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NEIGHBORS OF

San Juan CAPISTRANO

October 2025



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Cho'onom Noniskinum

"All My Relations"

We, the Tribal Council and our Tribal Members of Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation welcome you to what is now Orange County. The Acjachemen traditional tribal territory extends from the Pacific Ocean to the West, including the Southern Channel Islands of Catalina (Pímu), San Nicholas (Haraş'nga), and San Clemente (Kunkepar), to parts of Los Angeles County to the North, including the village of Puvungna at California State University Long Beach, to parts of Riverside County to the East, and parts of Camp Pendleton in San Diego County.- Tribal Chairman Nathan K. Banda

Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation

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ELDER & SPECIAL NEEDS ATTORNEY
Law Offices of
Cheryl L. Walsh, APC
Cheryl L. Walsh, Esq.
27282 Calle Arroyo, Ste. 200
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
949.240.9003
WalshSeniorLaw.com



ESCROW SERVICES
Escrow Leaders
Valerie Velotta,
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PUBLICATION TEAM

PUBLISHER: Linda Hakim

PUBLISHER ASSISTANT: Si Si Penalzoza

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER: Michelle Lugassi

DESIGNER: Sally Edens

FOR ADVERTISING INCLUDING:

Magazine Sponsorship, Facebook, Instagram, Google, and BVMSports.com,

CONTACT: Linda Hakim

EMAIL: LHakim@BestVersionMedia.com

PHONE: 949.584.1396

FOR NOMINATIONS INCLUDING:

Cover Family, Pets, Kids, Athletes, Coaches, or Teams,

EMAIL: TFitzgerald@BestVersionMedia.com

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San Juan Capistrano

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LHakim@BestVersionMedia.com

@laderaranchneighbors @wranglerlivingrmv
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We invite you to journey into the heart of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation's heritage. Our cover proudly features five revered Elders from the Acjachemen Tribe—guardians of ancient wisdom who embody the enduring spirit of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation. Their presence reminds us of the deep roots that anchor our community to this sacred land, where the echoes of their ancestors still whisper through the canyons and oaks.

Inside, we delve into stories that illuminate the tribe's vibrant legacy. Meet Nathan K. Banda, the current Tribal Chairman, whose visionary leadership navigates the challenges and triumphs of preserving Acjachemen culture amid modern times. His commitment to unity and advocacy inspires us all to honor indigenous voices.

We also explore the majestic Grandmother Oak, a living sentinel estimated to be over 800 years old, standing as a symbol of resilience and connection to the earth. Its branches, much like the tribe's matriarchal traditions, shelter generations and offer lessons in stewardship for our environment.

Turning to the strength of Acjachemen women, this article celebrates their pivotal roles as healers, storytellers, and leaders—women who weave the fabric of family, tradition, and empowerment. Finally, our article on tribal leadership examines the intricate governance structures that sustain the nation, blending time-honored practices with forward-thinking strategies.

This edition of *Neighbors of San Juan Capistrano* is more than a magazine; it's a bridge between past and present, urging us to reflect on our place in this storied landscape. We hope these pages foster appreciation and dialogue, strengthening the bonds that make San Juan Capistrano a place of profound history and harmony.

With gratitude for our community,

Linda Hakim

Publisher



Linda Hakim
Publisher
949.584.1396

LHakim@BestVersionMedia.com



Scott Weisgerber
Publisher
Assistant



Sally Edens
Graphic
Designer



Michelle Montgomery
Contributing
Photographer



Gina "GG" Scolari
Contributing
Writer



Daniele Smith
Contributing
Writer



Ryan Smith Groseclose
Contributing
Writer



Si Si Penalzoza
Contributing
Writer



Marianne Taylor
Contributing
Writer

The Power of a Well-Balanced Diet with The Exercise Coach Workouts



By Ed Gow



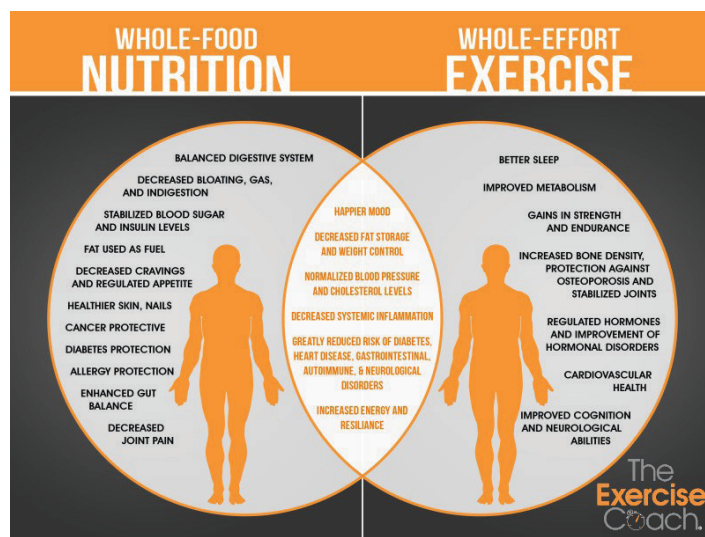
Achieving optimal health and wellness isn't about choosing between exercise and nutrition—it's about combining the two in harmony. At The Exercise Coach, our clients often experience remarkable results because they pair efficient, science-based workouts with a well-balanced diet designed to fuel their bodies and enhance recovery. Together, these two pillars create a foundation for sustainable strength, energy, and vitality.

A balanced diet provides the essential nutrients your body needs to function at its best. Proteins, carbohydrates, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals all play specific roles in supporting muscle growth, energy production, and cellular repair. When these nutrients are consumed in proper proportion, they give the body the raw materials it needs to thrive—not just during workouts, but throughout everyday life. For example, protein supports lean muscle development, fiber aids digestion and satiety, and healthy fats contribute to hormone regulation and brain health.

When paired with The Exercise Coach's 20-minute strength-training sessions, proper nutrition amplifies the benefits of each workout. Because our approach uses cutting-edge technology to maximize muscle engagement in a short time, your body requires adequate fuel and recovery nutrients to adapt and grow stronger. Without balanced nutrition, progress may slow, energy levels may dip, and results can feel inconsistent. But with the right diet, your workouts are more productive, your energy is steadier, and your body composition improves more quickly.

In addition to enhancing workout performance, a well-balanced diet supports long-term wellness goals. It helps regulate blood sugar, reduces inflammation, and promotes healthy weight management—all key factors in reducing the risk of chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. When combined with regular, efficient exercise, these benefits compound, creating a lifestyle that's both health-protective and empowering.

At The Exercise Coach, we encourage clients to view nutrition not as a restriction, but as a partner in their fitness journey. Simple, intentional changes—such as incorporating lean proteins, whole fruits and vegetables, and high-quality fiber—can drastically



improve outcomes. The goal isn't perfection but consistency: fueling your body with the right balance of nutrients most of the time so that your workouts and daily activities feel easier, more enjoyable, and more effective.

In short, wellness is the product of both strength and nourishment. By combining the efficient, customized workouts at The Exercise Coach with a well-balanced diet, you create a powerful synergy that supports not only fitness goals but also lifelong health, energy, and vitality.

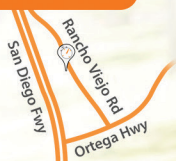
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AEP Is Here



By Carlos Aguilar

How to Know If You Should Change Your Medicare Plan



The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) is officially here—running from **October 15 to December 7**. This is your once-a-year opportunity to change, update, or fine-tune your Medicare coverage for 2026. And by now, you should have received your **Annual Notice of Change (ANOC)** from your current Medicare Advantage or Part D plan.

That document outlines important changes to your plan's premiums, copays, benefits, drug coverage, and network. Even if you're happy with your plan, those changes could mean it's no longer the best fit for your needs next year.

So how do you know if you should switch? Start by asking yourself these questions:

- Have my health needs changed this year?
- Did my doctor or specialist leave my plan's network?
- Have my prescriptions changed—or did the plan change how it covers them?
- Am I satisfied with what I'm paying at the doctor or pharmacy?

Even small shifts in your medication list or your plan's drug formulary can make a big difference in your total yearly costs. And network changes—especially with doctors or hospitals—can lead to unexpected out-of-pocket bills if not reviewed in time.

Plans also update their **extra benefits** each year. Some 2026 Medicare Advantage plans are expanding dental, vision, hearing, gym memberships, and even over-the-counter allowances. Others are trimming benefits or increasing copays to adjust for rising costs.

The good news? You don't have to navigate it alone. A licensed Medicare advisor can walk you through your ANOC, compare

plans side-by-side, and help you determine if a switch makes sense for your budget and lifestyle.

At 3G Health Insurance Services, I help clients across California and beyond make confident, informed decisions during AEP—with no cost for my help. Whether it's exploring new options or confirming that your current plan still fits, let's make sure 2026 is your best year yet.

But don't wait—**December 7 is the deadline**. After that, most changes will have to wait another year.

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The Horsepower Capital of San Juan Capistrano

By Si Si Penaloza

Shady Maples Farm is not your grandmother's farm. Forget cornfields, silos, and sepia-toned notions of "farm life." Shady Maples Farm is something else entirely—a 23-acre equestrian powerhouse where 220 horses set the tempo and the humans keep pace. It's equal parts training ground and community hub, riders chasing excellence in everything from dressage and jumping to reining and Western pleasure. This isn't rustic cosplay; it's the real deal, delivered with sweat, precision, and a touch of California cool.

Sarah Jon Porreca, the COO orchestrating this equine campus, puts it plainly: "We house 220 horses—each with opinions of their own." Behind the Instagram-friendly sunrise shots is the actual script: mucking stalls, ordering feed, repairing what broke overnight, and navigating the daily demands of a herd that outweighs its managers a hundred times over. "You don't run a farm," she says. "You live it."

And yet, amid the grit, the place retains its lyricism. When rain once turned paddocks into ankle-swallowing swamps, the



crew slogged through with resignation and laughter. "Roy, our manager, was knee-deep in muck," Sarah Jon recalls. "The land reminds you: you're not in charge here." Shady Maples thrives on this paradox—discipline laced with absurdity, beauty framed by labor.

“ SARAH JON HERSELF WAS DRAWN HERE NOT BY ONE CINEMATIC COUP DE FOUDRE BUT BY ACCUMULATION: THE THOUSAND MINOR EPIPHANIES THAT TOLD HER THE BOARDROOM WAS NEVER HER DESTINY. ”

Sarah Jon herself was drawn here not by one cinematic coup de foudre but by accumulation: the thousand minor epiphanies that told her the boardroom was never her destiny. "Every time I felt more alive on a horse than at a desk, I knew," she says. One day she stopped saying "someday" and started saying "today."

What she sees ahead is not scale but soul. "Small farms can't compete on scale, but we can compete on soul," she says, with the conviction of someone who's mucked enough stalls to know the weight of that word. Authenticity, sustainability, and community aren't slogans here—they're survival tactics.

By dusk, the arenas fall quiet, bridles hang heavy in the tack rooms, and the last riders drift off. Horses exhale in the twilight. The staff tidies, notes repairs, prepares to do it all again. The beauty of Shady Maples isn't that it looks timeless—it's that, against the odds, it lives in time. Every day it chooses to be both work and wonder, both heart and hustle. The day closes not on a postcard but on a truth: Shady Maples is a living story of grit and grace, hoofbeats and hustle.

ShadyMaplesFarm.com

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Bringing Whimsy, Charm, and Beauty to San Juan

By Ryann Smith Groseclose

Stacey Fitts' first foray into floristry started in a floral design class in her junior year of high school. Years later, she worked on a flower job with her mother-in-law and quickly realized she had found her calling. For more than two decades, she ran a successful floral events company called Floral Occasions. A 25-year resident of San Juan, when Stacey first heard the buzz regarding the development of River Street Marketplace, she realized her "too-good-to-be-true" dream of owning a flower shop right in her own backyard could finally come to fruition.

Pick Me Flower Boutique, located in the breezeway of the Mercantile building, opened its doors on November 1, 2024. The boutique is truly a family affair. It all started with the name: Stacey's son-in-law, Shea, came up with the catchy moniker, which the whole family loved—and customers do, too. Stacey beams, "We get compliments on the name all the time. It's fun and whimsical, like me!"

Stacey's husband, David, is a general contractor, so alongside their son, Isaiah, the family designed the shop together. And her daughter, Sydnee, runs social media, handles website design, and assists with community events and sourcing retail items. From the painted signage by her sister-in-law, Marcie, to the careful flower prep by Aunt Jan, every detail carries a family touch. Stacey acknowledges that Pick Me also has a talented team of gals who love working with flowers and are all very knowledgeable, approachable, and eager to help in any way.

"PICK ME'S STYLE IS ORGANIC, TEXTURED, AND UNIQUE. IN FACT, EVERY PETAL, STEM, AND SPECIALTY GIFT IN THE SHOP HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CURATED BY THE OWNER HERSELF."

Pick Me's style is organic, textured, and unique. In fact, every petal, stem, and specialty gift in the shop has been carefully curated by the owner herself. Stacey's favorite part of her job is driving down our sparkling coastline to Carlsbad each Monday to the San Diego Floral Trade Center to hand-select all the stunning flowers, greenery, vases, and retail items. Passersby can't help but compliment the boutique's charm and attention to all the fine details. Stacey reflects, "Customers often say, 'I've never seen a flower like that before!' or 'Wow, those colors of roses are so unique.' This feedback is one of the reasons I absolutely love my job and our community."

Open seven days a week from 11am to 7pm, Stacey and her hand-picked friendly crew are waiting to create the perfect arrangement and brighten the days of their San Juan neighbors... one bloom at a time.

949.795.3663 / PickMeFlower.com / [@pickmeflower_](https://www.instagram.com/pickmeflower_)

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Driving Forward

San Juan Hills Golf Club Tees Up Big Changes

By Ryann Smith Groseclose



Significant changes are happening at San Juan Hills Golf Club, namely, a brand-new driving range! The upgraded facility features nine elevated target greens, an enhanced parking lot, state-of-the-art ball machines, and all-new restroom facilities, to name a few. Construction at the previous driving range is underway for another exciting addition: a brand new youth athletic complex. In the coming months, even more high-tech amenities will be added, including enhanced analytics and computer-generated games powered by an impressive radar system, covered tee boxes, an elevated deck, an extensive practice putting green, and a dedicated space for chipping. A Grand Opening celebration will commence once the facility is complete.

The club's centerpiece remains the award-winning 18-hole public course itself, voted Best Golf Course in Orange County in 2022 by the *Orange County Register*. General Manager Ryan Brown calls their In-Club program "the best player's card in SoCal," offering perks like a 14-day booking window, early twilight tee times, discounts in the shop and sports bar, and Happy Hour pricing on range buckets all day. A new Driving Range membership program is also on the way to align with the club's incoming technology.

Hungry? The club's Sports Bar and Grill tees up delicious food, beverages, games, and fun. The fall menu rolls out soon, featuring

a new savory sirloin cut entrée and decadent milkshakes. The rotating Fall Game Day options include Coconut Shrimp, Fried Artichoke Basket, Irish Nachos, and—a club favorite—XXL Loaded Nachos. With more than 40 flat screens in the room, there's not a bad seat in the house to cheer on your favorite sports team.

Not a sports fan? Come down Thursdays from 7-11pm for Industry Night. Open to all, these weekly happenings allow local vendors to showcase their food, beverages, and products. They will also be serving up their own Sports Bar and Grill specials. After eating and browsing, cap off the night with a round on their Glow Putting Course.

Fridays from 6:30-9:30pm and Saturdays from 6-9pm, grab your friends and family and enjoy dinner, drinks, and free live musical entertainment on the patio. Looking ahead, the Thanksgiving Day Turkey Shoot returns this fall, complete with breakfast and an 8am shotgun start.

For the latest club news, follow them on Instagram @sanjuanhillsgc. To purchase In-Club memberships, learn about weddings and special events, or for other inquiries, visit SanJuanHillsGolf.com. See you on the links soon!

949.493.1167 / SanJuanHillsGolf.com
32120 San Juan Creek Road, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675



Blanca's

L A T I N K I T C H E N & B A R

Flavor, Flare, and the Joy Quotient

By Si Si Penaloza

By the time you slide into a table at Blanca's Latin Kitchen & Bar, San Juan Capistrano's newest darling, you already sense the trick: this isn't just another restaurant. It's part cantina, part theatre, part joy-delivery system. Owner Rick Leon is acutely aware of the alchemy. "Joy would definitely be what I want Blanca's to be known for," he says. "I want people to leave with a smile and to tell everyone they had a good time while dining with us."

Blanca's doesn't whisper; it hums. The cucumber-jalapeño margarita arrives looking like a jewel box staged for Instagram—lime green, tajín rim, cucumber crown—and then detonates on the palate. The kitchen is a site of reckless invention. Guava-and-cheese pancakes? At first, even his staff looked mutinous. "Once we had our tasting, their eyes grew and lit up with the surprise of how good the pancakes were," Leon laughs. Ditto the carnitas egg Benedict, which sounds like a dare but lands as a triumph. "It feels good when you take yourself out of your own comfort level," he says, "and you get such great reactions from staff and customers."

Blanca's brunch has already acquired the patina of ritual: pancakes, carnitas Benedict, mimosas, all with a live soundtrack. "Any good brunch experience starts with the food," Leon points out. "If the food doesn't have flavor and isn't good, no amount of music or atmosphere will save it." And yet the music does matter—guitar drifting across the patio, salsa coaxing a shoulder-shimmy out of the unsuspecting. "I love seeing people

enjoying their food while moving their shoulders and head to the music, all the while smiling through every bite."

There's a balance here, between cozy and daring, between cantina and cabaret. "I rely on my staff," Leon says. "A good smile and attitude will give you the sense of cozy. When you have friendly service, and people that have genuine gratitude for you to spend time in the restaurant, you'll want to stay and enjoy your time."

Leon is in it for the long haul. "I want to be a fixture that's synonymous with dining in this great city," he says. "When people talk about the great area of restaurants we're located in, I want them to always mention us." Blanca's has already slipped into the town's bloodstream—warm light, live music, flavor, flare—and, above all, joy.

363.207.0654 / BlancasLatinKitchen.com
26762 Verdugo Street, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
@blancaslatinkitchen



Blanca's

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Functional, Fresh, and FUN

nom Serves Up *Califusion* Flavors to River Street

By Ryann Smith Groseclose

San Juan residents Pete and Kimberly Klein are the proud owners of nom, the go-to, fast-casual eatery known for serving up delicious, health-conscious cuisine. Located in the Rodeo River Street at the River Street Marketplace and housed in a striking red barn, nom has quickly become a standout destination.

Pete's transformative health journey played a significant role in the eatery's origin story. Pre-diabetic and wanting to avoid the diabetic complications that Pete's father suffered with, he completely turned his health around. By eliminating processed foods, refined sugars, wheat, seed oils, and dairy, and increasing his activity levels, Pete lost 75 pounds. His remarkable health improvements, coupled with the Kleins' desire to bring crave-worthy, high-quality cuisine to River Street, made nom what it is today. Pete reflects, "I'm living proof that food really can change lives, and we believe nom offers the perfect way to deliver delicious, nourishing, and functional food to the community."

“NOM ISN'T JUST ANOTHER RESTAURANT. IT IS AN INSPIRED EATERY BUILT WITH LOVE, HIGH-QUALITY INGREDIENTS, COMMUNITY FOCUS, AND A GENUINE DESIRE TO BRING HEALTH AND HAPPINESS TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.”

The menu, inspired by Southern California's freshness and energy, layered with bold Asian flavors, is what the Kleins have dubbed *Califusion*. Kimberly explains, "Our food reflects the way we eat at home: scratch-made sauces, clean proteins, bright vegetables, and grains that actually nourish you." The cornerstones of their build-your-own bowls are vibrant and fresh, and always gluten-free. Whether you choose espresso-rubbed pork, sambal-marinated tofu, or Thai basil smashed avocado, you can't go wrong. Every item on the menu is carefully crafted to taste incredible together and leave you feeling great afterward. What you won't find in their food: refined sugar, toxic

seed oils, dairy, or gluten. For those looking for plant-based meals, nom also offers vegan options.

The Kleins feel incredibly blessed to be an integral part of the River Street Marketplace. From the start, they appreciated the elevated vision and design that feels naturally integrated into the Los Rios District and San Juan as a whole—an accomplishment they realize is rare and not easy. Pete says, "We think nom is a perfect complement to this beautiful space, and we're honored to be part of it."

Nom isn't just another restaurant. It is an inspired eatery built with love, high-quality ingredients, community focus, and a genuine desire to bring health and happiness to the neighborhood. The Kleins leave us with this: "Our door is always open, and we cannot wait to welcome you, share our story, and make your day brighter and tastier."

Sunday-Thursday: 11am-8pm / Friday-Saturday: 11am-9pm
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Pete and Kimberly Klein



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Delivering Comfort and Reliability with Integrity

By Micaela Harris



Triton Air has built a reputation as one of Southern California's most trusted heating, cooling, and plumbing service providers. Founded as a community for the community, Triton Air began with a simple vision: combine technical expertise with a people-first approach. Over the years, that vision has helped the company grow into a household name known for comfort, reliability, and integrity.

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Where *Healing* Meets *Honesty*, and Growth Finds Its Ground

By Si Si Penaloza

FLEURISH
COUNSELING

*Priscilla Chilian –
Photo by Candice Dartez*



As a therapist and life coach, Priscilla Chilian, LMFT, has crafted a practice that bridges healing and growth, both restorative and forward-looking. Her practice, Fleurish Counseling, offers clients tools beyond problem-solving; she offers a way of seeing themselves with candor, compassion.

Her clients—couples, individuals, teens, families—come seeking clarity and leave with something more rare: the experience of being truly seen. Her rapport with young people is striking. “Often what teens are guarded against is expectations and disrespect,” she says. “Teens are tired of people treating them like children, I regard them as respected adults, and they feel that.”

She describes her sessions less like a clinical appointment and more like “the atmosphere of a social call,” a place where autonomy and positive regard aren’t promises but givens. “Teens have highly attuned inauthenticity meters and they immediately notice my genuine care for them as their own agents of change.”

Couples counseling reveals a different dimension of her work, one that blends precision with empathy. “All of us carry with us scars from our formative years because each one of us was raised by an imperfect person,” she explains. By introducing couples to their attachment styles, she offers “a key to unlock the confusion and frustration in their lives.” For many, this reframing is revelatory: arguments about dishes are rarely about dishes at all. “The fascinating thing about couples counseling,” she says, “is that the person who has the highest potential to help heal your past wounds is the very person with whom you are arguing. And for that person to help heal you, they need to grow in their areas of weakness. That’s where I come in.”

Then there is avoidance, the silent saboteur in so many relationships. Chilian faces it head-on. “Avoidance is often the best friend of men,” she says with a wry smile. Growing up with four brothers taught her to meet resistance with warmth and directness. “I am not intimidated by a big man who doesn’t want to be there; I befriend him and guide him where he needs to go. Counseling is not always comfortable, but my ability to call a

spade a spade with compassion and understanding, effectively pushes clients forward.”

Chilian’s work is less about platitudes and more about precision: noticing the silence, naming the avoidance, reframing the conflict. Whether with a teenager guarding their secrets or a couple replaying the arguments of their past, she offers presence, clarity, and progress. At Fleurish Counseling, the work is about speaking the unsaid and finding a path forward that is both honest and human.

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Photo by Hannah Siegrist, Hannahbeth Photography



Chief Clarence Lobo

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Continuity Through Generations

The Juaneño Elders and the Mission's 250th Anniversary

By Si Si Penaloza and Chris A. Lobo



Dennis "Judo" Sommers, Thomas "Happy" Hunn, Stephen M. Rios, Harley "Wick" Lobo, Marian Walkingstick. Photo by Michelle Marie Photography

The arches of the Mission San Juan Capistrano have framed countless ceremonies and centuries, but never a moment quite like this: five elders of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians gathered for a specially commissioned portrait marking the Mission's quarter-millennium to grace the commemorative cover of *Neighbors of San Juan Capistrano*. On Monday, August 25, 2025, Dennis "Judo" Sommers, Thomas "Happy" Hunn, Stephen M. Rios, Harley "Wick" Lobo, and Marian Walkingstick reunited at the Mission—sunbeams on the adobe, swallows etching swift signatures across the sky—the gravitas of ten millennia visible in their stance, their laughter, their gaze.





THE MISSION INDIAN FEDERATION



To the passerby, it read as a photo shoot. To those present, it felt more like a rite: an image made to keep faith with time. A moment that stretched backward into centuries and forward into posterity. As the Mission celebrates 250 years since its founding in 1776, the city has planned a multi-year arc of programs culminating in the milestone on Sunday, November 1, 2026. Festivities will cast renewed attention on the site's layered history and living community. The "Jewel of the Missions" is preparing for lectures, exhibitions, concerts, and commemorations—the kind of civic choreography that invites the public to feel the long heartbeat of place.

San Juan Capistrano measures time in both architecture and story. Walk the grounds and the timeline becomes tactile. The Serra Chapel anchors the complex, while the haunting ruins of the Great Stone Church—so ambitious it rose in sandstone rather than adobe—mark the December 1812 earthquake that shattered its walls. Devoted docents have long turned that scar into a lesson on endurance. The Mission's public calendar beats like a metronome: school tours, feast days, and the candlelit Romance of the Mission gala. In this anniversary cycle, those rhythms carry added resonance.

The elders in the frame arrive with a longer arithmetic. Ten thousand years—more than three hundred generations—have unfolded on this ground. The Juaneño Acjachemen timeline is not a ribbon beginning in 1776, but a tapestry whose oldest threads—language, ceremony, kinship—predate first contact by millennia. Their ancestral domain spanned coast to foothills, and their present-day community maintains an unbroken cultural memory. That continuity is not merely asserted by the tribe; it is reflected in regional libraries and civic institutions that have been collaborating to document and elevate Acjachemen voices.



How to Step into the Story and Celebrate 250 Years

While the Mission is planning its own celebration, it also serves on a citywide committee that represents all parts of our diverse community. The Committee is organizing yearlong events to highlight the unique spirit of San Juan Capistrano at this moment in history.

Scheduled activities include an opening ceremony, monthly speakers, a special exhibit at the Bowers Museum, and participation in long-standing traditions such as the **Swallows Day Parade** and the **July 4th celebration**.

The Mission's celebration is distinct yet coordinated with the citywide calendar. Events will be presented in chronological order, beginning with the **Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation**. The City has designated the historic site of the original **Pituidem village** as an outdoor venue. Because January weather can be unpredictable, the yearlong celebration will officially begin on October 18, 2025, and conclude on November 1, 2026.

Opening day will begin at **10:00 a.m on October 18**, featuring the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, hosting the **Acjachemen Nation Pow Wow**.

Guests are invited to:

"Come feel the heartbeat of the Acjachemen land—where nations gather in song, dance and community. Experience intertribal dancing, birdsongs, Native foods, art and information booths. A living celebration of heritage, resilience, and culture carried forward."

The Acjachemen Nation Pow Wow offers a powerful beginning, setting the stage for a yearlong tribute to history and community.

www.SJC250.org

Continued on next page

For the Juaneño, the reckoning of time runs deeper still—an accumulation of wisdom layered like sediment beneath the soil. To count years is a civic habit; to count generations is a cultural inheritance. Tribal elders and members are not defined by a frivolous and grossly inaccurate document from the Bureau of Indian Affairs known as the California Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB). The true measure of belonging comes through blood—professional genealogy that traces each tribal member directly to their ancestors and to the villages identified long before first sustained contact. This is how the elders of the 1941 tribal roll, and those they represent, are rightfully recognized.

Creation, in Juaneño understanding, is a covenant between land and sky. Song ferries knowledge across time; ceremony gives that knowledge shape. To live in balance with what the land provides—taking what is offered in season, never in excess—is not sentiment but survival. Across great villages—Aluana, Pameie, Pange, Putuidem, Sajavit, Tobe, Mocuache, Ushmei—and smaller settlements, elders shaped the rhythm of life. Some elders were Nu's, Coroni, Eyacque, and Tepi—hereditary leaders whose wisdom carried weight across time. Others were shamans and healers, readers of stars and keepers of chants. Together they shepherded thresholds: birth, puberty, marriage, mourning, harvest, war, reconciliation.

For children, every day was a lesson, every season a curriculum. Elders were libraries in motion, and ceremonies their living footnotes. The litany endures—Màni (datura drinking), ántuš (ordeal), nótuš (pole climbing), méyiš (hunting purification), móraxiš (eagle feather dance), péniš (eagle killing), aputs (fertility dance), háyiš (moon racing), çúyiš (burning of mortuary clothes), tuviš (washing for death and birth), wiqèniš (female puberty), péwluš (marriage), nétuš (conception), çélaixiš (peace between individuals), náwtiš (peace between tribes).

Anthropologists and tribal historians describe an Acjachemen world that stretched from the beaches of what is now Orange County to the inland hills and river drainages—villages set near watercourses, lifeways adapted to oak woodlands and coastal estuaries. Linguistically, the people spoke a dialect related to Luiseño—part of the Takic branch of the Uto-Aztecan family—an affiliation scholars have pieced together from early recordings and field notes now used in revitalization efforts.

The names by which the world now recognizes them have their own story. "Acjachemen," some historians note, originally referred to residents of the village of Acjachme at San Juan; usage

broadened over time. "Juaneño," bestowed by missionaries, marks proximity to Mission San Juan Capistrano. Today, family names and village names braid into identity, a living map in which history, language, and landscape converge. Consider the five who convened beneath the arches for this collector's issue: Sommers, Hunn, Rios, Lobo, Walkingstick. Their presence demonstrates what the proverb means when it warns that, when an elder dies, a library burns. And yet libraries breathe, too: a prayer recalled in a quiet moment; a song hummed while working. These fragments accrete into continuity.

Continuity, in modern times, has demanded political stamina. From the Mission Indian Federation to the Capistrano Indian Council, and through the forty-plus tribal council members who have served since the ratification of the 1979 constitution, the wisdom of elders has steadied the tribe. In practice, sovereignty looks like meetings, minutes, ballots, budgets—and the long work of insisting that identity not be eroded by convenience or paperwork's tide.

The tribe continues to honor elders with the highest respect. They are living connections that stretch back to the time before first contact. Families are the spine of this continuity—the names Rios, Doram, Lobo, Valenzuela, and Olivares trace their lineage by blood back to identified villages, carrying with them an unbroken thread of history that links the people to the land itself. These elders also stand as a representation of all elders from the relations of Regulo, Natalia, Magdalena, Florentino, Yorba, Zola, Yrarabuit, Zudut, Saul, Yaquile, and Sulpicio—together representing every lineage of the nation.

Language—once suppressed—threads back into an unbroken conversation between land and ancestors. The last fluent Acjachemen speakers died in the early 20th century; yet recordings and notes by field linguists and community scholars have become seeds for renewal. Today, vocabulary re-enters daily life, sometimes tentatively, sometimes with bright confidence—names of places spoken aloud, meanings carried on native breath once more. In intimate classrooms and living rooms, the cadence returns; it does not matter if it arrives first as whisper.



Dennis
"Judo" Sommers



Thomas "Happy"
Hunn



Harley "Wick"
Lobo

Governance adapts as well. The contemporary Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation maintains a public-facing tribal government and cultural programs that range from site monitoring to education—an infrastructure for presence in a county that grew up around them. Back in the courtyard, the cover shoot carries its own levity. There is the usual choreography—“One more for safety,” “Eyes here,” “Okay, now relax”—and the electricity of a moment that understands itself. Jokes about who blinks, a hand on a forearm to steady a stance. As always, tribe ancestors can be felt within these walls. The Mission is not separate from the tribe—it is part of their story, just as they are part of its history. Juaneño ancestors embody the deep relationship of time within every aspect of the Mission, and in the traditions that survive today. To honor elders is to honor that bond, for they remind us that Acjachemen are forever connected to this land, this place, and to each other.

There is a tendency, in commemorations, to gild the narrative—to sand the burrs, sweeten the ending, widen the soft focus until grief and grit blur out. The elders’ presence resists that. Even as the Mission prepares its 250th festivities, even as gala tables are set beneath the old arches and the ruins turn into theater for a night, the community is adjusting the lens, adding depth of field: the earthquake story that decimated a Native congregation; the epidemics; the labor that raised every beam. Commemoration without candor is mere décor. While the Mission’s 250th is ongoing with a clear culmination date, the elders on the cover are not symbols but people carrying living obligations. When the shoot ends, the courtyard exhales. The elders step out of frame. The swallows keep their metronome across the sky. Readers will find this magazine in mailboxes and on coffee tables and call the beautiful cover momentous, historic, moving. They will be right. But those in the know will recognize a capture both documentary and devotional: five libraries unburned; five archives breathing; five lives standing at the hinge of a city’s

250th and a people’s immeasurable time. Which is why the picture matters. A cover image published and passed hand to hand anchors the commemorative to the community.

In the glow of the 250th, the elders remind San Juan Capistrano that memory is not an artifact; it is a pulse, steady and unbroken. And if the arches have seen centuries, so have the people—three hundred generations whose future, for the moment, looks out from a cover and meets the reader’s gaze.



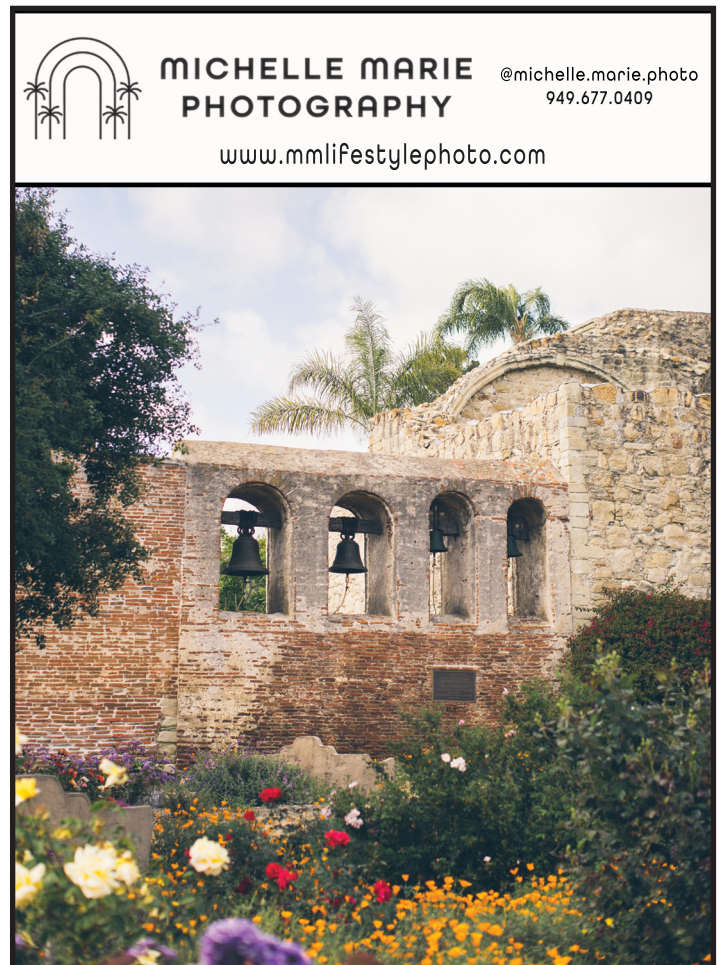
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Marian Walkingstick



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Wells of Life

CAPISTRANO VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL RESTORES 2ND WATER WELL IN UGANDA

By Siena Huang



Every year, Wells of Life hosts the Annual Run4Water event, gathering runners, guests, businesses, and Wells of Life supporters and leaders. Prior to the actual event, individuals, businesses, schools, and other groups fundraise for their "Run4Water Teams," restoring one well in rural Uganda for every \$4,000 raised.

Since 2024, several students from Capistrano Valley High School partnered with Wells of Life successfully funding a restored well each year. The two restored wells will go on to provide safe, clean, drinking water to communities of approximately 1,000 individuals in rural Ugandan villages. With these milestones, Capo Valley



High School became one of the first public schools nationwide to fund a restored well in Uganda.

Capo's 2024 and 2025 Run4Water fundraising efforts were led by 2025 graduate Siena Huang, who will head to UCLA in the Fall as a first-year undergraduate. Huang led a series of initiatives, including going door-to-door asking for donations from teachers, and selling handmade bracelets in her school quad and in front of a CVS Pharmacy; she also invited an Alohana Acai truck to school, earning a 20-percent kickback from all sales to Capo students.

"A year and a half ago, I believed that I had little power to help others around the globe as a high school student. I was proven wrong when I joined Wells of Life. With the support of people at my school and Wells of Life Director of Programs Michelle Danly, we ended up changing thousands of lives," says Siena.

Alongside Siena, Ethan Williams and Mahan Nourian, both graduates, also fundraised for Capo's Run4Water team. In 2024, Williams and Nourian began a fundraiser during a home football game with Raising Canes, where 15 percent of evening sales from CapostudentsandfamilywasdonatedbacktoCapo'srestoredwell. Williams and Nourian also went door-to-door asking neighbors for donations.

The Capo students' story demonstrates how high schoolers are not at all too young to do global good; in fact, the opposite is true. Anyone in grades 9-12 or even younger are perfect individuals to get involved in good causes.

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Veteran Strong

Empowering Veterans, One Horse at a Time

By Ted Fuentes, USAF Veteran



Ted Fuentes

Veteran Strong USA is a veteran-owned and operated 501(c)(3) nonprofit located at the historic Rancho Sierra Vista Equestrian Center in San Juan Capistrano, California. Built on the principle of for veterans, by veterans, our mission is simple yet powerful: Empowering Veterans, One Horse at a Time.

Our programs are rooted in the proven connection between horses and healing. Through Join-Up® techniques, we guide veterans in building trust, communication, and confidence with horses—skills that directly translate to life outside the arena. Our Equine Assisted Psychotherapy sessions provide a safe, non-judgmental space where licensed professionals and horses work together to support veterans navigating challenges such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, and trauma.

Beyond therapy, we offer Therapeutic Horsemanship, giving veterans hands-on experience in riding, groundwork, and horsemanship skills that foster resilience, discipline, and pride. Our Grooming Therapy programs emphasize calmness, mindfulness, and care—offering veterans

a chance to slow down, connect, and heal through the simple act of brushing, touching, and bonding with horses.

What makes Veteran Strong USA unique is that every aspect of our organization reflects the veteran experience. Our staff and volunteers understand the challenges of military service and the transition to civilian life because we've lived it ourselves. This shared background creates a community of trust, camaraderie, and purpose where no one is left behind.

From trail rides to group sessions, our equine-based programs not only strengthen veterans individually but also rebuild family bonds, support networks, and community ties. We are proud to provide these services at no cost to those who have served, honoring their sacrifice with meaningful pathways to recovery and growth.

At Veteran Strong USA, we believe that healing begins with connection—between horse and human, veteran and veteran, individual and community.

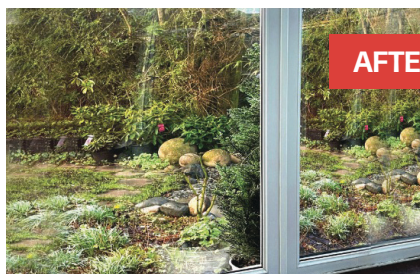
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Shielding Orange County and Mission San Juan Capistrano from the Sun

By Linda Hakim

In the heart of Orange County, Sun Tamers Window Tinting stands as a beacon of protection against the relentless California sun. Established in 1988, this family-owned business has served the region for over 35 years, with a strong presence in Laguna Niguel and nearby communities, including Mission Viejo, San Juan Capistrano, Dana Point, Ladera Ranch, and others. Located at 27862 Camino Capistrano in Laguna Niguel, Sun Tamers specializes in high-quality window tinting solutions for automotive, residential, and commercial needs.

Founded by Frank Torriero III, the company emphasizes expertise and customer satisfaction. Their team of seasoned technicians—praised for their knowledge and professionalism—handles everything from basic tint applications to advanced installations. Services include automotive window tinting that blocks up to 70-percent of solar heat and 99-percent of harmful UV rays, protecting vehicle interiors and passengers while enhancing privacy and style.

For homes, residential tinting reduces glare, lowers energy bills by minimizing air conditioning use, and prevents fading of furniture and floors. Commercial offerings extend to office buildings, where tinting creates comfortable workspaces and safeguards assets.

One standout project underscores their expertise: tinting the historic Mission San Juan Capistrano. Facing the fading of irreplaceable artifacts due to UV exposure, the Mission trusted Sun Tamers to apply specialized ultraviolet window film across several buildings. This solution not only halted deterioration but also reduced heat and controlled light, preserving this iconic Orange County landmark.

Customer feedback highlights Sun Tamers' reliability. On Yelp, with over 230 reviews averaging high ratings, clients rave about the team's efficiency and results. One reviewer noted, "Frank and his team did such a great job... advising and installing," while another praised quick fixes for minor issues. Angi reviews echo this, with testimonials on responsive service and dramatic temperature drops post-installation.

“ONE STANDOUT PROJECT UNDERSCORES THEIR EXPERTISE: TINTING THE HISTORIC MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO. FACING THE FADING OF IRREPLACEABLE ARTIFACTS DUE TO UV EXPOSURE, THE MISSION TRUSTED SUN TAMERS TO APPLY SPECIALIZED ULTRAVIOLET WINDOW FILM ACROSS SEVERAL BUILDINGS.”

Fully licensed, insured, and bonded, Sun Tamers backs their work with industry-leading warranties, ensuring peace of mind. Beyond tinting, they offer vinyl graphics, vehicle wraps, and window coverings, making them a one-stop shop for sun protection and aesthetic enhancements.

In Orange County's sunny climate, Sun Tamers Window Tinting isn't just a service—it's an investment in comfort, preservation, and style. Whether safeguarding a historic site or cooling a family home, they continue to tame the sun with unmatched dedication.

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San Juan's Cowboy Spirit Leads to Record-Breaking Rides

By Si Si Penaloza
Photos by Doug Olear

The 2nd Annual Circle S Ranch Rodeo arrived in Silverado like a cavalry charge—dust, grit, pageantry, and the kind of close-call competition that makes you question whether time itself can bend. At the center of it all: Corey Schlom, part hometown cowboy, part impresario, and wholly convinced that rodeo belongs as much to the locals as it does to the professionals. Ever humble, he's the reluctant visionary who insists he's just reviving old neighborhood rodeos while simultaneously reinventing what they can be.

"The Circle S Ranch Rodeo was born of a distinct mindset than the evolution of rodeos gone corporate," Corey muses. "We're more akin to the way it was back in 1950s California, back when neighboring ranches would gather to do regional rodeos. That's what we're chasing here—home, not headquarters."

If the rodeo is home for Western-loving locals, the Schlom family is the foundation stone. Speaking from the announcer's booth, Corey honored his brother, Sergeant First Class Ryan Dean Schlom, U.S. Army Special Forces, who served 21 years, deployed seven times, survived an IED blast, and had a hand in missions that read like the classified section of American history. "My brother Ryan is a hero," Corey said. "Twenty-one years ago, he answered the call, fought terrorism, fought enemies abroad—and now he retires with valor."

Valor was a recurring theme, even among the volunteers. Corey was quick to underline their commitment, "There would be no rodeo without the Rodeo Crew. Everyone's a volunteer, they work from dawn to dusk. That's the family legacy, Circle S as a second home to those who ride for the brand." Volunteer firefighters and sheriffs also turned up in full uniform on the hottest day of the year to serve.

And the competition? Fierce doesn't cover it. San Juan Capistrano riders all but stormed the leaderboard. Carlos Hernandez and Rob Bishop set a new rodeo record in Team Roping at 8.32. Brooke Carter of American Horse Products and Travis Caron claimed third. Ribbon Roping became a San Juan showcase, with Alex Hayden and Jake Corzine in first, and Antonio Torres pushing into second with partner Kevin Danishman.

Hayden and Corzine weren't done—they teamed up with Brent Chase and Rick Hanson, all SJC, to grab second in Sort N Rope.



Local canyon cowgirl Savy Keune, winner of the 2024 Rodeo barrel racing competition and one of this year's volunteer flag girls.



This year's Team Roping Champion Header Carlos Hernandez (left) with Announcer and Rodeo Producer Corey Schlom.

Nico Stable clawed into second in Mutton Bustin', while Kane Vandenberg, son of FKN Bread's founders, held on for third. For all the spectacle—Ropin' Steers, Sortin' Calves, the Duke helicopter flyover—the greatest trick of Circle S may be that it turned into the capital of cowboy camaraderie.

Grab your tickets for next year at CircleSRanchRodeo.com



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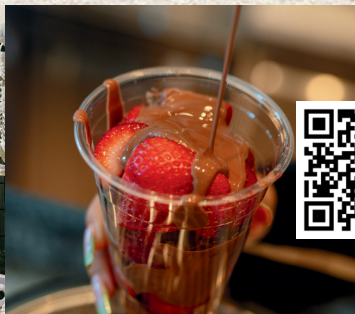
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The Great Grandmother Oak of Putuidem

By Chris A. Lobo

We are the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, the Acjachemen people. For countless generations, our lives have been guided and sustained by the great oak trees of our homeland. At Putuidem, one oak stands taller and more grand than most—our Great Grandmother Oak. She is not only a tree but a sacred relative, a living memory of our ancestors, and a testament to our survival.

Our elders have told us how the oak trees sustained our way of life. Each autumn, when the acorns fell, gathering them was one of the greatest efforts of our year. Families worked together to collect, dry, and store the acorns in large granaries woven from tule and willow. One mature oak could provide one to two tons of acorns in a season—enough to nourish families through the winter and into the following year. The oak trees gave us strength, security, and balance.



The acorns were carefully cracked, their shells removed, and the nutmeats ground into fine meal with stone mortars and pestles. This flour was leached with water to wash away its bitterness. From this patient labor came wiiwish, our acorn mush, which sustained our villages for thousands of years.

Preparing wiiwish was both work and ceremony. As the acorn mush was heating in a large cooking basket or clay bowl with hot stones, some of the liquid would be taken out and enjoyed warm, like milk, especially by the elders. As the wiiwish thickened into a porridge, the last hot rock was removed, and bowls were served for all to share. The remaining mush was sometimes poured onto a large flat rock, cooled, then cut into small pieces and carried in special pouches to be eaten throughout the day. It was food for the hunter, the gatherer, the child, the elder—food that carried us through every part of life.

As shared by respected elder Jerry Nieblas, His Nana once said “This great Grandmother Oak” represents our ancestors. The



Edward Davis photo of a native woman pounding acorns. The flour which resulted from this exercise was mixed with water to make a kind of mush which, enhanced with bits of meat (e.g. rabbit, or rattlesnake), or fish, was the basis of the diet of the Acagchemem people before the arrival of the Spanish in the late 18th century. The photograph, taken in the 1920's, is reproduced courtesy San Juan Capistrano Mission Museum.

Great Grandmother Oak reveals and tells the story of our people, the good, the bad, the struggles, and finally the great difficulties that we were forced to endure.”

This Sacred Oak is a living witness to our history, to our Chiefs and Chieftess’, and to our unbroken connection to Putuidem. Her branches reach out as our families do, growing strong from deep roots. Though time has brought hardships, the Great Grandmother Oak still stands, and so do we.

We are the Acjachemen. We have endured, we continue, and we are still here today.



Her branches reach out as our families do, growing strong from deep roots. Though time has brought hardships, the Great Grandmother Oak still stands, and so do we.

Honoring the Women of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation

By Chris A. Lobo

In celebration of the 250 years of Mission San Juan Capistrano, it is only fitting to honor the women who shaped our history across centuries. Long before the Mission was founded in 1776, our people had lived here for more than 10,000 years. Yet, since the Mission's first services, we have been forever woven into the fabric of every stone, every bell, and every prayer uttered within its walls.

The following women—matriarchs, teachers, spiritual leaders, cultural protectors, political figures and community anchors—embody the endurance of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation. They carried our traditions through generations of upheaval and change, ensuring that we remain a people rooted in our land, faith, culture, heritage and sovereign rights.

SERGIA XIGUIGUIDAM (BORN 1747)

Sergia was born before the founding of Mission San Juan Capistrano and was among those who endured the early years of Spanish arrival. Sergia was Baptised at the age of 58. From the village of Tobe her family was coerced into the Mission during the time of Gaspar de Portolá and Father Junípero Serra. As one of the oldest Juaneño women recorded, Sergia represents the beginning of our people's Mission era story, carrying traditions forward in the face of upheaval and a changed way of life forever more.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY.

MARIA BENARDA CHIQUILIA (BORN 1762)

From the village of Putuidem, Maria Benarda was the first Juaneño woman recorded to marry a Spanish soldier. On August 30, 1778, at just 16 years old, she married Antonio Cota, a leather-jacket soldier of Mission San Juan who was 58. This marriage became the first documented union between an Acjachemen woman and a Spanish soldier.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY.

MARIA GUADALUPE (YAHÙIVEDEM) (1760s)

From the village of Tòovunña. At 22 years old, Maria Guadalupe became the second Juaneño woman recorded to marry a Spanish soldier. On December 12, 1778, she wed Francisco Maria Peña. Her marriage illustrates the profound cultural and social upheaval experienced by our people as the Mission system began to reshape our traditional and cultural way of life.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY.

MARIA RUFINA ALLAM (1770s)

Maria Rufina, from the village of Uchme, represents the third documented marriage between a Juaneño woman and a Spanish soldier. As a teenager, she wed Pio Quinto Zuñiga, a soldier in his 30s. Like the others, her marriage symbolizes the forced blending of cultures and the resilience of Acjachemen women who carried tradition forward despite immense change.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY.

CORRONNI

Corronni, daughter of Chief Oyaisson, came from the village of Sejat and established herself as the female leader of our mother village, Putuidem. Oral tradition tells us that after her passing, her people mourned so deeply that they lay upon one another in a pyramid form. From this act came the name Acjachema—our Nation's name. It is said that it was Corronni's outward navel that gave Putuidem its name.

BURIAL: PUTUIDEM.

TEODISIA HUGAPIM (BORN 1700s)

Teodisia Hugapim is remembered as a symbol of the December 8, 1812, earthquake, when the Great Stone Church at Mission San Juan Capistrano collapsed. The mother of eight children, she lost two that day, including her daughter, Cirila Sabrina, who was pulled from the rubble and later identified as the 39th victim. Both mother and daughter were buried six weeks later.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY.

PRAXIDES NAUIDAM (BORN 1700s)

Praxides became known as an early renegade against the rigid rules of Mission life. In 1786 she fled the Mission, disappearing for two years. At that time, fugitives were often returned by soldiers to face punishment at the hands of the priests. Her story represents resistance, courage, and the longing for freedom even within oppressive conditions.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY.



*Victoria "Viviana"
Ricardes Olivares*

VICTORIA "VIVIANA" RICARDES OLIVARES (BORN 1883)

Viviana was a descendant from the villages of Alauna, Guaromo, and Totpam. She was known to be the very first Matriarch of San Juan Capistrano. When Viviana was born the area was still known to be Los Angeles until Orange County was established in 1889. She was born in the Parramatta Adobe on the Ortega Highway. Viviana lived in three historic

areas in Orange County. Her first residence was Los Rios Street where her house still stands today. Her second location was on the Ranch in what is now Camp Pendleton, and her third was the Ranch house in Ortega Highway.

BURIED: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.



Hope Esperanza Robles Lobo

HOPE ESPERANZA ROBLES LOBO (1892)

A descendant of the villages of Tobe, Pacseve, Chuitaque, Aguanga, and Matamo, Hope lived in the neighborhood known as Little Hollywood off Los Rios Street. She was the Executive Secretary of the Mission Indian Federation and one of the last fluent speakers of the Acjachemen language. Hope's neighbors were the Doram's and Cruz families, known as a central

hub for Tribal gatherings. Her home became a central gathering place for tribal affairs, drawing leaders and community members alike. She was the mother of Chief Clarence H. Lobo and a dear friend of Father O'Sullivan, the great restorer of Mission San Juan Capistrano. Her friendships, advocacy, and leadership ensured that the tribal voice remained strong in the 20th century. Hope, her son, grandson, and great grandson represent a direct line of leadership and service to the tribe for over 60 years.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.

1793, and known as one of the last of Juaneño Alcalde's (1850) he was from the village of Tobe.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.

KA CHI LOBO (BORN 1947)

For many years, Ka Chi Lobo served as the Spiritual Teacher of our Tribal Nation. From childhood she was raised and prepared to fulfill this sacred role, guiding our people in prayer, language, and ceremony. Through her voice in song and her steadfast dedication to keeping the Acjachemen language alive, she gave strength to generations and ensured that the heartbeat of our culture would endure. From Ka Chi, we are connected from the days of the past to the days yet to come, her teachings a bridge across time. In 2015, her ashes were returned to the ocean, spread among the dolphins off our coast—at home, at peace, and one with Mother Earth.

BURIAL: ASHES SPREAD IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN.



Juanita Rios Foy

JUANITA RIOS FOY (BORN 1913)

Juanita was the Great Great Great granddaughter of Feiciano Rios, a soldier assigned to guard Serra and help build the mission. She attended the Indian boarding school in Banning. She frequently traveled to several elementary schools throughout Orange County sharing the history of the Juaneño people and mission history. Juanita served as

docent to the mission and later became the Matriarch of the city, which is an honor given by the Historical Society. At her passing she had 19 grandchildren, 19 great grandchildren and about 80 nieces and nephews.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.



Evelyn (Lobo) Villegas

EVELYN (LOBO) VILLEGAS (1924)

A descendant of the villages of Tobe, Pacseve, Chuitaque, Aguanga, and Matamo, Evelyn Villegas was known as the Matriarch of San Juan Capistrano. Evelyn was the daughter of Hope Lobo and sister to Chief Clarence H. Lobo. She served as the only non-credentialed teacher in the Capistrano Unified School District, focusing her energy on local Indian children and

underprivileged youth. In 1992, Evelyn was instrumental in recreating our language for the Lord's Prayer to be sung inside Mission San Juan Capistrano—the first time the Acjachemen language was heard in the Mission since its founding in 1776.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.

LILLIAN ROBLES (BORN 1917)

A descendant of Guachenga, Panhe, Tobe, and Zagivit, Lillian Robles was a protector of sacred sites. Each year she led protesters in prayer at housing developments in Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, and Seal Beach, reminding developers that they were building on ancient Indian burial grounds. "This land speaks to me," she once said. "It calls to me. And I have



Lillian Robles

to do whatever I can to protect it." Lillian founded the Ancestors Walk, which continues today in its 28th year, visiting sacred sites across ancestral Acjachemen lands. A foster mother for 22 years, she cared for more than 500 children, and in 1969 Los Angeles County named her Foster Mother of the Year.

BURIAL: FAMILY PLOT, CALVARY CEMETERY, EAST LOS ANGELES.



Helen (Charles) McMullen

HELEN (CHARLES) MCMULLEN (BORN 1923)

A descendant of the village of Alauna, Helen sang in the Mission choir and became a respected Matriarch of San Juan Capistrano. She served as President of the Capistrano Indian Council during the 70s and 80s and was the daughter of Mission Indian Federation Chief of Police Ralph Charles. She was related to Alcalde Florentino Gugannavit, born

Continued on next page

YOLANDA SANDOVAL (BORN 1919)

A descendant of Zudut and Zoget of Putuidem, Yolanda served as Tribal Secretary to Chief Clarence H. Lobo during the fight for land claims, federal recognition, and self-governance. She was the mother of former Tribal Council member Chris Sandoval and the grandmother of Adelia Sandoval, our current Spiritual Overseer and Cultural Director. Yolanda and her children have served in the tribes' leadership for over 30 years.

BURIAL: HOLY SEPULCHER CEMETERY, ORANGE.



Viola (Lobo) Brown

VIOLA (LOBO) BROWN (BORN 1926)

Viola Lobo, a descendant of Tobe, Pacseve, Chuitaque, Auanga and Matomo, is remembered as the author of the "Lobo Lexicon." When she was only 10 years old, she began carefully recording the words of our language. By the age of 14, her work had grown into a lexicon of 222 words. She heard the Juaneño language not only from her mother, Esperanza (Danza) Robles Lobo, and

Grandmother, Luz Robles, but also from the community around her. Viola listened intently to the voices of friends and elders from the old neighborhood—people who today are remembered as historic pillars of our nation: Leepa Olivares, Viejo Majel, Jose and Victoria Doram, Ralph and Reyes Charles, Chita Clark, Mary (Wandell) Lobo, and the Lugo family from the Pala Reservation. Their words, woven into her lexicon, preserved not just a vocabulary but a heartbeat, the living memory of a people. Viola attended Sherman Indian School and carried her knowledge forward, leaving behind an invaluable foundation for the generations that followed. In one of her last writings, Viola wrote to Senator Barbara Boxer in 2003, requesting that the sacred village site of Putuidem be saved from development.

BURIAL: ALABAMA.



Bobbie Banda

BOBBIE BANDA (1946)

Bobbie Banda fought for Native children's rights in education. She went door to door with Teeter Romero and Marian Walkingstick, gathering signatures to secure grant funding for Indian curriculum in the Capistrano Unified School District. Her determination left a legacy for generations of students who would grow up connected to their culture and history. Bobbie's efforts

will last for decades and will serve as a foundation for our tribal nation. She was a devout Catholic who attended church every Sunday at the Basilica in San Juan Capistrano. She was also the

mother of Nathan K. Banda, who would go on to serve as Tribal Chairman.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.



Fran (Sommers) Yorba

FRAN (SOMMERS) YORBA (1959)

A descendant of Tobe and Nacomaye, Fran Yorba was a bridge between the old and the new. She was the great-granddaughter of Jose Doram, Captain of the Juaneño Band of Indians of San Juan Capistrano, and a leader in the Mission Indian Federation. Through this lineage, Fran carried forward the strength and authority of one of our most respected leaders. During her

time on Tribal Council, Fran worked closely with genealogists and historians to piece together the stories, locations, and connections that linked present-day tribal citizens to their ancestors. She was a true conduit to the historic Doram family and the Little Hollywood neighborhood, grounding her work in both memory and place. Fran also played an instrumental role in federal recognition efforts, helping to establish acknowledgment of our tribal nation as directly tied to the historic Tribe of San Juan Capistrano. From Jose Garcia Cruz, Jose Doram, Victoria Doram, and Fran you can see the direct line of leadership that represented more than 30-years of leadership service to the Tribe.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.

FELIPA AVILA OLIVARES (BORN 1872)

Felipa was the last to live in the Mission as a permanent resident. Her life bridged centuries of Mission history, carrying forward memory, language, and tradition into the modern era. Felipa served as a Captain of the Mission Indian Federation of San Juan Capistrano near the years of its inception, 1920. She bore witness to a world transformed, yet remained rooted in the old ways, her presence a reminder of endurance and continuity.

BURIAL: MISSION CEMETERY ON THE HILL.

CLOSING REFLECTION

These women, and so many others whose names may never be recorded, embody the endurance of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation. Their voices rise from the Mission's stones, from the neighborhoods of San Juan Capistrano areas, and from the memories of their descendants. Each carried language, memory, and strength through times of upheaval, ensuring that our people would remain.

The Mission and our tribal people share a history both painful and enduring. Yet today, we honor the deep historic bond between us, one marked by survival, mutual respect, and recognition of all that has been carried forward. In remembering these women, we affirm that the story of the Acjachemen is alive, rooted in the past but reaching toward the future with every step and breath we take.

Goin Native Therapeutic Gardens

Goin Native

Growing Community, Wellness, and Connection in Season 2.0

By Marianne Taylor, Founder, Goin Native

For over a decade, Goin Native Therapeutic Gardens has quietly transformed lives through hands-on gardening education at Los Rios and Reata Park in San Juan Capistrano. The nonprofit connects adults, seniors, families, teens, and community groups with the healing power of plants and the beauty of native California habitats. Neurodivergent individuals are welcomed and actively included. Volunteers and participants alike learn the importance of pollinators and sustainable gardening, while also gaining a more profound sense of purpose, teamwork, and a sense of belonging.

Goin Native partners with CHOC Mental Health Institute to offer virtual garden classes each month for children ages 5 to 17 who are facing significant mental health challenges. We hold eight classes each month, and thanks to the success of our recent Summer Sunset Soirée fundraiser, two additional courses will be added in 2026—further expanding access to the wellness benefits of gardening.

Entering our 11th year, Goin Native is introducing seasonal programs designed to bring the community together throughout the year. Inspired by the beloved Festival of Butterflies, this new format focuses on nature's rhythm, offering opportunities to learn, connect, and celebrate throughout every season. During the four sessions, participants will take part in plant workshops, natural arts and crafts, live music, yoga, movement, wellness workshops, and storytelling. Each program captures the season's spirit, motivating participants to reconnect with nature, community, and themselves.

In addition to these gatherings, Goin Native is expanding its reach with Blooms for Seniors. Volunteers will help assemble donated flowers into cheerful jars to be delivered to residents at local assisted living communities, bringing beauty, connection, and joy to those who need it most.

At the heart of Goin Native's mission is a simple truth: nature heals. When we garden, move, create, and connect outdoors, our senses awaken, our stress decreases, and our "happy hormones" increase, reminding us of the peace and satisfaction that come from giving back.

GoinNative.net

To learn more, volunteer, or join upcoming events,
email Info@GoinNative.net.



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A year-long series
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celebrating nature, wellness,
art, and community at San
Juan Capistrano's local parks.

Goin Native

- 🌱 Grow Plant workshop - plants sales - hands on a project
- 🧘 Renewal Community Yoga on the grass
- 🦋 Celebrate Butterflies and Blooms in a park setting
- 🎨 Create Art dance and live music in a park

You can help keep our seasonal events thrive:

- 🌟 Volunteer
- 💚 Donate
- 🗣️ Spread the Word

Learn more at www.goinnative.net

Nathan K. Banda Elected Tribal Chair of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation

By Linda Hakim

Photo by Michelle Marie Photography



Nathan K. Banda, Mission San Juan Capistrano's official bell ringer and longtime cultural steward, was elected Tribal Chair of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation in October 2024. He was formally inaugurated on February 15, 2025, and is now in his first year of a four-year term leading the tribe.

A 10th-generation member of the historic Rios family, Banda represents one of Southern California's oldest continuous Indigenous lineages. The tribe, the original people of Orange County, has ancestral territory spanning 265 documented villages across present-day Orange, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Riverside counties.

ANCESTRAL ROOTS: CONNECTION TO PITUIDEM, ALAUNA, AND GEVET

Banda's family ties to Acjachemen history extend well before the Mission period and the onset of first sustained European contact. His oldest documented ancestors in the Mission records include Nicostrato Singromivit Azuse of Pituidem (1767), Cucumel of Alauna (1755), and Forojominammovit of Gevet. Pituidem is not just a historic village—it is the mother village of the Acjachemen people.

According to oral tradition, Pituidem was founded by Chief Oyaision and his daughter Coroni (also known as Coronne). Chief Oyaision had a wife, Sirorum, and three daughters: Coroni, Vuiragram, and Uuniojum. However, it was Oyaision and Coroni who established Pituidem together. After founding the village, Chief Oyaision eventually returned to Sejat, another Acjachemen settlement, and left Coroni to serve as Chieftess of Pituidem. Her leadership took place well before the arrival of the Spaniards, during a time when Acjachemen governance and village life were fully sovereign and independent.

Located in what is now San Juan Capistrano, Pituidem represents both a spiritual and cultural center for the tribe, and a symbol of Acjachemen leadership, lineage, and continuity. For Banda, his ancestral ties to Pituidem, Alauna, and Gevet, and his family's historic connection to these villages, affirms his roots in the tribal territory and strengthens his role as a cultural and community leader. His election as Tribal Chair represents a continuation of this commitment to cultural preservation, leadership, and the protection of tribal history and territory.

A LEGACY OF BELL RINGERS

For centuries, the ringing of the bells at Mission San Juan Capistrano has been more than a ceremonial act—it has been a sacred tradition carried out by the Acjachemen people. When the Mission was established, the Acjachemen were entrusted with many daily responsibilities, including the role of bell ringer, a duty that held both practical and spiritual meaning. The bells marked the passage of time: calling people to worship, signaling mealtimes, warning of danger, and announcing births and deaths.

The sound of the bells became the voice of the Capistrano Valley, resonating through history. Despite the hardships of colonization, the community preserved this ceremonial role, passing it down through generations. For the tribe, ringing the bells is not just a ritual—it is a symbol of survival, cultural continuity, and connection to place.

Today, that tradition continues through Nathan K. Banda, who has served as the Mission's official bell ringer for nearly 15 years. For him, each toll of the bell is not just about history—it is a living affirmation of the tribe's continued presence in San Juan Capistrano.

Banda's personal ties to the Mission run deep. In addition to his ceremonial role, he has been a longtime volunteer, educator, and cultural leader at the site. His family history is woven into the Mission's own past: his great-grandmother from eight generations back, Crispiniana, tragically perished during the

collapse of the Great Stone Church in the December 8, 1812, earthquake, while attending Mass.

Reflecting on the evolving relationship between the tribe and the Mission, Banda said: "Mechelle [Lawrence Adams] and the Mission Preservation Foundation Board have listened to our stories and allowed us to hold important tribal ceremonies and celebrations, providing meaningful connections to our heritage in this sacred space."

NEW LEADERSHIP AND FEDERAL RECOGNITION EFFORTS

As Tribal Chair, Banda now represents nearly 2,000 tribal citizens. His leadership is the result of decades of preparation. He attended his first tribal meeting at the age of five and has held various leadership roles over the past twelve years. At 41 years old, Banda acknowledges the challenges ahead. The tribe is currently recognized by the State of California but not by the federal government—a distinction he is committed to addressing during his leadership.

"Federal recognition is essential for our people," Banda said. "It would formally acknowledge our sovereignty and give us the ability to govern our affairs, preserve our culture, and better provide for our citizens." Federal recognition would grant the tribe full self-governance, including the authority to manage cultural practices, internal governance, and community affairs. It would also provide access to federal programs through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS), supporting vital services such as health care, education, housing, infrastructure, and economic development. One of the most important benefits is the ability to acquire land in trust, ensuring tribal lands are protected from taxation or sale without federal approval. These lands could be used for housing, cultural preservation, business development, and ceremonial purposes.

The tribe first filed for federal recognition in 1982, and the process continues. It requires extensive documentation of tribal history, governance, and continuous community presence. In his campaign and election statement, Banda pledged: "As Tribal Chair, I will build upon our existing efforts to propel our nation forward. I am committed to expanding our current committees and appointing dedicated tribal members to represent our interests as ONE. Together, we will strengthen our relationships within Indian Country, the County of Orange, the State of California, and the U.S. Government."

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND LOOKING AHEAD

Mission San Juan Capistrano's Executive Director, Mechelle Lawrence Adams, expressed her support for Banda's leadership: "Nathan K. Banda is profoundly well-suited to take the reins from the ever-capable and highly respected Chairwoman Heidi Lucero as Tribal Chair. Having worked with Nate at the Mission for nearly 20 years and sitting beside him on the City of San Juan Capistrano's Cultural Heritage Commission, I have seen firsthand a family man of great dedication to the community. Nathan has always strived to preserve his ancestors' history in away that is open-minded, collaborative, and engaging. I am excited to see what comes next and stand ready to welcome the 250th anniversary of Mission San Juan Capistrano with him. With Nathan in this important role, the bells will continue to ring in honor of an evolving history and a positive future for our local Indigenous community for many years to come."

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Enduring Leadership

Our Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Past to Present

By Chris A. Lobo

We, the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, also known as the Acjachemen Nation, carry a legacy of leadership that stretches back thousands of years. Our ancestral homeland extends from Puvú (what is now Long Beach) in the north, down to Ushmai (North of Oceanside) in the south, reaching east to Kaláupa (Saddleback Mountain), and west to the Channel Islands. Within this vast territory, over 250 villages once thrived, each with 25 to 250 people, connected through a complex network of trails and shared culture.

Our society was organized into three distinct social classes, with leadership passed down through family lines. Each village was led by either a Nu (Chief) or a Coróne (Chieftess)—never both at once—but both held equal authority and responsibility. The Eyáacque, the first son, was trained to assist and eventually succeed the Nu, while the Tepi, daughter of the leader, played an important role in diplomacy, cultural knowledge, and passing our traditions forward.

Larger villages had councils called the Púplem, made up of respected leaders and advisors. This included Pájas (Ceremonial

Leaders), Shamans who provided spiritual and healing guidance, and sometimes a Pul (Astrologer), who read the stars to guide us through planting seasons, gatherings, and ceremonies. Many other specialists supported our ceremonies, each carrying unique songs and dances that keep our spiritual life strong.

Our villages were connected by trails known as the Nu or Notas trails. These were the paths our criers, messengers, and ceremonial leaders traveled to call our people together, share important news, or warn of conflict. These trails were the veins that kept our people united. Our villages were connected both culturally and geographically through intermarriage and the trails known throughout the territory, which reinforced a deep sense of unity, responsibility, and shared ceremonial life across the region.

Our leadership is not simply history. It is a direct, unbroken line stretching back thousands of years. Leadership is a sacred trust, built on stewardship, respect, and cultural knowledge passed from generation to generation. Both women and men have held honored positions, and our elders continue to guide us with their wisdom.

One of the most important records that help us trace our lineage and leadership are the revered Mission registers. These meticulously kept documents from Mission San Juan Capistrano provide invaluable insight into our ancestors, their family connections, and their titled roles, such as Nu and Coróne. The registers serve as both historical proof and sacred testimony of our people's enduring presence and governance through time.

As a small example from the time of the Mission's founding, Fr. Gerónimo Boscana documented in *Relación Histórica*—and the Mission registers confirm—that several village leaders (Nu or Chiefs) were actively recognized. These included Chief Oyaison of Sejat, Chief Coronne of Putuidem, Chief Taclet of Ecjelme, Chief Paat of Tepipche, Chief Choqual of Acjachemen, Chief Temiachocot of Julbe, Chief Tobalauc of Tebon, Chief Siddoc of Ene, Chief Sequilquix of Pange, Chief Toroe of Souche, Chief

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Quapchocops of Tobe, Chief Telmex of Tumume, Chief Gualua of Taje, Chief Uchat of Uut, Chief Cusuol of Alauna, and Chief Chululeck of Ushme. These names are not only recorded history—they are bloodline connections to our present-day tribal citizens and the original governance of our people.

In 1776, when Mission San Juan Capistrano was founded, our lives changed drastically. Spanish colonization brought forced religious conversion and labor, attempting to dismantle our governance. Yet, our leadership endured—in hidden ceremonies, in stories passed down, and in the strength of our families who refused to lose who we are.

In the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, our leadership continued and evolved through organizations such as the Mission Indian Federation and the Capistrano Indian Council. These bodies represented our people's interests at local and national levels during times of great challenge and change. Leaders like Alcalde Florentino Gugannavit, Jose de Garcia Cruz "Acu", Felipa Avila Olivares, Jose Doram, Hope Esperanza Robles Lobo, Ralph Charles, and Clarence H. Lobo carried our voices forward, standing strong for our rights, culture, and future.

From the founding of our Tribal constitution of 1979 to today, we continue this legacy through our elected Tribal Council, currently led by Chairman Nathan K. Banda. Though we are not federally recognized, we remain a powerful voice for cultural preservation, sacred site protection, education, and community leadership. We also maintain strong, respectful relations with Mission San Juan Capistrano, working together to honor our shared history

and ensure our stories are told accurately.

Our Tribe includes 1,941 enrolled citizens, each with professionally documented bloodlines traced to pre-first sustained contact, connected to villages dating back to the early 1700s. Every one of us can proudly name our ancestors and identify the villages where they came from.

Examples are names like Regulo Yeguagua (1757, Alauna), Florentino Gugannavit (1793, Tobe), Nicostrato (1767, Putiidhem), Chigila (1762, Acjaptavit), Xiguiguiviam (1747, Tobe), Yusenim (1718, Pacseve), and Panaula (1753, Pange) connect us deeply to this land.

We are not a club, a foundation, or a token. We are a historic and sovereign Native people that are the cultural foundation of these lands. Our bloodlines, our governance, and our beliefs form a living legacy—a culture with complex spiritual and cultural practices that continue to this day.

We are honored to kick off the 250th anniversary of Mission San Juan Capistrano on October 18th, 2025, at the Mother Village site of Putuidem Village—our ancestral homeland and a place of great spiritual significance. As we approach this milestone, we will share our truth: the Acjachemen built the Mission, survived its legacy, and continue to lead with pride, purpose, and strength.

From ancient village councils to modern tribal governance, our leadership is rooted in tradition and committed to future generations. For more information, please visit JBMIAN.com





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Adelia Sandoval

Acjachemen Spiritual Overseer and Cultural Leader

By Nathan K. Banda

Adelia Sandoval is the Spiritual Overseer (Púul) and Cultural Director for the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians/Acjachemen Nation, the Indigenous people of Orange County, California. For decades, she has dedicated her life to preserving and sharing Acjachemen traditions through art, writing, storytelling, and song.

A respected ceremonial leader, song keeper, wisdom holder, tribal teacher, and healer, Adelia has long been recognized as a guiding voice for her people. She has been the lead singer of the Tushmal Singers for many years, carrying and sharing traditional Acjachemen songs that honor her ancestors and pass on cultural knowledge to future generations.



Adelia created Song of the Earth, a Native American healing ministry held in outdoor sanctuaries, where participants experience the spiritual connection between people, the land, and the Creator. Her work bridges cultural traditions with spiritual healing practices, offering guidance and blessings rooted in Acjachemen wisdom.

Her leadership extends beyond the tribe. She served as a Trustee on the Global Council of the United Religions Initiative (URI), a worldwide interfaith network promoting peace, justice, and healing for the Earth and all living beings. She is also a member of Women of Spirit and Faith, contributing to their book *Women, Spirituality and Transformative Leadership: Where Grace Meets Power*. Adelia continues to advise interfaith and environmental organizations, advocating for the sacred balance between humanity and the natural world.

Locally, she serves as the Village Mentor and Elder at The Ecology Center, a 28-acre regenerative organic farm in San Juan Capistrano, where she offers ancestral blessings and shares traditional ecological knowledge.

On February 8, 2025, Adelia was ordained as an Ecumenical Catholic Priest within the progressive Catholic tradition and now serves at St. Matthew Ecumenical Catholic Communion, Servants of the Good Shepherd in Brea, California. Through her voice, teachings, and leadership, Adelia Sandoval continues to honor her Acjachemen ancestors while guiding her community and beyond in the spirit of healing, prayer, and cultural renewal.



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How to Spend One Simple Morning in San Juan Capistrano

By Daniele Smith



Living in San Juan Capistrano, we can all appreciate the charm this historic town has to offer. Whether you have been here for a lifetime or are new to the community, it's always a relaxing idea to stroll through the city and explore. From Historic architecture to locally owned restaurants and scenic trails, this city offers a surprising number of things to see and do—all within close distance. Here's how to spend a morning in San Juan Capistrano.

MORNING: STEP BACK IN TIME AT THE MISSION

Start your day at **Mission San Juan Capistrano**, the crown jewel of the town. Founded in 1776, it's one of California's most beautiful and well-preserved Spanish missions. Next year, 2026, will mark the 250th Anniversary of the Mission San Juan Capistrano and the United States of America.

DON'T MISS:

- The ruins of the **Great Stone Church**
- The **Serra Chapel** (one of California's oldest buildings still in use)
- The peaceful gardens and koi ponds
- Swallow nests and exhibits showing the town's famous bird migration

TIP: Arrive right when it opens to enjoy the grounds before the crowds. Bring something to read and sit in the Mission grounds amongst the tall palm trees, a favorite spot.

LATE MORNING: EXPLORE THE LOS RIOS HISTORIC DISTRICT

Just across the railroad tracks from the Mission is the **Los Rios Historic District**, the oldest residential neighborhood in California.

HIGHLIGHTS TO CHECK OUT:

- **The Montanez Adobe**
- **Riverstreet Ranch** (great if you're traveling with kids)
- Charming **historic homes** turned into boutiques and cafés
- **The Tea House on Los Rios** for a bite to eat and a variety of Tea's to enjoy.

This area feels like stepping into a different era—quiet, shaded streets lined with old pepper trees and flowering gardens.

TIP: The Historical Society provides tours on Saturdays. Check SJCHistoricalSociety.com for more information.

Daniele Smith DRE #01927934

949.433.1977 / PropertiesInOrangeCounty.com

Instagram: [danielesmith_realtor](https://www.instagram.com/danielesmith_realtor)

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- Daniele was Ms. Fiesta for the 2023 Swallows Day Parade -
- 2021/2022 San Clemente Chamber of Commerce Ambassador of the Year -

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Happy 100th Birthday Joan Utas!

And Many More...

By Thomas Fitzgerald

San Juan Serra Sol resident Joan Utas turned 100-years young on August 30. Born in London, England, Joan arrived in the US with her husband, Alexander, and their three children in 1966. Here's wishing you a belated happy birthday, Joan, and many more!





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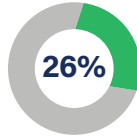
JUST SOLD
\$12,150,000



July marked a 1.9% increase for cash buyers in Orange County from June. Of all closed homes on record for July, buyers purchased **592** homes without a mortgage, **29.0%** of all closed sales in Orange County.

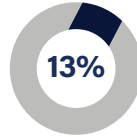


Closed Above L/P
(% of Recorded Closings)



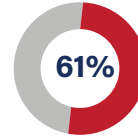
26% of all sales in July closed **above** the original list price. It was 32% in June.

Closed At L/P
(% of Recorded Closings)



Roughly 13% of all closed sales in July sold at the original list price. It was at 12% in June.

Closed Below L/P
(% of Recorded Closings)



61% of closed sales in July sold **below** the original list price. It was 56% in June.

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Recent *Real Estate* Activity

St#	St Name	Sale Price	Bed/Bath	SqFt	Sale Date	St#	St Name	Sale Price	Bed/Bath	SqFt	Sale Date
31277	Calle San Juan #92F	\$430,000	3/2	866	8/22/2025	27992	Paseo Barranca	\$1,350,000	4/3	2458	8/28/2025
26441	Paseo Carmel #8E	\$539,000	3/2	1141	8/1/2025	31937	Via Encima	\$1,360,000	3/3	1759	8/20/2025
31565	Calle La Purisima #28	\$575,000	3/2	1030	8/28/2025	25632	Purple Sage LN	\$1,565,000	3/2	1773	8/20/2025
27626	Morningstar LN	\$725,000	3/2	1332	8/27/2025	41	Plaza Vivienda	\$1,575,000	3/3	2227	8/22/2025
26491	Evergreen RD	\$730,000	2/1	1082	8/25/2025	33262	Paseo Molinos	\$1,670,000	5/4	2427	8/22/2025
30788	Calle Chueca	\$785,000	2/2	1095	8/13/2025	31282	Calle Bolero	\$1,800,000	5/5	3387	8/12/2025
27252	Via Callejon #A	\$810,000	2/2	1680	8/12/2025	25842	Calle Ricardo	\$1,960,000	4/3	2374	8/8/2025
26645	Paseo Ensenada	\$835,000	2/1	1020	8/15/2025	27221	Calle Delgado	\$1,975,000	4/3	3190	8/29/2025
27121	Via Chiquero #C	\$845,000	2/2	1300	8/12/2025	32152	Via Carlos	\$2,075,000	4/3	2246	8/11/2025
30872	Paseo El Marmol	\$1,050,000	4/3	1425	8/21/2025	31841	Paseo La Branza	\$2,250,000	4/3	2909	8/11/2025
13	Plaza Baja del Sol	\$1,165,000	2/2	1779	8/19/2025	31523	Aguacate RD	\$2,250,000	4/2	2416	8/22/2025
33081	Regatta CT	\$1,190,000	3/2	1285	8/25/2025	31521	Paseo Campeon	\$2,350,000	4/5	3373	8/4/2025
25	Plaza Caloroso	\$1,250,000	3/3	2285	8/6/2025	31842	Paseo Cielo	\$3,335,000	3/3	2984	8/27/2025
27559	Paseo Mimosa	\$1,300,000	3/2	1486	8/19/2025	27502	Paseo Boveda	\$3,780,000	5/5	5787	8/7/2025
32791	Parkplace LN	\$1,327,000	3/3	1996	8/29/2025						

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Katelyn Florentino

A Bright Light in San Juan Capistrano

By Gina "GG" Scolari

What began as small acts of service has blossomed into years of leadership and impact. A true role model among San Juan Capistrano's youth, Katelyn Florentino has been a shining light in her community since



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— Andy Rooney

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the 5th grade. What started with volunteering at cultural events and the Christmas Store has grown into years of dedication, leadership, and heart through her active participation in the Unidos program.

When the pandemic struck in 2020, Katelyn stepped up to support families through food distribution, ensuring they had access to essentials during uncertain times. That same compassion continues to guide her service today.

Now a junior at Dana Hills High School, Katelyn is involved in Breakthrough, AVID, Interact Rotary Club, and Unidos. In 2022, she launched Breaking Unhealthy Habits, a student-led initiative supporting peers in overcoming challenges like procrastination, stress, and mental health struggles.

Her advocacy runs deep. Katelyn is a strong voice for immigrant families, mental health awareness, and youth with limited resources. She inspires younger students and encourages her peers to step into leadership.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

Katelyn's dedication has earned her many awards, reflecting her leadership, academics, athletics, and service:

- Certificate of Congressional Recognition from the 49th Congressional District for her leadership and community service.

- Interactor of the Year Award
- Dana Hills High School Pillars of Excellence Award
- Exceptional Achievements Student Ambassador Career Award
- Academic Achievement in HMO Chemistry
- Athletic honors in girls' soccer, including the Junior Varsity Coaches Award (2024–2025)

Katelyn is more than a volunteer—she exemplifies the power of youth leadership in San Juan Capistrano. Her journey reminds us that when young people are given the space to lead, the whole community shines brighter. Her story challenges us as a community: if one student can create this much impact, imagine what could happen if every young person had the same encouragement and opportunities. We cannot overlook the voices of our youth—they are not just our future leaders; they are leaders today. By investing in programs, mentorship, and spaces like Unidos South OC in San Juan Capistrano, Katelyn proves that when we believe in our youth, everyone benefits.

Looking ahead, Katelyn dreams of studying criminal scene investigation at UC Davis or UC Berkeley. With her sharp mind, compassion, and determination, she is poised to make a lasting difference wherever life takes her.



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Sienna Soto

HOW A VARSITY STALLION
BECAME WATSON WOLFPACK 16U
PREMIERE'S BRIGHTEST SPARK

By Si Si Penaloza

Photo by Michael Khein, One of a Khein Media

Sports profiles tend to overdo it: prodigy, phenom, wunderkind. Sienna Soto, 16, softball star and quiet demolisher of pitchers' egos, has little patience for the thesaurus parade. Her own definitions are sharper and much more fun.

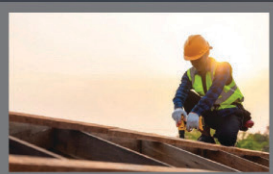
Take her comparison of middle infielders and first basemen: "The middle infielder is the confident social butterfly," she says. "They're throwing the dinner party, talking to every guest, still full of energy when the lights go out. First base? Total opposite. Shy, sweet teddy bear. Wallflower in the corner, probably next to a third baseman."

This is Soto's method: dismantle the game with anthropology and punchlines. A pitcher leaves a ball hanging? "It's my job to make it their biggest regret. That one missed pitch

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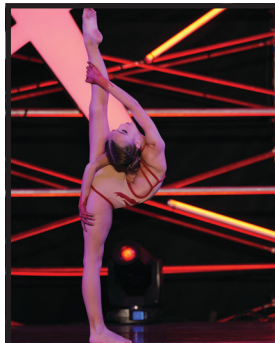
becomes the spark that ignites everything. When I square one up, it's euphoria and mischief. I'm rounding the bases with quiet cockiness—their mistake, my moment." Picture it: Soto rounding second, grin spreading, teammates screaming, and the pitcher staring into the middle distance wondering where it all went wrong.

Quiet cockiness—she says it like she's ordering fries. And you believe her. Because here's the Soto paradox: she makes violence look polite. Watching her punish a pitcher is like watching a nun win a bar fight.

By day she's a San Juan Hills High School Junior Varsity Stallion, sharpening her craft in navy and gold. By night—and most weekends—she's a Watson Wolfpack 16U Premiere star, where head coach Clint Watson sets the pace. The dual life suits her: one foot in the high school grind, the other in a travel-ball crucible.

She treats her career with the same brisk duality. First at-bat after an injury? Home run. "It was both Hollywood and Tuesday. I had put in the work, so I was just doing my job." If her bat ever wrote a memoir, its title would be better than most sports autobiographies: "The Comeback of Revival."

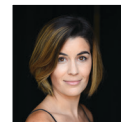
Soto wasn't one of the golden children scouted at 12. "Some girls get ranked high and fast-tracked. I wasn't one of them. I grew into my game later. But now? I've found my rhythm. That fire, that fight—you won't see it in a box score. But you'll feel it when I play." And there it is: less "phenomenon," more inevitability. She's not storming in. She's already here.



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