

# Three Groundbreaking Conferences

## Ancestral Peoples of the Four Corners Region

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The Ancestral Affiliation Symposia were the first conferences to bring together diverse tribes, the scientific community, and federal agencies to discuss their interpretation of affiliation. The conferences served as a forum for a full exchange of traditional knowledge, research hypotheses, and the interpretation of data. They increased understanding among all participants of each other's perspectives, and promoted cooperative efforts in determining cultural affiliation.

### *Premises/Purposes*

Three breakthrough Affiliation Conferences on Ancestral Peoples of the Four Corners Region organized by the National Park Service Intermountain Support Office-Santa Fe (IMSF), and the Fort Lewis College (FLC) Center of Southwest Studies were held in early 1998.

The conferences grew out of a previous IMSF Anasazi affiliation project, which was designed to augment the research and consultations already conducted by the National Park Service in compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).<sup>1</sup> The emphasis of the original project—and subsequently of the conferences—related to determining affiliations for the archaeological Anasazi culture.

Among its mandates, NAGPRA requires completion of the inventory of human remains and associated funerary objects "... in consultation with tribal government ... and traditional religious leaders" (25 USC 3003, Sec. 5). NAGPRA regulations (subpart D)<sup>2</sup> state:

A finding of cultural affiliation should be based upon an overall evaluation of the totality of the circumstances and evidence pertaining to the connection between the claimant and the material being claimed and should not be precluded solely because of some gaps in the record (10.14.d).

And:

Evidence of a kin or cultural affiliation between a present day individual, Indian tribe

... and human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, objects of cultural patrimony must be established by using the following types of evidence: geographical, kinship, biological, archeological, anthropological, linguistic, folklore, oral tradition, historic, or other relevant information and expert opinion (10.14.e).

All Intermountain Region national park units completed the inventory of human remains and associated funerary objects. However, certain affiliation determinations were made on the basis of limited literature research, with the assumption that further research and consultation would be necessary. Land managing agencies, universities, and museums all struggled with Anasazi affiliation questions—and this becomes readily apparent when the determinations of affiliation for NAGPRA inventories covering remains and funerary objects attributed to the Anasazi are examined. Serious disagreements among tribes and Anasazi scholars about the Anasazi culture, with contradictory hypotheses presented in the literature, added yet another dimension to the issues. Also, it is not a simple matter for tribes to arrive at consensus on Anasazi affiliation issues. National parks and others continue discussing affiliation issues with southwestern tribes. The wide scope of the issues and the importance of consistently-arrived-at affiliation determinations clearly called for additional affiliation work.

To assist in identifying and evaluating NAGPRA-related affiliation evidence more consistently and thoroughly, internal National Park Service funding was obtained to examine the current state of knowledge about Anasazi cultural affiliations on a regional, interdisciplinary, and systematic basis. The original discussions about how to achieve such a goal considered the possibility of interviewing representatives or experts from each of the tribes claiming affiliation with the Anasazi and academic experts from disciplines listed in NAGPRA regulations as potentially contributing to affiliation decisions. A

review of NAGPRA inventories and notices of inventory completion published in the *Federal Register* for Anasazi cultural heritage resources further emphasizes the immensity of the geographic area in which the Anasazi lived and the extent to which Anasazi resources have been dispersed. Further reflection made it quickly apparent that both completing the interviews and the necessary research were not feasible.

Questions concerning NAGPRA affiliation with the Anasazi culture potentially impact a large number of National Park Service units and tribes. For example, human remains and collections from Anasazi sites were reported on the 1993 NAGPRA summary and the 1995 inventory for a number of parks. The parks ranged from Aztec Ruins National Monument, New Mexico; Canyonlands National Park, Utah; Pipe Spring National Monument and Wupatki National Monument, Arizona; to Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument, New Mexico. Additionally, there are several National Park Service units either within or adjacent to the core Anasazi culture area that, although not holding NAGPRA-inventory-related material, would benefit from the study. The study of archeological cultures that are adjacent to the Anasazi, such as Fremont, Sinagua, and Mogollon, became part of the discussion to help understand the linkages between tribal views of their past and the way the past has been categorized by anthropologists. Parks reporting such related materials on their NAGPRA inventory or summary included Dinosaur National Monument, Colorado; El Morro National Monument, New Mexico; and Montezuma Castle National Monument and Tonto National Monument, Arizona.

American Indian tribes claiming affiliation with the Anasazi were contacted and, if they chose to, they participated in the conferences. Tribes contacted included all of the Pueblos, the Apache tribes, the Navajo Nation, the Ute tribes, and the Southern Paiutes of the Four Corners area. Additional tribes known to be affiliated or potentially affiliated with the adjacent archeologically-defined cultures were also considered, including the Gila River Indian Community, Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, Kiowa, Ak Chin Indian Community, Tohono O'Odham, Hualapai, Havasupai, and Yavapai. Although not known to have claimed affiliation with the Anasazi, they were also contacted about discussing possible relationships.

The large number of parties ancestral to the Anasazi culture or having an interest in Anasazi affiliation further supported the notion that the original project strategy was not practical. It would take years to complete the interviews, and neither the time nor the personnel were available.

It was under these circumstances that the idea of conducting a series of conferences evolved. The conferences were inclusive and interdisciplinary, providing a forum for in-depth discussion of diverse and sensitive topics. The interdisciplinary nature of the participants was considered critical to the success of the project. The conferences can be seen as an outgrowth of the NAGPRA inventory completion process, and as indicative of National Park Service efforts to obtain the best available and best possible affiliation information.

The purposes of the conferences encompassed those of the original project, and included further examination of:

- the basis for the “Anasazi culture concept,” from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, as used by archeologists and others, including the perspectives of Indian tribes;
- the empirical lines of evidence used to arrive at varying interpretations of prehistoric “cultures,” and descriptions of divergent interpretations of the “same” or similar affiliation data;
- data documenting cultural affiliation between the Anasazi and contemporary American Indian tribes and Pueblos, using all lines of evidence.

#### ***Past Perspectives***

The Anasazi, Mogollon, Fremont, Sinagua, Hohokam, Salado, and other archeological cultures do not readily correspond to the perspectives of the past held by the descendants of these cultures. They are what archeologists call a normative cultural concept, whereby the material culture of the past is prized in order to create discrete “packages” having well-defined boundaries in time and space. It was assumed that, when such units were constructed in the 1930s during the heyday of archeological culture history, these cultural units corresponded to some prehistoric social unit. However, it is now clear that such assumptions were not always justified. Human groups are dynamic and ever-changing social units, and archeological material culture does not always reflect the complex dynamism characteristic of human groups.

The construct “Anasazi” was originally used by archeologists as an organizational concept for

San Ildefonso Pueblo polychrome jar. Maria and Julian Martinez, potters. Photo courtesy Intermountain Support Office-Santa Fe.



cultural/historical interpretation. However, it became implicitly synonymous with some form of past social organization, defined along broad ethnic lines. The tradition is found throughout the present-day Four Corners region of the United States, and begins prior to 2300 B.C. The word “Anasazi” is a Navajo word, formed from two roots: *anaa*, which means “enemy” or “surrounding,” and *sazi*, which means “ancestors” or “old ones.”<sup>3</sup> Archeologists initially believed that the Anasazi tradition represented the archeological remains of modern Pueblo peoples. Internal Basketmaker and Pueblo temporal divisions reflect this perspective. As noted above, while cultural affiliation with modern Pueblos is not in question, fundamental questions concerning the affiliation of other southwestern tribes with the Anasazi and adjacent archeological cultures or traditions remain.

#### **Conference Format**

Owing to the geographical and temporal spread of the Anasazi tradition, conference organizers decided to convene three conferences, acknowledging the fact that any division of the tradition to facilitate discussion was essentially arbitrary. The organizing committee discussed temporal, geographical, ethnic, and topical bases for dividing the tradition, along with an optimum number of participants, into manageable units. However, all of these implicitly carry a priori assumptions about what the tradition means—something we wished to avoid, if possible. Therefore, for practical organizational purposes, the three conferences were arranged as Eastern Anasazi, Western Anasazi, and a final synthetic conference. Each conference included smaller, moderated sessions, concentrating on specific issues. Given the need to be flexible, we anticipated modifying the conference format.

Conference organizers agreed that the danger of too little flexibility was greater than the danger of too much.

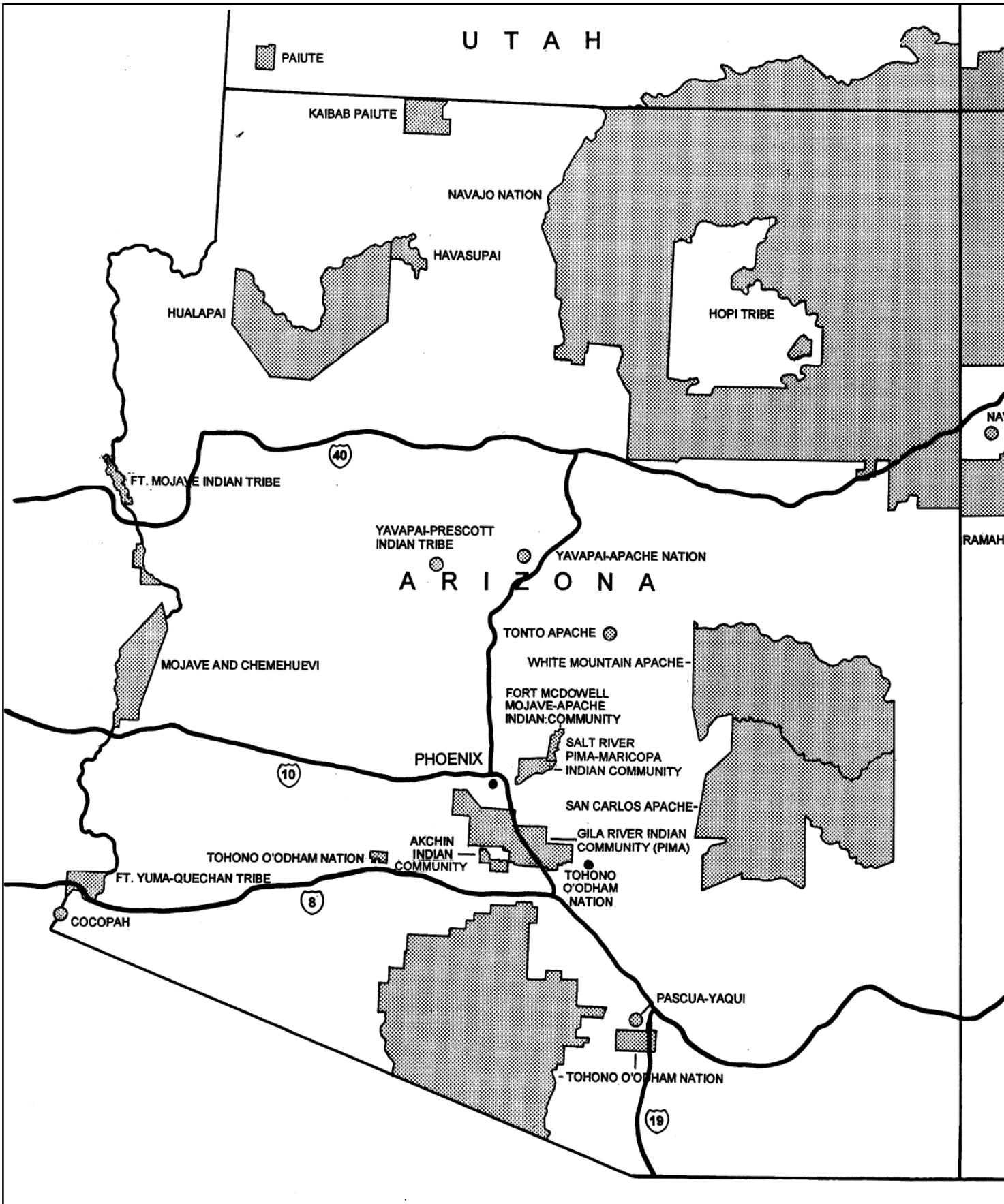
The first conference was held on January 23 and 24, 1998. The plenary session set the scene, and gave participants the opportunity to voice concerns or hopes about the conference. The conference included three concurrent workshops, designed for open dialogue. These covered Methodological Issues in Assigning Cultural Affiliation, Ethnicity in the Cultural Record, and Specific Affiliation Projects. No formal papers were presented. Each presenter was allowed 15 minutes to make an informal oral presentation, so that discussion could occur as soon as possible. We hoped that using this informal approach, rather than an academic lecture format, would encourage participants to dialogue.

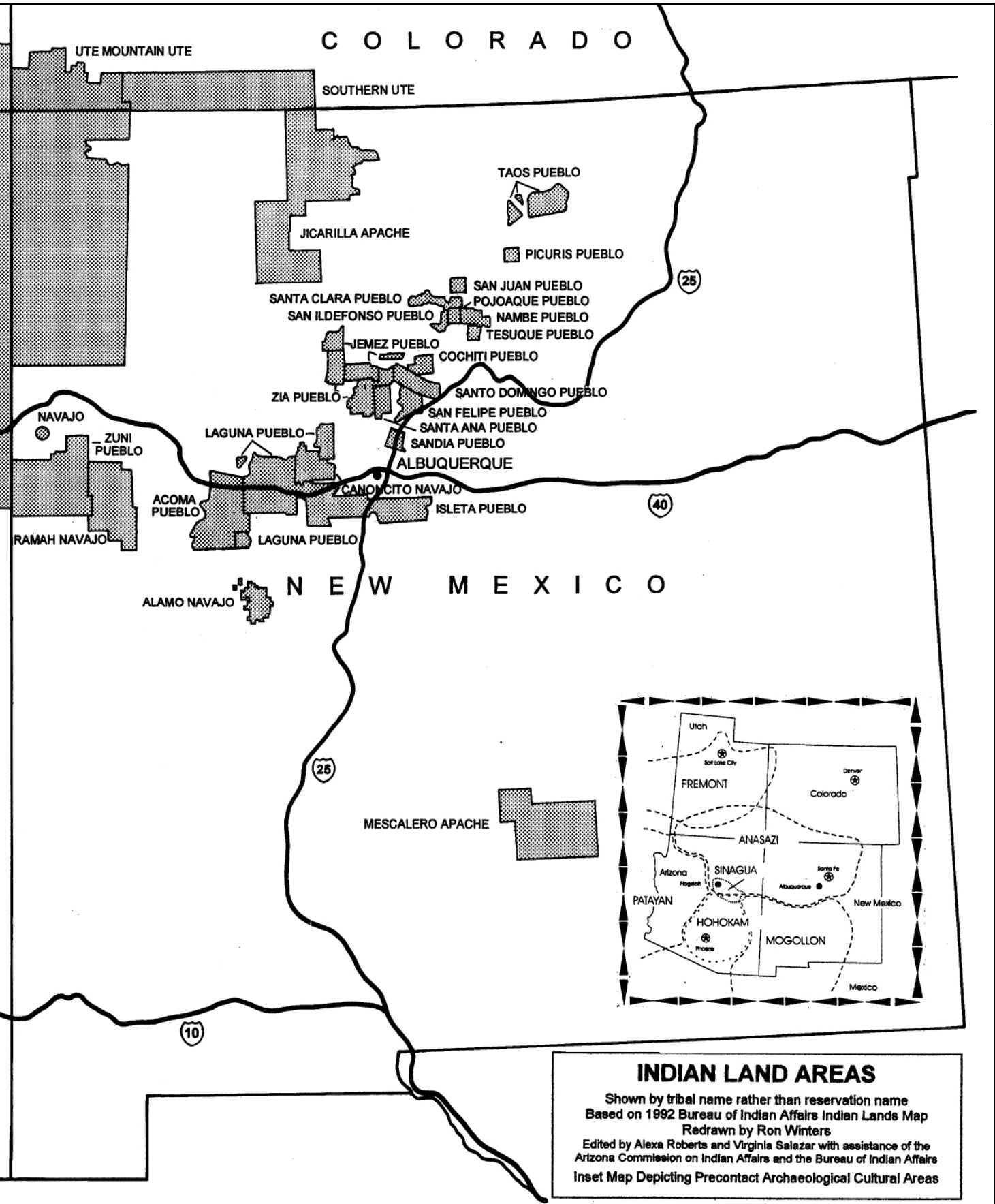
While this was partially achieved, two shortcomings detracted from the conference’s success. The first was a concern on the part of government and tribal representatives that, despite every effort to the contrary, academic speakers monopolized the discussion and used too much technical jargon. The second shortcoming, of particular concern to tribal representatives, was that concurrent workshops prevented participants from attending all workshops.

These concerns were addressed in the second conference, held on February 20 and 21, 1998. The conference was in a hotel conference room to avoid the academic setting. Two workshops were set up, which would be held once on Friday afternoon and then repeated on Saturday morning, so that all participants could attend both workshops. However, there was, again, too much academic jargon, and the small workshops, although encouraging discussion, excluded the whole group from knowing what was stated during a concurrent session.

The final conference was held on April 10 and 11, 1998, at Fort Lewis College. All tribal representatives who wished to attend did so. A small group of academic specialists was selected so that the conference would not be dominated by academic discussion. Before the April conference, National Park Service personnel met representatives from Acoma and Zia Pueblos to solicit advice on how to organize this conference and the topics to place on the agenda. No concurrent sessions were organized, and participants met in one large room.

*Continued on page 30*





**INDIAN LAND AREAS**

Shown by tribal name rather than reservation name  
 Based on 1992 Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian Lands Map  
 Redrawn by Ron Winters  
 Edited by Alexa Roberts and Virginia Salazar with assistance of the  
 Arizona Commission on Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Affairs  
 Inset Map Depicting Precontact Archaeological Cultural Areas

All conference workshops and discussions were recorded, and the recordings transcribed. At the beginning of each conference, it was noted that participants could ask for the recorders to be turned off at any time. Drafts of the transcripts were sent to each participant for review. Few recommended changes were received. The final transcripts were combined with the written version of “presented” papers into three volumes, one for each conference. All volumes were sent to each participant, regardless of the number of conferences attended. One set of audio cassettes is stored at the Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College, and a second set is stored at the National Park Service Intermountain Support Office in Santa Fe.

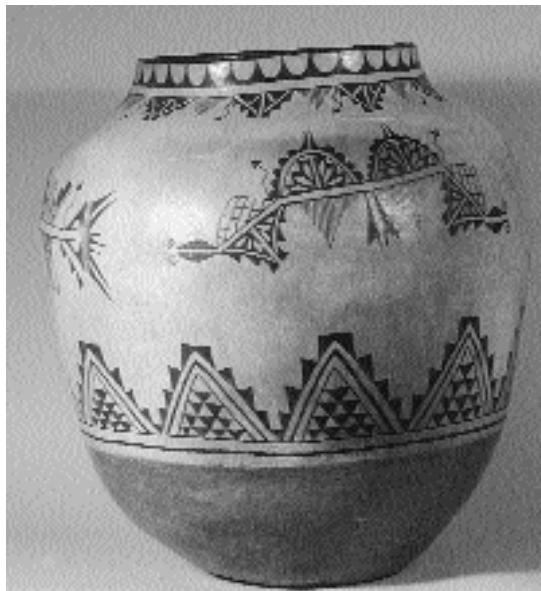
### *Issues*

Conference organizers expected approximately 30 attendees at each conference; however, over 60 attended, suggesting that the topic was timely. The conferences brought together representatives of different constituencies in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The total number of tribal representatives attending all three conferences was 75. A total of 66 government agency representatives and 51 academic scholars attended all three conferences.

Progress was made toward further identifying the complexities involved in making correct determinations of cultural affiliation to the Anasazi archeological tradition. Participants also identified and discussed areas of agreement and disagreement. Several major discussion themes, illustrating tribal, academic, and government agency perspectives, permeated the conferences:

- Several participants referred to the potential for undue intrusions into sensitive realms of American Indian culture, in the name of determining cultural affiliation for NAGPRA purposes. The seriousness and sensitivity of merely discussing affiliation information and the importance of confidentiality were stressed.
- Tribal governing officials need to become more directly involved in and knowledgeable about the effects and consequences of NAGPRA. It would be to a tribe’s benefit if members became experts in archeology or anthropology; however, this can present a serious dilemma, because individuals with such training sometimes find it difficult to be fully accepted and to have all possible options for community involvement remain open to them.
- It was recognized that NAGPRA implementation is straining tribes that do not have the infrastructure or the “cultural constructs” for such an effort. There was no consensus among tribal representatives and academic representatives on the multiple claims of affiliation to the Anasazi. This was particularly evident for Navajo affiliation claims. Archeological evidence has not supported a Navajo presence in the Southwest prior to about the first half of the 15th century; however, Navajo representatives provided oral-history information supporting an affiliation.
- It was acknowledged that government agencies, museums, and universities are responsible for making determinations of cultural affiliation through consultation with potentially affiliated tribes, based on the preponderance of the evidence. Tribal self-identification simply cannot be relied upon in meeting NAGPRA mandates.
- Dangers for tribes when they participate in affiliation discussions were mentioned. Participants must understand the consequences of gaining or giving knowledge. Institution representatives must understand the consequences of merely asking certain questions. Not participating may also be detrimental to a tribe, because all evidence may not be brought to bear on affiliation questions. It must be understood that internal tribal discussions about and tribal research into affiliation are often “in progress” and evolving, just as they are with federal agencies. Another potential danger for tribes in situations in which consensus about claims of affiliation has not been

*Cochiti Pueblo polychrome storage jar. Agapina Quintana, potter. Photo courtesy Intermountain Support Office-Santa Fe.*



achieved is that NAGPRA implementation may pit tribes against one another.

- The complexities of NAGPRA implementation were illustrated, particularly as they pertain to affiliation. The mere fact that there are more than 500 tribal entities and over 1,000 museums, universities, and government agencies provides opportunities for variability.
- Concerns were raised about variability in *Federal Register* notice information. Comparisons of those data with similar data from other sources such as affiliation studies were presented. Affiliation data from *Federal Register* notices were compared to data contained in broad-based affiliation studies for a larger administrative unit such as a national park containing resources or remains referenced in the *Federal Register* notices. Such variability might not be surprising, because published notices cover inventory completion and intent-to-repatriate actions, covering specific objects or remains, rather than for the generic resources or inhabitants of an area or place. Lists of affiliated tribes included in an area-wide affiliation study might legitimately vary from the list of tribes found on a *Federal Register* notice covering human remains and associated funerary objects. A subset of the generic tribal listing could be affiliated under NAGPRA, because of occupational or other data.

Variability was also recognized in terms of the lines of evidence used to reach affiliation conclusions for *Federal Register* notices and for published general affiliation studies. For NAGPRA inventory purposes, a line of evidence, such as biological anthropology, may not have been available, and no new studies were undertaken. Nevertheless, except for biological data, there was consensus that all lines of evidence should be used in making determinations of affiliation.

- It was recognized that oral traditions and traditional histories of descendant people were necessary in the study of their ancestral pasts. The value and validity of oral tradition, on its own terms, were debated, along with issues related to who validates affiliation information. Related discussions called for expanded efforts to interweave traditional histories with the histories developed by archeologists and anthropologists. Important discussion indicated that determining cultural affiliation continues to be an active process—a process that includes oral

tradition as an equal line of evidence. In this regard, oral tradition, along with other lines of evidence, was discussed as having a role in supporting Hopi, Zuni, and O’Odham affiliations with archeological cultures below the Mogollon Rim.

- Additionally, there was a call to reconsider the interconnectedness and movements of people in the past and the interconnectedness of movement from the past to the present—both in space and in time—movement by many peoples rather than a linear progression by individual groups, as some see NAGPRA requiring. A suggestion was made that NAGPRA call for considering the present and moving toward the past, rather than looking at the past first, as archeology typically does. This is based on the notion that NAGPRA mandates determinations of affiliation based upon a shared group identity that can be reasonably traced between a present-day Indian tribe and an identifiable earlier group.
- Questions were raised concerning the archeological constructs of Anasazi or Ancestral Puebloan, Fremont, Mogollon, Antelope Creek Phase, Basketmaker, and Sinagua. Questions were raised about whether or not these ever served as an identified cultural grouping in the past. In this regard, it was suggested that it is time to reconsider how the past has been defined, in that concepts such as Anasazi or Fremont are of little utility in making cultural determinations under NAGPRA. It might be more beneficial to look for smaller units—something like Mimbres. It was also suggested that we simply drop terms such as Anasazi or Mogollon and use Ancestral Puebloan. However, these terms also have cultural connotations and would be unacceptable to other tribes claiming affiliation.
- By using archeologically-defined cultural designations such as Anasazi, Fremont, or Hohokam, we may exclude the possibility of recognizing other affiliations from the beginning. For example, potential affiliations of the Wichita to the east or with the Paiute to the west would not be investigated, or Zia would simply be excluded from any consultations with archeological cultures that did not make black-on-white pottery. Multi-directional influences are not adequately addressed by these designations. It was suggested that such designations do not adequately recognize the

dynamics and interrelatedness of past populations around the Four Corners region—nor do they recognize internal community diversity or the time depth of clan histories, as opposed to tribal histories.

- Ethnicity was the focal point of several discussions. The recognition of ethnic groups in the archeological record and the continued use of eastern and western Pueblos were addressed. It was suggested that there were at least two ethnic groups during Basketmaker II (c. 2000 years ago), representing an east-west differentiation based primarily on discrete assemblages of material culture traits. It was noted that such assemblages of material culture traits may not correspond to Basketmaker II ethnic groups.
- Further discussion related to the presence or absence of clans among the Pueblos, with evidence for clans in the western Pueblos and not the eastern Pueblos. Such distinctions were recognized in the archeological records of several hundred years ago. These may have some bearing on affiliation, at least the degree of affiliation, a modern tribe might have to components of the Anasazi culture.
- Specific affiliation studies elicited discussion calling for equal treatment for all potentially affiliated tribes. Issues related to incomplete information becoming a public reference were noted.
- Tribal representatives recommended placing less emphasis on differences. The need for researchers to give at least equal weight to tribal commonalities was expressed by tribal members.
- For ancestral remains in the NAGPRA category of “unaffiliated,” the perspective of indigenous peoples at the conferences was that there is no such thing as culturally unidentifiable (unaffiliated). A common position was that ancestral remains are not to be disturbed. It was agreed that all available lines of evidence should be used in the determination of cultural affiliation. However, tribal representatives felt that the biological data should be used as a last resort, if at all.

### Results

Substantial efforts were made to ensure that all academic disciplines and tribes that would potentially provide cultural affiliation evidence, as well as other stakeholders, were represented. Such interdisciplinary participation was critical to

the success of the conferences. This was accomplished, although only one physical anthropologist and one linguist accepted an invitation. By adopting flexibility in the format for the conferences, we tried to ensure that tribal representatives had every opportunity to participate and to lead the discussions. As noted earlier, this was only partially achieved. The April conference in particular was much more successful in creating the right atmosphere for open and honest dialogue.

It was clear before the conference plans were completed that no prescriptive results in terms of affiliation between contemporary tribes and the Anasazi cultural tradition should be expected. Real successes will be longer-term in nature, further building upon the discussion described above. While this is certainly the case, it is also reasonable to infer that these conferences continue to help ensure compliance with legal mandates, ethical requirements, and the spirit of NAGPRA.

Finally, the conferences suggest that, while more effort is needed, the problems of correctly assigning NAGPRA-mandated cultural affiliation are not intractable. The momentum gained by the conferences can be put to good use. To this end, this author organized a panel and presented a brief synopsis of the three conferences at the 1999 Pecos Conference. Panel presentations were given by conference participants Petuuche Gilbert, Acoma Pueblo; Dan Simplicio, Pueblo of Zuni; and Virgil Swift, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes. During November 1999, three other conference participants—Philip Duke, Fort Lewis College; Dean Saitta, Denver University; and Cel Gachupin, Pueblo of Zia—presented a paper at the Chacmool Conference in Calgary, Alberta, on the causes for optimism that came from these conferences.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> 25 U.S.C. Sec. 3001-13, (1990).

<sup>2</sup> 43 CFR Part 10 (1996).

<sup>3</sup> Robert W. Young and William Morgan, *The Navajo Language, A Grammar and Colloquial Dictionary*, (Univ. of NM Press, 1980), 114.

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