# AGENDA & NOTICE

LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY
NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
***TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 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.

**To Listen Via Telephone:** 669 444 9171
Webinar ID: 833 7820 1638
Webinar Passcode: 584524

**To View Via Web:**
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83378201638?pwd=rGT4JwhvA0tQFtgakzeMSFitMq5OjW.1


MARK VILLASEÑOR, Chairperson
*Fernandeño Tataviam*

BRYCE LEWIS-SMITH, Vice Chairperson
*Citizen Potawatomi Nation*

DR. CAROLINE BHALLA, Secretary
*Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin*

RENE' WILLIAMS, Treasurer
*Colville Tribes*

CHRISSIE CASTRO, Commissioner
Navajo

DENISE ESCOTO, Commissioner
*Northern Cheyenne*

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

VIVIAN GARCIA, Commissioner
*Cherokee*

SHAWN IMITATES DOG, Commissioner
*Lakota*

DAWN JACKSON, Commissioner
*Saginaw Chippewa*

CHENOA MITSUI, Commissioner
*Pokagon Band of Potawatomi*

MONA MORALES RECALDE, Commissioner
*Gabrieleno Tongva*

JOHN ONLY A CHIEF, Commissioner
*Pawnee Nation*

TED TENORIO, Commissioner
*Tiguan Nation*

VACANT, Commissioner

ALEXANDRA VALDES
Executive Director
*Tlingit/Athabascan*


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1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **INVOCATION & LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**
3. **ROLL CALL**
4. **NEW COMMISSIONER WELCOME & INTRODUCTION**

**4.1** Commissioner Chenoa Topash Mitsui, Supervisor Kathryn Barger Appointee

5. **COMMISSIONER INTRODUCTIONS**
6. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
7. **ACTION ITEMS**

7.1. Adopt the September 15, 2026, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes

7.2. Complete Community Election Survey

**8. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

8.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

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

**9. PRESENTATIONS**

9.1 ***Presentation on Establishing Protocols & Guidance for the LA County Medical Examiner on the Appropriate Care and Treatment of Ancestors in Consultation with Local Tribes -*** Sarah Brunzell, Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians Cultural Resources Management Division Manager

9.2 ***Presentation on the State of Los Angeles County Housing and Neighborhoods*** **–** Dr. Caroline Bhalla, LANAIC Secretary & Director of Civic Engagement at USC's Lusk Center for Real Estate

**10. CHAIR'S REPORT**

10.1 General Updates

**11. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

11.1 General Updates

**12. COMMITTEE & AD-HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS**

12.1 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners

12.2 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee

12.3 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

**13. COMMISSIONER GENERAL COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

**14. ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**15. COMMISSION ADJOURNMENT**

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 17, 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:

Chairperson Mark Villasenor

**LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION**
**UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 15, 2026**

The September 15, 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 Villasenor 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
Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith
Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla
Treasurer Rene' Williams
Dawn Jackson
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Shawn Imitates Dog
John Only A Chief

Absent: Chrissie Castro
Denise Escoto
Vivian Garcia
Mona Morales Recalde
Ted Tenorio

Staff: Alexandra Valdes, LANAIC Executive Director
Julien Tan, LANAIC Administrative Manager
Heather Rigby, Department of Arts and Culture Chief Deputy

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, Matthew Walker, attended the meeting and shared that he chairs the Department of Mental Health American Indian Counseling Center Community Advisory Board. He stated that he would like to advocate for additional transportation to powwows, as well as tickets to museums, art events, concerts, and other activities that help community members connect with the arts, especially since the County encourages strengthening spiritual and cultural connections. He emphasized the importance of access to the arts, particularly events highlighting women artists, noting that women historically led many tribes.

He also said he is seeking permission to organize an LA County powwow and would like to connect with the commissioners about it. He also expressed interest in participating in Indian conferences to discuss political and lobbying topics and explore opportunities for increased representation in legislative bodies. He extended an open invitation to any commissioners who may wish to attend upcoming meetings as guest speakers.

Action Items

**6.1. Adopt the August 18, 2026, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes**

*A motion was made by Treasurer Rene' Williams and seconded by Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla to approve the unapproved August 18, 2026, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.*

*The motion passed.*

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

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**6.2. Extend Current LANAIC Community Elected Commissioner Terms up to 18 months**

*A motion was made by Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia and seconded by Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla to extend Current LANAIC Community Elected Commissioner Terms up to 18 months.*

*The motion passed.*

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

Discussion Items

**7.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County**

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia shared that an RFP was awarded from the LA County Development Agency and the LA County Department of Mental Health to support the development of 20–25 units of culturally responsive housing for AIAN who are chronically homeless and have severe mental illness. She noted that a CES policy is being actively examined to ensure these units are filled appropriately. She noted that the timeline for completing permanent supportive housing is projected for summer or fall of 2028. She also reported that the developer has an upcoming groundbreaking and can provide the Commission with updates on the development.

Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla shared that the State of California has a new department focused on housing and homelessness. She noted that, for the most part, it has its own dedicated staff, offices, and resources. Dr. Bhalla recently attended a research meeting with researchers from across California, where participants could comment on gaps in existing data and identify answers. She updated them on Native American homelessness and noted that one of her colleagues oversees the PATH study, which surveys individuals experiencing homelessness. Her partner at PATH expressed willingness to collaborate on collecting and analyzing Native American homelessness data.

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

There was no discussion on this item.

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**7.3 Discuss 2026 LANAIC Community Elected Commissioner Elections**

Alexandra updated the Commission that, as concluded last month, Commissioner Chrissie Castro and Alexandra will prepare a survey. Commissioner Castro will review the survey Alexandra drafted, and Alexandra will then share it with the commissioners.

Alexandra also shared that, per Chair Mark Villasenor's request at the August 2026 meeting, tribal Indian law experts retained by County Counsel have begun reviewing community election eligibility and have requested clarity from the Commission on a few aspects. Alexandra shared she would send out these questions via email (Bcc) and kindly requested the commissioner's feedback. The legal team needs to address these questions to conduct a more thorough review.

Chair's Report

**9.1 General Updates**

No report was provided.

**9.2 Establish Ad Hoc Committee to Review and Make Recommendations for Community Election Process and Procedures & Appoint Members**

Following item 7.3, Alexandra stated that the committee can be established to review and recommend changes to the Community Election Process and Procedures and to appoint members. Alexandra will email absent commissioners to gauge their interest.

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia suggested Commissioner Chrissie Castro as an excellent choice to chair the committee. Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog noted that, based on Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde's comments during the last discussion, she feels strongly about the topic and will likely want to participate. Commissioner Imitates Dog also added that if no other volunteers step forward, he would be willing to chair the committee.

Chairperson Mark Villasenor and Commissioner Dr. Garcia volunteered to serve on the ad hoc committee. Once the committee receives responses from additional commissioners, it will begin meeting.

Executive Director's Report

**10.1 General Updates**

Alexandra reported that Supervisor Hilda Solis's office is interested in authoring a 50th-anniversary motion, tentatively planned for September 29. She asked whether any commissioners would be interested in attending the Board Meeting if the item was held. She noted that the format would likely be similar to the event held last November for the firefighters. Alexandra added that, if the Commission would like, she can also reach out to former commissioners to inform them about the motion.

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The following commissioners expressed interest in attending: Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla, Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog, and Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith. Chairperson Mark Villasenor is tentative.

Commissioners agreed to have Alexandra notify former commissioners about this motion if it is to move forward.

Alexandra stated that if the Commission would like anything additional included, staff can speak with Supervisor Solis's office to make it happen. She also noted that if a good number of former commissioners attend, the Commission can offer coffee and pastries in the meeting space.

Alexandra shared that she previously reviewed Commission files from the 1970s and 1980s held by the Board of Supervisors, and she has nearly completed a comprehensive roster. It is approximately 80% finished.

Alexandra also emailed commissioners with questions about the 50th-anniversary roster, which may be displayed at the Huntington event. She noted that the Commission does not have complete tribal affiliation information for some former commissioners and asked whether those names should be included. The group agreed that tribal affiliation should still be listed for consistency and formatting, with a note indicating that some information is not available.

Alexandra also updated the commissioners that the Huntington is working on a program that includes a mock-up of the 1975 *Talking Leaf* newspaper. They are using a 5x7 portrait layout with heavier cardstock as a commemorative piece. Yesterday, Alexandra met with Nenette Luarco-Shoaf (The Huntington) and had a great conversation that generated several ideas. They discussed forward-looking questions, including: Over the next 50 years, what will impact the Los Angeles Native community? How can everyone be invited to share how they became part of Los Angeles—migration stories and the ways people have come to call LA home?

Alexandra reported 217 registrations for the event as of today. To date, three former commissioners have RSVP'd.

**10.2 New LA County Fifth District Appointee – Chenoa Mitsui**

Alexandra shared that the new Fifth District appointee, Commissioner Chenoa Mitsui, appointed by Supervisor Kathryn Barger, is currently going through the onboarding process and is expected to attend her first meeting in October. The Third District Commissioner position remains vacant.

Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog noted that Supervisor Barger posted about the vacancy on social media. Commissioner John Only A Chief asked whether the new appointee is also beholden to the eligibility requirements for community-elected commissioners. Commissioner

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Shawn Imitates Dog clarified that the elected appointee process is different and that they are not required to prove tribal affiliation. Chairperson Mark Villaseñor added that commissioners are not required to be Native American, though they generally are. Alexandra stated that the County cannot legally require commissioners to be Native American.

Commissioner John Only A Chief remarked that Iron Eyes Cody elevated LA County and Native American culture, adding that he served a purpose here and was dedicated to helping the community.

Commissioner Dawn Jackson shared that she knows Chenoa Mitsui personally, noting that she is Potawatomi, a long-time Burbank resident, married with children, and has worked at Disney for 20–25 years. Commissioner Jackson stated that she will be a great addition to the Commission.

Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

**11.1 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners**

No report was provided.

**11.2 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee**

This item was reported in item 10.1.

**11.3 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee**

Alexandra shared that she, Vice Chairperson Lewis-Smith, and Andoni with Councilmember Soto-Martinez's Office had a wonderful kickoff meeting, and she thanked Commissioner Chrissie Castro for connecting with Councilmember Soto-Martinez.Martinez. Councilmember Martinez oversees significant cultural programming, including El Grito, and is very supportive of contributing discretionary funds from his office to this event. Alexandra noted that his team is open to being strong collaborators and recognizes the importance of this celebration.

She reported that she has contacted all honorees. Former Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. expressed appreciation for the recognition, and Victor Chavez and his wife are thrilled to have been selected. The next step is to confirm their bios and finalize the Heritage Month cultural guide and calendar. Alexandra reminded commissioners that the content the commission is responsible for is due October 2. If anyone wishes to provide an updated version, or if Chairperson Mark Villaseñor has additional remarks he is working on, submit those materials. Headshots and she will ensure they are developed and submitted.

It was decided by Alexandra, Vice Chairperson Lewis-Smith, and Chairperson Villasenor that Chairperson Villaseñor will include a section honoring past commissioners in his letter.

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Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner John Only A Chief shared that several powwows are coming up, including those at San Manuel, California State University San Bernardino, and Morongo. Treasurer Rene' Williams also noted that the Tejon Indian Tribe will be hosting a powwow in Bakersfield. Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog added that Native Voices will be holding an event at LACMA. Alexandra said she will share the event details on Instagram when they become available.

Chairperson Mark Villasenor reported that Councilmember Imelda Padilla's office is organizing the Indigenous Peoples' Day celebration on October 11th and is currently working to secure a location. Once the location is confirmed, the organizers will send the digital flyer to commissioners. The organizer is requesting that a commissioner attend and speak at the event. Attendance is not required, but any interested commissioner may reach out to Chairperson Villasenor.

Commissioner Dawn Jackson reminded the Commission that the Self Governance Board will have a booth at the Heart of Tataviam Powwow. The SGB is seeking commissioners to help staff the booth. Alexandra will send out time slots for commissioners to sign up. Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog volunteered to help.

Treasurer Rene' Williams asked whether the Commission meets at 6:30 p.m. for a specific reason. Alexandra explained that, per County Code, the body determines the time and place of its meetings. She added that she can send out a survey to gauge commissioners' interest in selecting a different meeting time.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla offered to provide a brief data presentation at the next meeting.

Treasurer Rene' Williams requested a list of the last CFCI Project 47 funding details, noting that several organizations reported they did not receive funding. Alexandra stated that she will look into this.

Commission Adjournment

Chairperson Villasenor announced that the next LANAIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20, 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 7:33 P.M.

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LA City/County Native American Indian Commission

Community Election Survey

1. **Name (Optional):**

2. **Please rank roles and responsibilities of Community-Elected commissioners in order of importance.**

   ____ Attend monthly LANAIC meetings and quarterly LANAIC SGB meetings

   ____ Represent the Los Angeles County AIAN community and, in cooperation with other Commissioners, County and City agencies, work toward more and better services and economic opportunities for AIAN residents

   ____ Advocate for the community and provide leadership and direction to the Commission, LA City (City) government and LA County (County) government in matters concerning the AIAN community

   ____ Other: _____

3. **Please rank what knowledge or background community-elected commissioners should bring to the commission in order of importance.**

   ____ Documented affiliation with an American Indian or Alaska Native tribe.

   ____ Current active participation in the AIAN community and show strong interest in working on issues and problems facing the County's AIAN community.

   ____ Knowledge or ability in an area which has a significant bearing upon the problems of urban American Indians.

   ____ Reflective of the diversity of American Indians in the city and county, and consideration should be given to various tribal backgrounds, age groups and lifestyles.

   ____ Demonstrated capabilities of effective leadership within a specific area of community activity;

   ____ Other: _____

4. **If previous criteria for community-elected candidates were deemed impermissible, are there other ways we can ensure that community-elected candidates are representative of Los Angeles County's American Indian and Alaska Native community?**

_____

_____

_____

_____