

**REASSESSING CULTURAL EXTINCTION:  
CHANGE AND SURVIVAL AT  
MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, TEXAS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on Mission San Juan Capistrano, San Antonio, Texas, one of four missions comprised by San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. It provides baseline information for future consultations regarding implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Native American presence at the missions is linked inextricably to Coahuiltecans, the ethnically and linguistically diverse native inhabitants of south Texas and northeast Mexico. Only Coahuiltecans were missionized at San Juan, but they undoubtedly interacted with other groups, including Apache, Caddo, Comanche, Karankawa, Tlascalan, Tonkawa, Wichita, and non-Indians. San Juan's archaeologically recovered skeletal population (ca. 1731-1862) represented Native Americans and racially mixed individuals, but none were identified as known individuals.

Academically oriented anthropologists argue that geographic Coahuiltecans eventually assimilated into the region's Tejano population and, effectively, became extinct. They are not a federally recognized tribe. However, local popular literature and interviews with present-day San Juan community members reveal that segments of the San Juan community trace their ancestry to mission Indians and have recently formed several Coahuiltecan-oriented Native American organizations. Genealogical research confirms that some community members are lineal descendants of individuals who lived at San Juan during late Colonial times. Although none of the known progenitors appears to have been a neophyte at mission San Juan, they may well have been of Native American descent, as were many of San Antonio's residents.

All Native American human remains archaeologically recovered from San Juan's mission compound were reinterred in 1999 under the auspices of the Catholic Church, the entity that retained legal possession of the remains and under whose jurisdiction the excavations occurred. With the exception of human remains discovered intentionally or inadvertently after 1990 on federally owned, as opposed to Church-owned, property at mission San Juan, NAGPRA does not appear to be directly applicable at this time.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Dr. Rock, Mr. Chavez, and SAAN Park Archaeologist Susan Snow, reviewed draft versions of this report, as did Ms. Alexa Roberts, NPS cultural anthropologist with the Cultural Resources and National Register Program, Intermountain Support Services, Santa Fe. Valuable insights into NAGPRA’s applicability to skeletal remains and funerary objects from Mission San Juan were provided by Ms. Roberts, Ms. Virginia Salazar, an NPS NAGPRA specialist in Santa Fe, and by Mr. Jason Roberts, an NPS lawyer and NAGPRA specialist in the Washington D.C. office. The collective input of these individuals is recognized and greatly appreciated; it aided substantially in keeping the project on course and consistent with NAGPRA.

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Juan's current parish priest, also discussed with us the nature and diversity of community opinions and provided valuable insights about Native American issues.

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Although we—report editor, contributors, and technical editors—wish to acknowledge contributions made by the people and organizations mentioned above, as well as others who inadvertently remain unnamed, we accept the responsibility for our own contributions, including any errors in fact or oversights this report may contain.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i> .....	<i>iii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i> .....	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Figures</i> .....	<i>x</i>
<i>List of Tables</i> .....	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Management Summary</i> .....	<i>xv</i>

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO A LINEAL DESCENT AND CULTURAL AFFILIATION STUDY FOR MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, TEXAS ..... Error! **Bookmark not defined.**

*Alston V. Thoms*

Project Chronology and Contacts .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Research Objectives and NAGPRA Compliance .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
NAGPRA's Applicability to Mission San Juan .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Mission San Juan's Indian Occupants: Geographic Coahuiltecans ...	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Arguments for Extinction of Geographic Coahuiltecans .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Arguments for Survival of Geographic Coahuiltecans .	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Organization of the Report .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

### Chapter 2: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR REASSESSING COAHUILTECAN EXTINCTION AT MISSION SAN JUAN ..... Error! **Bookmark not defined.**

*Alston V. Thoms*

San Antonio's Pre-Mission Era, 1528-1718.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
San Antonio's Mission Era, 1718-1824 .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Post-Mission Era, 1824-Present .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Summary and Concluding Comments.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

### Chapter 3: POPULAR LITERATURE ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

*Jennifer L. Logan*

Architecture .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Ethnic Diversity .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Reemergence of Mission Indian Identity .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Concluding Comments .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

### Chapter 4: INTERVIEWS ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

*Jeffrey H. Cohen*

Methodology.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Defining Our Group .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Genealogies .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Cultural Affiliation .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Tradition .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Community .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Chapter 5: PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPONENT .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<i>D. Gentry Steele</i>	
The Identified Descendants .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Mission San Juan Capistrano and the San Juan and Berg's Mill Community .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Chapter 6: GENEALOGY .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<i>Adán Benavides, Jr.</i>	
Maternal Lineal Descent of Mickey Killian .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
State of Mission Records .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Findings .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Chapter 7: ETHNOHISTORY .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<i>Jennifer L. Logan</i>	
Regional Ethnography and Ethnohistory .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Mission San Juan .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Concluding Comments .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Chapter 8: LINGUISTICS .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<i>Jennifer L. Logan</i>	
Coahuiltecan Language .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Affiliated Languages .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Concluding Comments .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Chapter 9: ARCHAEOLOGY .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<i>Jennifer L. Logan</i>	
Material Culture .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Cultural Affiliation .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Concluding Comments .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Chapter 10: BIOARCHAEOLOGY .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<i>Jennifer L. Logan</i>	
Regional Skeletal Populations .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
General Health Status of Skeletal Populations .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Skeletal Remains from Mission San Juan .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Skeletal Remains from Outside the Mission San Juan Compound ....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Concluding Comments .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Chapter 11: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS: NATIVE AMERICAN LINEAL DESCENT AND CULTURAL AFFILIATION ISSUES AT MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, TEXAS .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<i>Alston V. Thoms</i>	
Perspectives on Coahuiltecans and Mission-Indian Heritage .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Native American Cultural Change and Survival .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Lineal Descent, Cultural Affiliation, and NAGPRA-Related Concerns .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

Recommendations for Management and Additional Research ....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
REFERENCES CITED .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Mission San Juan Capistrano (41BX5) .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
San Juan Annotated Bibliography.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Archaeology .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Ethnography .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Ethnohistory .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Linguistics .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Bioarchaeology.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
San Antonio .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Historical and Census-Related .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDIX A: MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO (41BX5) UTSA ARTIFACT BOX INVENTORY (excluding skeletal remains) .....	173
APPENDIX B: MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO (41BX5) NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND NAGPRA INVENTORIES .....	181
APPENDIX C: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	191
APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE.....	219
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS .....	227
APPENDIX F: LIST OF INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED .....	303
APPENDIX G: LIST OF POTENTIAL FUTURE CONTACTS.....	307
APPENDIX H: SELECTED LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS .....	311

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Map showing the locations of Spanish Colonial missions, the villa, presidio, and roads in the San Antonio area (after Ahlborn 1985:18).....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 2. Map of Mission San Juan and vicinity showing properties owned by SAAN, the Catholic Church, and other entities (modified from property map provided by SAAN).....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 3. Map showing the locations of Spanish Colonial missions, presidios, and settlements, as well as the Caminos Reales (Chipman 1992:108-109, 148-149, Figures 14 and 20; and McGraw et al. 1998:9, Figure 1).....	25
Figure 4. Map showing the locations, identified rooms, approximate periods of use for church structures, and burial places at Mission San Juan (after Schuetz 1968: Figure 1; 1974, and 1980b). .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 5. Photograph of teepee in the mission square where a Native American Church service was held Friday night (November 26, 1999) before the Saturday morning reburial ceremonies (photograph by Alston V. Thoms).....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 6. Photograph of parishioners and community members, including representatives of the AIT-SCM (foreground), attending the Saturday morning (November 27, 1999) funeral mass held prior to the Native American reburial ceremony led by Raymond Hernandez (photograph by Alston V. Thoms).....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 7. Photograph of Archbishop Patrick Flores delivering the homily at the funeral mass that preceded the Native American reburial ceremony on Saturday morning, November 27, 1999; also depicted are Father James Galvin (leaning forward, center foreground), San Juan's parish priest; and Monsignor Balthasar Janacek (seated to the right), the parish liaison between state/federal agencies and Indian groups on matters of old Spanish missions (photograph by Alston V. Thoms).....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 8. Mickey Killian Genealogy.....	58
Figure 9. Rebecca Stuart Genealogy.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 10. Rick Mendoza Genealogy.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Figure 11. Mickey Killian, a local community member who has engaged in personal genealogical research for over 20 years and actively works with community members to establish their Native American heritage. Killian preferred the presence of the extant church for the background of his photograph. Remnants of the original San Juan Mission walls are in the foreground. He holds a portrait of his great-grandmother, Refugia Díaz. She was the granddaughter of Santiago Díaz, Alcalde of San Juan Pueblo in 1819, June 2000 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele).....	64

Figure 12. Siblings Rebecca Stuart and Nicasio Montes. Nicasio holds a picture of his father and his father's brother, while Rebecca holds a portrait of her grandparents. Like Killian, they chose to be photographed against the extant church for their portraits, June 2000 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele). .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 13. Members of the extended family of Rick Mendoza, who unanimously selected the Tufa house as the background for their portraits. Present in the photograph from left to right are: Rick Mendoza's father, Joe Mendoza (seated); Rick Mendoza; Rick's wife, Monica, and their daughter, Quetzali; Lola Carreón's daughter-in-law, Maria Carreón; Rick's grandmother, Lola Carreón; Rick's aunt (paternal), Anita Rodríguez (née Sánchez-Mendoza); and Anita's friend, Porfirio Tejeda, June 2000 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele). .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 14. Members of the San Juan/Berg's Mill community socializing around the ticket table at the Berg's Mill Family Reunion, April 18, 1999 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele). **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 15. Many of the younger children at the Berg's Mill Reunion were entertained by swinging at a piñata, April 18, 1999 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele). .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 16. A late-afternoon impromptu street dance at the Berg's Mill Reunion, April 18, 1999 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele). .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 17. Inside the Tufa house, an audience attends presentations given by local residents on the community's history, April 18, 1999 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele) .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 18. An image of a Station of the Cross, marked by a large cross placed against one of the mission's walls, embodies the strong religious ties binding the San Juan/Berg's Mill community together, April 18, 1999 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele). .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 19. A Station of the Cross is marked by a cross placed against the wall surrounding the mission, April 18, 1999 (photograph by D. Gentry Steele) ..... 69

Figure 20a. Maternal ancestry chart for Mickey Killian (based on Killian interview, Feb. 24, 2000; Cadena interview, Feb. 24, 2000; Killian 1982). .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 20b Continued. (based on Killian interview, Feb. 24, 2000; Cadena interview, Feb. 24, 2000; Killian 1982; Chabot 1937:191-192). .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 21. Antonio Cantú's certificate of baptism, November 26, 1899, naming her parents Lucio Cantú and Adelina Montes. *Courtesy of Mickey Killian.* .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

- Figure 22. Routes of Cabeza de Vaca across Texas and Mexico, 1534-1536 (after Krieger 1955:Figure 1).....93
- Figure 23. Approximate location of tribal entities observed by Cabeza de Vaca within the south Texas study area (group locations estimated using descriptions from Campbell and Campbell 1981).....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- Figure 24. Approximate pre-mission locations for groups admitted to Mission San Juan Capistrano, 1731-1772 (after Francis 1999:40, Figure 2-1)...**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- Figure 25. Map showing locations of archaeological excavations at Mission San Juan from 1968-1998 (after Durst 1999:32 and Schuetz 1968:Figure 1).**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- Figure 26. Map of approximate locations (1690-1750) in the state of Texas for ethnolinguistic groups thought to have possessed Toyah material culture (after Johnson 1994:279, Figure 106).**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- Figure 27. Map with locations of burial places revealed after subsequent excavations shown. Adapted from Schuetz (1968:Figure 1, 1974, and 1980b). ....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Summary information for periods of church and burial-place usages and associated sacramental records (data from Ewers 1973; Schuetz 1968, 1974, 1980a, 1980b, 1980c; Rock 1999:16).....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 2. Summary census and other historical information for Indian populations at Mission San Juan (data from Schuetz 1980a:128; supplemented by Rock 1999 and Schuetz 1980c) .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 3. Non-anthropological references to descendants of Indian neophytes at Mission San Juan Capistrano and other places in San Antonio.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 4. The Santiago Díaz-María Josefa Gutiérrez household based on extant census records. ....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 5. Named Indian groups at four Spanish Colonial missions in San Antonio (after Campbell and Campbell 1996, Table 1). .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 6. Examples of Comments from Ethnographic Literature about Coahuiltecan Extinction.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 7. Native American group affiliation of individuals in residence at Mission San Juan. ....	89
Table 8. Names and tribal affiliations of mission Indian land grantees from San Juan. ....	90
Table 9. Ethnic make-up of San Antonio and its missions from available statistical reports, 1790 and 1792.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 10. Probable linguistic affiliation of Indian groups at Mission San Juan (after Campbell and Campbell 1996, Table 3). .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 11. Summary information on the classification of Coahuilteco and the Coahuiltecan language family.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 12. Chronology of archaeological investigations at Mission San Juan Capistrano (see Figure 30 for location of rooms and excavation areas) ..	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 13. Archaeological commentary on Coahuiltecan extinction.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 14. List of artifacts, including probable funerary objects (grave goods) recovered from burials at Mission San Juan (Schuetz 1968, 1974, 1980a; coffin nails and fragments of coffin wood excluded). .....	110

Table 15. Assumptions of cultural affiliation of mission Indian material culture.....	<b>Error!</b>
<b>Bookmark not defined.</b>	
Table 16. Summary of pathological data by region (after Reinhard et al. 1989:138, Table 22).....	117
Table 17. Comparison of historic and prehistoric pathological frequencies in coastal populations (after Reinhard et al. 1989:139, Table 26).....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 18. Human bone reported by Schuetz's excavations at Mission San Juan 1967, 1969, and 1971.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 19. Institutions housing skeletal material from Mission San Juan Capistrano.....	<b>Error!</b>
<b>Bookmark not defined.</b>	
Table 20. Master's theses concerning skeletal populations from Mission San Juan Capistrano.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 21. Preliminary comparison of MNIs for skeletal remains from unfinished church (Room 26), Mission San Juan.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

# MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

*(Alston V. Thoms, Principal Investigator)*

The present study focuses on Native Americans who traditionally lived and worked at Mission San Juan and in the surrounding community. Its primary objective is to provide baseline information to the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (SAAN) for future consultation with Native American groups regarding implementation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). This study also provides information that enables other cultural groups whose roots may stem from Mission San Juan to better establish their connected ancestry. Project results are also intended for use by park management to understand community values about park resources, present accurate interpretative programs, and make decisions about the park's culturally significant resources.

## Joint-Management Roles of NPS and the Catholic Church

The National Park Service (NPS) now plays a key role in the management of Mission San Juan in cooperation with the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio. Their joint-management role began in 1978 when Missions San Juan, Concepción, San José, and Espada became part of SAAN. The Church owns the mission compound itself and shares management responsibilities with SAAN. Most of the adjacent property is now owned and managed solely by SAAN, although the City of San Antonio owns and operates the public streets and the San Antonio River Authority owns and manages the river.

## Native American Remains and Funerary Objects from Mission San Juan

NAGPRA's potential applicability to Mission San Juan stems in part from archaeological excavations carried out by Mardith Schuetz within the mission compound in 1967, 1969, and 1971, under the auspices of the Catholic Church. These investigations resulted in the removal, study, and curation of skeletal remains from more than 100 individuals and the associated funerary objects presumed to be those of aboriginal and/or missionized Coahuiltecans. "Coahuiltecan" is a geographically defined designation widely used for linguistically and ethnically diverse bands of hunter-gatherers who inhabited Coahuila and other states in northeast Mexico as well as south Texas.

Ultimately, several universities were involved in the study of the human remains from San Juan, but, when NAGPRA became law in 1990, most of the remains and funerary objects were officially curated at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). At that time, several other human bones and funerary objects from the mission were also held at SAAN headquarters in San Antonio. As of June 2001, recovered funerary objects remain in the temporary custody of UTSA, while all the human remains were reinterred in 1999 under the auspices of the Church, the entity that retained legal possession of the remains and associated funerary objects.

Prior to the reburial, Archbishop Patrick Flores performed a funeral mass and noted that it had been a mistake for the Church to

grant permission for the protracted study of the remains of its parishioners. He also acknowledged and thanked avowed Indian descendants for their role in pursuing reburial. Two Native American Church services were held the night before the reburial to help prepare the Indian contingents for the morning ceremonies. Members of two Native American groups carried out the actual reburial ceremony: American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions and the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation.

UTSA archaeologists also recovered Native American remains in 1999, when a single gravesite was discovered inadvertently during construction of a drainage channel along the boundary line between Church- and NPS-owned properties. The remains were analyzed and identified as a young adult female of Native American origin. They were subsequently returned to SAAN and reinterred with approval of the Texas Historical Commission (THC).

### **Native American Cultural Change and Survival at Mission San Juan**

Only in the last decade or so have anthropologists and historians begun to understand that although effectively “merged” into secular society, San Antonio’s mission Indians may never have been assimilated to the point that they were unrecognizable. Prior to this, most professionals accepted conclusions based on the dominant culture’s view of the disappearance of Native American lifeways in South Texas. With emergence of groups whose members claim genealogical descent from natives in the Spanish colonial communities, the earlier belief that full assimilation had occurred was called into question. Formation in 1993 of the

organization known as American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions signaled a marked change in the manner in which San Antonio’s mission Indian history would be presented. For the first time in the city’s modern history, avowed descendants of mission Indians began to publicly promote Coahuiltecan components of their biological and cultural heritage. In doing so, they drew heavily from historical records and writings about geographic Coahuiltecans by anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians.

To renew and construct their own versions of native history and heritage, they selected specific information from the pool of data generated by the academic community and incorporated it into what they knew about mission Indians from family histories and community lore. Not surprisingly, total agreement is lacking between the cultural histories presented by academic and mission Indian communities, as is typically the case when perspectives between victors and vanquished or dominant and minority groups are compared. There is also a diversity of perspectives among today’s Native American groups who trace their heritage, or parts thereof, to Mission San Juan, including American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions, The Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation, and the Pamaque Band of San Juan Indians. To gain a more holistic perspective on inter-community controversies, it will be necessary to carry out additional investigations with representatives of the various groups that promote mission Indian heritage in San Antonio.

While the majority of people listed in the San Juan records as either Indian or part Indian probably descended in part from geographic Coahuiltecans, other Native American tribes and groups are represented as well. Undoubtedly, the community

included Tlascaltecan artisans (and their descendants) whose distant ancestors came from aboriginal homelands in central Mexico, but who themselves were born somewhere in today's northeast Mexico, settled at the mission and were then buried there. As noted, members of BIA-recognized tribes (e.g., Comanche, Apache, and Tonkawa) were also missionized in San Antonio and may have married into the community without leaving a record of their tribal affiliation. It is possible that other Native Americans came to San Juan during the late 1700s including Caddoan descendants of communities in east Texas, and Puebloan descendants from New Mexico. In short, lineal descent issues at San Juan extend well beyond individuals whose "documented" biological makeup was wholly or substantially geographic Coahuiltecan. These issues are also complex and, as this study shows, merit further study.

#### *Historical Contexts (Chapters 1 and 2)*

From historical and cultural evolution perspectives, geographical Coahuiltecans arguably epitomize the concepts of cultural change and survival. First encountered in the early 1500s as native hunter-gatherers, the aboriginal Coahuiltecans began to suffer from apocalyptic depopulation with the arrival of Old World explorers. Through considerable metamorphosis, neo-organized Coahuiltecans emerged early in the post-contact era and continued to do so throughout the *reducción* or in-gathering process, from the middle 1600s and through the early 1800s.

A vast majority of these people ultimately came to live, at least for a time, at missions in south Texas and northeast Mexico. Once there, a new round of metamorphoses occurred as a result of

missionization and miscegenation processes. Acculturated or *Ladino* (i.e., Spanish-speaking, Christianized Indians) Coahuiltecans, increasingly known as Indians, mestizos, mulattos, Mexicans, Hispanics, Tejanos, or sometimes Spaniards, left the mission grounds and were assimilated into the civilian communities. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in their new roles as members of "lower-economic tiers," their native heritage came to be almost invisible to much of the outside world. The descendants of *Ladino* Coahuiltecans adapted to the dominant culture through concealment and camouflage.

Throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, these "veiled" Coahuiltecans appear to have continued as an identifiable segment of the San Juan community. Archaeological excavations at Mission San Juan in 1967 served to spark and revitalize the community's public commitment to Indian heritage. These sparks caught fire, especially with the controversies that surrounded reburial issues in San Antonio during the late twentieth century. As a result, people with Indian heritage once again became readily visible, this time as resurgent Coahuiltecans.

The Catholic Church came to recognize the claims of these parishioners and worked in cooperation with Native American organizations in 1986 to ceremoniously rebury several archaeologically recovered skeletal remains. In November 1999, Church officials and members of the American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions and The Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation participated in religious services for reburial of all the human remains recovered from San Juan during archaeological excavations in 1967, 1969, and 1971.

During the 77<sup>th</sup> regular session (2001) of the Texas Legislature, the House of Representatives passed House Resolution 787 “recognizing the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation and its efforts to preserve its cultural and spiritual heritage and traditions.” The Texas Senate passed a similar resolution to “commend the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecans for their exemplary preservation of their heritage and their many contributions to the culture of our state and nation.” The President of the Senate formally presented members of The Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation with the resolution in the Senate chamber on May 18, 2001.

#### *Popular Literature Contexts (Chapter 3)*

Popular literature about San Antonio’s missions and the Indians who lived there does not routinely refer to Coahuiltecan Indians or any other specific ethnic groups for that matter. For more than 100 years, however, popular accounts have attested to a continuous presence of Native American people living around the missions, especially San Juan. An individual interviewed in the late 1800s reported that in 1836 the Mexican Army elected not to cut off or divert the irrigation ditches that supplied water to the Alamo (i.e., Mission Valero, secularized in 1794) because the water was still being used by mission Indians.

By the turn of the century, San Antonio’s tourist literature reported that San Juan was the mission where the neighborhood people looked more like Indians than was the case anywhere else in Texas. There are also numerous reports in the popular literature of Indian families—descendants of the original mission population—living and sometimes farming around the mission throughout the twentieth century. Since the late 1960s, San

Antonio’s news media has regularly reported on the values and concerns of people who traced their ancestry to Mission San Juan and other Spanish Colonial missions in the city.

#### *Native American Groups (Chapters 2- 5)*

Today, there are several Native American groups (i.e., resurgent Coahuiltecans) in San Antonio whose members trace their ancestry to geographic Coahuiltecans. Among those are the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation and the Pamaque Band of Mission San Juan. Many members of the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation are also members of a non-profit group, the American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions (AIT-SCM, see Chapter 3).

During the late 1990s, resurgent Coahuiltecans began to recount their own histories on the worldwide web and in ethnically based magazines, as well as in the popular literature. Initial conversations with prospective interviewees for the present project also revealed that numerous San Juan families had strong traditions about their “Indian blood.” Among these traditions were stories about Indians in the area, including one grandfather nicknamed “El Indio” who aptly looked the part. Two interviewees recounted stories about how a parent, grandparent, or great-great grandparent chased away stormy weather by shouting and waving a butcher knife or hatchet. This behavior closely resembles a practice of Nuevo León Indians, which was reported by Juan Bautista Chapa in the late 1600s. The point here is that what may well have been centuries-old native traditions were still practiced in the mid-twentieth century and are recalled to the present day.

The Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation, a resurgent Coahuiltecan group, recently

requested and was granted a formal sponsor relationship with the federally recognized Wichita and Affiliated Tribes based in Anadarko, Oklahoma. The group's request was based in part on historical evidence that sometime in the late eighteenth century the Wichita Tribe assimilated the Cantona, a Native American group possibly affiliated with Coahuiltecans. The resolution noted "that the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes hereby sponsor the participation of the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation in all official and appropriate matters involving their traditional homeland to include properties owned and controlled by the U.S. Government."

#### *Genealogical Contexts (Chapter 6)*

Adán Benavides' genealogical research for the present project focused on Santiago Díaz' family. Díaz served as an *alcalde* at Mission San Juan during late Colonial times. Mickey Killian, one of the individuals interviewed for the present project, had compiled considerable information about the history of Mission San Juan and traced his own ancestry to Santiago Díaz.

Benavides' research verified that Santiago Díaz was indeed among Mickey Killian's ancestors, but reliable evidence was not found to indicate that Santiago or his wife, María Josefa Gutiérrez, were Indian neophytes. However, some of the Díaz family members were listed in various records as being Indian, mestizo, and mulatto, as well as *Español*. As such, a door is clearly open to the possibility that descendants of the Díaz-Gutiérrez household were at least part Indian. It also seems possible, if not probable, that at least one of the individuals who descended from the Díaz-Gutiérrez family is likely to have married a *Ladino* Coahuiltecan. In any case, many people living in San Antonio during

the late mission and early post-mission periods would have had *Ladino* Coahuiltecans in their family trees.

#### *Ethnographic and Ethnohistoric Contexts (Chapters 7 and 11)*

Coahuiltecan does not designate a tribe in the same sense as Tonkawa, Comanche, or Caddo. Anthropologists often use the word "tribe" to denote a group of related bands that speaks a common language, shares most cultural traits, have definable territories, albeit often vaguely so, and that are held together by kinship and varying degrees of socio-political ties. Alternatively, Coahuiltecans were not nearly so bound together, insofar as this designation encompassed hundreds of small, seemingly autonomous bands, some of which spoke mutually unintelligible languages. What these diverse bands had in common was their hunter-gatherer lifeways that were well adapted to an environmentally similar portion of the coastal plains drained by the Rio Grande and smaller rivers that flow into the Gulf of Mexico in south Texas and northeast Mexico.

Only a very small percentage of the hunter-gatherer groups identified by Cabeza de Vaca in the 1530s can be reliably linked to Coahuiltecan groups encountered by French colonizers and Spanish explorers in the late 1680s. Further, only a fraction of the groups seen during the late seventeenth century are well-documented in Spanish Colonial government and missionary records. Early records show considerable overlap in band representation at San Juan and Espada, but it is also clear that Coahuiltecans were well represented at Missions San José and Concepción. The latter two missions were notably more ethnically diverse, however, and included

Apache, Karankawa, Comanche, and possibly Tonkawa, along with representatives of many other groups who remain unidentified as to language or ethnicity. Other groups are known to have occupied the region as well including the Wichita and Kiowa.

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Indian people who remained affiliated with the missions and churches in the San Antonio area probably represented several ethnically and linguistically diverse groups, but were still decidedly geographic Coahuiltecan in character. Of course, other survivors undoubtedly found their way into what would become mission, rural, and other urban communities in south Texas and northeastern Mexico where they often worked as laborers. As Native Americans moved through the missionization process and toward what was essentially citizenship, their ethnicity changed as reported in church and government records. These records suggest a tendency to list a given individual as having less Indian affiliation through time as she/he presumably became more integrated into the non-Indian community. In any case, by the late 1790s there was a marked decline in the proportion of Indians relative to non-Indians, mulattos, and mestizos.

Between 1824 and 1895, most of the Spanish surnames on the church registry were replaced by the names of Catholic immigrants from Alsace, Germany, France, Italy, and elsewhere. From the mid-1900s to the present, however, Spanish surnames again increased in number. Today the San Juan community is represented most strongly by its Hispanic heritage, although Catholic Euroamericans have remained a significant component of the community.

### *Linguistic Contexts (Chapter 8)*

Through the years, there has been considerable debate among linguists about the nature and classification of the Coahuiltecan language family and the Coahuilteco language itself. While there is agreement that Coahuilteco was once spoken, there are no known speakers today and all of the languages spoken by native south Texas Indians are poorly documented in historical records. It is becoming widely accepted that during the pre-Columbian era, Coahuilteco dialects (as a first language) may not have been spoken as extensively in southern Texas and northeastern Mexico as was once believed and that several very different languages were spoken in the region as well. With the coming of the Europeans and the onset of the Spanish Colonial era, however, Coahuilteco appears to have become a *lingua franca* for the region. In other words, the fact that many people spoke Coahuilteco dialects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries probably tells us more about Spanish Colonial history and the missionization process than it does about pre-Columbian ethnic and cultural affiliation.

Although new rounds of linguistic research are underway, there remains little consensus about which languages can be included under the rubric and whether Coahuiltecan is a legitimate language family. Representatives of the American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions, the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation, and the Pamaque Band of Mission San Juan are among those working to compile new information about languages spoken by geographically defined Coahuiltecans.

## *Archaeological Contexts (Chapter 9)*

Archaeological investigations at Mission San Juan began during the Depression Era and continue to the present. Mardith Schuetz excavated three cemetery areas within the compound in the late 1960s and early 1970s and argued that many of the burials and most of the Native American artifacts represented Coahuiltecan populations. Subsequently, Thomas Hester and others working in south Texas related artifacts and archaeological sites dating to the Late Prehistoric period and earlier to Coahuiltecan populations.

In general, archaeological research reveals that elements of pre-contact ceramic and chipped-stone technologies continued to be employed by native people after they entered Spanish missions in the 1700s. Leon Plain, the primary Late Prehistoric ceramic type in south Texas, continued to be made by Indians after contact with Europeans and is virtually identical to native ceramics found in a mission context and known as Goliad Ware or simply “Coahuiltecan ceramics.” Guerrero arrow points, a plain triangular form made from chipped stone and sometimes chipped glass, have been equated with Coahuiltecan use in Texas and northern Mexico. Numerous examples of Goliad Ware and Guerrero points have been recovered at Mission San Juan.

Historically known Coahuilteco-speaking peoples of south Texas may represent what one researcher calls latter-day Toyah people, who were represented in part by Leon Plain ceramics. In spite of links between the material culture of mission Indians and sites dating to the Late Prehistoric period, most researchers today hesitate to identify a specific cultural affiliation (e.g., Coahuiltecan, Karankawa,

Tonkawa) for pre-contact era native peoples who lived in southern Texas.

## *Bioarchaeological Contexts (Chapter 10)*

A primary goal of the 1967 archaeological excavation of Mission San Juan's unfinished church was the recovery of a sample of skeletal remains that would be representative of extinct (i.e., aboriginal or neo-organized) Coahuiltecans. Analysis of recovered remains and associated funerary objects revealed, however, that most the people had been buried at this location between the 1760s and the 1790s, and perhaps as late as the early 1800s. Several of the interments represented individuals whose bodies had been reburied. Most of the human remains were clearly those of Indians, arguably geographical Coahuiltecans, but others represented a population that had already undergone miscegenation (i.e., *Ladino* Coahuiltecans). Human remains recovered from the floor of the extant church in 1969 were interpreted as representative of a racially mixed population characteristic of the late Colonial and early Post-Colonial periods (1780s-1860s).

Excavations in 1971 at the site of the first stone church, in use between about 1756 and sometime in the late 1780s, revealed additional burials that were left in place. The presence of numerous empty grave pits was interpreted as evidence that their contents had been exhumed and reburied elsewhere, presumably in conjunction with desanctifying the original burial site. Based on ages of funerary objects associated with the graves and church records, some of these burials undoubtedly dated to Mission San Juan's early Colonial Period (ca.1731-1750s) and were probably associated with the original *jacal* church.

Of all the examined human remains from Mission San Juan, those from the vicinity of the first stone church are the most likely to have included neo-organized Coahuiltecans who entered the mission from the “wilderness” prior to 1750. It is also possible that the remains of a female Native American discovered along a proposed drainage ditch southwest of the mission compound in 1999 are representative of neo-organized Coahuiltecans or perhaps aboriginal Coahuiltecans. However, most recent bioarchaeological studies of the San Juan remains tend to minimize a “Coahuiltecan” connection and emphasize the heterogeneous nature of the mission's Native American skeletal population.

### **Conclusions about NAGPRA and Related Issues at Mission San Juan**

Questions about lineal descent, cultural affiliation, and the scientific importance of human remains recovered in the late 1960s from Mission San Juan were raised once again in 1986. It was then that the San Antonio Archdiocese expressed its intent to THC to rebury the human remains that had been recovered during Schuetz' excavations. THC maintained that comprehensive analyses still needed to be undertaken and recommended that questions about final disposition of the remains should be discussed by representatives of the Archdiocese, UTSA (where the remains were then held), the State Archaeologist's Office (part of THC), NPS, and any direct descendants of the deceased. Additional bioarchaeological studies were undertaken during the late 1980s and 1990s. NAGPRA was passed in 1990. Efforts by local Native American groups to claim repatriation rights were initially tied to NAGPRA, but it soon became clear that this case was not a NAGPRA issue.

THC noted that Coahuiltecans were not among the federally recognized tribes and encouraged Native American groups to address issues of federal recognition. NPS maintained, in accordance with NAGPRA's provisions, that: (1) the remains and funerary objects had been recovered prior to NPS assuming any management control; (2) they never had legal possession of remains and funerary objects from the mission compound, due to their management agreement with the Church; and (3) accordingly, reburial issues were beyond NPS' purview. By the mid-1990s, the State had relinquished its claim to the human remains and recognized that ownership and legal control rested with the Catholic Church. The Church maintained its position that the reburial issue was not NAGPRA-related and that only the Archdiocese had standing to seek the return of the remains from UTSA and that it would continue to do so.

NAGPRA-related opinions and interpretations in this subsection are consistent with information provided by NPS personnel, including Alexa Roberts and Virginia Salazar of the Santa Fe office and Jason Roberts of the Washington D.C. office. Synthesis and interpretation of the information compiled for the present project allows the following conclusions:

- NAGPRA applies to human remains and associated funerary objects discovered on NPS-owned land at Mission at San Juan, subsequent to its enactment in 1990. In such cases, NAGPRA regulations (43CFR10) should be followed explicitly.
- The Catholic Church contends that NAGPRA is not applicable to Native American remains and associated

funerary objects from Mission San Juan that are in its legal possession. The Act does apply, however, to any museum, agency, or institution that received federal funding. The Church also maintains that it is not a federal repository, therefore NAGPRA does not apply to human remains and associated funerary objects from the mission. Skeletal remains and related objects recovered from Church-owned property at Mission San Juan indeed have been “held” at repository facilities covered by the Act (i.e., UTSA and SAAN). However, the Archdiocese of San Antonio maintains that these remains and items are “on loan” from the Church. As such, the Act does not appear to apply in this case because neither UTSA nor SAAN can be said to be in legal possession of human remains and funerary items that were on loan from another entity.

- Establishment of cultural affiliation under provision of NAGPRA is not directly applicable to human remains or associated funerary objects from San Juan that are attributable to geographic Coahuiltecans because Coahuiltecans, by any name, are not among the federally recognized tribes. Recently, however, a federally recognized group, the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, granted the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation a sponsor relationship. As such, it appears to open a cultural-affiliation door, albeit indirectly, to human remains and funerary objects recovered from Mission San Juan that can be attributed to geographically defined Coahuiltecans.
- NAGPRA’s lineal-descent component is not yet applicable to human remains or

associated funerary objects from Mission San Juan. This is because all burials found to date represent remains of unknown individuals to whom lineal descent has not been traced in a manner that meets NAGPRA’s definition of lineal descendant. Although some of the remains have undergone DNA analysis, the results have not been applied to issues of lineal descent. For the present time, the situation is somewhat analogous to a mass grave wherein the names of some individuals buried therein are known, but none of the individual remains has been identified as a known person. However, DNA or similar studies may identify individual Native Americans interred at the mission, as well as their direct lineal descendants among today’s population. To the extent that such studies are successful, the door would be open to NAGPRA-related repatriation under a claim(s) of lineal descent, assuming that such action would be consistent with Church ownership and legal possession of the remains and funerary objects.

- Lineal descent from geographically defined Coahuiltecans is probable. The present study demonstrates that there are indeed living descendants of San Juan’s eighteenth and early-nineteenth century community members. Among those are the descendants of Santiago Díaz and María Josefa Gutiérrez. However, no member of the immediate Díaz-Gutiérrez family was identified as being from a particular band of mission Indians, although each was, at one time or another, listed as *mestizos y mulattos* (i.e., part Indian) as well as Spaniards. In short, a preponderance of evidence indicates a strong likelihood that there are people living today who descended

from San Juan's eighteenth and nineteenth century residents who would fall under the rubrics of geographic and *Ladino* Coahuiltecans, as defined herein. Seen from this perspective, lineal descent is applicable to the spirit of NAGPRA. In any case, our research has opened doors to further research that may yet trace descendants of San Antonio's known mission Indians to a known neophyte at a particular mission.

- Cultural affiliation is probable between segments of the contemporary San Juan community (e.g., the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation and the Pamaque Band of Mission San Juan) and the inhabitants of the mission at the time of the burials in question, including geographic Coahuiltecans. For example, "threatening" behavior was reportedly used to chase away stormy weather by sixteenth century geographic Coahuiltecans and twentieth century members of the San Juan community. There may also be important religious ties, although this topic was not addressed by the present study. Nonetheless, some of today's community members are members of Native American groups, termed resurgent Coahuiltecans herein, as well as the Native American Church wherein peyote plays a strong role in religious ceremonies as it did in various Indian ceremonies witnessed by Catholic priests throughout the Spanish Colonial era. There are also links, including pottery and lithic traditions, which tie *Ladino* Coahuiltecans to identifiable earlier Coahuiltecan groups. No evidence was found to indicate that these traditions continue to be carried out by members of present-day Native American groups associated with the mission, but efforts

are underway to renew them. The strongest tie that seems to bind some present-day community members to mission Indians, by whatever name, is their keen sense of a deeply rooted Native American heritage. Seen in this light, cultural affiliation is quite probable and as such this linkage is also consistent with the spirit of NAGPRA.

## **Recommendations for Management and Additional Research**

- SAAN representatives should continue to expand their consultation with Native American groups: (1) American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions, Inc.; (2) the Tap Pilam-Coahuiltecan Nation; (3) the Pamaque Band of Mission San Juan; (4) the Lipan Apache Band of Texas; (5) the Tribal Council of the Carrizo/Comecrudo Nation of Texas; (6) Tonkawa Tribe, Tonkawa, Oklahoma; and (7) the Erab Choctaw-Apache Tribe, Zwolle, Louisiana. Other groups and individuals with potential interests should be sought out as well, including the Caddo, Mescalero Apache, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, Comanche, and Kiowa, all of whom are known to have occupied territory in the vicinity of Mission San Juan during the historic era.
- Future research efforts should include implementation of Mardith Schuetz' call in 1968 for a major study to identify, locate, and gather oral histories from individuals who trace their ancestry to San Juan's mission Indians, as well as other people of Native American lineage who lived there during the Spanish Colonial period. Most of the older descendants she met 30 years ago have

since died, but their descendants may still reside in the area and provide sources of additional information about the values and concerns of people traditionally associated with the mission.

- Lineal descent can also be traced by beginning with individuals identified in Spanish Colonial records and tracing them through the centuries to their present-day descendants. Toward that end, genealogical investigations should be undertaken of individual Indians identified in San Juan's secularization records, as well as of Indians identified in the records from other San Antonio Missions, especially Concepción and San José, where the records are more complete and the mission Indian populations were larger.
- Lineal descent and cultural affiliation studies at other missions would be greatly facilitated by the availability of detailed historical reports for each mission. Of the literature reviewed for the present project, Rosalind Rock's comprehensive history of Mission San Juan was especially important. It revealed details not found in other sources, including information about Indian groups who came to live there, recruiting expeditions to the coast and off-shore islands, the difficulties of maintaining Indian populations, and the relationships among Indians at different missions in south Texas and northeast Mexico.
- Another avenue for future research regarding links between mission Indians, or other Indians who lived at the mission, and their present-day descendants, is the role of peyote in religious ceremonies and for other

purposes. Chroniclers of the Spanish Colonial era documented the importance of peyote in the *mitotes*, or ceremonies, among native people throughout much of south Texas. One of the individuals interviewed for the present project reported having grandparents who "would have their peyote ceremonies." Within the last decade, Native American Church ceremonies that traditionally incorporate the use of peyote have been held at Mission San Juan.

- Efforts should also be undertaken to assess Mardith Schuetz' suggestions that cemeteries dating to the Spanish Colonial era may be located within the presently enclosed area south of the unfinished church and in the entire plaza area associated with the first stone church. Judging from the recent discovery of a Native American burial well to the southwest of the compound, along the NPS-Church property line, there may be other burials on NPS-owned properties as well. Remote sensing techniques, including subsurface interface radar, should be explored as a means to identify burial sites. It may be necessary, however, to conduct exploratory excavations to verify the presence of graves and firmly establish the aerial extent of any identified cemeteries.

## Organization of the Report

Chapter 1 establishes a research context for the study, outlines the general nature of the debate surrounding Coahuiltecan extinction and how it relates to NAGPRA issues of lineal descent and cultural affiliation, and summarizes the project's own history. Chapter 2 establishes a historical context for reassessing Coahuiltecan extinction. Chapter 3

documents how descendants of San Antonio's mission Indians have been presented in popular and tourist-based literature since the mid-nineteenth century. Interviews with four individuals who trace their ancestry to mission Indians are summarized and analyzed in Chapter 4, and Chapter 5 provides photographs of these individuals, as well as descriptions of the project's photographic component. Genealogical research, which hoped to link one of today's residents to those who resided at the San Juan mission during the late Spanish Colonial period, is discussed in Chapter 6. Overviews of ethnohistoric, linguistic, archaeological, and bioarchaeological data pertaining to Coahuiltecans are provided in Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10, respectively. Chapter 11 summarizes and evaluates the project's findings and their potential to address NAGPRA issues of lineal descent and cultural affiliation that may apply to Mission San Juan.

Appendices included at the back of this report include the following: (A) table listing cultural materials from Mission San

Juan that are or were (prior to the reburial of human remains in November 1999) held at the Center for Archaeological Research, the University of Texas at San Antonio; (B) table listing the cultural materials from Mission San Juan that are or were (prior to the reburial of human remains in November 1999) housed at SAAN facilities; (C) annotated bibliography of sources pertaining to Coahuiltecans and San Antonio's mission Indians; (D) sample questionnaire used by Cohen as a guide for the interviews he conducted; (E) relevant transcriptions of the interviews with four individuals who trace their ancestry to mission Indians; (F) list of names and addresses of individuals and groups consulted; (G) list of other individuals and groups knowledgeable of traditional history and who are potentially interested in being considered for future consultation by authorized park personnel; and (H) copies of selected letters and documents pertaining to potential NAGPRA issues and related recognition issues at Mission San Juan.

