



AGENDA & NOTICE

LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY
NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2026, 6:30 PM

Meeting Location: County of Los Angeles Hall of Administration
Sybil Brand Room 372
500 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

To Provide Public Comment: You may submit written public comment via email to contact@lanaic.lacounty.gov. Please note "LANAIC Public Comment" in the subject line. Please submit your public comment or documentation as soon as possible, but no later than 5 p.m. the night before the scheduled meeting. Public comment received after this time will be added to the next regular Commission meeting.

MARK VILLASEÑOR, Chairperson
Fernandeño Tataviam

DENISE ESCOTO, Commissioner
Northern Cheyenne

MONA MORALES RECALDE, Commissioner
Gabrielino Tongva

BRYCE LEWIS-SMITH, Vice Chairperson
Citizen Potawatomi Nation

DR. ANDREA N. GARCIA, M.D., Commissioner
Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara

JOHN ONLY A CHIEF, Commissioner
Pawnee Nation

DR. CAROLINE BHALLA, Secretary
Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin

VIVIAN GARCIA, Commissioner
Cherokee

RUDY ORTEGA JR., Commissioner
Fernandeño Tataviam

RENE' WILLIAMS, Treasurer
Colville Tribes

SHAWN IMITATES DOG, Commissioner
Lakota

TED TENORIO, Commissioner
Tiguan Nation

CHRISSIE CASTRO, Commissioner
Navajo

DAWN JACKSON, Commissioner
Saginaw Chippewa

VACANT, Commissioner

ALEXANDRA VALDES
Executive Director
Tlingit/Athabascan

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. INVOCATION & LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

3. ROLL CALL

4. COMMISSIONER INTRODUCTIONS

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. ACTION ITEMS

- 6.1. Adopt the July 21, 2026, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes
- 6.2. Select the 2026 Native American Heritage Month Honorees

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 7.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County
- 7.2 Discuss Impacts of Federal Administration on LA County's AIAN Community
- 7.3 Discuss 2026 LANAIC Community Elected Commissioner Elections

9. CHAIR'S REPORT

9.1 General Updates

10. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

10.1 General Updates

11. COMMITTEE & AD-HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS

11.1 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners

11.2 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee

11.3 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

12. COMMISSIONER GENERAL COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

14. COMMISSION ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 15, 2026, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Location: Hall of Administration, Room 372, 500 W. Temple Street, LA, CA 90012

Meetings are held in English. If interpretation in other languages or accommodations for persons with disabilities are needed, please contact the Commission at 213-738-3241 at least 3 business days before the meeting. The meetings of the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Contact: www.lanaic.lacounty.gov, contact@lanaic.lacounty.gov, or (213) 738-3241

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Villasenor", written in a cursive style.

Chairperson Mark Villasenor



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JULY 21, 2026**

The July 21, 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 6:30 P.M. and read the Los Angeles County Land Acknowledgment.

Invocation

An invocation was provided by Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Mark Villaseñor
Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith
Chrissie Castro (Remotely - Just Cause)
Denise Escoto
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Vivian Garcia
Shawn Imitates Dog
John Only A Chief (arrived during item 6.1)
Mona Morales Recalde
Ted Tenorio

Absent: Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla
Treasurer Rene' Williams
Dawn Jackson
Rudy Ortega Jr.

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.



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Public Comment

No public comment was submitted for the meeting.

Presentation

7.1. Care First Community Investment Updates, Joey Williams (LANAIC CFCI Designee)

Joey Williams, the LANAIC's designee on the County's Care First Community Investment (CFCI) Advisory Committee, presented updates on the CFCI program.

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia thanked Joey for serving as the designee, for his ongoing engagement with the community, for being a strong voice, and for his work ensuring dollars reach community members. She asked whether, given it is now 2026 and the Justice, Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD) has developed new ways of engaging with the community, appointed commissioners can contribute more data and expertise. She inquired what Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and tribal partners might say about creating more intentional engagement opportunities and identifying what types of support are most needed. She emphasized finding appropriate fits between what CBOs and tribes can offer and what the community requires, asking how the commission can help and how to ensure they are fulfilling their responsibility to engage stakeholders effectively.

Joey noted that the land acknowledgment currently read at CFCI meetings should move beyond statements and be supported by financial investment. He shared that he encouraged the CFCI Advisory Committee to prioritize getting money back to the community rather than relying solely on symbolic gestures. He expressed desire to return to the trusted messenger model CFCI utilized previously for receiving community feedback. He noted that while many organizations focus on job training, there is a shortage of available jobs. Unemployment continues to affect many communities in Los Angeles County, not only Native people. He also discussed homeownership challenges, stating that the County cannot "build its way out of it," and emphasized continued housing funding. He added that education support should extend beyond universities to include trades and crafts, acknowledging that many people want opportunities to create and work with their hands.

Commissioner Dr. Garcia asked whether, in addition to the County underspend, there had also been underspending on the community side. Joey Williams clarified that there was no underspend on the community side. Joey shared that when underspending was identified, the County Supervisors had already developed a plan to allocate those funds.

Alexandra responded to the earlier questions about organizations. She explained that funding distributed through The Amity Foundation covered only one year, and the large dollar amounts combined with the short 12-month period made it difficult for organizations to build sustainable



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programs. She noted operational constraints, including hiring and staffing challenges, and emphasized the misalignment between funding levels, time horizons, and what organizations realistically can implement.

Joey Williams added that when discussions occurred regarding the full \$7.5 million (rather than just the \$3.5 million), the CFCI Advisory Committee had initially believed they had \$12 million to allocate. He stated that he wants the County to make good on that, suggesting \$2 million this year and \$2 million next year as part of honoring that commitment.

Alexandra noted that although the County intended to reach smaller organizations, the contract language still imposed barriers such as high insurance requirements, creating structural misalignment with the organizations they hoped to reach. Joey Williams agreed, noting that requirements such as prior funding history restrict new or smaller organizations. He emphasized that commissioners allocate dollars and identify funding areas (rental assistance housing, community-based health services, mental health, youth development and education, business support, non-custodial services, and reentry programs) but have no control over which organizations ultimately receive grants.

Alexandra added that similar issues affected the CFCI AIAN childcare funding opportunity. There are no existing daycare facilities to build upon, and creating daycare facilities from scratch is a major undertaking. Native entities are trying, but by the time a facility is built, funding may no longer be available. She noted community desire for childcare but also geographic dispersion, making implementation challenging. Joey Williams stated that Amity may allow Sacred Paths and UAI to develop a voucher program instead.

Commissioner Chrissie Castro agreed with Alexandra and explained that she had a background in early childhood development consulting and she had shared the childcare RFP with colleagues who found that the funding was inadequate for building a sustainable early childhood facility and that the only feasible option was a voucher system, yet the RFP did not reflect that. She recommended involving community-based organizations earlier in the RFP writing process so they can offer input. Joey Williams agreed and noted uncertainty about whom Amity and JCOD consult during the process. Commissioner Chrissie Castro asked whether Sacred Path and UAI could attend a future meeting to report on childcare work and share any barriers they are experiencing. Alexandra agreed to reach out to Sacred Path and UAI.



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Action Items

6.1. Adopt the June 16, 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 Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog to approve the unapproved June 16, 2026, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.

The motion passed.

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

6.2. Adopt proposed panelists and moderator for LANAIC 50th Anniversary Event at The Huntington on October 12, 2026

A motion was made by Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog and seconded by Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith to adopt proposed panelists and moderator for LANAIC 50th Anniversary Event at The Huntington on October 12, 2026.

The motion passed.

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



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6.3. Adopt a 2026 Native American Heritage Month Theme

Roll call votes were taken for the 2026 Native American Heritage Month Theme (the vote breakdown is below), and “A Legacy to Urban Indian Leadership” was selected.

2026 Native American Heritage Month Theme (Round 1)

	Bhalla	Castro	Escoto	Garcia, A	Garcia, V	Imitates Dog	Jackson	Lewis-Smith	Morales Recalde	Only A Chief	Ortega	Tenorio	Villaseñor	Williams
Living Truths: Fifty Years of Community Care	Absent						Absent				Absent			Absent
From Foundation to Future														
Still We Rise														
Carrying the Light for Our Future Generations														
Carrying the Fire		X				X								
Building the Fire														
Honoring Our Past. Shaping Our Future.			X		X				X			X		
50 Years of Advocacy. Partnership. Progress.														
A Legacy of Indigenous to Urban Indian Leadership				X				X		X			X	



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2026 Native American Heritage Month Theme (Round 2)

	Bhalla	Castro	Escoto	Garcia, A	Garcia, V	Imitates Dog	Jackson	Lewis-Smith	Morales Recalde	Only A Chief	Ortega	Tenorio	Villaseñor	Williams
Honoring Our Past. Shaping Our Future.	Absent	X	X				Absent		X		Absent	X		Absent
A Legacy of Indigenous to Urban Indian Leadership				X	X	X		X		X			X	

6.4. Approve the LA City/County Native American Indian Commission pages of the Department of Arts and Culture Website

A motion was made by Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia and seconded by Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde to approve the LA City/County Native American Indian Commission pages of the Department of Arts and Culture Website

The motion passed.

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

Discussion Items

8.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

No discussion was had.



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

Alexandra Ferguson reported on the OMB budget impact and rules changes discussed at the prior meeting. She stated that the County authorized departments to submit feedback. Alexandra decided not to publicly identify program names because doing so would not be strategic in the CSAIBG context.

She noted that the Department of Arts and Culture submitted comments expressing concerns about infringement on rights, particularly emphasizing impacts on arts and culture. This comment was referenced in a New York Times article titled "[White House Faces Stiff Pushback on Subjecting Grants to Political Review](#)."

Chair's Report

9.1 General Updates

No report was provided.

Executive Director's Report

10.1 LA County Draft Tribal Consultation Policy Update

Alexandra provided a brief update on the Draft Tribal Consultation Policy process. She shared that following the June meeting she shared the draft policy with Commissioners and requested feedback. She received one commissioner response noting they had reviewed the policy and had no edits. She explained that the policy will need to be read twice by the Board of Supervisors before adoption and that the consulting team is continuing its work. The goal is for the policy to be adopted through a Board motion, ideally in November 2026. Alexandra encouraged commissioners who have not yet done so to review the draft policy.

10.2 FY2026 LA County Single Audit

Alexandra provided a brief update on the Single Audit since the SGB is now meeting quarterly. She noted that CSAIBG is included in the County's single audit, as it is part of federal programs. Alexandra explained that she previously participated in single audit work at WDACS in 2021, where auditors request documentation and departments must submit the required materials. She stated that her and Julien along with the Arts and Culture Admin team have been working on this audit work over the past couple of weeks.



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10.3 CSBG Desk Review

Alexandra reported that the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) team had notified her that they will begin a desk review of the CSBG program. She shared that the desk review is a truncated monitoring and that CSD performed a full monitoring of the program in 2025 and that her and Julien will be working with CSD on documentation submittal. She also emphasized that monitoring their CSBG subcontractor is also required and that Julien will be performing a desk review of Pukuu later this year.

10.4 2026 LANAIC Community Elections Update

Alexandra shared language from the LANAIC Bylaws regarding community elections. She stated that commissioners will have a more extensive discussion at next month's meeting. She asked commissioners to review the bylaw language between now and then, noting that updates are needed in light of the Trump administration.

Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

11.1 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners

No report was provided.

11.2 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee

No report was provided.

11.3 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Alexandra reported that the Commission still has not secure a City Council office to host the 2026 NAHM in chambers presentation. Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith will reach out to a potential host. Commissioner Chrissie Castro offered to contact her own connection if Vice Chair Lewis-Smith's outreach does not result in a host.

Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner John Only A Chief reported that he spoke with Scott Black, CEO of American Indian Health & Services, regarding the new clinic. He asked whether the facility would focus more on dental or medical services, noting that he had secured 19 dental chairs and wanted to understand the percentage allocation. Scott Black indicated that dental services would be provided across various communities, likely through mobile vans.

Commissioner Only A Chief described the recent event at the American Indian Health Services site as positive. However, he noted that there is currently no timeline for the clinic's opening because several city-required utility and permitting sign-offs are still pending. He estimated the



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opening could be approximately two years away unless the organization begins contracting work sooner. For example, windows had to be removed to install the dental equipment.

He concluded that once completed, the clinic will be a beautiful building that will significantly benefit community members.

Commissioner Only A Chief asked for an update on the open seat on the Commission. He noted that in earlier years openings took significant time to fill and asked what the Commission is doing to increase awareness of the vacancy. He stated that he personally plans to share information at a powwow to encourage community interest.

Alexandra responded that the Fifth District (Supervisor Barger) manages its own appointment processes and outreach efforts. She offered to connect with anyone Commissioner Only A Chief may have in mind. She also noted that an additional vacancy will open in August for the Third District and advised commissioners to direct interested individuals to Supervisor Horvath's website.

Commissioner Ted Tenorio announced that Supervisor Solis is once again hosting a veteran's job fair at the Pomona Fairplex this Friday, the 24th, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in Building 4. He noted that additional information is available on Supervisor Solis' website, where flyers have been posted. Commissioner Tenorio added that he will be attending the event.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

No announcements/future agenda items were provided.

Commission Adjournment

Chairperson Villaseñor announced that the next LANAIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 18, 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 8:12 P.M.

**LA City/County Native American Indian Commission
2025 Native American Heritage Month Honoree Nominations**

Spirit of Community

Nomination for Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians

Biography

The Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians are the First People of the Los Angeles Basin, with their traditional territory encompassing the greater Los Angeles area, Orange County, and the Southern Channel Islands. Despite enduring historical hardships, they have maintained a continuous, active community and remain deeply committed to caring for both the land and the people. The recent establishment of the Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Center at Siban'gna serves as a testament to their enduring presence, providing a vital space for community gathering, tribal governance, and cultural continuity.

Statement of Nomination

This tribal nation's commitment to community focus is consistently demonstrated through their actions. They provide vital support, collaborative spaces, and resources for native people in Los Angeles. Their recent community-centered initiatives include:

- Hosting Native Markets that bring the community together and support native vendors.
- Organizing a music festival to celebrate and share cultural expression.
- Operating a community food bank to provide direct assistance to those in need.
- Hosting and facilitating meetings designed to empower other native organizations.
- Actively collaborating on and participating in local land acknowledgements.
- Contributing to the creation of the Los Angeles County Land Acknowledgement Statement.
- Being honored in the Los Angeles Unified School District's formal land acknowledgement.
- Continuously sharing information about opportunities available for native people throughout the Los Angeles area.

The Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians embodies the resilience, generosity, and community focus that the Native American Heritage Month awards seek to recognize. Their ongoing work ensures that the First People of this land continue to uplift, empower, and support the broader native community.

Nomination for Rudy Ortega Jr.

Biography

Born and raised on his ancestral homelands in the San Fernando Valley, Rudy Ortega, Jr. has dedicated his life to serving Native communities throughout LA County and beyond. Following in the footsteps of his late father, respected Tribal leader Rudy Ortega Sr., Rudy began advocating for his people at an early age and has become one of the most sought out leaders in the Los Angeles Native community.

As Tribal President of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, Rudy has led the Tribe through one of the most significant periods in its history. Under his leadership, the Tribe recently achieved a major milestone in its decades-long pursuit of federal recognition—a critical step toward restoring the rights, sovereignty, and acknowledgment long denied to the Tataviam people. Through unwavering persistence, strategic leadership, and a deep commitment to future generations, Rudy continues to move his Tribe closer to achieving this long-overdue recognition.

Beyond his service to the Tataviam community, Rudy has been a tireless advocate for Native peoples throughout Los Angeles County. Rudy served on the LA City/County Native American Indian Commission from 2005 to 2026 and served as Chair from 2011 to 2018. As Chair he played a key role in advancing the effort to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day, helping ensure that Native histories, cultures, and contributions are recognized and honored across the region.

In 2026 Rudy was appointed to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Board of Commissioners, making him only the second Native American to serve in this important role overseeing the largest municipal utility in the US. His appointment represents not only a personal achievement, but a meaningful step toward greater Indigenous representation in civic leadership.

Statement of Nomination

A respected cultural practitioner, educator, advocate, and Tribal leader, Rudy embodies the values of service, humility, resilience, and integrity. His leadership has strengthened communities, elevated Native voices, and inspired a new generation of Indigenous leaders. Rudy is steadfastly committed to sovereignty, justice, cultural preservation, and community advancement. He is the embodiment of the Spirit of Community award.

Spirit of Creativity

Nomination for Samantha Yang

Biography

As a proud member of the First People, Samantha MJ Yang channels her deep connection to the community and the land into her art. Her creative vision serves as a powerful educational platform, allowing her to share important truths, stories, and perspectives with a broad audience. Her exceptional talent and dedication were recently highlighted when her art was exhibited at the Huntington Library, bringing vital representation and profound artistry to a major institutional space.

In addition to her artistic achievements, Samantha is deeply active in the local community. She has been a crucial voice and active participant in the rebuild of Eaton Canyon. Her involvement in this project demonstrates her commitment to restoring and caring for the natural environment, blending her creative spirit with tangible community action and stewardship.

Statement of Nomination

Samantha MJ Yang is highly recommended for the Spirit of Creativity Award. Samantha perfectly embodies the essence of this recognition through her continuous community involvement and her remarkable ability to educate others through her beautiful creations.

Samantha is an inspiring creator and a dedicated community advocate. Her ability to weave education, environmental care, and breathtaking art together makes her exceptionally deserving of the Spirit of Creativity Award.

Nomination for Zahn McClarnon – Hunkpapa Lakota

Biography

A longtime Los Angeles resident, Zahn McClarnon is a celebrated Native artist whose remarkable career spans decades in film and television. From early roles on Baywatch to acclaimed performances in Reservation Dogs and his groundbreaking work on Dark Winds, Zahn has consistently demonstrated excellence in his craft. Today, he not only stars in Dark Winds but also serves as an Executive Producer, helping shape authentic Native storytelling both in front of and behind the camera. With Dark Winds recently renewed for a fifth season, Zahn continues to help elevate Native storytelling and showcase Indigenous talent on one of television's most successful and impactful Native-led productions.

Beyond his success on screen, Zahn has remained deeply connected to the Native arts community in Los Angeles. He has participated in numerous productions with Native

Voices and has long been a champion for Native artists, using his platform to uplift and support the next generation of Indigenous talent. Despite his growing success, he remains a familiar and welcomed presence in the community. It is not uncommon to see Zahn at a local powwow or community gathering, taking photos and shaking hands.

Statement of Nomination

Through his artistry, dedication, and unwavering commitment to community, Zahn embodies the true Spirit of Creativity. His work ethic, humility, and willingness to create opportunities for others reflect the values of Native leadership. He has built an extraordinary career while never forgetting the importance of community, culture, and representation. Through every role, every project, and every interaction, Zahn continues to inspire Native people and artists everywhere.

Spirit of Tradition

Nomination for Dr. Kimberly Morales Johnson

Biography

Dr. Kimberly Morales Johnson for the Spirit of Tradition Award. Kimberly embodies a dedication to honoring the traditional ways of the Gabrieleno Tongva people, serving as a vital bridge between ancestral knowledge and contemporary community visibility.

A Foundation of Knowledge and Leadership

Kimberly has dedicated her life to the preservation of her culture, a commitment that is beautifully reflected in her academic and community achievements. She recently earned her PhD in Native American Studies from UC Davis, reinforcing her deep knowledge with rigorous scholarship. As an enrolled member and the Tribal Secretary of her Tribe in Los Angeles, she continually uses her platform to uplift the First People of the Los Angeles Basin.

Education and Traditional Arts

Her work as a traditional basket weaver is a direct reflection of her commitment to keeping ancestral arts alive. Kimberly actively works to bring visibility to the Gabrieleno community by educating others on traditional ways of doing things. Her educational efforts span a wide range of spaces, allowing her to reach diverse audiences across the region:

- She teaches and shares cultural knowledge at the Natural History Museum.
- She provides essential cultural education directly within the tribal office.
- She gives insightful presentations to local colleges and universities regarding cultural continuity.
- She works directly with the community to tell the story of her people from an authentic perspective.

Statement of Nomination

Through her art, her scholarship, and her tireless teaching, Kimberly Morales Johnson ensures that the practices of the First People are not merely remembered, but actively lived. She is truly deserving of the Spirit of Tradition Award.

Nomination for Victor Chavez – Diné (Navajo Nation)

Biography

Victor Chavez is a longtime Los Angeles resident and a proud citizen of the Diné Nation whose dedication, leadership, and service have made him a cornerstone of the Native community throughout Southern California.

If you attend local powwows or Native community gatherings, chances are you know Victor. For many years, he has been the person the Los Angeles Native community calls upon to serve as Arena Director for powwows and cultural events. His patience, professionalism, cultural knowledge, and steady leadership have earned him the respect of dancers, singers, organizers, and attendees alike, making him one of the most requested and trusted Arena Directors in the Los Angeles area.

While Victor owns and operates a successful contracting business, his true passion has always been serving his community. Time and again, he volunteers his time and energy to ensure that powwows and cultural gatherings run smoothly, remain organized, stay on schedule, and uphold the cultural protocols and respect. His leadership behind the scenes helps create spaces where Native traditions, families, and communities can come together in a good way.

Alongside his wife, Mary, Victor is a familiar and welcoming presence at powwows, community celebrations, and Native events throughout the year. Whether serving as Arena Director, supporting organizers, or simply visiting with friends and relatives, he embodies the spirit of generosity, humility, and service that strengthens our community.

Statement of Nomination

Victor's unwavering commitment to the Native community, his decades of volunteer service, and his genuine love for bringing people together make him a deserving recipient of the Spirit of Tradition Award. His leadership reminds us that community is built not only through words, but through consistent service, dedication, and a willingness to show up whenever and wherever needed.

Nomination for Many Winters Gathering of Elders

Many Winters Gathering of Elders (MWGOE) plays a vital role in the Los Angeles Native community's healing, with the participation and support of the original peoples of the land. Founded in 1992, the vision of The Gathering is to host a sacred space in an urban setting for people to come together, with the intention to learn, pray, support Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and to inspire a healthier future for Native people. The Gathering hosts and welcomes Indigenous elders from across Turtle Island to share oral traditions, teachings, and medicine. Indigenous elders have been central in sharing their living knowledge, daily and generational struggles while participating at the annual Gatherings over the years.

The annual event is led by the MWGOE Core Committee, comprised of community members representing various tribes including the local Tongva, Chumash, Ajachemen, as well as organizations: Red Earth Defense, Xican@ Records & Film, in partnership with Angels Gate Cultural Center.