



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: October 7, 2026 REPORT NO. HRB-26-038

HEARING DATE: October 23, 2025

SUBJECT: **ITEM #8 – San Pasqual Valley Cemetery National Register Nomination**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians

LOCATION: *Restricted*, San Pasqual Valley Community Planning Area, Council District 5

DESCRIPTION: Review the San Pasqual Valley Cemetery National Register Nomination

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to the California State Office of Historic Preservation the listing of the San Pasqual Valley Cemetery with a period of significance of time immemorial to present at a local level of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and D and Criteria Considerations C and D per the nomination

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board pursuant to the California State Office of Historic Preservation's (OHP) requirement that the local jurisdiction be provided 60 days to review and comment on a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. A National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report was prepared and submitted to the OHP by Cultural Geographics Consulting in coordination with the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians. A recommendation by the Historical Resources Board to the OHP is not a designation action, and the proposed historic resource will not be listed in the City of San Diego Register of Historic Resources as a result of the Board's recommendation or as a result of listing on the National Register by the State. The San Pasqual Valley Cemetery is not currently listed on the San Diego Register. However, if listed or determined eligible for listing on the National Register by the State Historic Resources Commission and the State Historic Preservation Officer, the resource would meet the definition of a designated historical resource under the City's Municipal Code and would be subject to compliance with the City's Historical Resources Regulations.

Archaeological and traditional property locations are considered confidential and public access to such information is restricted by law (Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act; Section 9(a) of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act; Executive Order 13007; Section 6254.10 of the

California State Government Code). As such, the location and identifying information are not presented in this staff report.

## ANALYSIS

The San Pasqual Valley Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B and D as a significant Traditional Cultural Place at the local level for its association with the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians familial and ancestral landscape, as the place best associated with Felicita Duro Morales, a person of outstanding importance to the San Pasqual community; and for its association with past and ongoing traditional religious and cultural practices for the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians. The resource meets the National Register Criteria Considerations C and D, which allows for eligibility as a resource due to the site containing a grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance with no appropriate site or building associated with their productive life, and as a cemetery that derives its primary importances from graves of persons of transcendent importance, age, and association with historic events.

The San Pasqual Valley Cemetery, known as kuptúr 'awá, or The Valley Cemetery, is composed of one contributing site, with twenty-three contributing objects, and one non-contributing object. The nomination brings forward a 3.6 acre site, which is partially owned by the State of California and the City of San Diego. The Valley Cemetery is visually defined by an approximately 837-square-yard, fenced burial ground associated with the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians (Ipai-Kumeyaay. The Ipai and Tipai peoples collectively comprise the Kumeyaay Nation, with the Ipai traditionally associated with the northern portion of Kumeyaay territory and the Tipai with the southern portion.

The San Pasqual Band of Diegueño Mission Indians of California is a federally recognized tribe of Kumeyaay people, whose ancestral homeland is in the present-day region of San Diego area. The Kumeyaay have lived in the region since time immemorial, maintaining deep cultural, spiritual, and economic connections to the land. After Spanish colonization and the establishment of the San Diego Mission in the late 1700s, Kumeyaay communities faced major disruptions to their traditional way of life, including the loss of land and exposure to disease and forced labor. After the Mexican government won independence from Spain and disbanded the Mission system, the Kumeyaay helped establish the San Pasqual Indian Pueblo, sited in the same valley along the Santa Ysabel Creek where numerous Kumeyaay lived prior to Spanish conquest. The community prospered as an agricultural community for almost thirty years, until the United States declared war on Mexico. While the San Pasqual community helped the Americans in the Battle of San Pasqual, all efforts to ratify a treaty between U.S Federal authorities and the Kumeyaay fell through. By 1878, the San Pasqual Indians were forcibly removed by County authorities and the tribe dispersed throughout the region. Although a land reservation was patented to the band in 1910, it was only in the 1950s, after 80 years of dispersal that descendants of the original band began reconstituting the community. Despite historical challenges and displacement, the Tribe has worked to preserve and strengthen its language, traditions, cultural identity, and connection to its ancestral lands. Today, the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians is an important part of the history and contemporary Indigenous community of San Diego County. The Tribe's significance lies not only in its history of surviving colonization and displacement, but also in its continuing efforts to protect and celebrate Kumeyaay culture, community, and sovereignty.

The nominated burial ground is oriented generally along a singular axis. Historic photographs and physical evidence indicate that approximately three-foot-high adobe walls historically enclosed the

cemetery perimeter. A chain-link fence generally follows and functionally defines the historic cemetery perimeter, although the chain-link fence itself is not considered a contributing historic resource. Adobe wall remnants are considered both constituent and constitutive elements of the site as a whole and are not counted as a separate resource. It is likely that historic burials are also contained outside of the delineated modern cemetery space. Several grave markers of different materials identify select burial locations of San Pasqual Band family members and ancestors. These markers are identified as one grouping in the nomination in order to protect cultural sensitivity. A parking lot and a gazebo are located on the site.

The cemetery retains a particularly strong association with the San Pasqual Band's familial and ancestral landscape. Felicita Duro Morales, a person of outstanding importance to the San Pasqual community, is known to be buried within the enclosed burial ground. Morales was the daughter of the last hereditary San Pasqual *kwaapaay* (often translated as "Chief" or "Capitan"). The cemetery is also associated with *Tuchaipai* and with traditional religious and cultural practices, including practices related to cleansing, funerary rites, and honoring family members and ancestors. These practices continue at the cemetery, contributing to the property's ongoing traditional cultural significance.

The cemetery retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its historical significance. Of particular importance is the property's integrity of association, which reflects its continuing relationship to the San Pasqual people, their ancestral landscape, and living traditional religious and cultural practices. The continuation of these practices distinguishes the cemetery as a living cultural landscape rather than solely as a historic archaeological or funerary resource.

Staff concurs that the site is a significant historical resource under National Historic Register Criteria A, B and D in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Native American and Archaeology as follows.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION A – *Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*

The cemetery is associated with the ethnic heritage, historical development, lifeways, and cultural identity of the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians. It forms part of the ancestral village area identified in oral tradition as *Mukałkał* and is supported by oral tradition, documentary evidence, and ancestral material heritage documented through archaeological investigations.

In 2019, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order (EO) N-15-19 acknowledging that the State of California historically sanctioned over a century of depredations and prejudicial policies against California Native Americans. Within this context of unjust social systems and settler colonial society, the Valley Cemetery continues to showcase traditional religious and cultural associations, ceremonial practices, and an indelible sense of deep time and deep space of Kumeyaay attachment and identity. The cemetery site is uniquely capable of conveying historic complex histories and geographies of displacement, continuity, and recovery for the people of San Pasqual, and illustrates both positive and negative interactions of different groups of people over the course of time immemorial. The cemetery therefore reflects significant patterns in the history of the San Pasqual people and their continuing efforts to maintain and recover connections to their ancestral landscape, cultural practices, and identities.

After San Diego County officials and residents evicted and dispossessed the Kumeyaay from their homelands in 1878, the people of San Pasqual continued to use their ancient burial grounds in the San Pasqual Valley. The Valley Cemetery is tangible evidence of the deep time and deep space presence and perseverance of the Kumeyaay. The cemetery was never forgotten and has continued to be in direct use. The Valley Cemetery also represents an important geographical component of the San Pasqual people's ancestral and traditional cultural landscape. Its significance encompasses both the continuity of Indigenous cultural practices and the historical processes that affected the San Pasqual community, including displacement and dispossession associated with settler colonial governance.

The period of significance for Criterion A extends from time immemorial to the present, reflecting the property's continuing role within the ancestral and living cultural landscape of the San Pasqual Band.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION B – *Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.*

The Valley Cemetery is associated with Felicita Duro Morales (approx. 1820-1911), a person of outstanding importance to the San Pasqual community. Morales, the daughter of the last hereditary San Pasqual kwaapaay, and longterm resident of the San Pasqual valley, is known to be interred within the cemetery.

Morales was the daughter of Panto Duro, a respected San Pasqual Indian leader, who was an important figure in the San Pasqual community. Her significance comes from her connection to San Pasqual leadership and to a generation of Kumeyaay people who lived through major changes brought by American settlement and government policies. According to the nomination, Morales served, and should still serve, as a stark reminder to her Euro-American neighbors that their presence and fortunes in the San Pasqual Valley were and are built upon the stolen ancestral lands and labors of Ipai-Kumeyaay people. Morales persisted in her refusal to abandon the San Pasqual Valley and was buried in October 1911 alongside her family and ancestors in the Valley Cemetery, which is the only remaining and most appropriate site to acknowledge, remember, and honor her affirmative and difficult, but productive, life. As a member of Panto's family, Felicita represents the importance of family, community, and cultural continuity in San Pasqual history.

The site is further eligible under Criterion B as a traditional religious and cultural property because of its ties and associations with traditional religious and cultural associations, along with the use of ceremonial practices related to cleansing, funerary rights, and honoring of family and ancestors. Further the site is viewed as a place where the spirits of those family members and ancestors passed still dwell. Kumeyaay burials and burial areas hold indelible relationships with and associations to the ancestral figure and Creator Brother, *Tuchaipai*, whose death incepted mortality on the earth in the Kumeyaay belief system. Kumeyaay creation teachings associated with *Tuchaipai* form part of a broader worldview in which humans have a proper relationship with the spiritual world, the land, and the natural order. Funerary practices expressed that worldview by helping the deceased move onward while allowing the living community to release its connection to the person's physical belongings and presence. Kumeyaay beliefs surrounding *Tuchaipai* and the spiritual order of the world help provide a context for funerary traditions in which death was

understood as a transition, with cremation, mourning ceremonies, songs, and the burning or distribution of belongings helping the deceased move on and the living community let go.

Staff concurs that the Valley Cemetery is significant under National Register Criterion A.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION D – *Yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.*

The cemetery has the potential to yield information important to understanding the history, archaeology, traditional cultural practices, and ancestral landscape of the San Pasqual people. Its significance under Criterion D extends beyond conventional archaeological data to include the intergenerational transmission and recovery of knowledge through the continuing relationship between the San Pasqual community and the place.

The cemetery provides a spatial focal point for the transmission of traditional religious and cultural knowledge and for intergenerational learning. This knowledge includes relationships among place, ancestry, ceremonial practice, family, and the broader traditional cultural landscape. The interpretation of the cemetery may appropriately incorporate both Ipai-Kumeyaay and Western forms of knowledge production, including the "braiding" of knowledge systems described by Kassi et al. (2022).

The property's information potential is also significant in understanding the ancestral landscape from which the San Pasqual people experienced displacement and dispossession. The cemetery provides an enduring physical location through which connections to that landscape, and associated cultural knowledge and practices, continue to be maintained and renewed.

Staff concurs that the Valley Cemetery is significant under National Register Criterion B.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATION C – *A birthplace or grave of a historical figure is eligible if the person is of outstanding importance and if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life.*

Criterion Consideration C applies because the property derives significance from its association with the grave of Felicita Duro Morales, a person of outstanding importance to the San Pasqual community. The significance of the cemetery is not limited to the existence of individual graves; rather, Morales's burial is part of the property's broader association with the history, identity, and cultural continuity of the San Pasqual people.

Morales surpasses the Criteria Consideration C threshold as a "[birthplace or grave of a historical figure is eligible if the person is of outstanding importance and if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life". Morales personifies and embodies the colonial experiences of the San Pasqual people and serves as a stark reminder that colonial presence in San Pasqual Valley was built upon stolen ancestral land and labors of the Ipai-Kumeyaay people. Morales refused to be relocated, her house is no longer extant, and she was buried alongside her family and ancestors in the delineated fenced-in area of the cemetery. The nomination states that this is the only remaining and most appropriate associated site to acknowledge, remember, and honor her affirmative and difficult life.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATION D – *A cemetery is eligible if its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.*

Criterion Consideration D applies because the cemetery is associated with historical events and patterns of importance to Tribal, local, state, and national contexts and continues to function as a place of traditional religious and cultural practice. The property's ongoing ceremonial and cultural use contributes directly to its significance and distinguishes it from a cemetery whose importance is limited to its historical association or archaeological remains.

The San Pasqual Valley Cemetery continues to serve as a place of deep time and deep space ceremonial and traditional and cultural practice. Even with ground disturbance and non-contributing landscape elements and changes resulting from settler colonial occupation and development, culturally modified soils and other ancestral remains associated with traditional burial practices have high possibility and potential to exist throughout the site beyond the fenced-in delineated burial ground.

Staff concurs that Criteria Considerations C and D apply to this resource.

#### Traditional Cultural Significance and Integrity

The San Pasqual Valley Cemetery is identified in Ipai-Kumeyaay as kuptúr 'awá, a term that may be translated approximately as "level, bare ground." The cemetery is associated with the central San Pasqual Ipai-Kumeyaay village of Mukákał and forms part of the familial, ancestral, territorial, and traditional cultural landscape of the San Pasqual people. The property's significance derives from the continuity of these relationships across generations. Its value is therefore expressed not only through surviving physical features but also through its location, setting, associations, traditional knowledge, ceremonial practices, and continuing use by the San Pasqual community. The cemetery retains sufficient integrity to communicate these aspects of significance, particularly its integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

The period of significance extends from time immemorial to the present. This period reflects the cemetery's role within a cultural landscape that predates written documentation and continues to have active religious, cultural, familial, and ancestral significance for the San Pasqual Band.

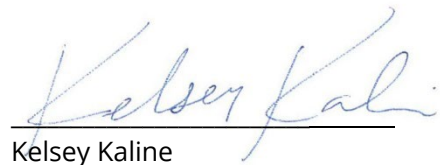
Taken together, the physical evidence, historical documentation, oral tradition, archaeological information, and continuing cultural practices establish San Pasqual Valley Cemetery as a significant component of the San Pasqual people's ancestral and living traditional cultural landscape. Its significance encompasses Indigenous ethnic heritage, important historical associations, associations with an individual of outstanding importance, archaeological and information potential, and continuing traditional religious and cultural practices.

While the addition of a black chain-link fence, and the construction of a parking lot and gazebo have occurred and may appear to show lessened integrity, the entirety of the Cemetery site retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to

convey its historical significance. Of these elements, feeling and association remain extremely intact and of importance.

### CONCLUSION

The City of San Diego acknowledges and accepts that the San Pasqual Cemetery derives its significance to the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians and broader Kumeyaay community as a place of deep time and deep space with ceremonial, traditional, religious, and cultural practices and importance. Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that the Historic Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for the San Pasqual Valley Cemetery to be listed on the National Register of Historical Places under Criteria A, B, and D.



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Attachment(s):

1. Restricted Summary of Applicant's National Register of Historical Resources Nomination Report under separate cover.