

TAP PILAM COAHUILTECAN NATION

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April 15, 2020

Dear Commissioners,

The Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation has been creating an official record of events since our family's involvement of sharing our history and working in protecting our families Campos Santos of all the Missions. With guidance and support came from our late Congressman Frank Tejeda and the late Archbishop Flores, who open the doors to the Archives of the Archdiocese for our research. In addition, the late Monsignor Balthasar Janacek, who was personally involved in helping our families in securing and the reinternment of our families on November 25, 1999, which had been excavated from Mission San Juan in 1967. Mission San Juan parish priest Father Jorge Baistra and recently retired parish Priest Father Gavin, supported the return of our family's displaced souls and in preserving our existing living Native culture at the Missions. The public support and sponsorship for Tap Pilam by Senator Melendez, State Rep. Pacheco, Senator Zaffirini has our unconditional gratitude as well. The Late Rodger G. Kennedy head of National Park Service in 1994 met with myself, Tap Pilam families and Monsignor Janacek in order for us to be able to participate in NAGPRA as lineal descendants without excluding the Rights of the Church and prevent the possibility of Federal Recognize Tribes claims or involvement to Catholic Native burials now on Federal Mission lands. Mr. Kennedy instructed the San Antonio NPS office to provide and make the necessary arrangements & funding for us to participate in the NAGPRA conference from July 24 thru July 29, 1995 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The purpose of the meeting was to help the National Park Service to identify American Indian tribes that are culturally affiliated with NPS parks units in Texas, Oklahoma, Southeast Colorado and Southern New Mexico, this was to be the first step in developing consultative relationships between the parks and the tribes if none presently existed (letter dated July 7, 1995 file H2217 (SW-IS). San Antonio NPS official Alan Cox also had attended said conference in order to report said findings, the involvement of Federally Recognized tribes would be critical as to how receptive toward us as a non-recognized tribe. This meeting was headed by Edward H.L. Natay, American Indian Liaison Officer, Southwest System Support Office. We were given standing by more than 20 Tribes and a majority vote as a Tribal people for the San Antonio Missions. That right was for the process and the return including reinternment of our Ancestors without any interference from the Tribes from the territorial regions. Tribal elder Virgil Franklin spoke in our support and acknowledged, that regardless of Tribal affiliation the Natives that entered the Mission way of Life had become part of our Native Catholic Community. AITSCM our nonprofit was to be the representative in negotiating that process between the NPS and the Archdiocese (Ref Federal Register Volume 61 No. 180 Sept 16, 1996 in the reinternment respecting Native and Church Traditions.

The conclusion of this is, Tap Pilam families may not be federally recognized but we sure as hell have inherited birthrights and Catholic archival records precedes Federal, State, standing and we will defend the decades of our work that has benefited the City of San Antonio and its Missions. The work and sacrifice done by our families in particular the last four generations was a process of love for our Community, City, State, and our Nation with a path for healing old wounds for the countless hardships, disrespect of our families loyalty and our contributions made during wartime for this Nation.



**Tap Pilam
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The work we have done for the last 25 years with the City of San Antonio, State of Texas and the DRT were positive experiences for the healing resolution of our grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren and a reflection of the pride they richly deserved from our research and work. My generation was blessed to have and been raised and taught by grandparents who were from the 1870's and lived until the 1960's. It was their teachings of their life struggles, culture, traditions and sacrifice that taught us that our educational system had failed many generations of our family's.

We took responsibility in preserving our grandparent's traditions, culture, and the importance of our Native language as an obligation to our future generations. How can we trust a private entity who just recently petition THC not to recognize our claim of existence and that of our family's burials? Their contention was a cemetery did not exist in the Alamo Chapel nor its compound. We understand that many burials have been destroyed in the past due to excavations by the city and other private contractors. As citizens of San Antonio we all have an obligation in preserving and giving respect to those before us and their final resting place, we must protect what is left.


When the Texas Historical Commission passed the Historical Designation for the cemetery, they made it a point to the Alamo Trust representative that it was only symbolic in nature and had no protection. How can we trust, when our legal system appears to be rigged by individuals? Are we to believe that a \$450 million, 10-year research study, cannot afford the DNA of said remains? Most of us would be willing to obtain our own DNA for that comparison. As in the past there is not much that can be learned from these intended studies, and who will it benefit. Their intent is obvious that they plan to remove them from their final resting place and to whitewash any knowledge of the first families. Those of us who have dedicated as much as 4 decades are now in the mid to late 70's. The present Alamo Trust cannot to be trusted today much less 10 years from now.

Those that believe that the involvement of the Federally recognized tribes from other States have the authority to decide how our Catholic Native and non-Native remains are to be handle and would support a 10 years study without the participation of living Lineal descendant is absurd. I believe that it would be proper for those tribes participating with the Alamo Trust to verify the NPS minutes & records of July 24 thru 26 1995 as to how their Elders and NAGPA representatives supported us regarding the San Antonio Missions. I am attaching a letter from a Caddo NAGPRA attendee making said reference to the above.

Just as we have been held accountable by others for decades, we now plan to have all those that support the removal of any human remains without Lineal descendant representation accountable, silent on this issue will be noted as acceptance for the record for this unethical, dishonorable act.

I am submitting this letter for the record as the Cultural Preservationist for the Tap Pilam Nation and members from our Mission community since we were denied the opportunity speak in the open public meeting to the commissioners on April 15, 2020

In God we Trust



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