Santa Catalina Island, located just off the coast of Los Angeles, provides a microcosm in which to investigate how prehistoric people utilized and managed essential resources within a well-defined area. Since 2007, the Pimu Catalina Island Archaeology Project (PCIAP) has been expanding the knowledge of inter- and intravillage relationships and cultural life of the Catalina islanders by re-analyzing previous research and identifying new cultural spaces while working with members of the Gabrielino (Tongva) community. Previous interpretations do not adequately explain the distribution, quantity, or variety of cultural phenomena identified across the island. Prior investigations invoked models of cultural ecology to explain how the island environment influenced human behavior. However, it is equally important to recognize how human behavior has shaped the island environment itself. PCIAP has incorporated landscape theory into its research design in order to evaluate the dynamic and interdependent relationships that islanders maintained with the physical and cultural dimensions of their environments. By examining trails and pathways, the landscape alterations that link people and resources, PCIAP hopes to better understand how these connections, both physical and social, were constructed and maintained.

Wendy Giddens Teeter, PhD is Curator of Archaeology for the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Part-time Faculty in Anthropology at California State University Northridge and Lecturer in UCLA’s American Indians Studies. She co-directs the Pimu Catalina Island Archaeology Project along with Desiree Martinez (Tongva) and Karimah Kennedy Richardson. She co-founded and is a coordinating committee member of the Tribal Learning Community & Educational Exchange, Native Nations Law & Policy Center, UCLA School of Law. Recent publications include “Returning the tataayiyam honuuka’ (Ancestors) to the Correct Home: The Importance of Background Investigations for NAGPRA Claims (Martinez, Teeter, and Richardson 2014) and “Human Occupation and Landscape Alterations on Catalina Island, California” (Teeter, Martinez and Richardson 2013).