Weaving the Story of Our Future

SANTA YNEZ CHUMASH
kiyiskon
our family
The Santa Ynez Chumash people have thrived for almost 9,000 years — that’s nearly 350 generations.
alísom
šaqušmoc
puxpuk
'ámityić
kitá
sukek
A MESSAGE FROM OUR TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends:

The title of this annual report, “Weaving the Story of Our Future,” is both an acknowledgement of our tribe’s rich cultural heritage and recognition of the possibilities the future holds for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.

Hundreds of years ago, our ancestors intricately wove juncus and sumac plants harvested from the Santa Ynez Valley into beautiful utilitarian baskets that today are treasures in the art world.

By that same token, over the past decade our tribal leadership team has carefully woven important decisions into a solid economic foundation for future generations of Santa Ynez Chumash.

Whether working diligently to get our Camp 4 land placed into federal trust or creating an education program that encourages academic achievement for our tribal youth, our tribe continuously strives for progress. We want to see our tribe advance in education, entrepreneurialism, economic development, and other areas important for growth.

In this report, you can read about the many challenges we face as a tribe as well as the various ways in which we have turned those challenges into projects and programs that have not only benefited our tribal members, but have helped the entire community.

Sincerely,

Vincent Armenta
Tribal Chairman
“Weaving the Story of Our Future,” is both an acknowledgement of our tribe’s rich cultural heritage and recognition of the possibilities the future holds for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.
The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians tribal leaders, known as the “Business Committee,” have been working diligently to get the tribe’s Camp 4 land placed into federal trust. The goal is to build homes on the property for tribal members and their families.
All across the country, millions of acres of ancestral land were taken through the improper action of others, resulting in Native American tribes losing jurisdiction and control of those lands.

At one time, the Chumash homeland extended from Malibu to Paso Robles—a 200-mile stretch of California coastline. When the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians was federally recognized in 1901 and its reservation was established a few years later, the tribe was relegated to 99 acres in a flood plain.

Today the Santa Ynez Indian Reservation comprises approximately 140 acres, yet most of the area includes unusable lands such as a streambed and an easement for a state highway that cuts through the reservation.

As a result, housing has become a critical concern for the tribe. The reservation simply isn't large enough to accommodate tribal members and their growing families. Currently, only about 17% of the Santa Ynez Chumash tribal members and their children live on the reservation.

Most of the homes currently on the reservation are the original homes built in the late 1970s and 1980s by Housing and Urban Development and they are not adequately accommodating the needs of the tribal membership.
In 2010 the tribe purchased 1,400 acres of ancestral land to address the tribe’s housing needs. The Chumash have long-standing cultural and spiritual ties to the parcel, known as “Camp 4,” and its surrounding territory. The tribe has been working diligently toward getting the Camp 4 land placed into federal trust, which would make the land part of the tribe’s reservation. There are two ways to place land into federal trust—administratively and legislatively—and the tribe is taking both routes.

In July 2013, the tribe took a step forward on the administrative route by filing a federal trust application with the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the Camp 4 land. In October 2013, federal legislation was introduced to take Camp 4 into federal trust for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.

Once Camp 4 is placed into federal trust, it would become an integral part of accommodating current and future generations of Santa Ynez Chumash.

“Building homes on this land will help create a meaningful opportunity for tribal members and their families to be part of a tribal community revitalization effort that rebuilds the tribal culture, customs and traditions,” said Vincent Armenta, Tribal Chairman of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.
saquismoc

gathering
The vision of the Chumash Museum and Cultural Center is to promote understanding of the unique and diverse contemporary culture of the Santa Ynez Chumash and the ancient heritage of their ancestors, such as beloved ancestor Maria Solares.
The tribe has collected hundreds of items from seagrass skirts to stone bowls to shell necklaces all awaiting their debut in the Chumash Museum.

It was 14 years in the making, but in June of 2014 the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians’ 6.9 acres across the street from the reservation was finally placed into federal trust, paving the way for work to begin on building the Chumash Museum and Cultural Center.

The tribe first filed a federal trust application with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for the land in late 2000. The BIA approved the application twice, but local anti-tribal groups spent millions of dollars to prevent the land from being placed into trust, creating a nine-year process of remands, dismissals and appeals.

Once the land was placed into trust, the tribe wasted no time in taking a giant step forward by hiring Jones & Jones, an award winning architectural firm that has completed more than 650 projects in the Americas, Asia, Europe, Australia and Africa.

Johnpaul Jones, a founding partner of Jones & Jones, was the lead designer for the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. His designs have won widespread acclaim for their reverence for the earth, for paying deep respect to regional architectural traditions and native landscapes, and for heightening understanding of indigenous people and cultures of America.

Hiring a renowned architectural firm is only part of creating an exceptional museum. The other part involves creating an amazing museum collection. For the past several years, the tribe has been quietly building a growing collection of artifacts, replications and heritage paintings that will showcase the artful beauty of the Chumash people.
Among the collection are several intricately designed baskets that demonstrate the expert weaving techniques of the Chumash—techniques that were passed down from one generation to the next. Baskets were essential to Chumash lifeways and had a number of uses including harvesting, cooking and even holding newborns in their first cradleboards.

The tribe has collected hundreds of items – from seagrass skirts to stone bowls to shell necklaces—that sit safely in a climate-controlled room awaiting their debut in the Chumash Museum. The tribe is focused on developing collections that will convey the comprehensive story in a way that will engage, inspire and inform museum visitors.

The vision for the Chumash Museum is to promote understanding of the Santa Ynez Chumash. It’s a proud history of survival, sustenance, loss and success, adaptability, flexibility—a story the Chumash will soon share in a museum built on the premise of embracing a culture.
'am i y ić
to be generous
The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians has always been a generous contributor to the community. Over the past several years, the Foundation has donated more than $19 million to non-profits throughout Santa Barbara County and beyond.
The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians has been a generous contributor to the community since the beginning. The Chumash ancestors even had a word for it—‘amiyič—which means generosity in Samala, the tribe’s native language.

As the first residents of the Santa Ynez Valley, the tribe takes special pride in its role in the community—a role that includes being the largest employer in the Valley and also being a tribal government that works diligently to provide for the well-being of its tribal members.

Over the years, the tribe has also played a significant role in the philanthropic arena, donating millions of dollars to a wide variety of non-profit organizations through its Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Foundation. In addition to funding a myriad of community projects that benefit the entire community, the tribe also provides volunteers for a number of non-profit organization projects and donates hundreds of cases of bottled water for special events in the community.

The tribe established the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Foundation on a basic principle: to build partnerships in the community and work collaboratively to make the community a better place to live and work. Implementing the collaborative nature of this philanthropic approach has resulted in a number of programs that have enhanced the lives of residents throughout Santa Barbara County and beyond.
A few of the Foundation’s recent donations include donating iPads to school children in an effort to expand technology access throughout the largest elementary school in the Lompoc school district, donating $10,000 to the Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County to help the organization continue its efforts to reduce homelessness and donating annually to the Santa Ynez Valley People Helping People organization to help with emergency and short-term social services.

For the past decade, the tribe has also hosted its annual Chumash Charity Golf Classic where the proceeds from the tournament go to well-deserving local charities. In 2014 the largest amount in the tournament’s history was raised—$150,000—bringing the total amount raised through the tournament for local non-profit organizations to $1 million.

Through its Foundation, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians has donated more than $19 million to hundreds of groups, organizations and schools in the community and across the nation as part of the tribe’s long-standing tradition of giving. These donations have been consistent with the heritage and values of the tribe.
The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Education Department first began in the early 1990s and was organized by long-time tribal leader Richard Gomez. The department is now led by tribal descendant Dr. Niki Sandoval.
Perhaps one of the greatest measurements of success for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians is found right on the reservation in the story of the tribe’s Education Department.

Up until the 1980s, fewer than a handful of Santa Ynez Chumash tribal members had attended college. But those numbers have increased significantly over the years. Today, nearly 100 tribal students are currently attending colleges, universities and trade schools.

Furthermore, recent statistical data demonstrates a climb in academic achievement for Santa Ynez Chumash tribal students. The tribe continually celebrates more graduates each year—from high school to graduate school.

The Education Department first began in the early 1990s as an ad hoc program organized by tribal leader Richard Gomez. Dunn, a local college-prep private school for grades 6-12, stepped up to the plate by offering tutoring for tribal children. That first year, three tribal students signed up for the program.

Those early days were just the beginning of academic achievement for tribal students. Since then, the Education Department has experienced extraordinary growth and now provides academic planning and support, opportunities for learning and assistance for career transitions for tribal students—youth and adults.
In 2009, Dr. Niki Sandoval was named Education Director, a move that helped the department advance even further. She grew up on the reservation, graduated from Santa Ynez High School and took an academic path that resulted in a bachelor of arts degree from Pepperdine University, a master’s degree from George Washington University and a Ph.D. from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Dr. Sandoval is perfectly positioned to serve her tribal community.

The Education Committee—which is comprised of seven elected tribal members—works with Dr. Sandoval to guide strategic educational investments in the tribe’s community members.

After the Education Department had outgrown its limited space at the Tribal Hall, planning began to create a community place for learning. In 2012, the tribe opened a 5,000 sq. ft. Learning Center, a space where tribal members can learn and grow as a community.

“Our tribe has always valued learning and we’ve respected our elders and our parents as teachers,” said Dr. Sandoval. “It is only in our tribe’s recent past that we have been able to funnel economic and human resources into our educational lives, which has resulted in very accomplished community members who are pursuing their dreams through education in a wide variety of disciplines.”
kitá
our valley oak
The tribe’s first venture into winemaking has been a success—demonstrated by the many awards Kitá Wines has earned in the short time since the wine was launched. Winemaker Tara Gomez taps into her Chumash heritage to bring the balance of nature and her surroundings into the fine art of winemaking.
Native Americans have always had a special relationship with land. They are the original stewards of land and understand the value of land in terms of its natural resources. They also recognize the importance of living in harmony with the land.

For the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, living in harmony with the land resonates throughout all of the tribe’s land holdings, but it is especially true with the 1,400 acres the tribe purchased in 2010.

The land came with 256 acres of vines—the Camp 4 Vineyard—planted with 19 different grape varieties. In addition to honoring existing contracts for the fruit, the tribe embarked on its own winemaking venture. In 2013, the tribe launched its wine under the label “Kitá,” which means “our valley oak” in the tribe’s native language of Samala.

Not only is the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians one of the few tribes in the United States that owns a vineyard and produces its own wines, it is the first that has one of its own members as the winemaker: Tara Gomez.

The daughter of a long-time tribal government official, Richard Gomez, Tara was a young girl when she first visited vineyards with her parents. By the time she was in
high school, she knew she wanted to be involved in winemaking. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in enology from California State University, Fresno and after college worked in the wine industry at two local wineries.

She brings a unique perspective to Kitá Wines. In Native culture, balance is a part of every day life. Tara believes that in viticulture, or grape growing and winemaking, it’s the same concept. In grape growing, it’s a balance of the soil, the climate, the geographic region. In winemaking it’s a balance of the fruit, the acid, the alcohol and the structure of the wine.

In the short time since Kitá has been in production, it has already won numerous prestigious awards—16 within the first three months of its release. The California State Legislature issued a Certificate of Recognition to the tribe for being the “First Native American tribe to have a Native American winemaker, vineyard and winery operations run solely by tribal people.”

Uncorking those first bottles marked a great day in the history of Native American winemaking and a significant milestone in the history of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.
sukęk

to sow seed, plant
Bringing hospitality at its finest to the region, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians has taken economic development to a new level. Visitors to the area can enjoy several Chumash-owned properties, including three hotels and five restaurants. Pictured here, a guest enjoys the patio at Root 246 in Solvang.
There’s no question that Indian gaming has had a significant impact on local economies throughout California, generating billions of dollars in revenue for the state and supporting thousands of jobs.

For the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, the revenue from its Chumash Casino Resort has helped enhance the lives of tribal members and their families by providing jobs, quality health care and excellent educational benefits. It has also contributed substantially to the local and state economies through job creation, donations from the tribe’s Foundation and secondary economic impacts.

Additionally, the tribe has been able to use the revenue from its gaming operations to build a portfolio of investments that will help shape a solid economic foundation for future generations of Santa Ynez Chumash.

Already invested in the hospitality industry with the Chumash Casino Resort, the tribe began broadening its reach further by purchasing hotel properties in the Santa Ynez Valley.

In 2007, the tribe purchased a hotel and restaurant in the nearby town of Solvang and completely refurbished and rebranded both, transforming the properties into jewels of the community. Now known as Hotel Corque and Root 246, the 122-room boutique hotel and contemporary restaurant have received rave reviews from both travelers and media alike.
Adding to its growing real estate portfolio, in 2012 the tribe purchased Hadsten House, a two-story 71-room property in the town of Solvang. The property includes a restaurant and is one of the only lodging facilities in Santa Barbara County with an indoor swimming pool.

Recently, the tribe opened a new service station adjacent to its casino. The station features 10 gas pumps under a 3,900-square-foot canopy, a convenience store, RV accessibility and a car wash—amenities guests of the Chumash Casino Resort appreciate.

Taking a page out of the tribe’s history where Chumash ancestors were stewards of the land and caretakers of the community, the tribe continues to welcome visitors to the Santa Ynez Valley area and to its hotel properties, demonstrating the tribe’s legacy of hospitality.

Whether investing in real estate properties or other ventures, the tribe’s diverse investment portfolio is an indication of how far along the tribe has traveled on its journey toward economic self sufficiency.

As the tribe continues to advance further into economic development, decisions will be based not only on continuing to strengthen the economic health of the tribe, but also creating a solid base for future generations.
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