



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAY 19, 2026**

The May 19, 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 Acknowledgment

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

Invocation

An invocation was not provided

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Mark Villaseñor
Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith
Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Vivian Garcia
Shawn Imitates Dog
Dawn Jackson
Rudy Ortega Jr.
Mona Morales Recalde
Ted Tenorio

Absent: Treasurer Rene' Williams (Excused)
Chrissie Castro (Excused)
Denise Escoto (Excused)
John Only A Chief (Excused)

Staff: Alexandra Valdes, LANAIC Executive Director
Megan Moret, Board Liaison – Department of Arts and Culture

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 submitted for the meeting.

Action Items

6.1. Adopt the March 17, 2025, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia and seconded by Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith to approve the unapproved March 17, 2026, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.

The motion passed.

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

6.2. Establish the 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith and seconded by Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde to establish the 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

The motion passed.

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

Commissioners Lewis-Smith, Imitates-Dog, Morales Recalde and Jackson volunteered to serve on the ad hoc.



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6.3. Approve partnering with the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens to host a Panel Discussion and Reception on the Evening of Monday, October 12, 2026, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the LA City/County Native American Indian Commission

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith and seconded by Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla to approve partnering with the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens to host a Panel Discussion and Reception on the Evening of Monday, October 12, 2026, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the LA City/County Native American Indian Commission

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

Presentation

7.1 Christopher Columbus Statue Loan to the Craft Contemporary – Lalena Vellanoweth, LA County Department of Arts and Culture - Conservation & Collections Manager, Civic Art Division & Frida Cano, Craft Contemporary - Senior Curator

Lalena Vellanoweth, Conservation & Collections Manager at the Department of Arts and Culture, provided a brief update about a recent request the County received from the Craft Contemporary to borrow the County’s Christopher Columbus Statue that has been stored at Carnevale & Lohr since its removal from Grand Park in 2018. Craft Contemporary Senior Curator Ms. Frida Cano then presented the museum’s proposal to borrow the Christopher Columbus Statue for an upcoming exhibit titled *Vandalismo Artesanal* by artist Carlos Castro Arias.

The commissioners engaged in a discussion regarding the request. While it was expressed by some commissioners that they appreciated the thoughtfulness of Frida's presentation, they had numerous questions for her and shared several concerns with the requested loan and overall expressed a desire for the County to not loan the statue for this exhibit. Because of the risks, possible harm, and unintended consequences associated with this exhibition, the LANAIC overall felt there was no reason that the County should be involved.

The following questions and concerns were shared:

- How would the Craft engage with Gabrieleno tribes and people for this exhibit?
- How would the truth of Columbus be provided in this exhibit?



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- Removing this statue from storage and putting it back in public view would anger and upset members of Native and Indigenous communities, including those who advocated for its removal and spent time providing public comment.
- Any accountability for backlash or negative response would fall on the LANAIC for supporting this loan and exhibition.
- The Commission would rather support an exhibit that uplifted and celebrated Indigenous leaders that the general public has little to no awareness of.
- Within Native cultures, when someone is banished, they are not welcomed back.
- While the artist's intent was understood, the adornment in Indigenous beadwork felt that it beautified and venerated Columbus.
- There was also a concern regarding this exhibit coinciding with the political environment we are in, and that right now is very fraught and could elicit extremely strong responses from both sides of the political spectrum.
- The timing of the exhibit starting in Native American Heritage Month was also flagged as a concern.

Discussion Items

8.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

No discussion was had.

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

No discussion was had.

Chair's Report

9.1 General Updates

No report was provided.



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Executive Director's Report

10.1 General Updates

No report was provided.

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 requested that Alexandra share a brief update. Alexandra shared that the LANAIC SGB met earlier tonight and discussed a timeline to complete the upcoming FY27-28 Community Services Block Grant Community Action Plan and Community Needs Assessment.

11.3 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Chair Villasenor shared that the LANAIC will partner with the Huntington to host a panel and reception to commemorate its 50th anniversary on Monday, October 12, 2026.

Alexandra shared that the Committee is in the early days of planning the panel and had identified Commissioner Dawn Jackson as a possible panelist.

Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis Smith shared that the California Strategic Growth Council released funds for the [Tribal Capacity Building Program](#) and the application is open through August 11, 2026.

Commissioner Ted Tenorio announced the opening of the first Federal Native American Cemetery in Riverside. He also shared details of a community-driven process undertaken to build a statute at the cemetery.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia requested that a standing item be placed on future agendas entitled "Mayoral Appointed Committee."



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Commission Adjournment

Chairperson Villaseñor announced that the next LANAIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 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.