

## ***Barbareno Chumash Council of Santa Barbara***

1263 E. Valley Rd.  
SantaBarbara, Ca. 93108  
Email: [shalawa@sbceo.org](mailto:shalawa@sbceo.org)

### **‘Upop/Point Conception : A Sacred Site**

In the past period of Spanish, Mexican, Californian then American invasion, the Chumash people have known and practiced in the area now known as Point Conception. Chumash name for this area is called ‘Upop. We the Chumash people are seeing the Economic development of the Gaviota Coast; especially the “Naples development” as a threat of our sacred sites, sacred region. It is seen by the dominant culture as:

- Economically profitable
- Environmentally sensitive
- Socially important
- Culturally un-important

The Gaviota coast consists of approximately 76 miles of scenic coastline and 200,000 acres of land in Santa Barbara County, in central California. Verdant hills gently slope towards the sapphire blue of the Pacific Ocean. On the horizon the Channel Islands silently rise out of the sea. The climate along the Gaviota coast is the best in the world. There is always a gentle fragrant breeze to inhale and savor.

This is the land where our ancestors, the Barbareno Chumash Indians, were born, raised their families, and were buried for more than a thousands of years prior to the arrival of the European explorers.

Numerous ancestral Chumash burials, village sites and significant ceremonial areas dot the entire terrain, from the shoreline up through the canyons and surrounding hills and into the mountain range known as Los Padres National Forest.

Up until now, most of the Gaviota coastal area was untouched by real estate development, except for a few lonely homesteads and horse ranches. This idyllic picture is about to change, big time.

Real estate developers and oil companies have made agreements (MOU) by Santa Barbara County to build extensive residential, commercial and industrial projects to fill in the “empty land”, forever changing the topography.

Oversized Caterpillar tractors and earth moving machines are ready to level the land for numerous building projects, irrevocably resculpting the terrain, and plowing through the archaeological remains of our ancestral past.

Unfortunately, money talks when it comes to obtaining real estate development permits. The oil companies' and billionaire real estate developers' teams of experts and Harvard attorneys gave dazzling Power Point presentations of how their development projects will benefit Santa Barbara County.

Past discussions with the National Park Service had the idea of establishing a National Park to protect the last undeveloped area of the Southern California Coast. The Barbareno Chumash Council have outlined the following:

- No disturbance of Sacred sites or Cultural sensitive region;
- Protection of ancestral items and objects
- Access of sacred sites and areas;
- A Homeland for the Chumash people.
- 

What Role for the Chumash in the Gaviota Coast Study? Past updates:

The federal government is conducting a study of the Gaviota Coast, that includes a possible national seashore designation for 76 miles of coastline. Initially, the Santa Barbara Chumash were excluded from these hearings, but they had limited discussions.

UPDATE - - On December 28, 2001, the Barbareno Council notified the federal government that, as a key "stakeholder" in the Gaviota Coast, it asked for 20,000 acres be set aside for a homeland for the descendants of the Barbareno Chumash. For further information, see: 20,000 acre Homeland

UPDATE - - The Barbareno Council testified against a development project under study near the ancient Chumash town sites in Dos Pueblos Canyon. The council asked the county board of supervisors to deny this development proposal. And the Barbareno requested that they be routinely consulted during all future county planning hearings on development near their ancestral sites, in accordance to local, state, and federal law. (3/20/02)

UPDATE: The State Park system announced its plans to acquire additional lands at El Capitan State Beach. Hearings on April 3. It is my understanding that the Barbareno and Coastal councils were not consulted to date concerning conflicts with their land acquisition efforts [J. Anderson, 4/2/02].

Since no decision was made in regards to these request, due to land developers and their representatives, we the Chumash people are still living in poverty and are homeless in

our home area. Many of us are living in homes not of our own, living in a economic system that is foreign to our cultural and spiritual being. The government has separated

and divide families of the Chumash by their laws and process of ignoring us for many generations.

We have economic, social, legal and educational barriers that limit our ability to have ceremonies and of being Chumash. The government and the social institutions provide us with nothing and create an atmosphere of lies and deceit as the “ Educational Academy” creates a misconception about us and a euro centric view of who we are and where we should be and how we should pray. The whole nature of the BIA system and the notion of Federal unrecognized and recognized tribe process is a continuation of genocidal policies of the government.

We pray for the animal plant and insect life and honor our land and earth by seeing that People realizes that we need to live in peace and in harmony with our natural world .We do this at the sites we have access to, however this does not conclude that ‘ Upop/Point Conception is out of mind nor out of our ceremonial considerations. We are forced not to be at ‘Upop by the clear distinction of private property , yet the idea that the land is ours, as the creator has given us to protect and guard as humans along with the plant, animal and insect life and other “people” in the land and ocean is still our belief.

We pray for protection and well being of the earth and that humans can act as humans to be in harmony with nature and the other elements of life. We Pray for you in these discussions to tell the world that we need to co-operate with each other for peace and tranquility for the children and the upcoming generations to come.

Sincerely, Barbareno Chumash Council of Santa Barbara, California;

Paul Pommier  
Ralph Morello  
Georgian Sanchez  
Ray Ward  
Marcus Lopez