

Jessica Lee Hamlin, Shumla Executive Director
HCAA GENERAL MEETING: May 21, 2022



TITLE: HEARTHSTONE PROJECT: The Next Step in Understanding Lower Pecos Rock Art

ABSTRACT: She is excited to tell us about Shumla’s newest cutting-edge endeavor, the Hearthstone Project. It is a comprehensive study and documentation of prehistoric art in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands of Texas and adjacent Mexico. Near the confluence of the Rio Grande and Pecos Rivers, archaeologists have identified over 300 rock art sites. The Hearthstone Project focuses on the oldest and most widespread type in the region, Pecos River style pictographs, created with multi-colored paints in many shades of red, yellow, black, and white as early as 4,000 years ago. In the Lower Pecos it seems that each discovery brings with it 100 more questions. There’s so much left to learn!

BIO: Jessica Lee Hamlin was fascinated by archaeology from an early age. She attended her first field school at the age of 16 and the hook was set. As a freshman in college at Texas A&M University, she met Carolyn Boyd, a PhD candidate writing her dissertation on the rock art of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands of Texas. Carolyn invited Jessica to join her in the field in the summer of 1997. Seeing the magnificent ancient murals was an experience that changed the course of Jessica’s life. Together they dreamed of an organization whose mission was to study, protect and share the murals. In 1998, Carolyn founded their dream 501(c)(3) rock art organization, hired Jessica and graduated with her PhD.

Jessica’s path after college graduation in 2000 took her to the Smithsonian Institution and Crow Canyon Archaeological Center. In 2006 she completed her Master’s degree in Human Geography at University of Texas in Austin. Archaeology positions were scarce at the start of the economic downturn. So, she took a position as a Communications Consultant with the international management firm, Towers Perrin. Through it all, her connection to Carolyn and to Shumla stayed strong. She even joined Shumla’s Board of Directors in January 2013.

By 2014, Jessica was a Senior Consultant designing and managing Communications and Change Management strategies for large firms across the nation. That year the Shumla Board of Directors decided that it was time for Carolyn to move from the administrative and fundraising role of Executive Director, to focus on the research that she had pioneered. Jessica, as she drove away from that meeting through the purple landscape of a Lower Pecos cenizo bloom, decided she wanted the job. Becoming Shumla Executive Director in March of 2015 was a homecoming and a perfect fit for the specific experience she had gained since her first field school.

Since taking her position at the helm of Shumla, Jessica has ushered the organization through the achievement of a National Historic Landmark designation for the Lower Pecos Canyonlands Archaeological Region, raised the funds to endow a Research Professorship at Texas State University for Dr. Carolyn Boyd, funded and oversaw the four-year Alexandria Project that documented 235 rock art sites across the region, and opened a second Shumla office in San Marcos, TX.