



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAY 20, 2025**

The May 20, 2025, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) meeting was at the Autry Museum of the American West, 4700 Western Heritage Way, Classroom One, Los Angeles, CA 90027.

Call to Order & Land Acknowledgement

Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog called the meeting to order at 6:33 P.M. and read the Los Angeles County Land Acknowledgment.

Invocation

Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor provided an invocation.

Roll Call

- Present: Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog  
 Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor  
 Treasurer Denise Escoto (Departed at 7:27 PM)  
 Caroline Bhalla (Departed at 8:11 PM)  
 Dr. Andrea Garcia  
 Dawn Jackson  
 Mona Morales Recalde  
 John Only A Chief  
 Rudy Ortega Jr.  
 Rich Toyon  
 Rene' William  
 Ted Tenorio
- Absent: Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith (Excused)  
 Chrissie Castro (Excused)  
 Vivian Garcia (Excused)
- Staff: Alexandra Valdes, LANAIC Executive Director  
 Heather Rigby, Department of Arts and Culture Chief Deputy  
 Julien Tan, LANAIC Administrative Manager

Quorum was met.

Commissioner Introductions

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



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Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

Action Items

**6.1 Adopt absentee excuses**

*A motion was made by Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. and seconded by Commissioner Rich Toyon to adopt Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith, Commissioner Chrissie Castro, and Commissioner Vivian Garcia’s absentee excuses for the May 20, 2025 meeting. The motion passed.*

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

**6.2 Approve the April 15, 2025 Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes**

*A motion was made by Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. and seconded by Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor to approve the unapproved April 15, 2025 LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.*

*The motion passed.*

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

**6.3 Adopt letter to LA City Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson responding to requests made to the LANAIC via LA City Council File No. 22-1142**

*A motion was made by Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia and seconded by Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. to adopt the draft letter to LA City Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson responding to requests made to the LANAIC via LA City Council File No. 22-1142.*

*The motion passed.*



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

**6.4 Adopt Letters to the LA County Board of Supervisors and the LA City Mayor Recommending Policy Solutions to Address American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Community Concerns Shared at the February 15, 2025, LANAIC Community Listening Session**

*A motion was made by Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia and seconded by Commissioner Rene' Williams to adopt Letters to the LA County Board of Supervisors and the LA City Mayor Recommending Policy Solutions to Address American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Community Concerns Shared at the February 15, 2025, LANAIC Community Listening Session.*

*The motion passed.*

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

Presentations

**7.1 Introduction to LA County Department of Parks & Recreation Tribal Liaison Jenée Ornelas – Norma E. Garcia (LA County Parks & Recreation Director), Alina Bokde (LA County Parks and Recreation Chief Deputy) and Jenée Ornelas (LA County Parks and Recreation Tribal Liaison)**

LA County Department of Parks & Recreation Director Ms. Norma E. Garcia introduced Ms. Jenée Ornelas, the first Tribal Liaison for the LA County Department of Parks & Recreation. Ms. Garcia expressed her appreciation for the Commission's advocacy for the new position, and Ms. Ornelas declared her goals, which her review of the Harms Report helped to inform. The Commission congratulated the Department of Parks and Recreation and Ms. Ornelas on the appointment.



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**7.2 Indigenous Tribal Signage Program Project (ITSP) Signs Donated within the LA City Department of Recreation and Parks - Kimia Fatehi (Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians Chief of Staff)**

The Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians' Chief of Staff, Ms. Kimia Fatehi, and Policy and Outreach Coordinator, Mr. Jerry Calderon, presented the Indigenous Tribal Signage Program Project (ITSP) and shared that LA City Recreation & Parks Department has requested that they review any historical language, but did not provide any context as to why. Ms. Fatehi requested that the Commission issue a letter to endorse and support its operation. Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde suggests fast-tracking this request and having the letter done as the signs are to be printed next month. Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia offers to attend the next project meeting for further clarification on the project's scope.

Discussion Items

**8.1 Discuss AB52 (Aguiar-Curry) and possible impacts to non-Federally recognized tribes in LA County**

Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. shared about the background of the bill with the Commission. He shared that the introduced language would not require consultation with non-federally recognized tribes. He shared that a coalition of 50 non-federally recognized tribes has prevented the introduction of the bill as initially proposed, and that author Aguiar-Curry has announced it will now be a 2-year bill.

**8.2 Discuss the LANAIC's role and priorities for Care First and Community Investment (CFCI) funding, and request a report back from the LANAIC's CFCI Advisory Body Designee, Joey Williams**

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia praised Mr. Joey Williams's work and shared that he has been a strong advocate for funding the community. She emphasized the importance of receiving a report back from Mr. Williams since he is the Commission's designee to the Care First Community Investment Advisory Committee. Commissioner Dr. Garcia encourages the Commission to utilize their knowledge and resources to provide Mr. Williams with the input to help him further advocate. Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog, seconded Commissioner Dr. Garcia's call, and shared that a presentation from Mr. Williams could be beneficial for both new and existing commissioners. Commissioner Rene' Williams advises that the presentation include background and budget updates.

**8.3 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County**

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia reported back on the Natives in LA Summit, held on April 18, 2025, at the Quiet Cannon in Montebello, and shared that a more detailed summary will be provided to the Commission at a later date. Commissioner Dr. Garcia suggested that the inputs and information collected from the summit can be, and should be, leveraged by the Commission in actions such as submitting letters, engaging in conversations with elected officials, and



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promoting placemaking for the community. Commissioner Rene' Williams reported that the attendance included over 170 community members, ranging from youths to adults, partners, and allies, and forecasted the event coming back next year. Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog applauded Commissioners Dr. Garcia and Williams for their dedication to the work. Commissioner Caroline Bhalla stated the event was one of the best but also wondered why the commission was not formally involved. Commissioner Dr. Garcia noted that most of the funding comes from fellowships.

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

Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. revealed that a significant portion of the federal grants his tribe received, approximately 26%, were lost, effective immediately. Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog mentioned that the Native community is fearful due to content produced by the government every week.

### **8.5 LANAIC Bylaw Review and Discussion**

Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor led a discussion on the LANAIC Bylaws and the findings of the LANAIC Bylaws Ad Hoc. He shared the need for the Commission to review and update its bylaws. Issues related to the current bylaws include inconsistencies in commissioner appointment requirements and elections, as well as outdated terms that reflect the conditions under which the bylaws were first developed and adopted. Commissioner Carolina Bhalla inquired about the possibility of hiring an outside attorney to advise on the language, as the attorney would ensure the spirit of the commission is upheld in the bylaws. Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. added the importance of a Tribal Indian lawyer. Assistant County Counsel Ms. Starr Coleman was present during this discussion and shared specific provisions related to the County Code and the process for updating County Code language with the Commission. The Department of Arts and Culture's Chief Deputy, Ms. Heather Rigby, welcomes the commission to hold further conversations with the Department to discuss the Bylaws and the updating of the County Code.

### **Chair's Report**

#### **9.1 General Updates**

No general updates.

#### **9.2 LANAIC 50th Anniversary Archive Ad Hoc Committee**

Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog proposed that the LANAIC 50th Anniversary Archive Ad Hoc Committee be sunset, as the project would be too overwhelming and beyond the commission's current capability to prioritize. Chairperson Imitates Dog ensured that there would still be a celebration. Alexandra shared a few possible ways to celebrate the monumental anniversary, such as through social media campaigns that highlight archives and recognitions or holding discussion panels in partnership with the LA County Library American Indian Resource Center. Alexandra shared that she explored County resources and requests that the commission share



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any ideas they may have, as this is a significant moment for the Commission and the community.

### **9.3 LA City Parks Needs Assessment Steering Committee Updates**

Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog shared that he had previously volunteered to join the Committee but stated that he will not be able to represent the Commission and is calling for another volunteer. Commissioner Rich Toyon attended the last Committee meeting and shared meeting specifics (ex., park ratings by data collected during surveys, workshops, and need assessment meetings, areas that require more attention, specific data were demarcated due to faulty in representation) and relayed the committee's goal to reissue data when they have better representation, and the data can be used for grant applications and other monetary purposes. Commissioner Rene' Williams nominated Commissioner Toyon to represent the Commission. Alexandra suggested an alternative in the event Commissioner Toyon is unavailable and will table this discussion with City-appointed commissioners for their input or interest in representing the Commission on the committee.

### Executive Director's Report

#### **10.1 General Updates**

Alexandra announced that the Request for Proposal for the Development of a Countywide Tribal Consultation Policy and Implementation Plan has been launched and is due on July 1st and requested that the Commission share the opportunity with their networks. Alexandra expressed her gratitude for the Commission for their previous advocacy for the development of this policy. She shared there are no updates to the Community Services Block Grant program and extended her gratitude to the commissioners who attended the public hearing on May 17 at LA City College.

### Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

#### **11.1 Executive Committee**

No Executive Committee updates.

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

Alexandra reported back on the May 17 CSBG Public Hearing.

#### **11.3 2025 Native American Heritage Month Ad-hoc Committee**

Commissioner Dawn Jackson shared that the Ad-hoc Committee is in the process of seeking a sponsor.

#### **11.4 LANAIC 50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Archive Ad Hoc Committee**

Sunset.



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**11.5 LANAIC Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee**

No report was provided.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Dawn Jackson met a group named the Jamaica Cultural Association. They are representing the Indigenous people of Jamaica at an event on July 14<sup>th</sup> at the Expo Center, and amongst their invitees is their hereditary cultural chief. They hope that he will be able to interact with the Indigenous people from Los Angeles. The Commission will receive an invitation to the event, and commissioners are encouraged to participate in the meet-and-greet event. The group wants to make it clear that they are here and intend to stay.

Commissioner Ted Tenorio shared some insight from the State committee. Data were collected from the census and suicide data from the County Medical Examiner. Commissioner Tenorio revealed that San Bernardino has the highest suicide rate among veterans. Commissioner Tenorio will work with the County examiner, the VA, and law enforcement to develop a suicide prevention program to be established in Sacramento. The next phase of the project will focus on Los Angeles County, and Commissioner Tenorio will approach the commissioners on this subject.

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde requested that the minutes reflect that LAUSD, the second largest school district in the country, adopted a Land Acknowledgment in November 2024.

Commission Adjournment

Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog shared that the next LANAIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Hall of Administration, Room 372, 500 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm in honor of former Commissioner Randall Murphy.