

## **John Pepper**

**Federally Recognized Tribal Representative:** Pala Band

**Campus Preference:** UC Berkeley

### **Qualified:**

John Pepper serves as the Pala Band of Mission Indians' Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and manages the Tribe's Cultural Resource Monitoring Program. In these capacities, he works directly on matters involving cultural resource protection, Tribal consultation, stewardship of culturally significant places, and the review of projects that may affect Tribal heritage.

### **References**

Shasta Gaughen (Pala THPO), Christopher Nejo, and Vaness Brierty recommend the candidate.

### **Chairman Letter of Support**

#### **Current UC Berkeley Committee**

1. Tribal Representative (Non-Federally Recognized): **Vince Medina** – Ohlone Indian Tribe (Appointed October 7, 2021)
2. Tribal Representative (Federally Recognized): **Dustin Murray** – Shingle Springs Rancheria (Provisionally Filled)
3. Tribal Representative (Federally Recognized): **Vacant**
4. UC Representative: **Sabrina Agarwal** (Appointed October 7, 2021)
5. UC Representative: **Phenocia Bauerle** (Appointed October 7, 2021)
6. UC Native American Studies Representative: **Seth Davis** – UC Berkeley



## NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

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### UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION ACT IMPLEMENTATION AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

#### - NOMINATION FORM -

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The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) seeks nominees for the University of California (UC) Systemwide and Campus Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Implementation and Oversight Committees (pursuant to Section 8026 of the California Health and Safety Code).

If you are interested in serving or nominating a candidate please review the criteria below, complete the following application materials, and submit completed packet to the NAHC nominations subcommittee: 1) Indicate the position(s) sought for the nominee, 2) Attach a short biography or resume demonstrating that the nominee meets the criteria below; 3) Attach a letter of support or tribal resolution with this form; and 4) Attach a list of at least three references, with names, telephone numbers, and email addresses for each.

**Tribal Nominees:** Support letters or tribal resolutions for tribal nominees should be from Tribal governments, tribal community organizations or Institutional leadership organizations, include the strengths of the candidate, as well as any information that might be relevant to the NAHC reviewing committee.

**UC Nominees:** Support letters for UC nominees should include professional experience demonstrating the ability to work in collaboration with Native American tribes successfully on issues related to repatriation or museum collection management.

Please note, even if you are not selected in the initial appointment group the NAHC will keep your application on file for Committee positions that may become available in the future.

**Deadline:** Nomination packets are due on the date(s) indicated at [nahc.ca.gov/calnaqpra/nominate](http://nahc.ca.gov/calnaqpra/nominate).

## QUALIFICATIONS

### Tribal Nominees

Tribal Nominees must be a member of a federally or non-federally recognized California Indian tribe as defined by Section 8012 of the Health and Safety Code. And have at least five years of experience in any of the following:

- Repatriation of human remains and cultural items pursuant to the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act;
- Cultural resources protection under tribal, state, and federal law; or
- Consultation with state and federal entities and agencies.

**Preference:** Preference shall be given to members of a California Indian tribe.

### UC Nominees

UC Nominees must be affiliated with or employed by the University of California and have the following:

1. A graduate degree in any of the following: Archaeology, Anthropology, Native American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Law, Sociology, Environmental Studies, or History, with a focus in California; and
2. A minimum of five years' experience working in his or her field of study.

**Note:** At least two UC nominees to the Systemwide one UC nominee to the Campus Committee(s) must be affiliated with an American Indian or Native American Studies program.

You are encouraged to submit a nomination if the nominee meets a majority of the requirements, even if you are unsure as to whether they meet a specific requirement. **In the event that you are uncertain as to whether a nominee may be qualified under a certain requirement, please include a brief explanatory statement supporting their qualifications in your nomination packet.** The NAHC shall consider all supporting materials and narrative to make a final determination of eligibility.

**Preference:** Preference shall be given to members who have demonstrated, through their professional experience, the ability to work in collaboration with Native American tribes successfully on issues related to repatriation or museum collection management.

**COMMITTEE(S) SOUGHT**

Please indicate the Committee(s) to which the nominee is seeking appointment. If nominating for a campus committee(s), list the campus(es) where the nominee is interested in serving, in order of preference. Check all that apply. If a nominee selects both the UC Systemwide Committee and Campus Committee, their application will be considered for both Committees and they may be appointed to either, however at this time Committee members will only serve on one Committee at a time, unless the pool of candidates does not allow.

- UC Systemwide Committee *(if only Systemwide please skip to Nominator Information below)*
- Campus Committee *(please fill out Section A below)*



A. If the Nominee would like to serve on a Campus Committee, please fill out the following additional information.

Campus Committee *(Preferred Campus)*: University of California, Berkeley

Alternative campus(es) Nominee will consider (candidates are encouraged to complete this section, if possible):

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

## SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### Nominator Information

Name: Robert Smith Title: Chairman  
Tribal/UC Institutional Affiliation: Pala Band of Mission Indians  
Email: rsmith@palatribe.com Phone: (760) 891-3518

### Nominee Information

Name: John Pepper Title: Tribal Historic Preservation Officer  
Tribal/UC Institutional Affiliation: Pala Band of Mission Indians  
Email: jpepper@palatribe.com Phone: (760) 891-3732  
Position Sought:     Tribal Nominee         UC Nominee

### **Please attach:**

- (i) A short biography and, if desired, a resume or CV of the nominee,**
- (ii) A tribal resolution or letter of support, and**
- (iii) A list of at least three references, with names, telephone numbers, and email addresses for each.**

Submit completed nomination packets to [NAHC@nahc.ca.gov](mailto:NAHC@nahc.ca.gov) or 1550 Harbor Blvd, Suite 100, West Sacramento, CA 95691 by the due date indicated at [nahc.ca.gov/calnaqpra/nominate](http://nahc.ca.gov/calnaqpra/nominate).

**Incomplete packets will not be considered.**



**PALA BAND OF  
MISSION INDIANS**

PMB 50, 35008 Pala Temecula Road  
Pala, CA 92059  
Phone 760-891-3500 | Fax 760-742-1411

April 20, 2026

**Sent via Electronic Mail**

Native American Heritage Commission  
1550 Harbor Boulevard, Suite 100  
West Sacramento, CA 95691

**Re: Recommendation of John Pepper for UC Berkeley Campus NAGPRA Implementation Committee Tribal Representative Seat**

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the Pala Band of Mission Indians, I write to respectfully recommend John Pepper for appointment to one of the Federally Recognized Tribal representative seats on the University of California, Berkeley Campus NAGPRA Implementation Committee.

The Pala Band of Mission Indians is a sovereign Tribal Nation whose citizens descend from the Kuupangaxwicheh (Cupeño), Payómkawichum (Luiseño), and Kumeyaay peoples. Our Tribe has long been engaged in the protection of cultural resources, the repatriation of ancestors and cultural items, and the advancement of respectful government-to-government relationships with institutions holding Native American collections.

Mr. Pepper is well qualified to serve in this important role. He serves as the Pala Band of Mission Indians' Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and manages the Tribe's Cultural Resource Monitoring Program. In these capacities, he works directly on matters involving cultural resource protection, Tribal consultation, stewardship of culturally significant places, and the review of projects that may affect Tribal heritage.

Mr. Pepper also has substantial experience in NAGPRA consultation and the review of cultural affiliation and repatriation issues. He has worked closely with Tribal leadership, cultural advisors, and partner institutions to help ensure that ancestral remains and cultural belongings are treated with dignity, care, and in accordance with applicable law and Tribal values.

Equally important, Mr. Pepper understands that traditional knowledge and Tribal perspectives are essential components of sound decision-making in NAGPRA matters. He approaches this work with professionalism, integrity, and deep respect for all Tribal Nations.

We believe Mr. Pepper would be a valuable addition to the Committee and would help strengthen its mission to support compliance with NAGPRA, CalNAGPRA, and University policy.

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation. Please feel free to contact our office should you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Smith', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Smith, Chairman  
Pala Band of Mission Indians

## **Biography – John Pepper**

John Pepper is a Tribal citizen of the Pala Band of Mission Indians and a proud father of five children. He was raised on the Pala Reservation and has raised all of his children there, teaching and sharing cultural traditions and values as they have grown into adulthood.

Mr. Pepper began his work in cultural preservation as a Native American Cultural Specialist and Monitor. Over the years, he has completed numerous archaeological field schools and cultural resource courses to strengthen his ability to protect Tribal cultural resources and ancestral lands. However, he believes the most valuable knowledge he carries comes from the cultural teachings and traditional knowledge passed down throughout his life within the community.

Mr. Pepper worked as a Native American Monitor for nine years, including several years as a Lead Cultural Monitor, where he helped oversee monitoring efforts and cultural resource protection activities. He was eventually hired by the Pala Band of Mission Indians as Lead Cultural Monitor and took on the responsibility of managing the Tribe's Cultural Monitoring Program while also participating in the Tribe's NAGPRA efforts.

For the past four years, Mr. Pepper has been actively involved in NAGPRA consultation and repatriation work. He has participated in the Luiseño Coalition and has worked with museums, universities, and military representatives on matters related to cultural affiliation, repatriation, and the respectful treatment of ancestral remains and cultural items. He has also participated directly in Pala repatriation efforts and was appointed by Chairman Robert H. Smith to represent the Pala Band of Mission Indians in consultation with the United States government, including military consultation efforts. Through this work, he has gained significant experience in government-to-government consultation and Tribal cultural resource protection.

After serving for two years as Deputy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Pala Band of Mission Indians, Mr. Pepper now serves as the Tribe's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). In this role, he has worked to improve and strengthen the Tribe's cultural preservation, monitoring, and NAGPRA programs to better serve the Tribe and protect its cultural heritage.

Mr. Pepper hopes to bring his cultural knowledge, practical experience, and commitment to respectful collaboration to help improve NAGPRA processes and relationships between Tribes, universities, and museums.

## References

Shasta C. Gaughen, Ph.D.  
(760) 891-3515  
sgaughen@palatribe.com

Vanessa Brierty  
(909) 553-2932  
vanessa.brierty@asm.ca.gov

Christopher Nejo  
(760) 891-3564  
cnejo@palatribe.com