California’s First People
Celebrate the Acjachemen People’s Culture and History at Mission San Juan Capistrano

Experience Native American History Today
Mission San Juan Capistrano is committed to celebrating and preserving the Native American or the Acjachemen people’s history in a variety of ways. Guests can learn more about the indigenous people by walking the grounds and visiting the following:

1. “NATIVE AMERICAN” ROOM MUSEUM EXHIBIT
This exhibit features information about the Acjachemen people’s origins, food hunting and gathering, plant uses, music and ceremony, basketry, village life, the Acjachemen today, and touchable items such as clapper stick instruments and grinding stone.

2. GRINDING STONE
Visit this historic stone where Native Americans ground acorns for food preparation. This area also explains what Kiichas or native dwellings looked like prior to the Spanish arrival.

3. THE PADRES’ KITCHEN
This exhibit compares and contrasts indigenous people’s food sources with Spanish farming and ranching and considers the impact of ranching reducing food stuffs for the indigenous people. Grinding stones used by indigenous people and those introduced by the Spanish are also on display.

4. THE PADRES’ SITTING ROOM EXHIBIT
This exhibit discusses new skills the padres taught to the Native Americans including speaking the Spanish language and learning about European music. The exhibit also features a reproduction of the original baptismal register from 1776.

5. THE LEGACY OF SAINT SERRA EXHIBIT
This new exhibit features information on the legacy of Saint Serra and his role in bringing Christianity to the West.

6. MISSION TREASURES EXHIBIT
Shows an original Acjachemen or Juañeno basket as well as pays tribute to the neophytes, or baptized Native American victims who lost their lives in the 1812 earthquake that felled the Great Stone Church during Mass.

7. THE MISSION CLUBHOUSE
This student and family friendly interactive area features hands-on activities that teach about the Ajachemen people’s culture and traditions. The Clubhouse includes a large interactive basket weaving center and more.

Flip for more information:

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8. RANCHO ROOM
This exhibit explains what happened to the Mission and to the Acjachemen people after the secularization period and features a large scale model of the Mission during the founding period.

9. STATUE OF SAINT SERRA AND INDIAN BOY (AKA COMING OF THE TWO CULTURES)
This 1914 statue was commissioned by Father St. John O’Sullivan (Mission Pastor 1910-1933). O’Sullivan was the model for Father Serra and local resident, Clarence Mendelson who was the model for the Native American boy. This statue symbolizes the meeting of the two cultures. The current cross was added in 2009 after the original cross had disappeared in the mid-1900s.

10. STATUE OF SAINT KATERI
In the Mission Basílica’s (separate site) Grand Retablo, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680), “Lily of the Mohawks,” statue is featured in the upper right niche. She is the first indigenous person from North America officially recognized by the Catholic Church as a saint. She is honored within the Church for her inspirational life as a Christian Native American.

11. ANNUAL “DAY OF REMEMBRANCE”
Every year on December 8, the anniversary of the Great Stone Church earthquake of 1812, the community gathers for prayer, remembrance and roll call of the 40 victims who perished.

12. BELL RINGING TRADITION
Mission San Juan Capistrano celebrates its history through a wide variety of bell ringing events and tradition. The last full blooded Acjachemen bell ringer was Jose de Garcia Cruz (1922), or “Acu.” Today’s bell ringers represent the diversity of the Missions history. Michael Gastelum and Nathan Banda are joined by long time Mission employee Rafael Gutierrez for most official bell ringing ceremonies occurring on feast days, festivals and special occasions. In 2013, the Mission began a new tradition of ringing the bells everyday at 9 a.m. to honor Saint Junípero Serra, the founder of Mission San Juan Capistrano.

13. NATIVE AMERICAN BASKET WEavers
Volunteer basket weavers provide demonstrations of their basket weaving traditions on the first and third Wednesdays of every month. Several of the volunteer weavers are of Ajachemen descent.

Visit www.missionsjc.com for more information about Mission San Juan Capistrano.

Mission San Juan Capistrano, California Landmark #200 receives no sustaining support from any governmental agency or religious organization. Proceeds from on-site activities help protect the religious and historic significance of Mission San Juan Capistrano, and further educational programs, exhibits and preservation efforts.

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