CHUMASH TOMOL

A tomol is the traditional plank canoe of the Chumash Native Americans who navigate along the Central and Southern California coast and among the channel islands. In the past, these tomols allowed for extensive trade, fishing and travel. Today, these tomols continue to be built and navigated by the Chumash people. Some of the names of our tomols are listed below, and more are being constructed as you read this ...

Hokk - completed 1996
Al'kayg' - completed 1996
Ya'kowal - completed 1996
E'yuw' (gathering salmons) - completed 2007
Mugentli - (sleep memory) - completed 2010
Little Sister - completed 2010

The Santa Barbara Channel island of Wi'ima, or “driftwood” was a favorite place to find the redwood logs which drifted down from the Northwest coast. Because of it’s length and buoyancy, Redwood is still the preferred wood for building a tomol.

A tomol can reach lengths of between 8 to 30 feet. Today, the highest recorded speed of a tomol is 9.3 knots, a speed created by the combined efforts of the men and women who pull their double-bladed paddles through the water. Look for us on the ocean!

RECENT HISTORY

BROTHERHOOD-OF-THE-TOMOL

The Brotherhood-of-the-Tomol, highly respected keepers of our tomols, have always been part of the history of our people. Only a few of the old names were recorded:

When Palai'to's tomol was in danger at sea, a prayers' task led him safely to shore.

September 8, 2001: The Crossing of the E'yuw' to the island of Limesu
The E'yuw' was the first to be owned by the Chumash community in over 100 years. She was completed in 1997 under the leadership of the Chumash Maritime Association and many respected Chumash artists, who donated nine months of their time to craft the E'yuw'. In 2001, the E'yuw' left Channel Islands Harbor on Saturday, September 8th at 3:40am. She traveled to Limesu (Nipomo Island) and then continued to the east end of Limesu (Santa Cruz Island) where she was welcomed home with ceremony by more than 100 members of the Chumash community encamped at Sunset Ranch. Since then, the Crossing to Limesu has become an annual homecoming for our Chumash community.

TOMOL STORIES

Visit the Syustam Story Circle, a 20-foot circular little fish mosaic located across from Ambassador Park on Cabrillo Blvd in Santa Barbara. The mosaic tells stories of the tomols and other Chumash history.