

# the SAA archaeological record

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On the cover: Priscilla Naylor (Paiute), former Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Fort Independence and undergraduate Jenna Rempfert screen during the 2013 PCIAFS field season.  
Photographer: Desiree R. Martinez.



# HO'EEXOKRE 'EYOOKUUKA'RO "WE'RE WORKING WITH EACH OTHER"

## THE PIMU CATALINA ISLAND PROJECT

Desireé R. Martinez and Wendy G. Teeter

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For decades, Tongva (Gabrielino) community members, the original inhabitants of the Los Angeles Basin, have actively battled multiple misconceptions about the community and its origins: that they are extinct; are relative latecomers to southern California, arriving as part of the "Shoshonean Wedge"; or are an imagined community of Mexican Americans lying about their heritage for personal gain and notoriety. These misinformed interpretations have hindered the Tongva community's ability to assert their sovereign rights over the treatment of their cultural items, sacred spaces, and ancestral remains under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). As a result, Tongva community members have created a number of educational programs at local museums and heritage sites to provide accurate information. However, these public programs do not necessarily reach the archaeologists who shape the academic discourse regarding Tongva history and cultural lifeways. To combat this situation, the Tongva community is working with scholars to develop research programs, such as the authors' Pimu Catalina Island Archaeology Project (PCIAP), to demonstrate that the Tongva are a vibrant living cultural community with a deep history within its southern California traditional territory. Most importantly, *Ho'eexokre 'eyookuuka'ro*, "We're working with each other," to ensure that Tongva history is represented in a way that honors the ancestors and told from a Tongva point of view.

### Pimu Catalina Island Archaeology Project and Indigenous Archaeology

The Pimu Catalina Island Archaeology Project (PCIAP), a collaborative project with members of the Tongva community, conducts research to dispel the imagined cultural history

of Santa Catalina Island in particular, and Tongva territory generally. Conceived in 2007 by the authors and Cindi Alvitre, the Most Likely Descendant (MLD) for Catalina Island as identified by the California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), PCIAP uses an indigenous archaeology approach to teach and understand the Tongva past. *Indigenous archaeology* was originally defined as "archaeology done with, for and by indigenous people". Our approach integrates Tongva perspectives during research development, execution, analysis, interpretation, and presentation. We decolonize traditional research agendas by acknowledging issues such as power, control, and authority within archaeological interpretation. Although some archaeologists fear that an indigenous archaeology approach favors indigenous perspectives over others, that is not the case. The mission is to create an archaeological future that incorporates and integrates a multiplicity of voices, both Native American and non-Native American, to narrate the stories of the past, stories that are empirically grounded collaborative research.

### Countering Extinction

Although PCIAP has a number of traditional archaeological research objectives, of paramount importance is attending to the immediate needs of the Tongva community (see Teeter et al. 2013). One such need, as briefly described in the introduction, is correcting the idea that the Tongva are extinct. This perception was based on the limited research methods and definitions used by early researchers while trying to quickly document the "vanishing" California Native American cultures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The death of the Tongva was propagated in the writings of Alfred L. Kroeber, considered the father of Native California ethnography. However, this "extinction" runs counter

to the active cultural lifeways, as detailed in Tongva family histories.

What Kroeber and others did not consider while trying to identify intact California Native American communities was the historical trauma endured by these same communities as a result of the violent colonial settler practices of the last 300 years. The Spanish Christian missionaries forced the Tongva to strip away the visible signs of their “paganess,” with mission neophytes learning to curtail their “Indian” practices while under the watchful eye of the priests. During the American period, the outward expression of Tongva identity continued to be hidden due to multiple state and locally sanctioned atrocities such as the California State Legislature paying bounties for Native American heads and scalps, as well as the routine incarceration and subsequent auctioning off of “drunken” Native Americans to Californios by Los Angeles city officials. To avoid these de-humanizing and degrading practices, Tongva community members hid in plain sight, taking on Spanish and Mexican cultural traits outwardly (clothing, speech, mannerisms, etc.) to avoid being identified as Tongva. Their very survival depended on society believing they belonged to any other cultural group other than a Native American community.

Although Tongva community members seemed to have assimilated into the greater Los Angeles Hispanic culture, in private and outside the view of government officials and the general public, they continued to practice their traditional Tongva culture and traditions to ensure transmission of these practices to the future generations.

### Reclaiming History

Ethnographic and archaeological essays of southern California propagate the notion that the Takic-speaking Tongva moved into the southern California from the Great Basin around 4,000 Before Present (B.P.), “wedging” themselves between the Hokan-speaking Chumash, located to the north, and the Yuman-speaking Kumeyaay, located to the south. Originating in Alexander S. Taylor’s observation, on the physical location of language groups in the mid-nineteenth century, Alfred Kroeber legitimized the theory through his research, which is now accepted as fact and without need for further evidence by most California archaeologists. This Shoshonean Wedge, or Shoshonean “intrusion” theory, is counter to the Tongva community’s knowledge about their history and origins. Tongva oral tradition states that the Tongva have always lived in their traditional territory, with their emergence into this world occurring at Puvungna, a well-known village site with cultural exposures documented

in Long Beach on the campuses of Rancho Los Alamitos, California State University, Long Beach, and the Veterans Administration Long Beach Healthcare System facility.

Despite the community’s deep and ongoing history, the uncritical acceptance of the “wedge” theory has ramifications for the Tongva’s attempts to claim cultural affiliation to human remains and items older than 4,000 B.P. under NAGPRA. Cultural affiliation is determined between a tribe and human remains when “the preponderance of the evidence—based on geographical, kinship, biological, archeological, anthropological, linguistic, folklore, oral tradition, historical evidence, or other information or expert opinion” reasonably leads to that conclusion. However, as discussed above, the academic foundation “wedge” theory has already decided that some other Native American community lived on the land prior to Tongva settlement, often leaving Tongva repatriation claims to be denied.

As the authors have described in their recent article “Returning the tataayiyam honuuka’ (Ancestors) to the Correct Home: The Importance of Background Investigations for NAGPRA Claims” many scholars have used data (ie, skeletal measurements) from human remains looted by Ralph Glidden to support the interpretation of the relatively recent arrival of the Tongva to the Los Angeles Basin. Based on the authors’ and others work through provenience, provenance, and physical anthropological research, it can no longer be assumed that the human remains within early nineteenth century collections are either Tongva or Chumash. Instead, other ethnicities have been identified, possibly as a result of Glidden’s practice of buying human remains regardless of origin. As a result “any conclusions drawn from Glidden’s problematic skeletal collection should be considered suspect” (Martinez et al. 2014). PCIAP is re-evaluating the data used to support these provocative theories to ensure that Tongva history is accurately portrayed.

### Educating the Future: Tongva Perspectives at the Forefront

In order to support and widen the use and value of indigenous archaeology as an approach, PCIAP developed the Pimu Catalina Island Archaeology Field School (PCIAFS) to expose potential future archaeologists to a Tongva perspective of the archaeological record and the surrounding environment, whose history on the southern Channel Islands and the mainland is 10,000 years long (Figure 1). First taught through the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and now offered through California State University, Northridge, PCIAFS students learn that artifacts should not be val-



Figure 1. Priscilla Naylor (Paiute), former Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Fort Independence and undergraduate Jenna Rempfert screen during the 2013 PCIAFS field season. Photographer: Desireé R. Martinez.



Figure 2. Undergraduate Andy Gonzalez learns to leach ground acorns during the 2013 PCIAFS Native Foods Workshop. Photographer: Desireé R. Martinez.

ued solely for their research potential. Via guest lectures and hands-on workshops lead by Tongva and other Native American community members, students are taught that archaeological sites, artifacts, and the natural landscape are viewed as ancestors that are to be honored and respected. They are not things to be managed, but instead are infused with life and power, and need protection (Figure 2). Certified by the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA), students learn directly from Tongva community members how archaeology, development, and the cultural resources management industry have impacted their ability to practice and maintain their cultural and spiritual traditions along with rigorous and innovative archaeological methods and techniques that forefront minimally invasive procedures. Through this unique experience, the authors hope students acknowledge that the Native American present is directly connected to their past and future, and will take this realization with them to their future archaeological endeavors with the highest ethical standards. By the end of our seventh season, we will have trained more than 82 students from all over the country and documented more than 100 sites.

### Reciprocity of Knowledge: Native Cultural Resources Practitioners' Training

An inherent practice within southern California Native American communities is reciprocity. In the past, reciprocity usually took the form of goods or food given to those in need, knowing that they would be returned to the provider at some future date. Reciprocity not only solidified cultural and social

ties, but also ensured cultural and physical survival during times of stress, environmental or otherwise. Community members who had access to the most resources usually gave the most. The authors have accumulated a vast amount of knowledge regarding the protection of cultural resources and felt that this information should be shared with not only Tongva community members, but with other Native American communities. Although we assumed we would be able to share this knowledge through PCIAFS, we found that potential California Native American community members were unable to attend PCIAFS due to familial obligations and work responsibilities. Additionally, since the course was offered through a university, the cost of attendance was often prohibitive, especially for tribal members from impoverished non-federally recognized tribes. As a result, we created the Pimu Catalina Island Native Cultural Resources Practitioners' Training in 2010. This intensive week-long course used the same pedagogical premise as the regular field school and was open to tribal monitors, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), or concerned tribal members who worked with tribal cultural resources in an official or unofficial capacity (Figure 3). Participants are not only introduced to traditional archaeological method and theory, but they are also introduced to federal and state environmental review process and learn how they can effectively participate in such processes. Additionally, critical strategies were shared with participants on how to respond to consultation request letters and evaluate cultural resources assessments and Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs)/Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) while being mindful of their





Figure 3. Jacob Ahluk Houston (Tlingit, kaagwaantaan Eagle Clan) and Alfred Cruz Sr. (Juaneno, deceased) learn to use a compass during the 2012 Pimu Catalina Island Native Cultural Resources Practitioners' Training. Photographer: Desireé R. Martinez.

responsibility to keep confidential sacred and specialized cultural knowledge.

Participant costs were covered through grants from UCLA Law School's Tribal Learning Community & Educational Exchange Program (TLCEE). In continuing the practice of reciprocity, participants were encouraged to share the knowledge gained with other Native American community members. Although the training is currently on hiatus, we hope to continue the training in the near future. Past participants stated that the training was extremely helpful in their struggle for cultural resources protection within and outside their tribal communities (personal communication, Alexis Wallick 2014).

Although PCIAP has accomplished many of the original goals and objectives within the last 8 years, there is still much work to be done. Changing the way that archaeologists and the general public think about the Tongva community and their history has been difficult. Even with the direct testimony of Tongva leaders and elders regarding their history to government officials and scholars, Tongva continue to be denied their place in history. The PCIAP team will continue this work striving for the return of Tongva ancestors and promoting their stories and lives as part of the deep history of the Los Angeles Basin.

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## WE WANT YOU! VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING!

For the 80th annual meeting in San Francisco, California. SAA is seeking enthusiastic volunteers who are not only interested in archaeology but who are also looking to save money and have fun.

To give volunteers more flexibility, SAA will again require only 8 hours of volunteer time! The complimentary meeting registration is the exclusive benefit for your time.

Training for the April 15–19 meeting will be provided from detailed manuals sent to you electronically prior to the meeting along with on-the-job training. As always, SAA staff will be on hand to assist you with any questions or problems that may arise.

For additional information and a volunteer application, please go to the SAAweb ([www.saa.org](http://www.saa.org)) or contact Shelley Adams at SAA: 1111 14th Street, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005, Phone +1 (202) 559-5881, Fax +1 (202) 789-0284, or e-mail [Shelley\\_Adams@saa.org](mailto:Shelley_Adams@saa.org).

Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until February 3, 2015.

See you in San Francisco!