



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026**

The March 17, 2026, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian (LANAIC) meeting was at the County of Los Angeles Hall of Administration, Sybil Brand Room 372, 500 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012.

Call to Order & Land Acknowledgement

Chairperson Mark Villaseñor called the meeting to order at 6:34 P.M. and read the Los Angeles County Land Acknowledgment.

Invocation

Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith provided an invocation.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Mark Villaseñor  
Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith  
Secretary Caroline Bhalla  
Treasurer Rene' Williams  
Chrissie Castro (joined after item 6.1)  
Dr. Andrea Garcia  
Vivian Garcia  
Dawn Jackson  
John Only A Chief  
Rudy Ortega Jr.  
Mona Morales Recalde (joined after item 8.1)

Absent: Denise Escoto  
Shawn Imitates Dog  
Ted Tenorio  
Rich Toyon

Staff: Alexandra Valdes, LANAIC Executive Director  
Julien Tan, LANAIC Administrative Manager

Quorum was met.

Commissioner Introductions

Commissioners provided brief introductions, including their names, appointing office, and tribal affiliation.



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026**

Public Comment

No public comment was submitted for the meeting.

Presentation

**8.1 Updates on LA County Draft Tribal Consultation Policy & Implementation Plan – Jenna Tourjé-Maldonado, Kearns & West Lead Facilitator**

Kearns & West Lead Facilitator Jenna Tourjé-Maldonado and Project Manager/Facilitator Christian Mendez provided the Commission with an [update](#) on the Los Angeles County Draft Tribal Consultation Policy and Implementation Plan. Alexandra encouraged Commissioners to share information regarding the Public Review Session with their respective communities when it becomes available, noting that broader participation will support the continued development of the policy.

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde requested that a copy of the presentation be emailed to her. Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia shared that she attended in her professional capacity the employee Tribal Consultation Policy and Implementation Plan Development meeting in February. She said she felt reaffirmed upon hearing that County departments are committed to helping establish the policy. She noted that during the meeting for County Employees she attended, participants demonstrated meaningful engagement rather than passive attendance, and she expressed hope that this process will result in a strong and effective policy.

Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. shared that he attended a tribal meeting on the policy in February in his professional capacity and emphasized that consultation is essential for the community. He noted that although the Commission is now established, significant work remains, and current efforts represent only a small portion of what is still needed.

Alexandra shared that the finalized and adopted policy would fall under County Municipal Code Section 3. She explained that the policy's length may vary, but the goal is to have it adopted by the Board of Supervisors the end of the year. The accompanying implementation plan is expected to be supported by a Board motion. At that time, the Commission may also propose a policy sunset date to ensure the policy is revisited and updated at an appropriate cadence.



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026**

Action Items

**6.1 Adopt absentee excuses**

*A motion was made by Treasurer Rene’ Williams and seconded by Secretary Caroline Bhalla for Commissioners Denise Escoto, Shawn Imitates Dog, Ted Tenorio, and Rich Toyon’s absentee excuses for the March 17, 2026, meeting.*

*The motion passed.*

<b>YES</b>	Villaseñor, Lewis-Smith, Bhalla, Williams, Garcia, A., Garcia, V., Jackson, Morales Recalde, Only A Chief, Ortega Jr.,
<b>NO</b>	
<b>ABSTAIN</b>	
<b>ABSENT</b>	Escoto, Imitates Dog, Tenorio, Toyon

**6.2. Adopt the February 17, 2026, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes**

*A motion was made by Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia and seconded by Secretary Caroline Bhalla to approve the unapproved November 18, 2025, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.*

*The motion passed.*

<b>YES</b>	Villaseñor, Lewis-Smith, Bhalla, Williams, Castro, Garcia, A., Garcia, V., Jackson, Morales Recalde, Only A Chief, Ortega Jr.,
<b>NO</b>	
<b>ABSTAIN</b>	
<b>ABSENT</b>	Escoto, Imitates Dog, Tenorio, Toyon

**6.3. Adopt Draft FY26-27 Budget Request Letter to the Board of Supervisors**

*A motion was made by Treasurer Rene’ Williams and seconded by Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde to adopt the Draft FY26-27 Budget Request Letter to the Board of Supervisors.*

*The draft letter was adopted unanimously.*

<b>YES</b>	Villaseñor, Lewis-Smith, Bhalla, Williams, Castro, Garcia, A., Garcia, V., Jackson, Morales Recalde, Only A Chief, Ortega Jr.,
<b>NO</b>	
<b>ABSTAIN</b>	
<b>ABSENT</b>	Escoto, Imitates Dog, Tenorio, Toyon



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026**

Discussion Items

**7.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County**

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia noted that Alexandra distributed an additional email regarding the Los Angeles County AIAN Homelessness Dashboard and encouraged all commissioners to review the information.

**7.2 Discuss Impacts of Federal Administration on LA County's AIAN Community**

Commissioner Chrissie Castro reported that the State of California hosted a webinar on updates to HR 1, which outlines federal policy changes in health and human services and California's response. She noted that the Native American community will likely be affected, although it is unclear whether those impacts are already being felt. She offered to share the webinar information with the commissioners.

Alexandra added that the County's Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) recently held a webinar on strategies for maintaining benefits. She shared that she previously sent out the information to commissioners, but will distribute the recording to commissioners for review and assessment of its usefulness.

Chair's Report

**9.1 General Updates**

There were no general updates.

Executive Director's Report

**10.1 General Updates**

Alexandra reported that she has begun early planning discussions with Chairperson Mark Villaseñor regarding Native American Heritage Month, which is eight months away. She and Commissioner Dawn Jackson have been in communication with LA City Councilmember Imelda Padilla's office regarding reserving the Henry P. Rio Bridge Gallery at City Hall. The Commission has also reached out to the Office of Councilmember Imelda Padilla to gauge their interest in co-hosting this year's NAHM celebration. Alexandra will provide updates as they become available, and commissioners will likely discuss potential themes at the next meeting.

Alexandra and Chairperson Villaseñor also discussed options for commemorating the Commission's 50th anniversary, including whether to combine the celebration with NAHM, hold it separately, or potentially not link the two events.

Secretary Caroline Bhalla shared that Supervisor Holly Mitchell has inquired about the County's role in NAHM, noting that past celebrations have been more closely aligned with the City of Los Angeles. Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. explained that the city has historically shown greater



## LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026

interest in hosting the celebration but welcomed the possibility of County involvement if Supervisor Mitchell wishes to participate. Alexandra noted that the Board of Supervisors typically presents a proclamation during NAHM.

Commissioner Chrissie Castro recalled that the County has previously supported NAHM by allowing commissioners to use Grand Park to host a Pow Wow. She observed that community engagement tends to be stronger with City-led events, which often have a more formal structure. Alexandra also shared that in 2025 Supervisor Lindsey Horvath hosted a reception on the 8th floor of the Hall of Administration.

### Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

#### **11.1 Executive Committee**

No report was provided.

#### **11.2 Self Governance Board**

Self Governance Board (SGB) Chairperson Dawn Jackson announced that the newly revised SGB bylaws now require the Board to convene at least four times per year. She noted that the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program remains unaffected by the current federal administration, and this is expected to be a lighter program year. Towards the end of 2026 the SGB will begin discussions on the next Community Action Plan and Community Needs Assessment. Alexandra will distribute the calendar for upcoming SGB meetings.

#### **11.3 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee**

Chairperson Mark Villaseñor reported that he, Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog, and Alexandra have been exploring the idea of an commemorative event at the Huntington Library. They are also considering hosting a panel on the Commission's past, present, and future, tentatively planned for the fall. He emphasized that the event should remain open to the public and community, reflecting the Commission's commitment to accessibility.

Alexandra highlighted the significance of this milestone. He also reflected on the broader historical context, acknowledging that the anniversary coincides with the nation's complex 250-year history and recalling how, in 1976, organizations such as the LA Native Legal Clinic demonstrated the specificity and strength of Native-led institutions. She suggested that incorporating visual elements into the celebration could help showcase the Commission's contributions to urban Native communities.

Chairperson Villaseñor also proposed that the County consider hosting a presentation in the Board chambers in June, if feasible, as part of the anniversary recognition. He encouraged exploring potential sponsorships, and Commissioner Ortega Jr. suggested issuing a proclamation.



## **LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026**

Commissioner John Only A Chief asked whether former commissioners would be invited to participate in the celebration, and Chairperson Villaseñor confirmed that outreach could be conducted. Commissioner Castro proposed selling tickets as a fundraiser, and Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith suggested that proceeds could support NAHM activities. Alexandra reminded the group that NAHM remains primarily under the City's jurisdiction. Commissioner Only A Chief expressed concern about charging the community for an event intended to honor the community itself, and Chairperson Villaseñor clarified that any contribution could be framed as a suggested donation rather than a requirement. Commissioner Castro added that it would be helpful to understand the Commission's constraints and identify approaches that support the community while remaining compliant with County and City policy.

### Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner John Only A Chief shared that he sent an email earlier today regarding his work on documenting the early history of American Indian Changing Spirits. He explained that he is preparing an initial edition to ensure the community has access to accurate information, noting that many conflicting or incorrect claims are circulating. He has photographs and documentation, and emphasized the importance of presenting the truth when historical questions arise.

Commissioner Only A Chief reiterated that this effort reflects his long-standing intention over the past 20 years to preserve and clarify the program's origins, particularly given the significance of the treatment services provided to men in the community. He envisions the final product as a concise, fold-out pamphlet that allows individuals to contact him directly with further questions. Once commissioners have more information on the narrative, they are welcome to distribute it.

Secretary Caroline Bhalla announced that USC will host a Pow Wow on April 26, organized to support the Native community. She shared that a Native graduate student group has recently been formed—marking the first time such a group has existed at USC—and that the event will include participation by alumni and staff. She will continue to provide updates as planning progresses.

Secretary Bhalla also shared that she is nearing completion of her doctorate. Through her research, she learned that many Native student associations exist outside USC, prompting her to consider establishing a similar organization on campus. She noted that USC does not currently have a land acknowledgment, highlighting an area where further institutional support and recognition are needed.

Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. announced his appointment as a commissioner for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), a role with significant responsibilities. As a result, he will be resigning from his position on the LANAIC after 26 years of service, though his departure will not be immediate. He shared that his tribe is experiencing exciting developments, including the hiring of additional personnel, and he will also be stepping down from his role with the Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority (MRCA) to balance these commitments.



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026**

Commissioner Ortega Jr. affirmed that he intends to remain involved with the Commission's 50th anniversary celebration in whatever capacity is appropriate and noted that his tribe will support the event as well. He reflected on the legacy he shares with his father, former Commissioner Rudy Ortega Sr., emphasizing their shared belief in the importance of Native voices in government.

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde shared that her tribe, the Gabrieleno Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, hosted a Native American music festival on March 15th to showcase musicians' work and that they are also hosting a spring Native market on April 11th. She invites all commissioners to attend and spread the word on the event.

Commissioner Chrissie Castro announced that on the upcoming Thursday, the Chapter House and California Native Vote Project will host an event at the Jeffrey Deitch Gallery in Los Angeles. She provided historical context, noting the 1973 occupation of the Pine Ridge Reservation by members of the American Indian Movement. The event will feature several artists, including Tongva artists and that a hoop dancer will close the program. Commissioner Castro shared that approximately 150 people have registered to attend.

**Announcements/Future Agenda Items**

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia suggested establishing a standing agenda item for Mayoral appointees at future meetings to ensure their contributions are intentional and consistently incorporated.

**Commission Adjournment**

Chairperson Villaseñor announced that the next LANAIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. in the Hall of Administration, Room 372, located at 500 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 P.M.