

T'epot'aha'l

The People of the Salinan Tribe

Vol. 26 No 1

January, 2026

Winter Solstice



A Winter Solstice of Preparation, Provision, and Prayer at Lešamo

This year's Winter Solstice at Lešamo was held with deep care, intention, and thoughtful preparation. Many hands and hearts contributed in the weeks leading up to the gathering, and that collective effort was felt throughout the day.



Continued on next page:

In many ways, the gathering began before Sunday. On Friday, Salinan relatives went clamming in Pismo, harvesting food from the sea and setting the tone for the days that followed. The act of gathering food together—moving with the tides, working cooperatively, and providing for the community—carried forward ancestral values of responsibility, sharing, and relationship with place.

That spirit flowed into Sunday as relatives, allies, and extended community came together on the land at Leśamo. Patti Dunton opened the day by leading a beautiful prayer, grounding everyone in gratitude and intention. Before the potluck was shared, a spirit plate was prepared—an offering of respect and remembrance—honoring ancestors and the unseen relationships that continue to nourish us.

We then shared a deeply abundant and beautiful potluck, featuring clams on the half shell, rich chowder, bear-stuffed pumpkin, roasted bay laurel nuts, beans, enchiladas, baskets of freshly gleaned local fruit, and many other thoughtful offerings. Special thanks to **Brian Clark** for his generous offering of freshly harvested and roasted bay laurel nuts, **Josh Carmichael** for his wild bear-stuffed pumpkins, and **Nathan Reisse of Grassy Bar Oyster Company** for sharing fresh oysters. The table reflected so much abundance, so much sharing, and so much love.

Throughout the afternoon, drumming, song, and ceremony grounded the gathering. We are especially grateful to our Chumash friends and drummers **Matthew Zapata** and **Pete Crowheart**, whose music and song held the space for many hours, keeping the mood steady, reverent, and alive. The community altar steadily grew with photos, written prayers, ancestor remembrances, and offerings brought with care.

At one o'clock, three generations of Patti Dunton's family ascended Leśamo together—Patti, her daughter Jessica Bournonville, and her granddaughters Taylor and Madison—a powerful living expression of continuity, resilience, and intergenerational presence on the land.

We also extend heartfelt thanks to the **Bear Valley Redrum Motorcycle Club**, who brought a dedicated team of volunteers that helped with everything from set-up to clean-up and managed the gate throughout the day. Their steady presence and generosity of labor made a real difference and allowed the gathering to unfold smoothly.

After a rainy start, the weather cleared just in time for the ascent. As evening settled in, many stayed by the fire, closing the day with a ceremonial burn from the altar—sending prayers, gratitude, and intentions into the night. It was a truly connected and meaningful Solstice at Leśamo.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to **Harvey's Honey Huts** for their generous donation of portable toilets, an essential contribution that supported the comfort and care of everyone gathered.

With deep gratitude to all who planned, prepared, cooked, sang, prayed, stewarded the land, volunteered their time, and showed up in good relationship—this gathering was made possible by many generous hands and open hearts.

Collective information from tribal members Bruce Flood and Shaunie Briggs



With a reduction of the amount of people allowed to climb and the popularity of this event, we will be creating an application process that will be equitable to everyone.

In the future all requests will be forwarded to the Solstice lead which currently is Josh Cody, and will be readdressed in the January council meeting.

Indian Cemetery Work Day

At Mission San Antonio

Next work day at San Antonio Mission, on Indian cemetery Adobe walls is Saturday, **Janury 17th.** 8 am. To 11 am. Adding mud to the Adobe cemetery wall at mission San Antonio that protects over two thousand native ancestors. Five Salinan Indians gathered and worked together in an ongoing effort to restore the protective wall.

Elder Edward Pierce led the morning with a territorial story with undeniable enthusiasm. Two young bucks, Joseph Villa and fourth grader Dylan Pearson stepped up doing most of the heavy work, Erin (Villa) Pearson steadily applied Adobe mud to the protective wall. Special thank you to all the volunteers.

Contact Bruce Flood @ 805-903-3089 If you have any questions, comments or would like to voulnteer contact the Tribal Office and leave a message. @ 805-464-2650

Submitted By: Council Member Bruce Flood

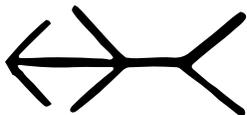


Don (Donald Wayne) Timmerman was born on Friday, April 23, 1943 in San Luis Obispo at General Hospital to June Margaret Pierce and Wayne Arnold Timmerman. He passed away on Tuesday, October 7, 2025 at the age of 82.

He is survived by his wife of 43 years Priscilla "Dianne", daughter Kimberly Cones of Atascadero and stepdaughter Katherine "Katie" Osborn of Ventura and brother Randy Timmerman of Atascadero and many grandchildren, nieces, nephews and cousins. He was proceeded in death by his brother Rodney Timmerman and stepson Ben "Dietrech" Carpio-Timmerman. Don is the grandson of Katherine "Kate" Pierce (McCormack).

Don spent most of his youth in Morro Bay Ca. At the young age of 17 with his father Wayne's permission joined the US Army. Before and after the military Don had many jobs like short-order line cook, Heavy equipment operator, Commercial truck driver, sales representative for a farm supply company, store manager for a concrete company, and owner/operator of his own window décor and installation company.

He enjoyed playing golf and had a great sense of humor and was a true friend to his friends and his family. And he will be truly missed by all.



Salinan Tribe of Monterey & San Luis Obispo Counties joined with Cal Fire, and Upper Salinas - Las Tables Restoration Conservation District

On a crisp, clear mid-December Tuesday, members of the Salinan Tribe of Monterey & San Luis Obispo Counties joined with Cal Fire, and Upper Salinas - Las Tables Restoration Conservation District personnel, and applied their first cultural burn in recent memory. Five acres of the Willow Creek Conservancy in the Adelaide region of Paso Robles was lit in 10 half-acre plots to clear a massive volume of invasive, non-native yellow-star thistle and other vegetation.

Much preparation was required to conduct this cultural burning. Meetings, permits and notices to neighbors all took place. In the days prior, the land was surveyed by foot, Cal Fire mowed boundaries around the selected plots, and Salinan Elder and Council Member John Piatti came out with his tractor and relocated several almond bark piles out of the burn region; piles that are being employed to create moisture-rich locations by conservation steward Brian Keeley to replant oak trees and other plants without need for irrigation.

The morning of the burn, the assembled tribal members, including elders Piatti, Ed Pierce, Mary Rodgers, and Les Montgomery met with the leadership of the other groups, and Cal Fire held an educational training on proper personal protective equipment, and fire and weather behaviors. After lunch, Council Member Robert Piatti addressed the gathered assembly, and Tribal Member Jessica Rodgers led the group in an offering of gratitude and land acknowledgement. Once Cal firefighters were deployed in safety support positions, torches were used to start the first field, and all the subsequent areas in a logical order. Among the torch wielders, Council Member Josh Cody and Tribal Members Randy Timmerman, Lynn Flood, Jessica Rodgers and Garret Segobia applied fire. Retired Cal Firefighter Brandi Plaskett, who is descended from both Salinan and Chumash ancestors, and Chumash Kelsey Shaffer also participated.

Among the intended goals of the cultural burn are the reduction of fuels to reduce the intensity and possibility of wildfires, the clearing of land to reintroduce and hearten native species growth for habitat and harvesting, and the spiritual reconnection of the tribe to some of its traditional homeland. This first five acres will function as a living laboratory, Keeley said, as they intend to use different methods of grazing and continued burns to discover which processes lead toward the most effective land restoration. The RCD plans to continue consulting with and including the Salinan Tribe in all facets to ensure the native flora aligns with our desired goals. All in all, the day was measured a success, the first of many hopefully to be scheduled and take place at Willow Creek and other Salinan lands throughout the region.

Submitted By: Council Member Robert Piatti



Salinan Elder Ed Pierce prepares to smudge the assembly



Salinans gather



Along the trail prior to the burn



Looking down from a nearby elevation



Watching the burn



First touch of fire applied

Fire, Relationship, and the Long Work of Healing Land

Fire has always been part of how our ancestors understood care.

For our people, fire was not an emergency tool or a destructive force to fear. It was a way of tending the land—used thoughtfully, at the right moment, and in relationship with everything around it. Fire helped clear small areas without exhausting bodies, guided animals during harvest, brought food like rabbits and grasshoppers into reach, renewed plant foods, strengthened materials needed for daily life, and kept living areas safer. It was practical, embodied knowledge, passed through observation and practice, not theory.

Recently, members of the **Salinan Tribe** participated in a hands-on fire training with **CAL FIRE at Willow Creek Conservancy**, where a small plot was carefully burned. This moment matters—not because it was large or dramatic, but because it was done with intention, attention, and collaboration. It represents a step toward restoring right relationship with fire in a modern landscape shaped by regulation, suppression, and long-standing disconnection. The land at Willow Creek carries a complicated history. Long before it was placed into land trust, ancient forests were cleared and the land was heavily altered. Fire alone cannot undo that. Real recovery and revitalization take time, patience, and repeated acts of care. Fire is not a cure-all—it is one important step in reopening ecological pathways so plants, animals, and soil can begin responding again. Healing land like this is slow work, and it asks us to pay attention to how the land answers back.

What matters most in this process is relationship. Relationship with the land, built through listening, observation, and humility. Relationship with fire professionals and agencies, grounded in trust, shared responsibility, and learning together. Relationship with one another, strengthened by showing up side by side and doing the work carefully, not performatively. When those relationships are tended, fire becomes a tool for healing instead of harm. The decision to burn a small plot reflects an old understanding: meaningful land care often begins modestly. One place, one moment, done well. This is how fire was traditionally used—gently, frequently, and with restraint—creating many benefits without overwhelming the system. These are not new ideas. They are teachings that have endured because they work.

Bringing fire back is part of remembering who we are and how we belong to this place. On lands that have been deeply altered, fire helps us begin again—not by forcing outcomes, but by creating conditions where life can return in its own way. Fire alone will not restore what was lost, but fire used with care, strong relationships, and long-term commitment can help open the door.

The land knows how to heal. Our responsibility is to listen, to build trust, and to tend that healing together.

Submitted By: Shaunie Briggs





Define Rich in Native Cultural Life in...

Ancient Period	Historical Period	Modern/Today
<p>In ancient Native American cultures, being "rich" was defined by community connections, generosity, spiritual well-being, and a deep, respectful relationship with the land.</p>	<p>In Native American cultural life during the colonization history, the definition of "rich" was fundamentally different from the European concept of wealth, which was based on individual accumulation of material possessions.</p>	<p>In contemporary Native American cultural life, being "rich" is a holistic concept rooted in community cohesion, strong relationships, cultural knowledge, spiritual well-being, & a deep connection to Earth</p>
<p>Generosity and Sharing: Status and respect were often earned by what an individual gave away, not what they kept.</p> <p>Strong Community and Family Ties: True wealth was found in the strength of a person's relationships, the support of their family, and their contribution to the collective well-being of the community. The community itself was considered a form of wealth.</p> <p>Connection to the Earth: A rich person had a harmonious and balanced relationship with Mother Earth, understanding and respecting that the land, rivers, and animals were relatives and sources of life.</p> <p>Knowledge and Wisdom: The preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge, history, stories, and traditional skills across generations was a vital form of wealth. Elders and spiritual leaders were highly revered for their wisdom.</p> <p>Self-Sufficiency and Health: Having access to the resources needed for survival and health—such as food from hunting and farming, clean water, shelter, and medicinal plants—was considered abundance.</p> <p>Spiritual Stability and Peace of Mind: The ability to live a life in balance and harmony, with a "peaceful heart," was a sign of true prosperity.</p>	<p>Communal Resources and Generosity: Wealth was not hoarded but shared. Individuals who were "well-off" were often those who could be most generous and provide for their community. A leader's role often involved being a conduit for distributing materials and ensuring everyone's needs were met.</p> <p>Land and Natural Resources: Land was a core component of cultural, spiritual, & community wealth, but not as private property to be exploited for individual profit. Richness meant having access to healthy land and natural resources that could sustain the community, such as access to fishing streams, hunting grounds, or agricultural plots.</p> <p>Relationships and Kinship: Strong, extensive relationships with both human & non-human relatives (the natural world) were a form of abundance. Being a "good relative" was a key measure of a person's standing and contribution to the community.</p> <p>Cultural Knowledge and Spiritual Stability: The preservation and transmission of language, lifeways, ceremonies, and oral traditions were considered a form of intergenerational wealth, essential for community health and identity.</p> <p>Skills and Reputation: An individual's skills (e.g., as a hunter, healer, artist, or orator) and their reputation for wisdom, integrity, and contribution to the collective good held significant value and respect within the community.</p> <p>Trade Goods and Ornaments (Contextual): While not seen as "money" in the European sense, certain items—beads made from shells or specific animal hides—were valuable as ceremonial items, signs of respect.</p>	<p>In this worldview, a person is "rich" if they have a peaceful heart, strong relationships, and contribute to the well-being of their people and the natural world, embodying the values of relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, and redistribution.</p> <p>Strong Community and Family Ties: A person who is well-loved and respected by their community is considered rich.</p> <p>Cultural and Spiritual Stability: Maintaining traditional knowledge, ceremonies, and spiritual practices is a vital form of wealth that provides a sense of identity, purpose, and balance.</p> <p>Reciprocity & Redistribution: Status and respect are often gained by what an individual gives to others, rather than what they keep.</p> <p>Connection to the Land: Land is not merely a material asset but a core component of cultural, spiritual, and community well-being.</p> <p>Non-Monetary Assets: Personal richness is found in qualities like kindness, compassion, good health, wisdom, and skills that support the community.</p> <p>Legacy of Love: Ultimately, true legacy is not about material possessions but the love and compassion shared and the positive impact one leaves in the hearts of others.</p>

Skinner Pierce often would ask, "I wonder what the Rich people are doing?" laughing as he practiced the above definitions of 'Rich' daily. I wondered if values passed down had changed within our Native Cultural life today? I typed in 'Define Rich to Native Americans... Ancient, Historical, Today?' Above is AI's responses.

Bonnie Pierce-Elder/Education



Salinan Words of the Month

Guide to sounds

Ak'eesh mo'

"How are you"

Ts'ep hek

"I'm good"

ts – sound at the end of cats
tr – make a t but curl your tongue (almost sounds like a ch)
' – sound in the middle of uh-oh (glottal stop)

P't' k' ts' ch'
consonants said at the same time as a glottal stop ('); they make a strong, emphasized pop!
x – guttural throaty h sound

a father ay pie
e get ow mow
l beat. oy toy
o hope
u due

double vowels (**aa, ae**) are the same sound but longer in length

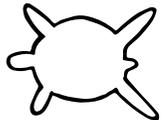
Quotes from Native Elders

RETURNING TO TRADITION DOESN'T MEAN RETURNING TO THE PAST. IT MEANS CONNECTING TO WISDOM OF OUR ANCESTORS AND BRINGING IT FORWARD WITH US.

Author unknown

May the warm winds of heaven blow softly upon your house, May the Great Spirit bless all who enter there. May your moccasins make happy tracks in many snows, and May the rainbow always touch your shoulder.

Cherokee Blessing



First you are to think always of God, of Wank-an-Tanka. Second, you are to use all your powers to care for your people and especially for the poor.



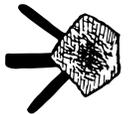
Black Moon, Hunkpapa Sioux

Strength is not the only thing we must have in the world, and, in a man or a nation, it is of little use without wisdom.

Chacopee and the Wooden Man, Yankton Sioux

Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds on it.

Chief Dan George, Coast Salish, 1899-1981



Notice !!!

Remember the Newsletter will be ONLINE ONLY.

Contact Kenneth Pierce at editor@salinantribe.com with your email address to receive a Newsletter online or pick one up at the Tribal Office.



We have a new T-Shirt design and it will be available at the general meetings it will also be on the website soon for viewing.

The following sizes are available,

Women's – Sm, to 3xl

sweatshirts size sm to 4xl

Men's – Sm, Med Lg, xLg, xxLg, xxxLg

We also have hooded sweatshirts



NEW ADDITIONS

In women's t-shirts we have size small to 3xl. And we have have sweatshirts sizes small to 4xl.

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T'epot'aha'l The People of the Salinan Tribe

REMEMBER TO PRAY TO kensha:nel (CREATOR) TO keeheak (PROTECT) ALL lu wa' (MEN) AND lets'e (WOMAN) WHO ARE SERVING OUR COUNTRY. AND BRING THEM Ta'ma (HOME) SAFE.

Vision of the Salinan Tribe

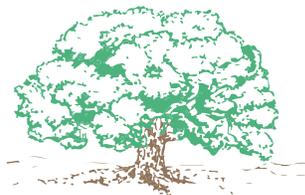
We, as the Salinan Tribe, follow the way of our ancestors as we walk the path of our heritage toward becoming complete individuals. We exercise our rights as a sovereign entity. We continue to reawaken our culture. Each and every tribal member has an equal voice.

We, as the Salinan Tribe, commit to honoring the rights of each and every tribal member to practice our spiritual, individual, or religious beliefs. We remember and honor our ancestors, elders, and children now and for all generations to come.

We as the Salinan Tribe, continue to gather as a tribal family.



salinatribe.com



Tribal Office 8270 Morro Road Atascadero, CA 93422
 Phone: 805-464-2650 Fax: 805-464-2651 Email: info@salinatribe.com
 www.salinatribe.com

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17 Cemetery WorkDay at Mission San Antonio 8 am -11 am
18	19	20	21 Tribal Business meeting 6:00pm	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Tribal business meeting is on the 3rd Wednesday of each month						

**THERE ARE NO DRUGS OR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ALLOWED AT ANY TRIBAL EVENT.
 PLEASE USE INFO@SALINANTRIBE.COM TO EMAIL THE OFFICE**

➡ TRIBAL COUNCIL ←

Traditional Lead:

Mary Rodgers
 (805) 674.1525
 marytwohawks@gmail.com

Contemporary Lead:

Gary Pierce
 (805) 610.0037

Elder Council:

Leslie Montgomery
 (805) 674.6006
 yourkiddingme160@gmail.com

Kenneth Pierce
 (559) 392.1950
 pgi@sti.net

Sharon Thomas
 (805) 459.4935
 sheshopsharon@aol.com

Yvonne Davis
 (805) 391.3619
 palmtreezz@aol.com

Pamela Flood
 (805) 234.6854
 info@salinatribe.com

Josh Cody
 (805) 459.4638
 cody.josh@gmail.com

Michael Woody
 (805) 305.0660
 info@salinatribe.com

Dayna Sciocchetti
 (805) 801.4929
 dsciocchetti7601@gmail.com

Robert Piatti
 (949) 677.0549
 monitoring@salinatribe.com

Bruce Flood
 (805) 903.3089
 bruce@salinatribe.com

John Piatti Jr.
 (805) 703.0629
 boheathan@hotmail.com