



LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JUNE 16, 2026

The June 16, 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 6:35 P.M. and read the Los Angeles County Land Acknowledgment.

Invocation

An invocation was provided by Commissioner John Only A Chief.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Mark Villaseñor
Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith
Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla
Treasurer Rene' Williams (Remotely - Just Cause)
Chrissie Castro (Joined after Item 6.1)
Denise Escoto
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Vivian Garcia
Shawn Imitates Dog
John Only A Chief
Dawn Jackson
Mona Morales Recalde
Ted Tenorio

Absent: Rudy Ortega Jr.

Staff: Alexandra Valdes, LANAIC Executive Director
Julien Tan, LANAIC Administrative Manager
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 May 19, 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 Dr. Caroline Bhalla to approve the unapproved May 19, 2026, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.

The motion passed.

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

Discussion Items

7.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia reported that AIAN homelessness continues to be a broad and deeply systemic issue. She noted that LAHSA is currently under attack and under Federal investigation, creating a catastrophic situation that includes the loss of approximately \$200 million in federal funding and significant layoffs. These challenges have made it extremely difficult to advance homelessness-related work, as agencies are now severely understaffed.

Dr. Garcia shared that, through her day job, she is doing everything possible to keep efforts moving forward, though the outlook remains difficult. She also informed the group that Los Angeles County has established a new Department of Homelessness Services and Housing, which includes an Equity & Cultural Care position in the Office of the Director. She invited anyone with input or feedback to reach out to her. She added that one-third of the Department of Mental Health's budget is allocated to housing and homelessness, and leadership has shown strong interest in expanding housing support. Dr. Garcia emphasized that despite current barriers, the commissioners must continue to advocate through letters and conversations with the appointing authorities.



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

Alexandra stated that she would provide her update during Item 9.2, as her information is already included in the Executive Director's Report regarding the Federal Office of Management and Budget Proposed Rules Change Update.

7.3 Discuss 2026 Native American Heritage Month Theme and Honoree Selection Processes

Alexandra shared about the Commission's previous processes to select a Native American Heritage Month theme and NAHM honorees as well as associated timelines. She shared that following this meeting she will send an email requesting nominations for both a NAHM theme and 2026 NAHM honorees, using the same process followed in previous years. She also included the list of past NAHM honorees in the agenda packet and encouraged members to let her know if anyone is missing so the record can remain inclusive and accurate. She added that next month's meeting the body will take action selecting a theme and will select NAHM honorees at the August meeting.

Chair's Report

8.1 General Updates

No report was provided.

Executive Director's Report

9.1 LA County Draft Tribal Consultation Policy Update

Alexandra provided an update on the County of Los Angeles Draft Tribal Consultation Policy. She shared that Kearns & West, the consultant team hired for this effort, has been working with the County since September 2025 and has held several meetings with local tribes and County employees to gather feedback on what should be included in the policy and what constitutes a strong consultation framework.

A draft has been developed, revised with feedback from tribes and County employees, and a second draft is now in progress. Alexandra will send the updated draft to commissioners this week and encouraged members to send any feedback directly to her. She noted that the policy is intended to guide approximately 100,000 County employees across 37 departments, particularly those with limited experience working with tribes.

The next step will be the County approval process, with anticipated adoption in November 2026. As of today, nine tribes participated in the process.



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9.2 Federal Office of Management and Budget Proposed Rules Change Update

Alexandra reported that the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced an expansive rules change in the Federal Registry that would dramatically change federal contracting. She shared that, due to the scope of the changes, she was immediately alerted by the Community Services Block Grant partner CalCAPA, which emphasized that the proposal is significant rather than a minor update.

The proposed changes include items related to DEI, federal authorities, and determinations of whether an award remains in the national interest. Of particular concern to Alexandra is the requirement that cost-reimbursable programs obtain prior approval, as the CSAIBG program operates under a cost-reimbursable model. Alexandra and Julien Tan consulted with the State of California Community Services & Development Department regarding how the State is processing the proposal. To date 10,000 public comments have been submitted. Individuals and organizations may submit comments through a 45 day public comment period.

Board Liaison Megan Moret added that Alexandra was the one who elevated this issue to County legislative staff, making their department the first to bring it to the CEO's attention, and the County is now working actively to push back on the proposed changes. Alexandra stated she can provide commissioners with the appropriate channels for submitting public comment as individuals.

Chairperson Mark Villaseñor commented that what stands out to him in the proposed federal rule changes is the use of terms such as "at-will" and "national interest," noting that these provisions could allow the federal government to abruptly discontinue programs by simply stating it no longer wishes to continue them. Alexandra responded that while tribes are also expected to provide feedback, the federal government ultimately retains control, and the best the County can do is formalize protections through policy and regulation. She acknowledged the discouraging nature of the situation but emphasized the importance of submitting comment. Megan added that each County department can submit its own comments to County Counsel and partner with other departments to achieve stronger, more coordinated responses. She referenced last week's meeting with the CEO's office and noted that the current federal environment is unpredictable. She will notify Alexandra as soon as she hears any updates and encourages everyone to submit comments.

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia noted that because the Commission works with CSBG funding, it is important to engage.

9.3 LANAIC Website Migration Update

Alexandra presented the interim LANAIC website solution, explaining that it serves as a temporary approach until resources can be identified to do a wholesale redesign of a standalone website. She invited commissioners to review the site, take notes, and share any feedback, emphasizing that she is open to ideas regarding content, structure, and whether all



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current sections are necessary. Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith asked whether a newsletter could be created for community members to subscribe to, potentially distributed monthly or bimonthly, and featuring powwows and community events. Alexandra expressed openness to the idea and requested guidance on what the newsletter should include, such as commissioner activities, community events, or broader updates as well as suggested newsletter platforms to look into. Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia cautioned against creating too many separate information sources and questioned whether the website should serve as a platform for both Commission activities and community event listings. Alexandra stated she will send out the website link the following morning and invite feedback for a few weeks. She shared Julien and her would incorporate feedback and present updated pages at the July meeting for possible adoption by the LANAIC.

Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

10.1 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners

Chairperson Mark Villaseñor reported that the committee has not yet met and therefore had no updates to share.

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia noted that representatives from the Mayor's Office, Jean Ansolabehere and Faith Williams, were present and had previously met with commissioners virtually. She invited them to introduce themselves.

Commissioner Chrissie Castro asked about the status of the upcoming City/County MOU amendment. Alexandra explained that City and County hoped to present on a draft MOU tonight but had received last-minute feedback from the Mayor's Office that is being incorporated. Commissioner Castro emphasized that the Commission has long advocated for increased City contributions, at a minimum to keep pace with inflation, noting that limited funding restricts the Commission's ability to serve the community effectively. She added that while the City has expressed commitments such as returning land to tribes, implementation has been the primary barrier, and stronger commitments are needed.

Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla asked whether the delay is due to the absence of a City Council member championing the issue, observing that in her professional experience, City Council sponsorship is typically required for progress.

10.2 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Alexandra reported that the Commission previously agreed to partner with the Huntington Library to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The upcoming event will include light refreshments and a performer to welcome attendees into the auditorium. The Huntington Library recommended using a neutral moderator, and Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith offered to serve in that role for the panel discussion. Proposed topics include a discussion of the policy landscape that the LANAIC was born out of with potential contributions from Huntington



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archivists, as well as Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr., a soon-to-be former commissioner, who could share stories about his and his father's service, including his appointments by both the City and the Board of Supervisors. The event may also include an acknowledgment of past and current commissioners, an invitation for them to stand, and a large screen for attendees to share images. The Huntington Library has also offered free return tickets for event participants. Commissioner Chrissie Castro asked whether any of the former commissioners are still living and suggested that the Commission consider hiring someone to film their stories, even if only five or six individuals are available. Alexandra noted that the Huntington Library is covering some event costs and, given its archival resources, may also have research funds to support a production component. Commissioner Castro shared that at a recent community gathering, an elder in her mid-80s—who served on the LAUSD Indian Commission in the 1980s—offered a powerful testimony and holds extensive historical knowledge from that era of activism.

Alexandra asked commissioners to review the list of former commissioners she previously circulated and identify potential elders to highlight. She also invited anyone interested in visiting the archives to contact her, noting that there are many visuals and that collaborative review would be valuable. Commissioner Dr. Caroline Bhalla suggested that all event speakers be Native, which she felt would be meaningful. Alexandra shared that the event is tentatively planned for 6:30 p.m., with a small performance following the reception, and welcomed ideas for individuals who may want to participate.

10.3 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith noted that the committee has a meeting scheduled for Friday. Alexandra shared that the Commission still does not have a Council Office assigned. She also reported that she has not yet received information regarding this year's Heritage Book. Once she does, it will initiate the annual call for artists.

Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde shared that a resolution introduced by Councilmember Ysabel Jurado and seconded by Councilmember Imelda Padilla listed only the Kizh Nation. Commissioner Morales Recalde encouraged fellow commissioners to ensure that other tribal nations are also included when developing projects such as the Tribal Consultation Policy.

Commissioner John Only A Chief raised a concern regarding a tribal member in Los Angeles County who applied for assistance through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program after receiving a three-day notice to vacate following the sale of their building. The individual reportedly sought assistance through Pukúu but was denied services. Commissioner Only A Chief stated that he wanted to bring the matter before the Commission due to the urgency of the situation. Alexandra request that John connect her with the impacted community member so that she can review the case and provide guidance or assistance as appropriate.



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Commissioner Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis Smith shared that the Tribal Capacity Building Program is currently hiring Tribal Student Assistants. He stated that he would distribute the job announcements to the Commission and emphasized the importance of ensuring that the opportunities reach Native students.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde shared that The Huntington recently opened its United States 250th anniversary exhibition, This Land Is. She noted that the exhibition features two Gabrieleno artists.

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 7:56 P.M.