



# ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

## CHANCERY OFFICE

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May 10, 1995

Mr. Raymond Hernandez  
President  
American Indians in Texas -  
at the Spanish Colonial Missions  
1130 Mission Road  
San Antonio, Texas 78210

RE: The American Indians in Texas - at the Spanish Colonial  
Missions (AIT-SCM)  
File No.: 200.1073

Dear Mr. Hernandez:

This letter is in response to yours of March 15th in which you enclosed a draft of a letter that you proposed that I send to you as president of American Indians in Texas - at the Spanish Colonial Missions (AIT-SCM). I have met with the Mission priests to discuss your letter and I can assure you that they and I are supportive of the desire of the descendants of the Mission Indians to recover their heritage in terms of its history, its artifacts and the preservation of the remains of their ancestors.

To give credence to its support, the Archdiocese will make its resources available to those Indians who wish to verify their ancestry. The Archdiocese will provide technical assistance to those who wish to undertake this task, and will certify the authenticity of those whose heritage is verified. Although the process to verify his identity may seem burdensome to one who believes himself to be a descendent of the Mission Indians it is essentially the same process that a Native American must undertake to qualify as a member of one of the tribes recognized by the Federal Government. The certification that may be provided by the Archdiocese should be valuable for an individual or group of individuals who seek further recognition.

As I mentioned, the Archdiocese will be glad to work with the individuals who are interested in verifying their ancestry and establishing themselves as descendants of the Mission Indians. Should a sizable group be certified it would perhaps become expedient for them to put forth a representative to act on their behalf with the Archdiocese. In the meantime, however, the Archdiocese will deal with them on an individual basis.

You have proposed that I authorize the use of the Missions, the Mission Churches and the camposantos by all Native Americans. If by the "Missions" you mean more than the portions reserved for religious services, generally only the Mission Churches, you must consult the National Park Service. As for the Mission Churches and the camposantos, you should consult the priest at the Missions. Since they have voiced their support of the cause of Native Americans generally, I am sure