





Beloved Santa Ynez Chumash tribal elder Maria Solares spent a significant amount of time sharing stories about her tribe with John Peabody (J.P.) Harrington, an American linguist, ethnologist and specialist in the native people of California.

As Harrington took meticulous notes of his conversations with her, the history, culture and heritage of the tribe was forever committed to paper, ready to share with future generations of Santa Ynez Chumash.

The conversations between Maria Solares and J.P. Harrington have been used by the tribe for a variety of cultural programs developed by the tribe's Culture Department.

Perhaps one of the more ambitious cultural programs for the tribe was resurrecting the tribe's native language, Samala. When the tribe first began the process, research led them to Dr. Richard Applegate, a professor who was familiar with the Samala language. When he was a graduate student at UC Berkeley more than 40 years ago, he spent time working with materials from J.P. Harrington and Dr. Applegate's dissertation was on the tribe's native language.

Under the guidance of Dr. Applegate, the tribe began hosting language classes for tribal members and their families and eventually developed a language apprenticeship program. The program featured a select group of tribal members learning the Samala language and, in turn, teaching groups of fellow tribal members the language. The Samala language is now taught at two local elementary schools.

The tribe also published a comprehensive, encyclopedia-type Samala dictionary with 4,000 entries, a resource guide, an English to Samala index and a pronunciation disc.

In addition to the language program, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Culture Department works in other ways to instill and preserve the tribe's culture.

There are basket weaving classes, regalia making workshops, participation in the annual Chumash Inter-Tribal Pow-Wow and Camp Kalawashaq, a summer youth program that is a great opportunity for tribal children to learn about tribal culture, participate in recreational activities and just be kids at camp.

