



AMERICAN INDIANS IN TEXAS AT THE SPANISH COLONIAL MISSIONS

30 Years of Cultural Healing and Empowerment

June 3, 2025

Statement on the Passing of Jonathan Joss

On Behalf of American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions

We extend our deepest condolences and heartfelt prayers to the family, loved ones, and community of Jonathan Joss, whose life was tragically and unjustly taken.

Jonathan was not only a beloved actor and artist but also a powerful voice for Indigenous representation and cultural pride. He was a friend and relative, and we at AIT-SCM were deeply honored by his support—especially around our efforts regarding intimate partner violence and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) crisis. Jonathan's lifelong contributions and dedication to elevating Native visibility have had a profound impact on many, and his absence leaves a significant void.

His legacy will undoubtedly continue to inspire us for generations to come.

As we reflect on the recent coverage surrounding Jonathan's final days, we carry this ache like a stone in our chest. Public reports describing his distress are heartbreaking, not because they define who he was, but because they point to a more profound crisis that is all too familiar in Native communities: the unspoken, underserved, and ongoing struggle with mental hardship and lateral violence.

Jonathan was not alone in his pain. Across the country, Indigenous people face mental health disparities at alarming rates. Historical trauma, systemic neglect, cultural disconnection, and limited access to care continue to shape the emotional and psychological health of our people. In Texas, Native communities report higher levels of severe psychological distress than the general population, yet remain among the least likely to receive culturally informed or accessible care. Too many of our relatives carry their burdens in silence. The absence of community-rooted, holistic mental health support, especially care grounded in ceremony, kinship, and traditional healing, has left far too many without the resources they need and deserve. Our grief today is also a call to action. We must speak openly, advocate fiercely, and work relentlessly to ensure that no more lives are lost to silence or suffering.

Jonathan's death is also a reflection of broader, ongoing violence that Indigenous communities continue to face. While national attention around the MMIWP crisis has rightfully focused on Indigenous women—Native men, boys, Two-Spirit, and non-binary relatives are equally impacted by these injustices. However, they are far less visible in the national conversation. As we grieve Jonathan's loss, we must also recognize the layers of invisibility and vulnerability that exist for those living at the intersections of gender, identity, and Indigeneity. No form of hatred, discrimination, or violence towards any identity is acceptable.

Jonathan's passing underscores the reality that no segment of our communities is untouched by this crisis—no one should ever be made to feel unseen or unsafe.



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Gun violence, too, is a devastating force in our neighborhoods. Here in San Antonio, 127 lives were lost to homicide in 2024 alone. Behind each number is a person with a family, a story, and a future that should not have been cut short. Jonathan's passing is not only a personal tragedy, but it also reveals how deeply urgent it is to address violence in all forms.

We grieve not only for Jonathan but for the countless others whose lives have been stolen, whose cases have gone unsolved, and whose families still seek justice. We call on all people, institutions, and governments to recognize and confront the systemic neglect, racism, and injustice that perpetuate this crisis.

AIT-SCM remains steadfast in our commitment to providing spaces of care, healing, and support. We believe in reclaiming and restoring the tools our communities need to heal and are dedicated to expanding access to culturally grounded mental health care, amplifying Indigenous-led solutions, and building systems of support that reflect the strength and beauty of our people.

In honor of Jonathan's life and legacy, we reaffirm our commitment to the sacred work of remembrance, resistance, and protection of our people.

May his spirit journey in peace, and may his memory fuel the fire of justice and healing for all Indigenous nations.

In solidarity,

Ramon J. Vaquez,
Executive Director
American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions