



Village Narratives written by yak titʷu titʷu yak tɪhɪni Northern Chumash Tribe

We live by a universal rule: to take responsibility towards upholding our world view, creating and maintaining a balanced relationship, and respecting all forms of life. We hold values of respect, trust, community relationships, shared culture, and sustainability. We believe all life holds inherent knowledge passed from one generation to the next generation. Our relationship with the world, oral narratives and history define us as all related to all living life forms, each having equal value.

tsitkawayu

Meaning: Place of the Horses

Modern Location: Cambria

tsitkawayu, “place of the horse”, is a coastal village known as Cambria. Horse people are an “after contact” relative that our people built a relationship with. Horses were first introduced by the Spaniards during the Mission period. Spanish and [Mexican](#) governments encouraged settlement, giving prominent men [land grants](#) called *ranchos*. With the integration of horses into communities, California Natives worked and developed into a new vocation called Indian vaqueros.

Prior to contact and today, tsitkawayu is known for its richness and abundance of flora and fauna. The established ecosystem is covered with endangered wildlife, such as native Monterey Pines, steelhead, Blue Herons, and more, all living within this pristine coastline.

tsitkawayu is home to many of our yaktitʷutitʷu families. We honor our horse people and the vaqueros by naming this area tsitkawayu.

elewexe

Meaning: Named for swordfish

Modern Location: Paso Robles

elewexe, the “swordfish” village, known today as Paso Robles, is renowned for its wealth, best fishing and waterways. Water systems support all life forms, sustaining us for thousands of years. The Salinas River along elewexe runs through the mountains to the ocean, carrying diverse marine ecosystems. elewexe holds underground thermal springs, heated by earth’s medicinal properties.

Our water is essential to all life’s existence, our rivers share rich resources, and the ocean’s rich ecosystem provides food. We recognize our world’s gifts and pay homage to the swordfish and ocean people for their stewardship.

“All...,whatever there is in the ocean..., like everything that is here on earth. . . We are the people of this land ... The people of the ocean are the swordfish.” - Mary J. Yee (1897-1965), Barbareño Chumash

tšikukunitš

Meaning: Place of the Rabbits

Modern Location: Carrizo Plain

tšikukunitš, “place of the rabbits”, located in southeastern San Luis Obispo County, is surrounded by grassland plains, now known as Carrizo Plain. With the large open grasslands, known for the vast wildflowers and diverse brushlands, tšikukunitš provides an ideal habitat for rabbits. Rabbit people hold a special place of honor, as they provide our people with sustenance in food and cultural wealth.

The rabbit fur capes, once prevalent and still highly valued among our people today, offer warmth and are often vital for survival. Our relationship with our environment provides us knowledge of this place where the rabbits live. We have an understanding of what this location means in terms of sustainability for all people. We acknowledge the rabbit people by naming tšikukunitš in their honor.

tiłhini

Meaning: Place of the Full Moon

Modern Location: San Luis Obispo, Cultural Capital

tiłhini is the “place of the full moon.”

This place, now San Luis Obispo, is our cultural capital.

The Moon serves as a marker of time. When the moon is full, the water is full, bringing with it life. Waterways are the highways for all people; fish, birds, animals, plants, skies, land, and our families. The valley’s ponds and lakes are fed by the creeks and tributaries coming from the mountains from all directions, traveling through tiłhini before joining the ocean.

As the full moon draws the tides, tiłhini draws the people. Trading, cultural celebrations and harvesting brings everyone together, making the land complete. This was, is, and always will be a center for gathering, trade, stimulating life and growth. We honor the full moon by naming this area tiłhini.

tsitqawi

Meaning: Place of the Dogs

Modern Location: Morro Bay

tsitqawi, “place of the dog,” is the coastal village referred to as Morro Bay. tsitqawi is one of our largest and oldest villages with large settlements along banks, mountains and the coast, nestled among a family of volcanoes that formed 25 million years ago and stretch from tsitqawi to tiłhini. The volcanoes are part of our cultural heritage which holds a significant place in our spiritual and social practices. tsitqawi supports vast flora, fauna, and water regions providing a clear sustainability map for all life today and future generations.

This standing wealth—renowned abalone, fishing, abundant waterways, pristine environment, and ample food—heartened the dog people to establish dwellings at tsitqawi. We pay homage to their people by naming our village tsitqawi.

nipumu?

Meaning: Place of the Big House

Modern Location: Nipomo

nipumu?, “place of the big house,” is the original name of the town now known as Nipomo.

Its name represents the wealth of the village—a community with a large house to host dances, celebrations, and the gatherings of our people and neighbors. This enormous responsibility is a community effort, coordinated by a head woman or head man. Preparation for hosting a dance includes accommodating all dancers, singers, and their families from other villages, as well as providing food and shelter during the duration of dances. Head men or head women are considered in a position of holding of responsibility and prayer. The preparation of foods materials for the dances are done throughout the year.

We honor our spiritual leaders who have taken this responsibility by naming this village nipumu?.

tsitpxatu

Meaning: Place of the Whales

Modern Location: Avila Beach

tsitpxatu, “place of the whale,” is a coastal village now referred to as Avila Beach. tsitpxatu can sustain the hunger of many whales. The whale people understand that this location supports their needs, so they travel here for nourishment. Our people also understands the abundance of this location. As a result, a village emanated from tsitpxatu, full of cultural and spiritual vibrancy, leadership, and craftsmanship. Today that same vibrancy, leadership, and craftsmanship continues to exist among the people from tsitpxatu.

The shared knowledge and value of the wealth of tsitpxatu strengthens our relationship between our people, the whale people, and this place. We honor the whale people by naming this village tsitpxatu.