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04/07/2017  
Woodlands Signage

## Historic Preservation Collaboration Between the Kumeyaay, San Diego County, CA, and Friends of the Kumeyaay

### Introduction

Issues in the preservation of Native history and culture are prevalent throughout societies around the world. Many Native groups are pushed to their limits, but through their resiliency and capacity to adapt and thrive have overcome great adversity. How are these societies able to overcome difficulties such as forced removals or even genocides? Many of these Native Nations cite language and culture as a key player in finding strength and unity as a group; this points to the importance in the preservation of Native historical culture. Appropriate preservation and management of these resources start with Native Nations, but also typically involve local governments as well.

The Kumeyaay have successfully collaborated with the San Diego County Government and a local non-profit organization, to protect cultural sites while also educating the public to foster further protection of these cultural resources in the future. A key success that resulted from this collaboration that offers lessons for future preservation projects is the Kumeyaay-Ipai Interpretive Center which contains traditional Kumeyaay lodges and interpretive signage created through consultation and collaboration with the local Kumeyaay People.

## Background

The Kumeyaay People – also known as the Ipai and formerly referred to as the Diegueño – have resided in the Southern California and Baja California areas for approximately 12,000 years. They are closely related to other Tribes of the Yuman family of languages and cultures, all of which also reside in current day the Southwestern United States. Kumeyaay in the Kumeyaay language means “those who face the water from a cliff”. Their current membership is approximately 20,000 (Hoffman and Gamble, 2006). As a society, the Kumeyaay traditionally live off the landscape as mobile hunters, gatherers, and fishing people. In 1542, the explorer, Juan Cabrillo, made the first European contact with the Kumeyaay (Ballard, 2012). Permanent settlement of European colonists began in the 1780s which significantly reduced the ability of the Kumeyaay to move throughout their original territories to maintain their hunting, gathering, and fishing – based lifestyle.

Furthermore, in 1848, following the end of the Mexican-American War the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. This treaty established the Mexico – United States international border thus separating California and Mexico. This political division cut straight through Kumeyaay ancestral homelands (Ballard, 2012). Due to this there are currently, thirteen federally-recognized bands of Kumeyaay in the United States and an additional five bands of Kumiai – which is the Spanish-equivalent of the Kumeyaay in Mexico. Current day Kumeyaay history, language, and culture have been influenced by the side of the border on which they are situated. Kumeyaay people have incorporated environmental knowledge from prehistoric, historical, and contemporary periods into modern culture and lifestyles (Wilken, 2012).

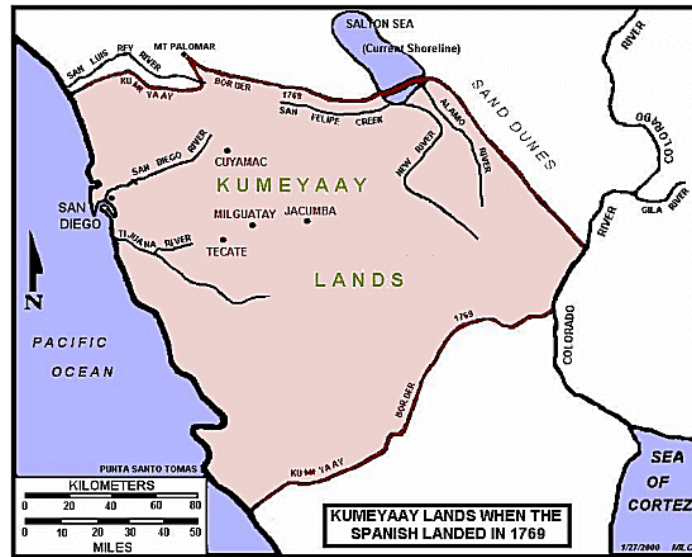


Figure 1. Map of the original Kumeyaay land which spans over current day Southern California, United States and Baja California, Mexico. (Miskwish, 2000).

### Policies affecting the case

The rapid modern development in the decades following WWII lead to the establishment of policies and laws on a national, state, and local level that work to protect and preserve Native history and culture. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places, authorized funding for state programs, created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and established a review process for protecting cultural resources (Historic Preservation 10, 2015). Following its amendment in 1980, the NHPA created the Certified Local Government (CLG) program which allows local governments to be directly involved in local historic preservation planning processes. Cities and counties that are CLG designated may compete for funds towards preservation projects and programs awarded by Congress (Historic Preservation 10, 2015).

On a state level, the creation of the California Register of Historical Resources and the State Historical Resources Commission led to the amendment of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in 1992. This amendment included guidelines to define buildings, structures, sites, areas, records, and manuscripts as historical resources. Furthermore, the CEQA amendment also clarified that a project that causes significant adverse change to a historical resource will damage the integrity of the resource and impair the resource's significance (Historic Preservation 10, 2015). This allows recognized historical landmarks and sites to be protected as an environmentally significant site.

Additionally, in California the basic land use document each local government is required to adopt is called the General Plan – which is a document that local governments will draft and instate that serves as a guide for all future city planning which includes ordinances, zoning, regulations, and specific plans (State of California, 2017). There are seven elements that the California State Government requires to be included in the General Plan. Historic preservation is not one of these required elements; however, it is identified by California to be one of the optional elements that local governments should include. All elements of a General Plan have equal legal status – meaning that if there is a historic preservation element included it holds the same legal power as all other elements (State of California, 2017).

San Diego and its surrounding cities have a Historic Preservation Element included in their General Plan. There are several policies entailed in the Historic Preservation Element that discusses the preservation of important sacred Native American sites. Policy HP-A.2.b states city planners are encouraged to consider historical resources early in the

development process by promoting the preliminary review process and early consultation with various local groups – including Native Americans (Historic Preservation Element, 2008). Furthermore, HP-A-3 aims to establish a government relationship and collaboration with the Kumeyaay tribes in the San Diego area. This includes the creation of regular meetings with local Tribal Governments to discuss issues of mutual concern, consultation with Native American Nations prior to the adoption or amendment of the General Plan, maintaining confidentiality of locations of Tribally-identified sacred places, and support for Tribal governments holding conservation easements over places recognized for cultural or historic protection (Historic Preservation Element, 2008). One particular goal outlined by the Historic Preservation Element is public education about the importance of historical resources. These policies aim to preserve cultural resources and educate the public in an accurate and appropriate manner through collaboration with Native Communities.

### Analysis

The adoption of the Historic Preservation Element in the San Diego General Plan shows the commitment that the local government has made to protect historically significant places. As the oldest inhabitants of the San Diego Area, Kumeyaay history and culture has helped shape the landscape of this area. Under the Historic Preservation Element, the Kumeyaay and the local San Diego Government have fostered a collaborative relationship that has led to the creation of culturally-appropriate educational tools that can be used to educate the public about the importance of historic preservation of the Kumeyaay culture (Totton, 2015).

One major project in particular that has shown the work possible in creating this collaborative relationship between the Kumeyaay and the San Diego Government is the Kumeyaay-Ipai Interpretive Center. The Kumeyaay-Ipai Interpretive Center is a local cultural and historical site located in Poway, CA; it is a five-acre site that includes native gardens, a replica of an *'ewaa*, which is a traditional Kumeyaay dwelling, and interpretive signage that marks and explains significant landmarks throughout the site (Friends of the Kumeyaay, 2017). This educational site was created through the collaboration amongst the San Pasqual Band of the Kumeyaay Indians, the City of Poway, and Friends of the Kumeyaay. The project came into conception in the late 1980s when the City of Poway began acquiring the land that is now the Center. Under the Historic Preservation Element in the San Diego County General Plan, the City of Poway were required to consult the San Pasqual Band of the Kumeyaay in the handling of the historic resources present within this land. This ensured that in the development of the site, the signage and other educational material at the site were historically and culturally accurate.

Friends of the Kumeyaay played a large role in the successful collaboration of San Diego and Kumeyaay on this project – they acted as an ally for the Kumeyaay by being a voice for the San Diego citizens to urge the local government to take action in the preservation of this site. An issue that can arise in the preservation of historic resources is a conflict of interest and general distrust between the Native People and the Local Government. A third party can help mediate this relationship and foster a common goal (Comer, 2011).

The common goal in the creation of the Interpretive Center is increasing public awareness and knowledge of local Kumeyaay culture. The Center holds tours and other learning activities for local school field trips; events open to the local community also help draw in more local citizens to learn about Kumeyaay culture. The interpretive signage that are present throughout the park inform people that are walking the trails about the significance of various landmarks. For example, there are *morteros* – or grinding stones – found along the trails. Signage along the trails give this landmark the traditional name *mortero* and explain what they are used for in Kumeyaay culture. Additionally, as discussed earlier, *'ewaas* – or traditional Kumeyaay dwellings – were erected within the site. These *'ewaas* allow visitors to see these traditional dwellings in person and learn more about the community life in traditional Kumeyaay culture. The San Pasqual Band were able work closely with the city of Poway and Friends of the Kumeyaay to ensure that the signage and the *'ewaas* were appropriate and accurate to Kumeyaay culture. Cultural appropriation and misinformation about Native American culture are both big national issues; collaborative projects similar to the creation of the Interpretive Center can help tackle these issues on a local level, which will hopefully then lead to greater cultural sensitivity and knowledge around the nation.

### Lessons Learned

The preservation of historical and cultural resources is vital for society and the collaboration between Native People, the local government, and other local citizens could be the key to the successful and accurate preservation of these resources. These three groups together can create a strong collaboration to result in the execution of a large

projects – such as the Kumeyaay-Ipai Interpretive Center. Additionally, public outreach and education can be an element that ties different groups together towards the ultimate success in the preservation of these resources.

Woodland Park in Monona, WI is currently undergoing a project in creating culturally appropriate interpretive signage. There are many similarities between the Kumeyaay Interpretive Center and the project in Woodlands Park such as the erection of Native lodging and usage of interpretive signage. Looking at the collaborative work amongst the Kumeyaay, San Diego County, and local groups, it is apparent that in order for this project to be successful a strong reciprocal relationship must be established among all parties; the parties in this case being HoChunk Nation, Monona Parks and Recreation, and the University of Wisconsin Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. Students in the Nelson Institute could mobilize the partnership to design signage that incorporates HoChunk language, culture, and is useful for education of Monona community members.

Additionally, the Kumeyaay found an ally in Friends of the Kumeyaay; this collaboration helped facilitate communication with the Poway City Government. It also brought greater attention to the site through local community voices and local publicity. Friends of the Kumeyaay started a website to inform citizens of this cultural resource and currently play a large role in the management and outreach planning for the Center. More local involvement will allow for greater dispersion of the resource, through word of mouth and other outreach events. In Woodland Parks, local involvement could help ensure that this cultural resource is known by members of the Monona community. Bringing in a strong public outreach and educational element that engages community members directly



will also hopefully foster greater relationships between local citizens and cultural resources in their community to motivate them to work on their continued preservation in the future.

### Conclusions

The Kumeyaay in the San Diego Area have been able to work collaboratively with the San Diego County Government and local organizations and citizens to both preserve Native historical resources as well as partake in culturally appropriate public outreach to educate the local populations about their history and culture. Using tools such as interpretive signage, the Kumeyaay, San Diego Government, and local groups can help ensure that the public is accurate information about historic landmarks. This culturally appropriate educational resource attached with historic resources will hopefully ensure that future generations will be able to learn about and visualize these important historical places. San Pasqual Band of Kumeyaay Tribal Chairman Allen E. Lawson in reference to the Kumeyaay Interpretive Center stated, "Preserving the site, as well as expanding it with further land acquisitions, opens great opportunities for revitalizing consciousness of history and culture, as well as spreading this knowledge to the broader San Diego County community," thus further demonstrating the goal of collaborative preservation projects between the Native People and Local Government (ZCode, 2011). Using this example as a case study for future collaborative projects amongst Native leadership and local government, will hopefully lead to successful preservation of important historic resources in other local communities.

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