpreters and employees speak the **same linguistic variant**
- Create **formal partnerships** with Indigenous interpreting organizations to provide interpreters + training about working with Indigenous farmworkers

## #3: REACH Indigenous Farmworkers Using Community Radio!



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