

Dorothy Ramon Learning Center

In 2002, my wife, Jill, began taking Maarenga' (Serrano) language classes given by Dorothy Ramon's nephew Earnest Siva at the Morongo Reservation near the town of Banning in California. Jill's hometown is Yucaipa, also in traditional Serrano territory near Banning. She wanted to learn More about the people whose land was by circumstance her own 'earth center'. At this time, Dorothy Ramon had recently passed away and June and Ernest Siva were just starting a center in her honor, which they named The Dorothy Ramon Learning Center. Earnest Siva's language classes were often based on the text found in Wayta'Yawa, and Jill introduced the book to me.

In the years since the Center's founding, Ernest and June Siva, with the help of many California Indians and other friends, have created a vibrant place to enjoy learning about Southern California Indians. It is an excellent 'home base' for participating in numerous social and educational events. The physical location of the Center is in Banning, California, and it's website is <https://dorothyramon.org>. Here is a part of the website's own description of the Center's origin and work:

“DOROTHY RAMON was an elder knowledgeable in traditional ways and recognized as the last primary speaker of the Serrano language, that is, the last person who thought and dreamed in Serrano first, before English. In her final years before her passing in 2002, she worked tirelessly with a linguist and helped save the region's own Serrano language and much cultural knowledge. Her nephew, Ernest H. Siva, formed the Learning Center to carry on and expand her work to include all Native American nations of Southern California. Dorothy Ramon symbolizes those Native American elders, brought up knowing their language and cultures, who are willing to share this knowledge. . .

The Learning Center honors her life work by saving and sharing the wonders of Southern California's distinct Native American cultures. This treasure is part of our national heritage and serves the broader community, drawing all – Indians and non-Indians alike – into the Center as an active collaborating partner.”

I encourage you to visit the DRLC website, and the Center itself if you live nearby. On their website, the Center invites you to: “make a difference. . . consider joining us! Tell the stories! Sing the songs! Participate in our activities! Save and share Native American cultural ways with us!” They also invite you to consider joining their associate group, Heritage Keepers.

John Anderson
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