



**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AUGUST 18, 2026**

The August 18, 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

No invocation was provided

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Mark Villaseñor
Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla
Treasurer Rene' Williams
Chrissie Castro
Dawn Jackson
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Vivian Garcia
Shawn Imitates Dog
John Only A Chief
Mona Morales Recalde
Rudy Ortega Jr. (Left at 7:00 PM)
Ted Tenorio

Absent: Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith
Denise Escoto

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

A member of the public, Jack Ochoa, attended the meeting to share information about Familias Kumiai, a traditional Indigenous gathering hosted by the Mat Tipey Kumiai at the IMAC Rosarito Cultural Center on September 13, 2026. Mr. Ochoa serves as the contact for the Los Angeles region and offered to share his contact information with anyone interested in connecting.

Alexandra Valdes shared that this meeting is Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr.'s last meeting after serving on the Commission for over 20 years and invited Ms. Rachel Fox, Board of Supervisors Community Services Associate Deputy, representing Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, to provide remarks on Rudy's tenure and offer words of appreciation for his service to the City and County of Los Angeles.

Commissioner Ortega Jr. was recognized as an outstanding leader who continued his family's legacy. During his time as Chair, he guided both City and County efforts with his invaluable participation and contributions. LANAIC commissioners shared their gratitude to Rudy for his service and tireless commitment to the Native community.

Action Items

6.1. Adopt the July 21, 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 July 21, 2026, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.

The motion passed.

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



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6.2. Select the 2026 Native American Heritage Month Honorees

Commissioners voted for the 2026 Native American Heritage Month Honorees. The selected honorees are Rudy Ortega Jr. for the Spirit of Community, Zahn McClarnon for the Spirit of Creativity, and Victor Chavez for the Spirit of Tradition. The following are the roll call vote results:

2026 Spirit of Community

	Bhalla	Castro	Escoto	Garcia, A	Garcia, V	Imitates Dog	Jackson	Lewis-Smith	Morales Recalde	Only A Chief	Ortega	Tenorio	Villaseñor	Williams
Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians			Absent					Absent			Absent			
Former Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr.	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X

2026 Spirit of Creativity

	Bhalla	Castro	Escoto	Garcia, A	Garcia, V	Imitates Dog	Jackson	Lewis-Smith	Morales Recalde	Only A Chief	Ortega	Tenorio	Villaseñor	Williams
Samantha Yang			Absent					Absent	X		Absent			
Zahn McClarnon	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X



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2026 Spirit of Tradition

	Bhalla	Castro	Escoto	Garcia, A	Garcia, V	Imitates Dog	Jackson	Lewis-Smith	Morales Recalde	Only A Chief	Ortega	Tenorio	Villaseñor	Williams
Dr. Kimberly Morales Johnson		Abstain	Absent					Absent	X		Absent			
Victor Chavez	X				X	X	X			X		X		
Many Winters Gathering of Elders				X									X	X

Discussion Items

8.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia provided a shout-out to Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla for her work on the SOLACHAN Neighborhood Data for Social Change conference. She highlighted the amount of reporting that Secretary Bhalla's Center produces for the County, including insights on housing. Dr. Garcia said the conference was excellent and congratulated Secretary Bhalla on her leadership.

Secretary Bhalla said that, if there is interest, she can soon present the annual report on LA County affordability, housing, and homelessness. She explained that the report includes both county-level and neighborhood-level data. The recent event at the California Endowment drew 260 registered attendees, and staff turned away others due to high demand. Secretary Bhalla emphasized the importance of data in policy decision-making and advocating for improved conditions. She noted trends such as fewer people being able to afford to have children and an increase in individuals living alone. She offered to share the online report link, noting that she advocates keeping Native data included, even though there are data limitations. She clarified that the report is not focused specifically on the Native population but does include Native demographic data.



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Treasurer Rene' Williams shared the latest report regarding the recent suspension of LAHSA over the past three months. She explained that there has been significant back-and-forth due to actions taken by the LA Continuum of Care (LA CoC) Board, which required the creation of a separate council. Key outcomes included a judge's determination that the suspension was illegal and that different rules were being improperly imposed on LA housing. Treasurer Williams sent the latest release to Alexandra for distribution and it was included in the meeting packet for commissioners.

She noted that meetings are ongoing, including special sessions that are typically not open to the public due to ongoing consultation with legal counsel. The group reviews the appeal process and continues to apply for funding regularly, while also working with vendors whose operations have been frozen. She commented that the situation has forced more collaboration and may provide an opportunity for larger entities, such as LACAHS and the City of Los Angeles, to step in as potential leads. She stated that monthly meetings typically occur on Wednesdays, the week before the LANAIC monthly meeting, and that additional virtual and closed-session meetings continue as needed. Treasurer Williams will share further updates, so commissioners have talking points.

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

There was no discussion on this item.

7.3 Discuss 2026 LANAIC Community Elected Commissioner Elections

Commissioners discussed the bylaws included in the packet that pertain to Community Elected Commissioner Elections. Alexandra noted the need to review definitions related required eligibility for candidates and the electorate as election planning begins for the upcoming cycle. Commissioners shared differing perspectives on how tribal identity should be recognized, raising concerns about verification practices, inclusivity for California tribes, individuals falsely claiming Native identity, and the balance between community self-governance and practical logistics. The conversation also touched on historical election processes, questions about documentation, challenges with dual enrollment, and the importance of seeking guidance from Native legal experts. Commissioners agreed to form a 2026–2027 election ad-hoc committee, develop a survey to collect commissioner feedback, and consider extending current terms to allow sufficient time to review bylaws and prepare for a stable, community-centered election process.

Chair's Report

9.1 General Updates

No report was provided.



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Executive Director's Report

10.1 General Updates

Alexandra reported that a Native woman named Stephanie St. Clair is missing in Los Angeles and that the Moorhead Police Department in Minnesota contacted the LANAIC regarding the case. She has been in communication with Lt. Mike Detloff, who is assigned to the investigation. Alexandra shared she worked with Assemblymember Ramos' Office to get a Feather Alert initiated. The request is for the community to help spread the information. Alexandra added that Lt. Detloff mentioned ongoing challenges when working with Los Angeles, underscoring how widespread and serious these cases are.

Alexandra also updated the commissioners on the Tribal Consultation Policy and Implementation Plan project, which continues to move forward. She shared that in early August a meeting was held with tribes and focused on an outline for the forthcoming Implementation Plan. The conversation was productive, with nine tribes participating. The group reviewed a detailed outline of the implementation guide and discussed missing components and additions.

Alexandra reported that the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) team has completed the CSBG desk review and the LANAIC team is continuing work with MGO on the County's single audit. She also shared that Julien will be conducting a required desk review of CSBG provider agency Pukuu Cultural Community Services before year end.

Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

11.1 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia shared that Mayor Karen Bass is holding a convening with all city appointed commissioners in September.

11.2 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Alexandra shared that The Huntington has announced the LANAIC 50th anniversary event. Amanda Wixon will serve as the moderator, and Professor Lauren van Schilfgaarde, Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr., and Commissioner Dawn Jackson will be the panelists. She reminded the commissioners that she sent an email seeking ideas on ways to promote the event with the Native community. If commissioners have additional promotion ideas, please share them.



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11.3 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Alexandra reported that the Commission has not yet secured a City Council office to host the 2026 NAHM chambers presentation however Commissioner Castro was working with Councilmember Soto-Martinez's Office and is hopeful they may host. Commissioner Dawn Jackson has secured the Bridge Gallery as part of the NAHM celebration.

Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner John "Only A Chief" shared that the Hawaiian Garden Pow Wow will take place this weekend, August 22–23. He also noted that the Table Mountain Rancheria Pow Wow will be held August 21–23.

Commissioner Dawn Jackson asked commissioners for their support in staffing a booth at the Hart of Tataviam Pow Wow on October 3. She shared that the LANAIC SGB will be disseminating the required CSBG Community Needs Assessment and needs support in this effort.

Commissioner Vivian Garcia highlighted that the Gabrieleno San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians released their debut album, We Are Here (Ekwa Chem), on August 14th. Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde added that as of August 16th, the album had reached #1 on the iTunes Worldwide Chart in its genre.

Commissioner Chrissie Castro requested that, within the next 6–8 months, a CFCI grantee attend a Commission meeting.

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, September 15, 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 8:09 P.M.