

Back to Lisamu'

The Chumash reunite the Rock



All her relations Tribal Council Chair Violet Sage Walker greeted Chumash members from across Southern California.

The Northern Chumash Tribal Council held a ceremony on August 20 to commemorate the return of stones mined more than 120 years ago from the Chumash sacred site of Lisamu', commonly known as Morro Rock.

“Lisamu' has been a place of spiritual significance for the Chumash for thousands of years, bringing life and food for our people,” said Violet Sage Walker, Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chairwoman. “The reunification of Lisamu' represents a healing of our people and our culture - a healing that is long overdue.”



The return of the stones was incorporated into the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) maintenance project for the Port San Luis breakwater, which was built using stones mined from Lisamu'. The Corps will use ten tons of reclaimed stone from the breakwater to create an underwater seamount to enhance marine habitat on three acres of seafloor 150 yards west of Lisamu'.

In the late 1800s, approximately 40% of Lisamu' was quarried with high explosives to build the breakwaters in Port San Luis and Morro Bay as well as buildings throughout San Luis Obispo County. The Army Corps contacted Violet's father, the late Northern Chumash Tribal Administrator Fred Collins, to consult on the breakwater repair project in 2017. At Fred's request, the Army Corps agreed to return the reclaimed stones.

“When the Army Corps first reached out to Fred asking how they should handle these sacred rocks, he told them to bring them back to Lisamu’,” said Violet. “They took his request seriously, and ultimately determined that they could bring the stones back to Morro Bay. “Fred spent most of his life trying to protect Lisamu’. This project wouldn't have happened without him.”



Rare wildlife sighting The Sierra Club's beloved giant otters made an appearance, along with Chapter Chair Carole Mintzer and Chapter Director Andrew Christie.



“For us, this is one of the most meaningful things we’ll get to do in our career.”

- Col. Julie Balten, USACE

Home again The quarried stones were brought across Morro Bay in Chumash tomols, then relayed from the beach up to the base of Lisamu via a human chain.