

ISSUE 41 • SPRING / SUMMER 25

THE CURATOR

Official Newsletter of the San Diego Archaeological Center



FEATURED ARTICLE

Sharing Native Voices
by Neve Luna
P 5 - 6

"THE BEST LITTLE-KNOWN MUSEUM IN SAN DIEGO"
- San Diego Magazine

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San Diego Archaeological Center
MUSEUM • EDUCATION • RESEARCH

VISIT US AT
16666 SAN PASQUAL VALLEY ROAD,
ESCONDIDO, CA 92027

Closed until autumn for construction:
Learn more on P2

Regular hours: Wednesday - Saturday
9 AM - 4 PM (9 AM - 2 PM Saturdays)

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*Construction
is Underway
at the Center*



We are pleased to share that construction has begun on long-awaited improvements to our building. Thanks to the support of California State Parks, work is now underway to replace the roof and install new HVAC units. These much-needed upgrades have been in the planning stages for some time and we are grateful to see them moving forward.

The new roof will provide enhanced fire and water resistance, ensuring better protection for our collections and greater safety for all who use the space. The installation of modern HVAC systems will allow for more efficient climate control. These improvements are essential not only for visitor comfort, but also for the long-term preservation of the cultural resources we care for.

The construction project began in mid-July and is expected to take a few months. During this time, the museum will be closed to the public. Our staff, however, remain hard at work. We have set up temporary offices in an adjacent building that allow us to continue caring for collections and preparing for the exciting months ahead.

When we reopen, we look forward to welcoming you back with updated and reimagined exhibits. In the meantime, please note that we are temporarily unreachable by phone. We encourage you to visit our [website](#) where email information is listed for department contacts.

Thank you all for your continued support during this important period of renewal.



Stephanie

**STEPHANIE SANDOVAL
SDAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



NOW CURATING

by Tamsin Czochara, Lab Manager

The Center's newest staff member, Lab Manager Tamsin Czochara, moved to California from North Carolina for the position. In addition to crossing the country, she also made the journey from working in the field to the laboratory, which she describes below.

FROM SHOVEL BUM to LAB MANAGER

It all started on a historic sugarcane plantation off the Mississippi River in Louisiana. There was historic ceramic and glass scattered between the rows of cane, and it was so hot and humid our clothes clung to our backs like mud to our boots. The only sound was the wind rustling through the sugarcane above our heads, shovels scrapping against the earth and dirt sifting through screens. The first thing I was told that day as the sun rose over the plantation was, "If you hear a plane coming, start running. Those are the crop dusters dropping pesticides over the sugarcane."

I had just graduated from Appalachian State, and after years of being in various labs and field schools I was finally an archaeologist. None of it could have prepared me to hear that kind of thing on my first day. It was daunting. *What had I gotten myself into?*

What followed in the next three years would be countless projects in various landscapes across the country. From being stalked by a gator in a cattle pasture in Florida, trudging through snow in -10° weather in Iowa, digging holes off Route 66 in Oklahoma, hiking up and down mountains to document old moonshine stills in

Virginia, to excavating among skyscrapers in downtown Miami. I eventually worked my way to conserving wooden artifacts from a historic dock off the Miami River in a makeshift conservation lab in downtown Miami.



Flake found in Philpott Lake State Park, VA



Black Hawk County, IA



Lake State Park, VA



Knox County, IL

Life as a field tech means your 'office' completely changes from project to project—very different from the lab!

All my experiences as a shovel bum—the good, the bad and the ugly—led me to San Diego. I am passionate about the preservation of cultural heritage and sharing it with the community in a meaningful way. Stepping into the role of Lab Manager here at the Center is providing me the opportunity to preserve cultural resources and share their stories in the hopes of broadening our understanding of the past in the benefit of the future. I'm so excited to continue working on GIS projects and cataloging collections with our amazing lab volunteers, curating collections, and working on exhibitions for our museum!

WELCOME, TAMSIN!



"Going to college in the mountains of North Carolina strengthened my passion for the outdoors and photography, and after bouncing around the country for the past three years, I'm excited to hike my way through San Diego."



FROM THE STACKS

by Jessica McPheters, Cultural Resource Director

We wanted to reintroduce you to our library! With longtime Librarian and Collections Technician, Suzanne Moramarco retiring this past fall, the Center has been hard at work on organizing the library and making room for the new Center archives! Catalog entry of materials is on-going. Almost 50% of the archaeological reports have been entered into the library database. The Center has also been working on digitizing library and archival holdings, so they are easier to share with the public.

Center library holdings focus on the anthropology, archaeology, and history of San Diego and surrounding areas including publications on various Southern California marine life, ceramics, fauna, flora, geology, and art. The catalog contains over 13,000 entries for books, journals, magazines, monographs, and media file in addition to more than 2,600 archaeological reports.

LOOKING FORWARD:

This fall, we will be looking for library volunteers to perform a variety of tasks, including cataloging, labeling, sorting and repairs. Visit our [Volunteer and Internships](#) page for more information and to see when the application portal opens.

The library recently received a large gift of books from a private donor's library, which will shortly be cataloged in the library database. We thank Donna Price and the late Don Liponi for their generous donation.

Note: Due to the high volume of donation offers the Center receives, we do not usually accept unsolicited books, images, or documents unless you first submit a completed donation form. For donation policies and forms, visit our [Collections](#) page.

Other past donors have included the San Diego County Archaeological Society, and Dr. Raymond Starr, history professor, who donated their entire libraries to the Center. The collection of Dr. Starr includes many biographies of notable San Diegans as well as his personal files containing newspaper and magazine clippings, written oral histories and notes from his many years as a history professor at San Diego State University.



DONATION SPOTLIGHT

VOLUMES ON ROCK ART & SHAMANISM

From Donna Price and Don Liponi

We were honored to add a selection of books donated by the late Donald Liponi to our library of archaeological knowledge. Don was a researcher based in San Diego with a passion for the rock art of the region. His explorations inspired him to co-author La Rumorosa Rock Art Along the Border Volumes 1 & 2, a visually rich survey of rock art in Southern California, the Colorado River area, and Baja California.

After Don's passing, his wife, Donna, honored his wishes for his book collection by reaching out to the San Diego Archaeological Center and similar organizations to coordinate donations.



FEATURED ARTICLE

Sharing NATIVE VOICES

by Neve Luna, Tribal Outreach Coordinator

The Center has brought on a new Tribal Outreach Coordinator, Neve Luna, to strengthen our relationships with local tribal communities in a respectful and collaborative way. Learn about her goals and initiatives below!

TRIBAL OUTREACH

Haawka! I am a Kumeyaay descendant who grew up in San Diego on the San Pasqual Reservation. After obtaining my BS in Environmental Studies at the University of Oregon, I decided to return home to reconnect with my roots. Here at the San Diego Archaeological Center, I am looking forward to strengthening the bonds between the Center and local tribal communities.

I'm striving to cultivate a program which celebrates local Indigenous heritage and honors San Diego's first peoples, offering our services in tandem with educating the public about San Diego's rich tribal history and culture. I aim to work hand-in-hand with tribal cultural committees, education departments, libraries, as well as both tribal and public schools to facilitate cultural events and promote the importance of archaeology through an indigenous perspective.

I'm currently developing culturally centered activities and lessons for

both children and adults to be added to the Archaeological centers educational outreach programs.

In collaboration with my colleagues and local tribes, I also wish to help create future Luiseno and Diegueño Exhibits for the museum, as well as open opportunities to feature Indigenous authors, artists, and craftspeople.



KUMEYAAY DAY at SUMMER CAMP

I recently organized and hosted a Kumeyaay Day for the final day of the Center's "Kids Dig Archaeology" Summer Camp, in which I got to immerse the classroom in a full day of Kumeyaay history and activities!

To kick things off, I taught the campers a few common phrases in the Kumeyaay language so we could greet and thank each other properly. I then led a lesson explaining the history of who we are, how we cared for the land, and the resilience of the Kumeyaay people throughout the major time periods in San Diego.

For hands-on activities, we made mini gourd rattles and medicine bags. As the kids worked on their creations, I emphasized the creativity and expertise involved in using specific types of plants to create different kinds of music in addition to including material items that spiritually fulfilled and protected the community.

I encouraged the campers to express themselves by personalizing the appearance of their rattles, adorning their bag strings with colorful beads, and choosing what to put in their medicine pouches - I provided options of dried lavender or white sage.



Medicine pouches



Gourd shakers



Dried sage & lavender



Demonstrating techniques for making medicine pouches

With our crafts complete, we headed outside to play a couple lively rounds of **foot Shiny**, a traditional Kumeyaay game similar to soccer, which the kids picked up on quickly.

We wrapped up the day with a very important aspect of any culture: food! The kids sampled a few traditional Kumeyaay meal staples: Shawii, an acorn-based mush/bread, and chia seeds (which I made into a more kid-friendly pudding). I was quite surprised the entire batch of Shawii was eaten and nearly everyone asked for a second serving of chia seed pudding!

It was a great time for all involved, and I look forward to incorporating more cultural activities like this into the Center's programs in addition to participating in future events with both tribal and local San Diegan communities.

WELCOME, NEVE!



"Growing up on the San Pasqual reservation was a blessing. My siblings and I had the freedom to explore and live out a unique childhood with the outdoors as our playground. We stayed active through intertribal sports and received mentorship at our tribe's education center. Our summers were reserved for the Young Ipaí program, where we learned about our culture, the Kumeyaay language, and how to be environmental stewards! This sparked my love for nature, a fascination with environmental science, and a spiritual and cultural connection to the land."



PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY

by Adam Niesley, Public Archaeology Coordinator

Spring and summer were busy seasons for the Public Archaeology department. Though our roof went under construction in July it didn't deter Team Archaeology from sharing the joy of archaeology with the community!

The other massive achievement that has been keeping us busy this summer has been our outreach events. We've been out and about in the community teaching archaeology at some of San Diego's amazing libraries and museums. We tabled at the San Diego Natural History Museum's 'Adultology' night and the Children's Museum of Discovery, made amazing pinch pots at the Encinitas Public Library, carved stone beads at Scripps Miramar, and taught the fundamentals of Archaeology at the Rolando and San Marcos Public Libraries.



First Lego League student

This summer, we have been inundated by emails from teams of the First Lego League wanting archaeology field trips and technology lectures. The First Lego League introduces STEM to children ages 4-16 through fun, exciting hands-on learning. This year's topic: applying modern robotics

and engineering to archaeology! We've had a TON of fun teaching excavation, ancient construction techniques, survey, and talking about current tech (like LiDAR and GPR) to the 'Fantastic Bots,' 'The Soggy Waffles,' 'Ctrl Alt Elite,' and 'Error 404: Team Not Found.'

We wish you all the best in your competition!



Adultology at the NAT



Children's Museum of Discovery



Hone your aim every month with the **NORTH COUNTY ARCHERY CLUB**

We are excited to announce that our archery range is now a permanent feature!

Our Historical Archery events have been such a success that the SDAC has decided to open our range on the **last Saturday of every month** and establish the SDAC **North County Archery Club**. More information on that is coming soon.



SUMMER CAMP

by Hayden Bulloch, Education Specialist

The San Diego Archaeological Center's Kids Dig Archaeology Summer Camp took place during the week of June 16–20. Twenty-three campers journeyed across time and space to learn about cultural and technological interactions with different environments.

Each day included a presentation to set the scene, an art project, a hands-on technology activity, and an exploration of the cuisine of the time. The Public Archaeology Department led the program with the help of our incredible interns and volunteers.



We began our quest in the Pleistocene epoch, where we experimented with ochre pigments and discussed the transition from atlatls to arrows as we practiced with each. On the second day, we ventured to the Mesoamerican lowlands, where we created ceramic vessels, papier-mâché masks, and attempted to play the Pok-ta-Pok ballgame (minus the warfare). On the third day of camp, we traveled across the Atlantic and back in time 2,000 years to explore Ancient Egyptian life along the Nile River. We learned about the stunning archaeological research behind how the pyramids were built before experimenting with physics to move an 80 pound wooden block. We practiced the basics of hieroglyphics and tried a recipe preserved in ancient inscriptions. From Egypt, we sailed up the Mediterranean to Ancient Rome, where we became tile mosaic

artists and masters of the dice game, Tali. The final day was lead by Neve, our Tribal Outreach Coordinator, who guided the campers in understanding the Kumeyaay relationship with the surrounding chaparral landscape. We made faux leather pouches and gourd rattles, and played the traditional ballgame, shinny.

Every day of camp offered exciting, hands-on activities designed to bring the past to life and explore how people all over the world lived within their communities and environments.

Coming up next:

*Limited
Space -
Register
Today!*

FALL INTO ARCHAEOLOGY DAY CAMP

Thanksgiving Week

Nov 24 - 26, 2025

Mon - Wed, 10 AM - 2:30 PM

Extended Care 9 AM - 4 PM

\$200 full session or \$85/day

Grades 2-7



EXHIBIT DESIGN

by Linn Splane, Design & Marketing Manager

We are updating our museum hall with exhibits that teach archaeology and tell San Diego's story in fresh, engaging ways.

UNVEILING FRESH NEW DESIGNS

In the spring, we unveiled a quirky exhibit on archaeological pseudoscience titled “*Fact or Fiction: Hoaxes, Hearsay, & Hollywood.*” The interactive exhibit is playfully centered around a “web of misinformation” spreading out from a computer. The items in the web show how false ideas spread and proliferate until they form fully-fledged conspiracies, using Plato’s allegory of Atlantis as an example.

Over the summer, we have taken advantage of our temporary closure to install new exhibits and update old favorites.

We are excited to debut “*Kumeyaay Cosmology,*” an immersive exhibit on Kumeyaay sky knowledge, when we reopen in the fall. This beautiful exhibit is on loan to the Center from the Imperial Valley Desert Museum. It explores the Kumeyaay calendar and Kumeyaay constellations as described by Michael Connolly Miskwish in his book, *Maay Uuyow*, and inspires wonder and curiosity in adults and children alike.

We are also taking our summer closure as an opportunity to revisit some of our existing exhibits. We are reprinting old pannels and updating science in the Center’s long-standing *By Land and By Sea* exhibit. This exhibit lives at the front of our museum and is where visitors begin their journey through our exhibit hall. It explains the peopling of the Americas, setting the stage for the very beginning of San Diego’s history. Our new, refreshed display outlines the timeline for human settlement and invites visitors to explore the evidence for both coastal and inland migration routes.



Uncover the origins of famous misconceptions spread by hoaxes, hearsay, and Hollywood on your next visit to the museum!

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



INTERN CORNER

with

FATIMA SABEIH

Public Archaeology Intern
November 2024 - Present

Hi all! My name is Fatima SabeiH. I'm a first-generation Mexican-Palestinian student with associate degrees in anthropology and archaeology, as well as a field technician certificate from Palomar College. This year, I'll be starting my bachelor's at Cal State San Marcos while also pursuing a GIS associate degree and drone certification.

I've had the privilege of taking part in Palomar's field school in Elfin Forest and a research project in the Rio Frio caves of Belize with Dr. Jon Spenard. Being in the field with experienced archaeologists and applying what I've learned has deepened my passion for this work. Here at the Center, I'm interning with the Programs Department, so I get to bounce around a little. I've been a docent, helped lead educational programs like Art with an Archaeologist, assisted during camps and family days, learned photogrammetry, and done exhibit research.

"I am very appreciative of the people, learning experiences, and opportunities interning at the Center has introduced me to, and I'm excited to grow in this field."

BOARD CORNER

Announcing our new Board
President & Vice President



BRIAN WILLIAMS

CEO, ASM Affiliates
SDAC Board President

&

BENNAE CALAC

President/Founder, Onoo Po Strategies
SDAC Board Vice President



And introducing new board
member and Treasurer

AHMET TURKEN

Sr. Finance Manager, Operations, BDB
Reagents

SDAC Board Treasurer

Brian Williams, long-time supporter and former SDAC Board Vice President, has stepped up to the role of our new Board President. At his side as SDAC Board Vice President is Bennae Calac, who joined our board of trustees in 2024.

Thank you, Brian and Bennae,
for your continued leadership and
support.

We are also excited to welcome Ahmet Turken from the world of finance management to our Board of Trustees as SDAC Board Treasurer.

Welcome, Ahmet!

WE LOVE OUR SUPPORTERS

by Danté Farenga, Development & Marketing Director



WE GOT THE GRANT!

The San Diego Archaeological Center is thrilled to announce we've been awarded **\$34,219** from the **City of San Diego Cultural Affairs** through the Organizational Support Program.

This annual grant provides essential operational support, helping us continue to offer engaging **educational programming both at the Center and across the San Diego community.** We are grateful for this continued investment in our work!

THE ANNUAL BBQ WAS A BLAST!

The San Diego Archaeological Center's Annual BBQ in April brought together museum supporters, students, professional archaeologists, tribal members, and community guests for an afternoon of food, fun, and connection. Guests enjoyed delicious tacos from **Frida's Taqueria**, refreshing drinks from **Pizza Port** and **Rancho Guejito Vineyard**, and live bluegrass music by Probable Caws. Our popular archery and atlatl range kept all ages entertained, while students connected with archaeologists from local CRM firms and colleges.

Thanks to the generous support of our lead sponsors, **Wollman Wealth Designs** and **ASM Affiliates**, the event **raised \$16,875** to support the Center's preservation work and educational programming. We are deeply grateful to everyone who joined us in celebrating San Diego's archaeological community and look forward to welcoming you again next year!



SEPT 9, 2025
SAVE THE DATE!

The San Diego Archaeological Center is reopening this fall with a new roof, updated exhibits, and expanded educational space—and you can **help us launch this next chapter on a strong note!**

San Diego Gives arrives

at the perfect time to support our reopening. Mark your calendar for **September 9** to take part in this powerful local movement supporting San Diego's community and archaeology.

Your generosity will help fund **new and updated exhibits, engaging educational programs, and the preservation of more than 2 million cultural resources.** We invite you to help shape the future of archaeology with us.



BECOME A MEMBER

The Center is the only local organization dedicated to the collection, study, curation and exhibition of San Diego County's archaeological artifacts. Your membership helps save our history and heritage. Membership can be purchased [online](#), by phone, or by mail.



BECOME A DOCENT

Docents welcome visitors and answer general questions regarding the Center and exhibits. Hours are flexible. To apply for a volunteer position or for more information, email us at vol.intern@sandiegoarchaeology.org.



MAKE A DONATION

Cash donations may be made to the Center by visiting our [website](#), or with a check made to the San Diego Archaeological Center. In-kind gifts are contributions of goods or services to our organization. Please contact us if you would like to make this kind of donation.



LEAVE A LEGACY

Planned gifts are a wonderful way to contribute to our mission. Making a plan in your estate or will ensures peace of mind and the future of The Center's programs and collections. [We will work with you](#) to customize any gift and thank you for your generosity.



GIVE MONTHLY

Purveyors of the Past Monthly Donation Program is an easy and convenient way of supporting the many important projects at the Center. You may determine the amount to donate per month and the specific campaign, project, or program to fund. Please [contact us](#) for more information.



DONATE STOCK

The Center now accepts donated shares of stocks. By gifting stocks directly to our organization, you can support programs and preservation while potentially lowering your tax bill. Please [contact us](#) for more information.

IN APPRECIATION

*For your time, talents, membership,
donations, and in-kind support*

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possible without this
wonderful community.
Thank you all for being
a cherished part of it.*

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