AGENDA & NOTICE

LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY
NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2026, 6:30 PM

Meeting Location: San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians Tribal Office
203 E Mission Road
San Gabriel, CA 91776

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

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

6.1. Adopt the October 20, 2026, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes

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 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

9.2 ***Forward Platform & the City's Measure ULA Disbursements –*** Aja Brown and Melissa Freeny-Young, Executive Leadership at Forward

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 Self Governance Board

12.2 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners

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, January 19, 2027, 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 OCTOBER 20, 2026

The October 20, 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

Commissioner John Only A Chief provided an invocation

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Mark Villasenor
Denise Escoto
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Vivian Garcia
Dawn Jackson
Chenoa Topash Mitsui
Mona Morales Recalde
John Only A Chief
Ted Tenorio

Absent: Vice Chairperson Bryce Lewis-Smith
Secretary Dr. Caroline Bhalla
Treasurer Rene' Williams
Chrissie Castro
Shawn Imitates Dog

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

Barbara Lopez shared that she is a new employee with Los Angeles County's Homeless Services and Housing (HSH) department, serving in the new role of Tribal Government Relations. She expressed excitement about joining the County and noted that while both her position and the department are new, the challenges of homelessness and housing instability are longstanding.

Barbara explained that her work will focus on strengthening relationships with tribal governments and Native-serving organizations, identifying collaboration opportunities, and ensuring tribal perspectives are incorporated into HSH priorities. Before joining the County on October 1, she spent 18 years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture addressing food insecurity in Indian Country, primarily through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Her work included implementing programs, developing policy, enhancing food access, supporting self-determination projects, and conducting extensive tribal consultation. In the coming months, she plans to meet with County partners, Native-serving organizations, and tribal leaders. She acknowledged the Commission's longstanding advocacy for Native Americans in Los Angeles and thanked it for its guidance. She looks forward to partnering with the Commission to support improvements throughout Los Angeles County.

Matthew Walker, a member of the public, shared that he serves as Chair of the Department of Mental Health's American Indian Counseling Center Community Advisory Board. With the holiday season approaching, he proposed that the County and Native-serving organizations collaborate to support families in need. Matthew noted that when he stayed in a shelter, residents received jackets and other items during Christmas, and he expressed interest in organizing similar efforts. He explained that DMH AICC receives toys, but often too late and of low quality, and suggested that getting items earlier would allow time for gift-wrapping and better distribution to children. He proposed gathering jackets, socks, sweatshirts, toys, and other essential items for distribution to Native families and organizations across the County. He also referenced prior discussions about ensuring families have access to holiday food resources such as turkeys. Matthew emphasized that many families need support during the holidays and said these efforts would be meaningful and greatly appreciated.

A member of the public, Jamie Rocha, shared that she is a Project Director at Anahuacalmecac, Los Angeles County's only Indigenous K–12 school located in El Sereno. She spoke on behalf of both the Gabrielino-Shoshone Nation and Anahuacalmecac. Jamie reported that Anahuacalmecac, in partnership with Tzicatl CDC, the Gabrielino-Shoshone Nation, the National Indian Education Association, the National Urban Indian Family Coalition, and the American Indian Law Alliance, recently launched the Indigenous Education for All campaign. The campaign is intended to elevate Indigenous voices throughout the County's pre-K–12 education system across all 81 local educational agencies, including the Los Angeles County Office of Education. She noted that this work builds on partnerships with the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and the State Board of Education, identifying systemic policy and legal pathways to improve access to educational resources for Indigenous students. Jamie emphasized that Los

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Angeles County is home to one of the largest Indigenous populations in the country, yet resources and educational representation do not reflect this. She noted the need for Indigenous education, history, and language courses, and shared that the school's intergenerational Indigenous education framework is the result of 25 years of work. She highlighted ongoing efforts at Chief Ya'anna Learning Village, where students engage in land-based learning and stewardship grounded in traditional ecological knowledge. She stated that these experiences inform broader efforts in Indigenous educational redesign, self-determination, and sovereignty, challenging traditional notions of public education. Jamie asked that the Commission place the campaign on its radar and requested time at a future meeting to present its goals. She encouraged Commissioners and County partners to engage with the initiative and said she would follow up with additional information and an invitation to visit Chief Ya'anna Learning Village.

Presentation Items

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.

Sarah Brunzell, Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians Cultural Resources Management Division Manager, presented a proposal to establish protocols and guidance for the LA County Medical Examiner on the appropriate care and treatment of ancestors in consultation with local tribes.

PowerPoint Presentation Attached

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

This presentation has been tabled to the next meeting.

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Action Items

6.1. Adopt the September 15, 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 Ted Tenorio to approve the unapproved September 15, 2026, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.

The motion passed.

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

7.2. Complete Community Election Survey

Commissioners present at this meeting completed the Community Election Survey.

Discussion Items

8.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia shared that she had no new updates. She reminded the Commission that Treasurer Rene' Williams is the Commission's COC appointee, has attended many emergency meetings, and the Commission will hear report-backs from Treasurer Williams at a future meeting. Commissioner Dr. Garcia said the Commission has worked for several years to change the Coordinated Entry System (CES) policy to better support housing Native community members. She noted that many different LAHSA staff have come and gone during this time, and the policy has not moved forward. Although some current champions are willing to pilot what has been proposed, she expressed concern about the ongoing dispute between LA County and LA City over the COC and who will take over CES and HMIS. She emphasized that these systems directly help house community members, and it is frustrating that the dispute could roll back progress made since 2018. She said this situation helps no one. Commissioner Dr. Garcia added that the lack of clarity between the County and City is affecting the Native community and people's lives.

Chairperson Mark Villasenor said the Commission consistently advocates for Native-specific homelessness and housing needs. He emphasized that Native people continue to be undercounted, underrepresented, and underserved, and that the current situation with LAHSA "imploding," as described, is discouraging. He noted that years of work, advocacy, and relationship-building with LAHSA administrators and allies, people who listened and championed

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Native housing needs, now seem to have reached a dead end. He expressed concern that the Commission may need to restart the entire process with a new organization and without established contacts. Chairperson Villasenor added that identifying someone at a higher level within the County or City administration who could engage with the Commission and allow meaningful input would help, given the work already invested.

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia added that, to be fair, the Commission does have relationships on the County side, particularly with LAHSA and HSH, though less so with the City. She stated that if the CES contract shifts to the City, it will be important to build those relationships because City housing partners have historically been difficult to engage, referencing one promising meeting that never received follow-up. She noted that progress has been easier on the County side, in part because of her own role there, and expressed hope that if the City takes over, a dedicated position will be created to allow the Commission's work to move forward. Commissioner Dr. Garcia concluded that the years-long delay is not helping anyone who is unhoused, and the ongoing uncertainty is deeply frustrating.

Alexandra encouraged the Commission to celebrate its wins. She said the Commission played a critical role in advocating several budget requests spearheaded by Dr. Garcia and strongly supported by the full body. She highlighted the creation of the new position at HSH as a direct result of this advocacy and emphasized that the position will continue to exist, noting this as a significant accomplishment. Alexandra thanked the Commissioners for their work and reminded them that their advocacy matters and reflects this body's purpose.

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

Alexandra reported that the County will be submitting a five-signature letter from the Board of Supervisors regarding the recently proposed changes to the Census. She noted that these changes have major implications for all of Los Angeles County, including funding, population counts, and identity. Alexandra shared that, as mentioned at the last meeting, she spoke with the County's legislative representative, and the County is backing legislative advocacy to oppose the proposed Census change.

Chair's Report

10.1 General Updates

No report was provided.

Executive Director's Report

11.1 General Updates

Alexandra updated the Commission that the Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted the first-ever Countywide LA County Tribal Consultation Policy today. She described it as an exciting, significant achievement. She expressed deep appreciation for the consulting team,

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Kearns & West, noting their thoughtful, human-centered approach and the high quality of their work. She also thanked the tribal governments that stayed engaged throughout the process and contributed their time, knowledge, and expertise. Alexandra also acknowledged the 28-plus County departments that helped develop the policy and thanked her County colleagues. She noted that Commissioner Dr. Garcia, in her County role, has joined some of these interdepartmental calls. Alexandra shared that each time she joins these calls, she wishes the Commission could see the commitment of County staff working with tribes, and that while there is still much more to do, she is inspired by employees who are dedicated, humble, and genuinely trying to do better. She said she hopes to bring Commissioners into these conversations in the future, as they reflect the County's meaningful efforts to listen and improve. She added that she is very excited about the policy's adoption and noted that the next step will be developing an implementation plan. She hopes this next phase will be more ceremonial and inclusive. While she cannot guarantee it, the goal is to return with the implementation plan for Board approval, ideally in a way that celebrates the significance of this accomplishment. Alexandra anticipates something more public or celebratory in the spring, as the Board passed today's item without discussion.

Alexandra briefly shared that she felt the recent 50th Anniversary Celebration was a wonderful event and a huge success. She described it as very joyful and a lovely evening, noting that the location, a world-renowned garden, could not have been a better venue. She thanked The Huntington for being exceptional partners, saying they were generous at every step, providing the food, the venue, all AV support, and handling many event logistics while also following the Ad Hoc Committee's guidance. Alexandra thanked Commissioner Dawn Jackson for serving on the panel, acknowledging it was outside her comfort zone but emphasizing how meaningful and inspiring it was to hear her story and see her on stage alongside former Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr., Professor Lauren van Schilfgaarde, and moderator Amanda Wixon. She encouraged everyone to visit Amanda's exhibit at the Autry. She concluded by thanking everyone who attended and noted that The Huntington will make professional photographs of the event available in the next week or two.

Alexandra updated the Commission on Project 47 of the Care First Community Investment funding.. She noted that at last month's meeting, commissioners asked about the most recent Care First Community Investment (CFCI) solicitation administered by the Amity Foundation. She provided background, explaining that in 2021 LA County voters adopted Measure J. Measure J directed the reinvestment of net County funds previously allocated to the Sheriff's Department and other areas into alternative, community-based investments. This funding is now known as CFCI. Alexandra explained that some CFCI funds are distributed internally across County departments, while another portion is administered through a third-party entity, which is the Amity Foundation. This year, Amity released $3.5 million for a broadly Native/Indigenous-targeted direct services program. She noted questions about which organizations were funded and confirmed that contracts have now been executed.

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She further noted that these funds must be spent by June 2027. At this time, Alexandra shared that she only has the list of organizations and dollar amounts and does not yet have details on the specific program activities associated with each award.

Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

12.1 Mayoral Appointed Commissioners

No report was provided.

12.2 50th Anniversary Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Chairperson Mark Villasenor shared that he also felt the 50th Anniversary celebration was a very nice event. He stated that the Commission should send a formal thank-you letter on behalf of the body. Alexandra will bring a thank-you card for Commissioners to sign and will prepare an event recap to post on the Commission's website. Commissioner Dawn Jackson reported that KBC7 contacted the Commission and would like to run a Heritage Month story about the Commission's 50th anniversary, noting they believe it is a great story to highlight. Alexandra suggested inviting former Commissioner Sallie Cuerisma to participate. Chairperson Villasenor added that the Commission should gather more information about what KBC7 intends to feature so it can direct the media to Sallie and is open to any Commissioner who wishes to comment on the Commission's 50-year history. Commissioner Jackson also noted that Professor Van Schilfgaarde would have much to contribute to the KBC7 story.

12.3 2026 Native American Heritage Month Planning Ad Hoc Committee

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde announced that the 2026 Native American Heritage Month Celebration will take place on November 6th at the LA City Hall Forecourt.

Alexandra shared that Councilmember Soto-Martinez is hosting this year's event. The community invite has already been distributed. Historically, the Councilmember's office drafts the invitation, and Alexandra posted a screenshot on Instagram to share more widely. Attendance typically reaches about 100 people, which fits well with the space. Alexandra noted that Commissioner Shawn Imitates Dog contributed several creative ideas. She explained that securing dancers has been difficult, partly because the event occurs on a school day and workday. Shawn proposed a potato dance, something his grandmother taught him, as a joyful and participatory community activity. He plans to bring potatoes for the dance, and while there will still be dancers, this activity will help more attendees feel included. Alexandra shared that Councilmember Soto-Martinez's office is working to secure a fiscal sponsor to cover event costs. She has also been coordinating with the City on the Heritage Month Book, providing requested content, and ensuring the gallery component will be completed on schedule.

Commissioner Dawn Jackson reported that she will install the Bridge Gallery on the 29th.

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Alexandra added that the event will follow roughly the same run-of-show as last year. Chairperson Mark Villasenor will provide remarks. She expects the Heritage Month Book will be unveiled at the event, as it is currently at the printer and on track for timely completion. She encouraged Commissioners to attend, spread the word, and help community members participate. She noted there may be RSVP instructions included in the invite, but she was unsure about parking information. Regarding Honorees, Alexandra shared that Zahn McClarnon's attendance is tentative, while Victor Chavez and former Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. will attend in person.

Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner John Only A Chief announced the upcoming Sacred Path Pow Wow, scheduled for November 7, 2026, at the Autry Museum in Los Angeles.

Commissioner Dawn Jackson reminded the Commission about the ongoing Community Needs Assessment and encouraged Commissioners to ask community members to complete the survey. She brought laminated QR codes to distribute and noted that more people completed the survey this year during in-person outreach.

Commissioner Only A Chief distributed stickers featuring the Commission's logo. He said that since this is the Commission's 50th anniversary year, they hope to have the stickers available for the November 6th Heritage Month Celebration to share with attendees.

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde announced several upcoming community events:

She shared that the Autry Museum of the American West will present "Promised Lands: California's Unratified Treaties and Native Resilience" from September 26, 2026, to July 30, 2028.

She also noted that the annual Pumpkin Patch with a Native American Market will take place at Cal Poly Pomona this weekend, on the 24th and 25th.

Additionally, on November 15, United Native Artist, a concert group that hosts Indigenous bands, will host performances at the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians Tribal Office. The tribe is also hosting a Native market on December 6th. The commission can also host a table that day to collect donations for the community.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

No announcements or future agenda items were provided.

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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 San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians Tribal Office at 203 E Mission Road, San Gabriel, CA 91776 and that a potluck will directly follow the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 P.M.

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