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Amidst Invasion, Conversion, and Extinction, the Power of Communication Prevails: An Ethnographic-Inspired Account of the Chumash Indians

1. Introduction

Instead of viewing my senior project as the last to-do item on my college checklist, I saw it as an opportunity to do something different and end my college career with a bang. I wanted to look back at my project knowing I took a risk for the sake of originality. In order to devote myself entirely to my paper and produce my best work, I knew I had to be passionate about my topic.

Throughout my college education as a Communication Studies major, I've come to recognize the role of communication in all aspects of life, whether it is past, present, or future. Faced with my senior project, I decided to explore a topic that supported my recognition. When a fellow classmate brought the Chumash Indians to my attention, I carried out further research. The story of the Chumash's survival throughout time compelled me to find out more about them as a people and to share their story.

1.1 Preview

My paper represents a combination of traditional and ethnographic research on the Chumash, inspired by my interest in their relationship with nature, and their commitment to keeping their culture alive, despite all odds. Although my project is not ethnography, my engagement with the Chumash as a culture, influenced by my personal

writing and culture, combined with my engagement of the literature on ethnography, has given my paper an ethnographic sensibility.

In a formal sense, it can be classified as a research report with face-to-face research. However, I would like to call it an application of the research skills I've learned throughout college in order to put together a whole population's history from past to present. The interviews I conduct with Chumash Indians, Karen Evangelista and Joe Talaugon, are my attempt at ethnography. My paper does not represent a complete history of the Chumash in any way. It is important to keep in mind that my own interests drive my writing. This is not solely about the Chumash; it is also about me. My insight and reactions I express are influenced by my experiences, culture, education, and upbringing.

1.2 Organization

Following my introductory remarks, the structure of my paper is split into four sections. The first part comprises my involvement with the literature on ethnography and how I plan to involve an ethnographic inspiration in my paper. Next, I transition into the story of the Chumash, which I present in two different lights. I start out the second section with their story, based off of old-fashioned research. You will notice that I remain mostly objective because this part functions as my research report.

In the third section, I present the story of the Chumash as Karen and Joe have helped me to understand it through our interviews. This method allowed me to identify the inconsistencies between the two narrations. In the final section, I proceed with a description of the role ethnography has played throughout the progression of my paper and provide the necessary relevance to my major in Communication Studies. My

conclusion provides a reflection of my overall experience and expresses what I've come away with as a result of my project.

1.3 Intentions for my Readers

I hope my project functions as a means of self-discovery for my readers like it has for me. I hope that you can come away with cultural sensitivity, which is the most important lesson I have learned from my experience. Many different cultures exist today and it is pertinent to be aware that our cultural differences and similarities affect who we are as individuals. Cultural sensitivity is a great tool to better understand another's values, learning, and behavior, and to avoid coming across as offensive or naïve.

My purpose for interviewing two Chumash people was to personalize the experience for you, and make it more real. I hope my examination of the Chumash's story is an inspiration for you to find what you are passionate about. I hope you can develop respect for the Chumash and other indigenous peoples in their devotion to rebuilding their culture and their perseverance throughout history. I hope you will read my paper with an open mind and join me on my journey to find the truth about a native people.

2. Literature Review Encompassing Ethnography

My understanding of ethnography is that it describes a researcher's study of a specific people and their culture, including his or her firsthand experiences. In order to build on my knowledge of ethnography, I explore other definitions. Keep in mind ethnography is not easily defined. Over time, it has taken on many meanings depending on the circumstance in which it is applied.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ethnography as, "the study and systematic recording of human cultures; also: a descriptive work produced from such research" ("Ethnography" 2012). I will be using this general definition. In Hammersley and Atkinson's book, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, they too talk about the method of ethnography. They describe ethnography in their own words: "ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time... gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry" (3). The term originated in nineteenth-century Western anthropology. Whereas it used to describe an anthropologist's descriptive account of a community or culture, now that anthropologists started doing their own fieldwork, it has come to include not only the research aspect, but also first-hand empirical investigation (1).

I will be incorporating many qualified ethnographers' knowledge from experience. In speaking about the seemingly unavoidable deficient quality of writing ethnography, H. Lloyd Goodall states,

To speak and write from this tension—a tension between incomplete personal evolution and the desire for complete scholarly arrival—is part of the new ethnographic text. Writing that tension honors the incompleteness, the desire, the learning. It shows the self, and the self's construction of knowledge, as a jointly produced work in progress. (8)

I want to mimic Goodall's sense of ethnographic writing as a work in progress in my style of writing. I will be using the idea of "personal experience narratives" in Denzin's *Interpretive Biography*, with its focus on how culture makes meaning through nature, and the function of stories to reveal cherished values. He also emphasizes the tale of someone's life as an experience for the audience in his book, *Interpretive Ethnography*,

which has informed my purposes for my senior project. Van Maanen's *Tales of the Field* supports my interest in the story-like quality of people's lives that I wish to express.

Denzin's book, *Interpretive Biography* highlights the importance of the fact that there is no such thing as an unambiguous statement of any intention, meaning, or anything. Denzin discusses the commitment interpretive sociologists and anthropologists take to study real people who have real-life experiences in the social world. Specifically his discussion of "personal experience narratives" will give me great direction because of its unique qualities.

Another approach to ethnography is related in another one of Denzin's books, *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. In it, he examines the tale of someone's life as a means of experience for the reader. He sees ethnography as a vehicle for readers to discover moral truths about themselves. I will be adopting his idea of a "messy text" in which the writer becomes co-author, producing a joint document with the interviewee. I do not wish to impose any beliefs on my audience or to offer some theory. This book has given me a lot of guidance in terms of reminding me of my objective. I wish to follow his goals of writing in the "sixth moment" which "promotes interpretive works that raise public and private consciousness, which works help persons collectively work through the decision-making process and help isolate choices and core values, utilize expert and local systems of knowledge, and facilitate deliberative, civil discourse" (281). Denzin proposes a style of writing that moves the audience to meaningful judgment and challenges the receivers to transform their view of the world into a more sacred outlook.

I want to create a representation that is as close to the truth of a given reality as possible in my ethnographic study. My writing will represent the "new" ethnographic writing which Goodall implements in his book, *Writing the New Ethnography*. He talks about the change from the rigid, formulaic, essay-style ethnographic writing to the more conversational, involved ethnographic writing. In this way, he stresses the "new"

ethnography, which Goodall defines as being shaped out of a writer's personal experiences within a culture and addressed to academic and public audiences (Goodall 9). He describes the more postmodernist view that focuses on how writers experiment with forms of communication to create meaningful relationships with readers. This motivation to appreciate the differences in people in order to improve our understanding of ourselves in comparison to others is exactly in line with the purpose of my senior project.

I will also draw on John Van Maanen's understanding of "tales," used to "highlight the presentational or, more properly, representational qualities of all fieldwork writing. It is a term meant to draw attention to the inherent story-like character of fieldwork accounts, as well as to the inevitable choices made by an author when composing an ethnographic work" (8). His beliefs as an experienced ethnographer of modern organizational structures supports one of my purposes for interviewing the Chumash: to tell their story. I strive for his objective presentation of someone's story.

3. Chumash Research Report

3.1 Who the Chumash Are

All Native Americans are descendants of people who migrated from Asia over 20,000 years ago across a land bridge that once connected Siberia and Alaska. The Chumash descended from people who lived in southern coast of California 13,000 years ago (K. Gibson 5). The word "Chumash" means bead moneymakers. The Chumash believe their history began on the Santa Cruz Island when the Earth spirit, *Hutash*, built a "rainbow bridge" so the Chumash could cross to the mainland when the Island became too crowded (Hicks 7). In order to save some of the Chumash who fell off the bridge, *Hutash* turned them into dolphins, which Chumash call their brothers and sisters. This is how the Chumash people came to be people of the land and the ocean.

3.2 Early Chumash

Before the Spanish, the Chumash lived in villages of 50 or more (Hicks 15). Villages were built on high ground near a good source of water. The largest settlements served as political capitals for the surrounding area or as trading centers for people from islands and the mountainous interior. Each village, consisting of 100 to 1,000 people, was organized in rows along pathways with storehouses, dance grounds, a playing field, and a cemetery (K. Gibson 10). The cemetery had graves marked by painted poles. There were also special activity areas where tools and artifacts were made ("California's Chumash Indians" 19).

The Chumash lived in a home called an *ap*, which was a dome-shaped hut made of willow poles with a fire pit in the center and a hole at the top to allow smoke to escape. There was a *temescal*, or sweat lodge, in each village, where men would cleanse their minds and bodies before hunting (K. Gibson 10). There was a *wot*, or hereditary chief who settled any disagreements, especially arguments over hunting and fishing grounds. When disputes between villages arose over who had the right to a collecting or fishing ground occurred, a ritual battle would be held where warriors from two sides would meet and take turns firing arrows at each other ("California's Chumash Indians" 19). The chief had the largest house and lived with many relatives. The chief was the only man allowed to have more than one wife.

Social groups, called *clans*, were either named after animals or ancestral villages. They were composed of a group of people who believed they shared a common ancestor. Chumash ranked their *clan* according to respectability and wealth ("California's Chumash Indians" 40). Their *clan* affiliation was inherited from their parents, particularly

through the mother's line. Members of various *clans* lived in each village but village allegiance was more important than *clan* loyalty. Life in the village was centered on the search for food, which went on all year.

3.3 Food

The land and ocean were their providers. Men and boys hunted deer and small game with clubs, harpoons, nets, and a hook and line, while women and girls gathered acorns, pine nuts, and seeds. They used wild berries for food and medicine (Hicks 17). Food from the ocean, like clams, abalone, and mussels made up a large part of their diet. They used the shells they collected to make tools and jewelry.

3.4 Arts and Clothing

The Chumash were admired for their crafts by their neighbors and the Spanish. Chumash made shell and stone jewelry, bowls, tools, and pipes from a soft stone called steatite (Hicks 21). Arrowheads were constructed with flint. They are well known for their hand-woven baskets, which were so tightly woven that they could carry water, seeds, food, and valuables. In craftsmanship, Chumash basketry ranks among the most impressive in North America ("California's Chumash Indians" 52). Basketry was a life-sustaining, integral part of their culture. They ate, drank, and made clothes out of their baskets. Baskets were burned in honor of the dead, and used to decorate women's grave posts. The early Spanish explorers were most impressed with their basketry and bought a lot to send back to their homeland ("California's Chumash Indians" 49). They hand-made wooden trays, boxes, and ladles. Plant fibers were used to make shelter, clothing, and basketry. In addition, tar was implemented for many purposes: to seal basketry water bottles, to caulk canoes, as gum, and to attach points to shafts of arrows.

They did not wear much clothing. Women wore two soft pieces of buckskin or animal fur, necklaces, and earrings. Their hair was worn in bangs, cut short, and combed forward. They would trim it daily by singeing it with pine bark ("California's Chumash Indians" 22). They wore side locks but the rest of their hair was worn loose, with the top slicked down. Children were usually naked. Men wore a belt or net around their waist that held tools like knives, and a large cloak made of animal fur to their waist. Some men had their nose pierced (K. Gibson 23). Their hair was worn long, tied up with long strings interwoven in their hair and ornamented with decorations of bone, flint, and wood. The chief wore an ankle-length cape of bearskin in order to distinguish himself. They all had two large holes in their ears for little canes in which powder made of wild tobacco was held. All Chumash had well-formed bodies and were very agile and alert ("California's Chumash Indians" 22). In winter, they would wear animal skins for warmth. They decorated their bodies with paint and jewelry and designs that represented the village where they lived (K. Gibson 23).

3.5 Tomols

The Chumash were excellent sea travelers and the finest native boat makers in California. This was all due to their most famous invention: the *tomol*. It was made from redwood logs and fashioned entirely by hand with tools made from stone, animal bones, or shells (R. Gibson 24). It was the best way to travel and carry goods from place to place along the coast. It allowed them to trade with other Chumash, visit relatives, fish, and hunt in the Channel. When they were ready to launch, four men would carry it down to the water and say a prayer to the world. According to Fernando Librado, a Chumash Indian cited in *California's Chumash Indians*, "The Canoe was the 'house of the sea'. It

was more valuable than a house on land and was worth much money. Only a rich man owned such a canoe..." (32).

A special group of men who knew how to make canoes and how to travel in them across the Channel made up the Brotherhood of the Canoe. If anyone wanted to learn the trade, they had to get permission to be admitted and then would be adopted as a brother and the secrets would be revealed to them. Members of the brotherhood lived in many different canoe ports and every brother would help any brother in need ("California's Chumash Indians" 32). As Fernando Librado said, they were some of the richest and most respected people of the towns. It was highly honored to have the ability to catch the largest fish and to travel.

3.6 Trade and Money

Trade was another part of life at which the Chumash excelled. They traded using a barter system where one person would trade one thing directly for something another person had. Food items, shells, and animal skins were mainly traded for tobacco, jewelry, and beads (Schwabacher 10). They used strings of shell beads for money. The amount was measured by seeing how many times a string of beads could wrap around your hand. Chumash supplied most of the shell money used by Indians throughout southern California, making them one of the wealthiest of the California Indian tribes.

Chumash traded among themselves and with neighboring American Indians.

Their large trading network allowed the Chumash to prosper (R. Gibson 14). The trails they used to trade were used by Spanish explorers and were the basis for railroads and paved roads years later in the 19th and 20th century. Today, highways 1, 101 and 126 in

the Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties follow the ancient Chumash trails ("California's Chumash Indians" 39).

3.7 Games

Another pastime of the Chumash was games. They loved games and contests, specifically gambling. Shell bead money or prized possessions were used for gambling. They would even determine political positions through gambling and believed supernatural forces caused people to win or lose; luck was not a factor (K. Gibson 21). Games were played all year long but especially during times of ceremonial gatherings, which were motivated by their devotion to spirituality.

3.8 Spiritual Life

Everyday and everything was spiritual for the Chumash. Their way of life reflected the natural world around them, which was the source of their food, clothing, homes, and tools. The world was the inspiration for their religious beliefs, music and ceremonies. The Chumash respected and feared it because their lives depended on it ("California's Chumash Indians" 12). It could either bring them abundance or threaten them with famine, flood, or disease. No resource was wasted and their abundance of resources allowed them to surpass survival in order to develop a unique culture.

Throughout the year, they had many festivals and ceremonies in order to honor the different spirits. The most important included the harvest festival, which honored *Hutash*, the Earth spirit, and the winter solstice festival, which celebrated the rebirth of the sun spirit (Hicks 29). *Hutash* is the mother of all people and filled the world with plants, animal and fish. In the winter solstice, rituals were held to persuade the sun to change directions and warm the Earth so that plants could grow.

All religious celebrations were led by the *paxa*, the spiritual leader of the village. *Shamans*, that were believed to be the link between the Chumash and the spirits, assisted the *paxa* (Schwabacher 32). *Shamans* treated sick people and some were thought to be able to bring rain or good hunting. They sometimes took a powerful drug called *toloache*, which they believed gave them visions of the spirit world (Schwabacher 31).

Shamans communicated with spirits through rock paintings, prayer, and song. Children of the wealthiest Chumash were invited to join a secret society called the *antap* (K. Gibson 14). This society performed sacred songs, dances, and rituals that honored the spirits in order to keep the world in balance ("California's Chumash Indians" 42). Members always stayed hidden behind wooden fences so that the ordinary Chumash couldn't see them.

3.9 Beliefs

Their spirituality encompasses a wide spectrum of beliefs. The Chumash believed the universe was divided into three layers: the top layer, middle layer, and the bottom layer. The top layer was the sky world, home of spirits called Sky People, like the sun, moon, and morning star (R. Gibson 13). The sun crossed the sky each day carrying a torch to warm the Earth. The middle layer was the Earth where humans lived and the bottom layer consisted of two giant snakes that held up the Earth. Each time the snakes would move, they caused earthquakes. All three layers were filled with spirits that lived in animals, plants and natural forces. The most powerful were the first people, *Kakunupmawa*, the Sun god, and *Hutash*, the Earth god (Hicks 25). The sun spirit is believed to travel across heaven every day carrying a burning torch. At the end of the journey, he shakes the torch to put out the flames, creating stars with the scattered sparks.

They believed that before the time of humans, the First People lived in the Middle world (Schwabacher 30). A flood came that forced the first people to transform into the present plants and animals and natural forces. Others became Sky People, stars, and planets (K. Gibson 22). After this turn of events, a council of some Sky People led to the creation of humans.

Another important component of their beliefs is power. It is a central idea in the California native religion. Supposedly power's energy was scattered throughout the universe when it was created ("California's Chumash Indians" 41). They believed that power could be used by anyone for good or for bad. You could only gain extra power if you knew the traditional secret rules. Some went to dream helpers for courage and strength; others would take dream-inducing drugs under the supervision of a *shaman*. The *antap* was the only one who knew the secret of how to keep good and evil forces in balance (Schwabacher 42).

3.10 Arrival of the First Europeans

Little did they know, though, that everything that made up who they were was about to be taken from them. In the early 1500s, Spanish explorers were traveling north from Mexico (K. Gibson 25). They were the first to come into contact with the Chumash. They found the Chumash eager to trade. The Spanish met them with missionaries, Christianity, and the Spanish language. Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was the first recorded European to encounter the Chumash in the autumn of 1542 ("Chumash People" 2012). He led two sailing vessels to the coast from Mexico. Although Cabrillo died shortly after, his men brought back a diary containing names and population counts for many of the Chumash villages.

The Spanish wanted to claim the area in order to keep out competitors, like Russia, who also wanted the land. They were attracted to the abundance of wood, water, and pasture land for livestock. In 1769, a group of Spanish soldiers and priests arrived in Chumash territory and built settlements and a military fort to protect the land from Russians (K. Gibson 26). Soon, the Spanish decided they wanted to completely convert the Chumash through Spanish citizenship, the Roman Catholic religion, and Spanish laws.

3.11 The Mission Period

To achieve their objective, they created missions. The mission period had already begun in 1772 with the establishment of their first mission in Chumash territory, called Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa (K. Gibson 27). Catholic priests at the missions brought Chumash to live there and taught them Christianity. They forced Chumash to leave villages, give up their languages and religions, and work on mission farms basically as slaves (Hicks 11). Anyone who refused was beaten or killed. The Chumash traditional way of life slowly was replaced by European ways. Native hunting and fishing was replaced with mission agriculture and animal husbandry ("California's Chumash Indians" 14). Many Chumash became Catholics and became dependent on the missions for work and food. With the spread of diseases likes measles, nearly half of the Chumash died within 13 years of entering the missions. By 1806, hundreds had died (K. Gibson 29).

The period of Mexican rule was the worst in Chumash history. Historians believe that hard work, violence, and disease killed 60% of the Chumash population (Hicks 13). When Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1810, a long war followed, during which missions did not receive enough supplies from the Mexican government because

of a lack of money. Chumash revolted against the Spanish soldiers stationed at the missions who were treating them poorly, but were forced to surrender (Schwabacher 58). When California officially became a Mexican state in 1821, Spanish control of the Chumash ended, and Mexico assumed responsibility for the missions. By 1834, the Mexican government had given away much of the Chumash land and turned the missions over to private landowners (K. Gibson 31). The Chumash had to leave the missions but barely 1,000 were left. As a result, most Chumash were forced to find work as household servants or cowboys.

3.12 United States' Influence

The Spanish were only the beginning of the settlers. With the discovery of gold in northern California in the mid-1800s, huge influxes of Americans began to take over native lands. When the United States defeated Mexico in the Mexican War of 1848, control of Chumash land was passed from Mexico to the United States (Hicks 41). California became a state in 1850, yet its laws did not take into account American Indian rights (K. Gibson 31). Settlers moving to California regarded the Indians as troublesome.

Racist views of the Indians were widespread. Whites believed that the Indians were "wild savages" to be destroyed and were inferior "diggers" to be laughed at and pitied ("California's Chumash Indians" 16). They were harassed and victimized until they fled their homes. Families were scattered and afraid to admit they were Indians. They were made outcasts in their own land. Come 1852, fewer than 600 Chumash existed (R. Gibson 84). The United States government began placing California Indians on reservations to free up the land, with the population as low as 300 by 1880. At the turn of the 20th century, poverty, unemployment, and drug and alcohol abuse was taking over the

Chumash population (Hicks 31). Chumash traditions were almost extinct due to intermarriage and the Spanish and American settlers. Finally, on December 27, 1901, the United States government granted the Chumash the former church lands near the Santa Ynez Mission, called the Santa Ynez Reservation (Schwabacher 69). They were one of the last California Indian nations to get their own reservation.

3.13 Modern Chumash

Today, more than 300 Chumash live on the Santa Ynez Reservation, which consists of 128 acres north of Santa Barbara ("California's Chumash Indians" 17). But, most Chumash live in cities and towns in southern California. There are many different groups living in California; some are descendants of Chumash who left coastal homes during the rebellions against the Spanish, and some are identified from the mission where their ancestors lived, like the San Luis Obispo band. Many Chumash are Roman Catholics, following the religion the Spanish priests and missionaries introduced (K. Gibson 37). But, some still follow their traditional beliefs, honoring the natural world and all it provides. Karen Gibson states in her book, The Chumash: Seafarers of the Pacific Coast, that "Some experts believe about 3,000 people of Chumash background live in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties in California" (35). They live much like other Americans but are continuously initiating projects to ensure their sacred shrines and burial grounds aren't disturbed. The Santa Ynez band of Chumash is currently the only federally recognized tribe, although the Ventureño and Barbareño Chumash are currently striving for federal recognition ("Chumash People" 2012).

3.14 The Santa Ynez Reservation

The Santa Ynez Reservation is governed by a constitution and elected officials. Chumash 18 years old and up elect officers and vote on issues related to tribal money (K. Gibson 36). A business committee oversees day-to-day tribal operations with elections held every two years to choose four committee members and a tribal chairperson. The elder's council oversees cultural traditions and advises the business committee on cultural matters (Armenta 2009). The reservation opened a gambling casino, called the Chumash Casino, which soon became one of the largest employers in the Santa Barbara County and an important source of economic growth (K. Gibson 36). The money earned from the casino pays for education and housing programs and every registered member gets a share of the casino's income. The Santa Ynez Reservation also donates money to outside organizations and community events. Their health clinic serves Chumash and non-Chumash people. They also run an environmental office that protects air, land, water, and cultural resources (R. Gibson 90). The education programs in place provide scholarships for students and tutoring. In fact, "The Santa Ynez Chumash have one of the largest percentages of California Indians attending college" (K. Gibson 38).

3.15 Instrumental Contributors

Another significant part of rebuilding their community is preserving Chumash ways. They continue to pass on their culture through traditions like storytelling. A very instrumental man in the history of the Chumash is Kitsepawit, also known as Fernando Librado (K. Gibson 39). In Robert Gibson's book, *The Chumash*, he notes that, "Fernando Librado...provided Harrington with information on the Chumash's traditional political organization and rituals," (35). He spent his childhood at the San Buenaventura

Mission learning Spanish and the language of the Ventura Chumash. Librado learned as much about the Chumash as he could. He devoted his life to learning about his people's way of life by traveling and, later in his life, by passing on his knowledge of the Chumash language and culture to John Harrington ("California's Chumash Indians" 16).

John Harrington, an anthropologist, took thousands of pages of notes, including Chumash stories, from their encounters (Schwabacher 32). Scholars, to this day, use the information he provided to learn about the Chumash. The Chumash calendar is based on the information he received from Fernando. With all the knowledge he had built up, Harrington was able to construct a Chumash dictionary. John Harrington wrote down what had been entirely oral tradition ("California's Chumash Indians" 16). By studying Harrington's notes, in addition to studying artifacts like surviving baskets, and experimenting, researchers are slowly recovering Chumash culture (51).

Another important person is Maria Solares who spent years also working with John Harrington, teaching him her language and myths (Hicks 36). "Solares was probably anthropologist John P. Harrington's most knowledgeable informant on Chumash mythology" (R. Gibson 33). Most of the legends that are known are thanks to the information she relayed. She has allowed Chumash after her to reconnect with their culture.

3.16 Preserving Chumash Ways

Chumash today are picking up where their ancestors left off in the preservation of their culture. Some Chumash now work as archaeologists to study ancient Chumash objects. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is the most important institution for studying their culture (Hicks 33). The finest collection of artifacts can be found at the

museum. Researchers of the museum have spent many years studying the culture and language and trying to help locate more Chumash descendants. Robert Gibson describes the role of the Chumash representative in the California Native Heritage Commission: "This person must be contacted in the event that a Chumash burial is uncovered, because such sites are sacred and protected by California law from disturbance," (R. Gibson 93). Whereas Chumash items found at archaeological sites used to be taken by private collectors, now laws are in place to help them and other American Indians preserve their property. Especially with cemeteries and historical sites, Chumash are now given the right to oversee any construction projects that affect sites where ancestors lived.

4. The Native American Perspective

4.1 My Experience with the Chumash

Throughout all my research, I felt like I was receiving the information through an observer or through some outside source. But, I wanted to receive it firsthand. I did not want to present a detached account of the Chumash; I wanted to interact with the people I was studying and make it more personal. To get a better idea of what the Chumash were really like, I turned to people of Chumash descent. Joe Talaugon, who is one quarter Chumash, owns the Guadalupe Cultural Arts and Education Center in California. His daughter, Karen Evangelista, functions as the director. By tying together the knowledge I gained from my research with Joe and Karen's input from interviews, I have been able to further develop my presentation of the Chumash's story with a new sense of truth and understanding.

I was interested in finding out how the actual Chumash felt about their history and how they told their story, because it was their story after all. Rather than reading words

off a page or a screen, I knew hearing the story of the Chumash from actual Chumash would make it a lot more real to me. The Chumash's words have been silenced for generations; I saw my project as an attempt to make sure they are heard. As Goodall describes the process of ethnography: "It shows the self, and the self's construction of knowledge, as a jointly produced work in progress" (8). The following represents the story of the Chumash that Joe and Karen helped me to create.

4.2 The History through Chumash Mouths

There is evidence of the Chumash as long as 13,000 years ago. The Chumash were born into the responsibility of their role in life genetically. They had their own system of survival with the location of village sites close to the coast or any water source. Everything in the village depended on the movement of the sun and stars. They believed that everything depended on the Earth. Life itself, on a daily basis, was spiritual.

The Great Spirit is their god. They pray and worship the Great Spirit; it inspires their songs and prayers. They do not attend church; their spirituality is very basic. The Great Spirit, including the Earth, is viewed as their creator. They believe everything that grows in their land is put there for a purpose. Even the method of burial was related to the Earth, with the head facing west and the body laid down. Their religion had no structure but encompassed a belief in everything including life itself. Everything had worth. The Chumash's skill in storytelling allowed their oral traditions to be passed down from generation to generation, all the way to today.

Food was stored in big storage bins requiring the chief to know how many people were in the village, in order to divide up all the food amongst everyone. There was an astronomer for each village who taught his underlings the trade so that it would not be

forgotten when he passed away. Although women are not given as much recognition, they were the leaders; they gave birth to these great men.

Currently, 1400 acres were purchased for the Santa Ynez Reservation. There are less than 200 enrolled members of the reservation, each of which receives money per capita from its income. The people at the reservation are referred to as "rez" people and there are five individuals who are true descendants, providing the link to the Chumash at the reservation now. Maria Solares, one of the descendants, is Karen and Joe's ancestor.

The reservation has provided immensely for the Chumash. The Education

Department offers tutoring, pays for college, and allows opportunities for members to attend conferences regarding Native American issues. The casino's profit is used for environmental education, and for investment in property and land. The casino is fulfilling its purpose to utilize the money in order to contribute to the people. A great development for the Chumash community is the Cosmic Serpent, which is an organization that combines western science and indigenous science. It is a project devoted to increasing the "capacity of museum practitioners to bridge native and western science learning in informal settings," which is something that both Karen and Joe touched on in their interviews. They were frustrated that their people's intelligence was not appreciated, especially in the realm of science. Cosmic Serpent

stems from the fact that a cultural disconnect exists between western scientists and educators and the native community in terms of scientific worldviews and Indigenous ways of knowing. This cultural disconnect manifests itself in the lack of participation of Native Americans in

Western science and a lack of appreciation by Western scientists of Native science. (National Science Foundation)

The hope is that this organization will give the Chumash and the other Native Americans the credit they deserve for their intelligence. Others are trying to discover more about the history of the Chumash. Rex Saint Onge and Joe discovered a 500-year-old carving in a local oak tree, known as an arborglyph, which was similar to rock paintings of the ancient Chumash. It represented astronomy: the top two handles are the big dipper, which symbolizes the winter solstice. I will relate the significance of this discovery later. Carmen Sandoval, a botanist, is studying what the Chumash really used plants for and how exactly they lived off them.

4.3 A Distanced Identity

The majority of Chumash today do not even know that they are Chumash because past generations were taught to be ashamed of their Indian heritage. A full-blooded Chumash is basically nonexistent because Chumash had been utterly stripped of all they had identified with, and forced to take on a Spanish identity. The pressure was so intense that they barely knew who they were anymore. Joe Talaugon, for example, lived his life thinking he was Spanish until he learned of his Chumash descent from a census at the age of 50.

Although elder Chumash were relatively successful at holding onto their culture, they were dying off, and the responsibility lied with the younger generations. However, without as much experience and attachment with the culture, the younger generation started believing the Spanish's accusations that their beliefs were witchcraft. Soon, the

younger generations were almost completely converted and the Chumash began to disappear into the general population.

4.4 Frustration in the Search for Truth

Imagine not knowing where you came from, your people's past, and how they were really treated. In the interviews I conducted on February 9th and 10th, both Mr.

Talaugon and Mrs. Evangelista expressed frustration at the incomplete story of the Chumash. They felt that the Chumash were not given enough credit for a remarkable intelligence, which allowed them to be completely self-sufficient. For example, they had to have studied astronomy; it was their key survival system (Evangelista 2012).

Understanding the movement of stars allowed them to generate seasons for the year and to predict the best time to hunt and fish. They are classified as hunter-gatherers, but they are so much more. They lived here for 10,000 years; they obviously were not just hunting and gathering (Talaugon 2012). They had to know how to butcher animals and how to utilize all the different animal parts because they would not waste anything. They were skillful and scientific in jewelry, trading, and building. Their trading system, specifically, was ingenious for that time (Talaugon 2012).

With the arrival of the Spanish, the lifestyle the Chumash had worked so hard to sustain quickly disintegrated. The Spanish knew they had to develop a system so that the Chumash would give up their own ways for the Christian ways of the church. The Spanish, prepared with an army of soldiers and weapons, were no match for the Chumash, who initially welcomed them with open arms. They easily took advantage of Chumash hospitality and used many tactics to convert the Chumash, including alcoholism. The first priest brought barrels of liquor, claiming that it was for the church,

but in reality, no church needed such a large amount of liquor. The Chumash, never having drank before, quickly became a weakened people due to the effects of alcohol (Talaugon 2012). A whole generation of alcoholics developed, although no one wants to admit it. The Spanish also changed the diet of the Chumash to include more animal meat and fewer plants.

Many Chumash ran away to the valley or hills because they did not want to lose their identity. Although it took from 1769, when the first Europeans came into San Diego, until 1850, by then, the Chumash were completely converted and all their spiritual beliefs disbanded (Talaugon 2012).

4.5 The Chumash Influence

Even though a lot of time has passed since the Chumash ancestors were alive, it is amazing to me how much being Chumash has impacted Joe and Karen's lives. It has come to not only influence who they are, but also to inspire them to reconnect with their past.

Karen's great grandmother experienced the time of the missionaries, and was forced to leave her home and attend boarding schools. Four generations ago, in her mother's ancestry, her grandma was able to experience the Chumash life prior to the Spanish, when there was no contact with anyone but her own people (Evangelista 2012). Karen learned most of her Chumash knowledge from her grandma. Her mom said it was pertinent for her to learn culturally who she is and where she comes from. She is proud to know that her family and ancestors lived and thrived in the place she now calls home: Guadalupe.

With Joe's knowledge from the census of his Chumash descent, he is now trying to live his life as a Chumash Indian. He bought a home and turned it into a cultural center as his contribution to the community. The Guadalupe Cultural Arts and Education Center reflects different types of existing cultures (Talaugon 2012). He feels fortunate to be able to communicate and work with other communities and universities. His mother was born on the Santa Ynez Reservation and, as a child, was taken away and forced to grow up in Ventura. Born in 1914, she lived during the period of time where the shame of being Indian was strong. Everything around her was negative about being Indian. To adapt to her surroundings, she and other Indians would call themselves Mexican or Pilipino and no longer identified as being Chumash. So, as a high school student in Ventura, she identified as Mexican. Her mother and grandmother quickly shut her down when she expressed curiosity about her ancestry.

Inevitably, Joe Talaugon's mom inherited this feeling of guilt about her identity and did not want to talk about where she was from. Left with no other option, he took it upon himself to discover the truth. He was able to trace back his ancestry seven generations to Maria Solares; this newfound knowledge propelled him on his spiritual path. Twenty years ago, when he was living up north, he was experiencing strong feelings of spiritual emptiness. Although he had grown up Catholic, he had grown further and further apart from the Church. He wanted to learn the spiritual beliefs of his native people.

His spiritual journey took him to Mount Shasta, an important place for Wintun Indians, where he met an elder Indian, named Florence, who was the spiritual leader of the tribe. Her purpose was to learn as much as possible about the culture and pass on her

knowledge to following generations. He joined the Wintun tribe's gathering on Mount Shasta and prayed to the Great Spirit. When a spiritual connection overcame him, he knew Catholicism was not for him. He took it as his calling to tell the truth about his people. His involvement with the Wintun Indians' culture and ceremonies, and later with the Miwok and Pomo Indians, drew him back to Guadalupe to join up with the Chumash at the Santa Ynez Reservation. His curiosity also led him to study books by Blackburn and Harrington, who were seen as credible sources on Chumash history.

Now, he is a proud member of the Santa Ynez Reservation and is very involved in the community, taking on personal projects of his own. He is currently working on an arborglyph project with a paleontologist named Rex, which I touched on earlier. The significance lies in its similarity to designs created by the native Chumash on rock formations. This finding provided evidence that, "the ancient images were deliberate studies of the stars and served as integral components of the Chumash people's annual calendar" (Kettmann 2010). Kettmann emphasizes the importance of this tree carving to the Chumash, saying that Saint Onge and Talaugon "are most satisfied that the arborglyph is confirming what they've long known: that, despite centuries of being classified by historians as merely hunter-gatherers, the Chumash lived in a very complex and sophisticated society" (2010). This discovery created another connection to the Chumash's ancestors and an opportunity to tell the truth about their history (Kettmann 2010). Saint Onge and Talaugon went on to publish a paper on arborglyphs, inspired by the one they discovered. They also published a paper on the shadow of the sun, which has a lot to do with the survival and existence of Indian people.

He is not afraid to admit that sometimes his people get caught up in the world of greed, allowing money to mislead them. They make money, own land, and sometimes become selfish (Talaugon 2012). He is not afraid to go up against opposition in his path to benefit the community. Some people do not approve of what he is doing but nothing will stop him because it is his calling (Talaugon 2012).

4.6 Hopes for the Future

In the past 30 years, the Chumash have begun to revive their culture. Despite all the grief caused by discovering the truth of their history, Joe and Karen remain positive about their people's future. They want to generate interest in their background and connect the Chumash people with their ancestors. They are proud of the direction they are headed. They strive to eventually speak the language, hopefully achieving fluency in the next generation. Through language, song, science, and research, the traditions are coming back. They are still unsure if many things will come back, but they are confident that science will help put the pieces together.

The Santa Ynez Reservation has a lot of potential in furthering the goals of the Chumash people; it is an example of their perseverance. Chumash took the reservation, made by the very people who tried to destroy their identity, and are now using it to their advantage to rebuild their culture. "We're building our community again. We wouldn't be the people we are today if it wasn't for the people before us," states Karen Evangelista (2012). Now Karen and Joe have taken the responsibility upon themselves to change the history books. With a revamped curriculum, complete with how people lived and studied stars, maybe the Chumash will be granted the credit they deserve.

5. My Reflection

5.1 The Role of Ethnography

I understand Goodall's point when he talks about the incompleteness of writing the new ethnography (8). Even after all my research and firsthand experiences, I am aware that my work is not complete; I still have so many questions about the Chumash's history. There is no way to create a complete writing product when dealing with ethnography. It was important for my satisfaction to realize that it is a work in progress.

My use of ethnography remains consistent with my intended purpose. In their book, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, ethnography is about "gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry" (Hammersley and Atkinson 3). My interviews with Joe and Karen brought aspects of the Chumash history to mind that require more investigation.

Throughout my writing process, I became aware of the necessity of having first-hand empirical investigation (1). My account of the Chumash would thus not have fulfilled the requirements of the new ethnography if I had not come into contact with actual Chumash people. Without my first-hand experience with Joe and Karen, I would be basing my story on my encounters with history books, which would have failed to provide me with satisfactory insight into their community and culture. It is also unfair to the Chumash people to only present one side of the story, a side not their own. Their words have been silenced since the day the first Europeans arrived. They deserve to have a voice in the story of their people and I saw it as my responsibility to make sure they were heard.

In the structure of my paper, as I mentioned earlier, I have presented the story of the Chumash in two different lights. Goodall states in his book, *Writing the New Ethnography*, "all new ethnographies are really *two stories* that shape and inform each other—one personal and one professional" (15). I modeled his theory in my chronicle of the Chumash's story. First, I presented their history, as I have understood it from research through the Internet and books. Then, I presented their history, through Karen and Joe's words.

Goodall describes the postmodernist view of ethnography that focuses on how writers experiment with forms of communication to create meaningful relationships with readers (Writing the New Ethnography 2000). In my ethnographic-inspired account, I communicate the Chumash story through the White Man's eyes and through the Chumash eyes. My writing has been created from many different types of communication. It is an accumulation of written, oral, and electronic instances of communication.

It is not possible for my presentation of the Chumash history to be an unambiguous presentation of their story. But I agree with Denzin that I have an obligation to study real people who have real-life experiences in the social world (26). In my writing, I take the responsibility that my interpretation is my own and may not be in accordance with other views. I have created a joint document with Karen and Joe and it has been quite a journey for me. Denzin sees the examination of a person's story as a means of experience, and that is what my project has created (Interpretive Ethnography 1997).

The expert ethnographers I referenced in my literature review influenced and helped to create my views of ethnography. Their work gave me the ability to generate new ideas for the direction of my project and to evaluate the motivations for my own work. Denzin made it apparent to me that I could draw upon the Chumash's experiences with nature in order to understand how their culture makes meaning. He gave me confidence that my writing has the power to tune into the function of their stories in order to express a part of their inner life that relates their cherished values and memories (Interpretive Biography 1989).

5.2 Relation to Communication Studies

As a communication scholar, I have learned a lot about messaging and its different modes. Messages can so easily be distorted due to all the channels they are communicated through; this became very evident in my project.

You can trace the development of communication through the Chumash history. In the beginning, their culture was passed down orally. Next, it was passed down through written language. Not only was the communication mode changing and becoming less and less oral throughout time, but the sources were also becoming less and less Chumash. I realized the importance of recognizing the source of my information. Non-Native Americans authored all the book research on the Chumash that I reference. But, I wanted to present both sides.

My project thus emphasizes the power of communication. Communication has allowed the Chumash culture to withstand time. It has allowed for their history to be passed down from generation to generation. Despite invasion, conversion, and extinction, communication has kept the Chumash culture as alive as ever. Communication has made

it possible for Chumash descendants like Joe and Karen to find out where they came from and to find out more about the people who made them who they are today.

Communication provides the link between time and space. It fills the gap between 10,000 years ago, when the first Chumash existed, to the present. Communication has provided the greatest gift of all: remembrance.

5.3 My Thoughts

Compared to the story I received from the two Chumash, I found the story I had constructed through my own research to be very sugarcoated and even biased to the white man. In reality, a people who were made to think that they were being saved from their barbarous lifestyle, were essentially taken away from their land, used as slaves, and run off their original homes.

My view of the Chumash has been transformed. I have gained such a respect for their way of life and what they have overcome. It has made me realize how much society has taken advantage of nature and how much I have. Nature is everything to the Chumash. Hearing their history especially made this very apparent to me. I was able to explore how their culture makes meaning through nature and their story's ability to reveal their cherished values, as Denzin proposes in *Interpretive Biography*. Their respect for every living thing and their lifestyle, completely dependent on the Earth itself, is remarkable. A lot can be learned from this community of people. They ask for nothing. They have accomplished so much and have so much to be proud of, from their trading system and basketry, to their perseverance through European invasion. They have been taken advantage of since the first Europeans arrived and yet they look at me with a smile on their face, and tell their story.

I have realized the importance of spirituality, and of knowing where you came from. It is a part of me that is incomplete. This project has created a passion in me to discover my ancestor's past. It has made me desire that connection the Chumash feel with their ancestry and the Great Spirit. When the Spanish invaded their land and took everything from them, they did not give up their spirituality or their hope for a brighter future. Their attachment is so strong that the Chumash alive today are doing everything they can to bring back their culture and rebuild their community.

I came away from this project with a very essential lesson: cultural sensitivity. As a Caucasian, I am associated with the very people who just keep taking and taking from the Native American population and have nothing to give back. It was very hard for me to come to terms with this. I am embarrassed at how my people have treated the Chumash and yet there is no escaping this fact or my association. I tried to contact various Chumash, including the tribal elder of the Santa Ynez band of Chumash. When I received no response, I was extremely frustrated because I could not understand why no one wanted to help me. Ethnic Studies Professor, Kathleen Martin, enlightened me that the Chumash have no incentive to help me out at all. I was pursuing information from them for my own gain, specifically to complete my senior project. I did not offer their community any benefits (Martin 2012). Professor Martin made me realize I was only repeating the history between the White Man and the Chumash; it was hard for me to accept.

Although I never saw my interest in the Chumash people as selfish, this experience has brought me to the realization that it was. And I am ashamed to admit it. But, my conversations with Karen and Joe have instigated in me a desire to share their

story and help them achieve their hopes for the future of the Chumash community. Denzin introduces the idea that ethnography allows one to discover truths about oneself (Interpretive Ethnography 1997). At the start of my project, I had hoped to create this same self-discovery in my audience, but I soon realized that my own words were producing an effect on me. I thus hope that my words will reach open ears and allow my audience to experience what I have.

It has been an eye-opening experience, to find out the truth about a native people. It makes me wonder how much truth has really been suppressed about not only the Chumash, but about all indigenous peoples. I hope this story is as much an inspiration to you, my reader, as it was to me, the writer.

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