



AGENDA & NOTICE

LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY
NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2025, 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 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.

SHAWN IMITATES DOG, Chairperson
Lakota

MARK VILLASEÑOR, Vice Chairperson
Fernandeño Tataviam

BRYCE LEWIS-SMITH, Secretary
Citizen Potawatomi Nation

DENISE ESCOTO, Treasurer
Northern Cheyenne

CAROLINE BHALLA, Commissioner
Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin

CHRISSIE CASTRO, Commissioner
Navajo

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

VIVIAN GARCIA, Commissioner
Cherokee

DAWN JACKSON, Commissioner
Saginaw Chippewa

MONA MORALES RECALDE, Commissioner
Gabrielino Tongva

JOHN ONLY A CHIEF, Commissioner
Pawnee Nation

RUDY ORTEGA JR., Commissioner
Fernandeño Tataviam

TED TENORIO, Commissioner
Tiguan Nation

RICH TOYON, Commissioner
Acjachemen

RENE' WILLIAMS, Commissioner
Colville Tribes

ALEXANDRA VALDES
Executive Director
Tlingit/Athabaskan

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. INVOCATION & LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

3. ROLL CALL

4. COMMISSIONER INTRODUCTIONS

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. ACTION ITEMS

- 6.1. Adopt Absentee Excuses
- 6.2. Adopt the July 15, 2025, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes
- 6.3. Select the 2025 Native American Heritage Month Honorees: Spirit of Creativity Honoree, Spirit of Community Honoree and Spirit of Tradition Honoree

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 LA City Parks Needs Assessment Steering Committee Updates
- 7.4 Discuss the Preservation of Flat Top Rock in Lincoln Heights

8. PRESENTATIONS

- 8.1 *Presentation on How to Best Serve LA County's American Indian and Alaska Native Community - Andrea Diaz (Outreach Coordinator, Sacred Path Indigenous Wellness Center)*
- 8.2 *Los Angeles County Community Engagement Efforts to Address Homelessness and Housing Insecurity – Danielle Tobey (Consultant, Change Well Project)*

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 Executive Committee
- 11.2 Self Governance Board
- 11.3 2025 Native American Heritage Month Ad Hoc Committee
- 11.4 LANAIC Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee

12. COMMISSIONER GENERAL COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

14. COMMISSION ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 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 Shawn Imitates Dog



LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JULY 15, 2025

The July 15, 2025 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 Acknowledgement

Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. and read the Los Angeles County Land Acknowledgment.

Invocation

Commissioner Ted Tenorio provided an invocation.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog
Vice Chairperson Mark Villaseñor
Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith
Treasurer Denise Escoto
Caroline Bhalla
Chrissie Castro
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Vivian Garcia
Dawn Jackson
Mona Morales Recalde
John Only A Chief
Rudy Ortega Jr.
Rich Toyon
Rene' William
Ted Tenorio

Absent: None

Staff: Alexandra Valdes, LANAIC Executive Director
Megan Moret, Department of Arts & Culture Board Liaison and Special Assistant
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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UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JULY 15, 2025**

Public Comment

Mr. Jack Ochoa introduced himself as an appointed commissioner of the Indigenous People of Mexico. He advocated for free trade between Indigenous Peoples and countries, aiming to bridge the gap by collaborating with our commissioners.

Action Items

6.1 Adopt absentee excuses

There were no absentee excuses requested.

6.2 Approve the May 20, 2025, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor and seconded by Commissioner Ted Tenorio to approve the unapproved May 20, 2025 LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.

The motion passed.

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

Discussion Items

7.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

Dr. Andrea Garcia shared a video titled *Natives in L.A. Summit*. The video documented an event on Native housing where community members were able to reflect on the question: What is home in L.A.? Dr. Garcia emphasized the importance of visual media and the reports that have been produced, acknowledging that while progress has been made, there is still much work to be done. The following steps involve pulling data from past listening sessions and bringing that information back to the commissioners' respective appointing bodies. Dr. Garcia stressed that it is the commissioners' responsibility to engage in difficult conversations, which require time, effort, and relationship building.

She shared that feedback from the event affirmed that homelessness remains a significant issue for the Native American community. There is a need for a more inclusive definition of homelessness, especially considering recent data: 2,474 Native individuals were counted, with



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homelessness in the Native community growing by 4% this year compared to 3% last year. Measure A, which has been passed recently, offers a new stream of funding for homeless services.

As the responsibility for homelessness shifts entirely to the County, Dr. Garcia sees this as a critical opportunity for the Native community to make its presence and priorities known. With the creation of a new County department focused on homelessness, she expressed hope that the Commission can formally communicate to the Board of Supervisors that this is an issue they want to prioritize and engage with meaningfully. Specifics of the requests to the Board of Supervisors should be discussed during the next meeting.

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

Commissioner Chrissie Castro asked that, since a lot of funding originates from the federal government and flows to the state and ultimately down to the County, how potential cuts might affect LA County. Megan Moret reported that the County just completed its fiscal cycle in June, and the final budget for the current fiscal year will be confirmed in September. However, preliminary information should be available before then. She noted that the most likely area for state-level cuts is healthcare.

Alexandra added that the state has already received its federal funding allocation for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program for 2025, so funding for the current year is secure. However, funding for the following year will depend on Congressional decisions expected in September. She also mentioned that under Project 2025, CSBG is proposed for complete elimination.

Commissioner Chrissie Castro asked what would happen to the LANAIC Self Governance Board if CSBG funding were eliminated in 2026. Alexandra responded that she will follow up with the State of California Department of Community Services & Development (CSD) for clarification.

7.3 Discuss LA City Parks Needs Assessment Steering Committee Updates

Commissioner Rich Toyon reported no updates.

Presentations

8.1 Care First Community Investment Updates - Joey Williams (LANAIC Designee to the CFCI Advisory Body)

Mr. Joey Williams, the LANAIC's Designees to the County of Los Angeles Care First Community Investment Advisory Body provided a presentation and summary report of CFCI Funding since 2021, and general funding information. He advised on specificity when Community Based Organizations apply for funding, and how to present their project concept. Commissioner



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Chrissie Castro requested a list of Native Organizations affiliated with CFCI and suggested holding workshops for CBOs to support their application process.

8.2 City of LA Park Needs Assessment Updates – Sarah Swanseen (The Olin Studio)

Ms. Sarah Swanseen provided a presentation on the City of Los Angeles Park Needs Assessment updates. She shared that the survey received over 5,000 responses, with nearly two-thirds of respondents rating parks as being in excellent condition. Over 90% of participants reported having visited a park, and about half had visited an L.A. City recreation center. The top reason cited for not visiting parks was concerns about homelessness, primarily related to safety. There was a clear consensus that parks support health, mental wellness, and stress relief. While many expressed a desire for programmed green spaces, interest in natural, unstructured areas was mixed. Commissioner Rich Toyon is expected to join the August Steering Committee meeting to continue these discussions.

Commissioner Chrissie Castro asked about tribal engagement and whether Native communities are being adequately represented, expressing concern that their voices might be overlooked. She referenced the past removal of the Columbus statue from Grand Park as an example of using park spaces for public education and cultural acknowledgment. Ms. Swanseen acknowledged the importance of broader awareness and the need for future report-backs. Alexandra offered to share previous reports including a report on equitable land access inf with Ms. Swanseen to support this effort.

Commissioner John Only A Chief asked if there were plans to eliminate parks, raising concern that there is no dedicated community space for Native people. Ms. Swanseen clarified that the City is working to expand park space, not reduce it, and mentioned the use of multi-benefit infrastructure and underutilized city-owned properties as potential opportunities, while also noting that real estate costs are a significant factor in meeting these needs. Mr. Darryl Ford from L.A. City confirmed that parks cannot be sold and reaffirmed the City's recognition of the ongoing need for more park space. Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith emphasized the importance of creating areas that support climate resiliency, such as cooling centers and spaces for cultural events like powwows. Ms. Swanseen encouraged further conversations about heat risk and the design of shaded and cooling spaces. She noted that a public survey is open to gather feedback on unprogrammed green spaces. She also committed to setting up a separate meeting with Alexandra to continue this dialogue outside the formal commission setting.

Chair's Report

9.1 General Updates

No general updates.



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9.2 Discuss Appointing a Commissioner or Community Member to Serve as the LANAIC's Alternate Designee to the Care First Community Investment (CFCI) Advisory Body

Commissioner Rene' Williams volunteered to serve as the CFCI Advisory Body Alternate Designee.

Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

10.1 Executive Committee

No Executive Committee updates.

10.2 Self Governance Board

Alexandra reported that the Self Governance Board has adopted the 2026-2027 Community Services Block Grant Community Action Plan & Community Needs Assessment during the Self Governance Board meeting earlier that evening. She expressed gratitude to the Self Governance Board for their effort, and that this is a huge achievement. Alexandra will provide more information on the fate of CSAIBG funding as it becomes available.

10.3 2025 Native American Heritage Month Ad Hoc Committee

Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith reported that funding for the project is secured through the office of LA City Councilmember Imelda Padilla and that the Ad Hoc will have a meeting with the Councilmember's Office on July 22.

Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog underscored the need for commissioners to submit Native American Heritage Month honoree nominations. He shared that it is an opportunity to highlight the many community leaders doing great work who deserve recognition. He encouraged each commissioner to submit at least one or two nominees, sharing that past honorees found the recognition deeply meaningful and that more effort should go into this process. Commissioners Rene' Williams and Caroline Bhalla initially believed the recognition was limited to firefighters, but Secretary Lewis-Smith clarified that the intention is to honor both Native firefighters and community members.

Alexandra noted that a memo outlining this recognition process was established in 2018 and was shared via email when the initial access for nominations was sent. Nominations are due by Tuesday, August 12, at 5:00 PM, and should include a brief biography (no more than 250 words) and a statement on why the nominee should be considered (no more than 250 words).

10.4 LANAIC Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee

No report was provided.



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Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner John Only A Chief expressed that the full attendance of the commissioners during this meeting is very encouraging and expressed gratitude to everyone who showed up to help the Native American community.

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia shared that she received a call from a community member on a Wednesday regarding an upcoming event scheduled for that Saturday. The event host encouraged as many commissioners as possible to attend and speak about the commission's work and identity, emphasizing the importance of the community knowing who the commissioners are and understanding their role. Commissioner Dr. Garcia highlighted this as a reminder of the value in being more visibly present at community events and sharing information about the commission's efforts. She encouraged the group to consider additional ways to be in community and strengthen connections with the public.

Alexandra reported a recurring issue where individuals seeking assistance are unable to receive support because they are not residents of Los Angeles County. She emphasized that this reflects a broader reality within the Native community—people often come to L.A. seeking safety and support but are ultimately unable to access services due to residency restrictions. She will explore flexible funds to help address these gaps. She also reported a significant increase in individuals seeking help with tribal enrollment.

Commissioner Caroline Bhalla shared that she is involved in a research study focused on identifying service providers for individuals experiencing homelessness. She invited any commissioners who have relevant connections or contacts to share them with her to support the study.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

No announcements/future agenda were provided.

Commission Adjournment

Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog shared that the next LANAIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Hall of Administration, Room 372, 500 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 P.M.

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

Spirit of Community

1. Nomination for Tribal Nations and Tribal Fire Fighter Crews Who Fought the Eaton & Palisades Fires

Biography

In January 2025 when catastrophic fires and a windstorm hit LA County tribal nations from California and beyond sent their firefighters to LA to help combat the fires.

Statement of Nomination

I am nominating the following tribal nations and their firefighters for the Spirit of Community honor. Their bravery, generosity and support aided our County in an incredible time of need.

- Barona Band of Mission Indians
- Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians
- Klamath Tribes
- Morongo Band of Mission Indians
- Navajo Nation
- Pala Band of Mission Indians
- Pechanga Band of Indians
- Rincon Band of Luiseno Indians
- Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
- Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
- Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians
- Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians
- Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation
- Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation
- Yurok Tribe

2. Nomination for the Chapter House

Biography

The Chapter House (TCH) is a community organization based in Echo Park, led by Native Women, that cultivates Indigenous joy through art, performance, celebration, and collaboration in order to nurture a vibrant, re-emergent Indigenous identity for LA Urban Indians.

Statement of Nomination

Through events such as comedy nights, the LA NDN Flea Market, Indigenous Drag Show, improv classes, fundraising events, and yoga sessions, TCH offers a place where our community members can gather, share stories, and celebrate our shared Urban Indian identity. Their gatherings center Indigenous presence/thrivance in an

(Nomination for the Chapter House Continued)

urban landscape where Native Peoples are often made invisible. By offering consistent, creative, and welcoming programming, TCH has become a space for connection, culture, and collective joy - embodying the Spirit of Community.

3. Nomination for Tencha Chavez

Biography

Yá'át'ééh, Shí éí Tencha Chavez yinishyé. Haltsoof nishłį́, Naakai Dine'é báshíshchíín. Hello, my name is Tencha Chavez. I am born to the Meadow People and born for the Mexican people (Chicana). This is how I am Diné/Navajo. My homeland is on the Little Water Reservation within the Navajo Nation in New Mexico, but I was born and raised in Los Angeles County, where I've lived my entire life.

My life's purpose is to help our people heal — to confront generational trauma, dismantle systemic barriers, and break the cycles that have held our families and communities back for too long. This calling is deeply personal. I walk the Red Road in recovery, a journey of resilience, growth, and spiritual awakening. Overcoming addiction was not only a personal victory — it was a reclamation of purpose, identity, and power. Today, I dedicate my life to uplifting Native communities through advocacy, systems change, and culturally rooted healing. My work centers on instilling cultural pride, building political consciousness, and connecting our people to the tools and resources needed to thrive. I believe in solutions that come from within our communities, rooted in Indigenous knowledge and collective strength.

In alignment with this commitment, I will be attending the University of Southern California's Sol Price School of Public Policy this coming fall, where I've been accepted into a dual Master's program in Public Administration and Urban Planning, with a concentration in Arts & Culture. This next step represents my ongoing investment in building sustainable, creative, and equitable futures for our Native communities.

My vision is one of hope — a future where our people rise, healed and empowered, free from the weight of historical trauma and the illusion of invisibility. Every step I take on this path is guided by the strength of my ancestors and the resilience that lives in all of us. Together, we can reclaim our stories, restore our communities, and create a future where the next generations inherit healing instead of hurt.

Statement of Nomination

I am nominating Tencha Chavez for the "Spirit of Community" honor. Tencha Chavez exemplifies the Spirit of Community through her tireless advocacy and healing-centered leadership. As a co-creator of a weekly Wellbriety group, she has provided a consistent space for Indigenous healing, sobriety, and reconnection. Her compassion has led to tangible impacts—helping many unsheltered relatives find places to call home and supporting community members in achieving educational and employment goals. Tencha advocates fiercely for increased resources for AIAN-serving organizations, ensuring that Native people in Los Angeles County receive the support and services they deserve. She models what it means to lead with humility, love, and

(Nomination for Tencha Chavez Continued)

commitment to community healing. Tencha's work is not just impactful—it is deeply rooted in cultural values, and she continues to walk in a way that uplifts and unites others. She is a true example of the Spirit of Community.

4.Nomination for Billy Mills

Billy Mills (Oglala Lakota name Tamakhóche Thehíla translation, Respects The Earth) has numerous awards and achievements spanning his lifetime. The major contribution to Los Angeles was carrying the Olympic flag into the Colosseum for the opening ceremonies of the 1984 Olympics.

Billy attended the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas (Haskell Indian Nations University). He excelled in track events, and at 18, he won the 1956 KSHAA Class B State Championship in Cross Country. Mills attended the University of Kansas on an athletic scholarship and was a three-time NCAA All-America Cross Country Runner. He went on to win the individual title at the Big Eight cross country championship. While competing at Kansas University, the track team won both the 1959 and 1960 outdoor national championships. Billy graduated in 1962 with a degree in physical education and went on to become First Lieutenant in the US Marine Corps Reserve, while competing at the 1964 Olympics.

Billy was also inducted into the United States Olympic Hall of Fame. In addition to these acknowledgements, Billy was further inducted into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame, the Kansas Hall of Fame, the South Dakota Hall of Fame, the San Diego Hall of Fame, and the National High School Hall of Fame. In 2013, he was presented with the Presidential Citizens Medal by U.S. President Barack Obama, and the following year he received the Theodore Roosevelt Award by the NCAA.

In 1986, Billy founded "Running Strong Oyate Ta Kola Ku Center" for American Indian Youth, which provides health and shelter assistance while also supporting traditional cultures and languages. Equipped with a community garden, the center provides food boxes to supplement healthy food options to the reservation, and it also provides school supplies, prom suits, and basic needs.

Billy Mills is a true Native American Ambassador representing all tribal Nations. At 85, he travels nearly 300 days a year to visit Native communities throughout Turtle Island (U.S.A) to speak about the importance of healthy lifestyles and taking pride in their heritage.

5.Nomination for Kimberly Morales Johnson

Biography

Kimberly Morales Johnson is a tribally enrolled member of the Gabrielino Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians. Kimberly has dedicated her life to the preservation, revitalization, and celebration of Native identity, culture, and sovereignty in the Los Angeles area and beyond. Kimberly's leadership is rooted in service. As a cultural educator, advocate, and community organizer, she has worked tirelessly to uplift Indigenous voices and ensure that the original peoples of Tovaangar (Los Angeles) are recognized, respected, and included in civic life. Her work bridges generations—mentoring youth, collaborating with elders, and building coalitions that reflect the diversity and resilience of Native communities. Kimberly is co-founder of the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy, the first community land back in Los Angeles County.

Statement of Nomination

I nominate Kimberly Morales Johnson for the Spirit of Community Award. Among her many contributions, Kimberly has been instrumental in advancing land acknowledgment practices across institutions in Los Angeles. Her advocacy has helped shift public consciousness, reminding Angelenos that they live on unceded Tongva land. She has also played a key role in organizing cultural events, educational workshops, and healing gatherings that foster community pride and intertribal solidarity. Kimberly's impact extends into policy and representation. She has served on advisory boards and worked with local governments to promote Indigenous visibility and inclusion. Her voice is one of wisdom and clarity, always grounded in the values of reciprocity, respect, and responsibility. What truly sets Kimberly apart is her unwavering commitment to community. Whether she is leading a sunrise ceremony, supporting a family in need, or speaking truth to power in a public forum, she does so with humility, grace, and fierce love for her people. Her work is not about recognition—it is about restoration, justice, and the enduring strength of Native nations. Kimberly Morales Johnson embodies the Spirit of Community. She is hope, a keeper of culture, and a tireless advocate for Native American rights. This award would provide recognition of her contributions and impact on the Native American community of Los Angeles.

6.Nomination for Dr. Claradina Soto

Biography

Dr. Claradina Soto (Navajo/Jemez Pueblo) is an Associate Professor at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine in the Department of Population and Public Health Sciences. She has over 20 years working with American Indian and Alaska Native populations in public health, collaborating with urban and Tribal communities in California to reduce and prevent mental health disparities, cancer prevalence, commercial tobacco use, and substance use and opioid use disorders.

(Nomination for Dr. Claradina Soto Continued)

Statement of Nomination

Dr. Soto is not only an accomplished researcher and professor, but she is a fierce advocate for the Native American community, for the innumerable amount of mentees she's helped throughout the years, and truly operates with an Indigenous worldview. While her work may be behind the scenes, its impact will have implications for generations to come in mitigating some of the biggest crises to touch our community (opioid and other substance use). Dr. Soto is warm, looks out for her people, and brings that warm aunty like love and generosity in every space she enters. Her warm and grounded presence in a large institution like USC is a beacon of hope for current and future Native and non-Native students alike that will surely be guided by her.

Spirit of Creativity

1. Nomination for Metzli Projects

Biography

Metzli Projects, led by Huichol artist Joel Garcia, is an Indigenous creative studio and cultural platform that centers Native voices, histories, and futures through art, design, and storytelling. Metzli blends traditional knowledge with contemporary creative practices to make Indigenous presence visible, celebrated, and healing. Their work spans murals, public art, graphic design, and cultural programming such as men's and women's circles. Their work is grounded in Indigenous sovereignty, reciprocity, and connection to place.

Statement of Nomination

Metzli Projects embodies the Spirit of Creativity by using art to celebrate Indigenous identities, reclaim cultural spaces within Los Angeles, heal our community and protest the harms caused to our relatives. Metzli has continuously uplifted the work of our Native community to protest injustices being committed against Indigenous Peoples across the world by colonial governments. During the ICE Raids against our undocumented relatives in Los Angeles, Metzli organized community gatherings and distributed posters that read: "Keep ICE out of Tongvaar" and "No One is Illegal on Stolen Land" - centering the shared struggle for justice our communities seek.

In a city where Native histories are often erased, Metzli boldly centers the ancestral legacy of resistance.

2. Nomination for Sierra Nizhoni Teller Ornelas

Sierra Nizhoni Teller Ornelas is a showrunner, screenwriter, filmmaker and sixth-generation traditional weaver from Tucson, Arizona. She was the co-creator of the critically acclaimed scripted NBC (Peacock) comedy series *Rutherford Falls*. The series made history marking Teller Ornelas as the first Indigenous showrunner and serving as the first major television production with five indigenous writers for a single series. Known for writing and production work on shows such as *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Happy*

Endings, *Splitting Up Together*, and *Superstore*. In 2019 Teller Ornelas signed a multi-year development deal with Universal Television.

Teller Ornelas attended the University of Arizona, where she studied media art and graduated from the School of Theatre, Film & Television in 2005. After graduating from college, Teller Ornelas worked for five years as a film programmer at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

In 2010, Teller Ornelas was selected for the Disney/ABC Television Group's diversity writing program. After this, she gained a position as a staff writer on *Happy* (Nomination for Sierra Nizhoni Teller Ornelas Continued)

(Nomination for Sierra Nizhoni Teller Ornelas Continued)

Endings. Teller Ornelas said in an interview with the *Navajo Times* that if done right, comedy can be a way to "get conversation going about very dense, complicated issues."

Teller Ornelas currently makes her home in Los Angeles, CA. continuing to develop new projects.

Television – Credited as:

Year	Title	Creator	Director	Writer	Producer
2011	Happy Endings	No	No	Yes	No
2013	Brooklyn Nine-Nine	No	No	No	Yes
2014	The Hustle	No	No	Yes	No
	Selfie	No	No	Yes	No
2014	Surviving Jack	No	No	Yes	No
2015	Superstore	No	No	Yes	Yes
2018	Splitting Up Together	No	No	Yes	Yes
2021	Rutherford Falls	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
2022	Loot	No	No	Yes	Yes
2024	St. Denis Medical	No	No	Yes	No

3. Nomination for Ian Skorodin

Ian Skorodin (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) is a visionary filmmaker, writer, and advocate for Native American representation in media. In 2007, Skorodin founded the Barcid Foundation to confront the systemic lack of Native representation in entertainment. That same year, he launched the LA SKINS FEST, a Los Angeles–based Native American film festival held at the historic Chinese Theater. The festival screens more than 70 Native films annually and includes a robust slate of programming—industry pitch sessions with major studios and networks, audition workshops with casting directors, and comedy showcases hosted at Comedy Central Stage. Expanding his commitment to career development, Skorodin created several high-impact training labs through the Barcid Foundation. These include:

- The Native American TV Writers Lab (launched in 2016), a five-week intensive that has helped over a dozen Native writers land staff positions on major series.
- The Native American Feature Film Writers Lab (launched in 2018), guiding participants through the completion of a full-length screenplay in 10 weeks.
- The Native American Animation Lab (launched in 2019), connecting Native creatives with leaders in the animation industry.
- The Native American Showrunner Program (launched in 2020), a nine-month mentorship for experienced Native writers preparing for leadership roles in television.

(Nomination for Ian Skorodin Continued)

Since 2009, Skorodin has also led the Native Youth Multimedia Workshop, traveling to tribal communities across the U.S. to teach young people how to create short documentaries about their language, heritage, and identity. In 2019, he expanded the program to include animation workshops focused on digital tools and creative careers. Beyond his work with the Barcid Foundation and LA SKINS FEST, Skorodin has also served as a Commissioner with the Los Angeles Native American Indian Commission, continuing his commitment to cultural advocacy and visibility.

4. Nomination for Ben West

Biography

Ben West is a filmmaker who has worked with companies such as Carsey-Werner Mandabach, Telenova Productions, Mandalay Pictures, and outlets such as the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. West was born and raised in Washington, D.C. and Albuquerque, NM, and is an alumnus of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California. His last film, Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film Finalist and one of The Washington Post's Best Films of 2023, *Imagining The Indian: The Fight Against Native American Mascoting*, is available on Amazon Prime and AppleTV. He is currently co-directing and producing *Loyal To The Soil*, a film about Native American Military Service. West serves as Executive Director/CEO of Rena Flying Coyote Collective. RFCC, named after his paternal great-grandmother, is a non-profit organization dedicated to telling the stories of Indigenous Peoples through Film, Television, and the Arts. Most recently, he has been invited to join The Pacific Council on International Policy, and was awarded a Fellowship to the 2024 Aspen Ideas Festival by the Aspen Institute. Ben is a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, and has chosen to focus much of his life's work on Native Peoples.

Statement of Nomination

Ben West creates films that don't just tell stories—they ignite movements. A citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, West has devoted his life to amplifying Indigenous voices and histories through film, television, and the arts. His work is grounded in the belief that people only fight for what they truly understand and feel.

This belief drives the mission of the Rena Flying Coyote Collective (RFCC), the nonprofit he leads in honor of his great-grandmother. RFCC is built on four powerful pillars: making films that serve as calls-to-action for social change; leading screenings and discussions to build coalitions; creating educational curricula to reach audiences when they're most impressionable; and conducting workshops that empower communities to tell their own stories. This bold, integrated model—blending art, education, coalition building, and inclusiveness—sets RFCC apart from the many organizations that focus on just one of these areas.

(Nomination for Ben West Continued)

West's recent documentary, *Imagining The Indian: The Fight Against Native American Mascoting*, was a finalist for the Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film and named one of *The Washington Post's* Best Films of 2023. Now streaming on Amazon Prime and Apple TV, it has sparked critical conversations and real-world change in schools and sports. His next film, *Loyal to the Soil*, will honor Native American military service.

Through his artistry, vision, and deep cultural commitment, Ben West has transformed creative work into a force that educates, connects, and inspires action—a true embodiment of the Spirit of Creativity.

Spirit of Tradition

1. Nomination for Emma Robbins

Biography

Emma Robbins is a proud Diné (Navajo) artist, activist, and community leader. Emma exemplifies the living power of Indigenous tradition—honoring ancestral knowledge while forging bold, contemporary expressions of Native identity and resilience. Emma's work is grounded in the sacred teachings of her people and the enduring relationship between land, water, and community. As Executive Director of the Navajo Water Project, she has led groundbreaking efforts to bring clean, running water to families across the Navajo Nation. This work is not only about infrastructure, it is an act of cultural preservation and sovereignty, rooted in traditional values of stewardship, kinship, and collective well-being. Emma is also the co-founder of The Chapter House, a groundbreaking Indigenous art and community space in Los Angeles. The Chapter House serves as a vibrant hub for Native creatives, activists, and culture bearers, offering a space to gather, share stories, and build community through art, dialogue, and tradition. Through this work, Emma has helped create a vital platform for intertribal connection and cultural continuity in the heart of the city. As a visual artist, Emma draws from Diné matrilineal strength, and the lived experiences of Native women. Her photography and mixed media work honor the beauty, complexity, and resistance of Indigenous life. She uses her art as a tool for education, healing, and advocacy, bridging generations and challenging colonial narratives with grace and power.

Statement of Nomination

I nominate Emma Robbins for the Spirit of Tradition Award. Emma's commitment to tradition is not performative, it is deeply lived. She mentors Native youth, collaborates with elders, and participates in community gatherings that center language, ceremony, and cultural practice. Her leadership is guided by humility, integrity, and a fierce love for her people. Emma Robbins is the embodiment of the Spirit of Tradition. Through her activism, her art, and her community-building, she ensures that Indigenous traditions are not only remembered, but revitalized and reimagined for the future. For her visionary leadership, her cultural stewardship, and her unwavering dedication to Native communities she would be an excellent award recipient.

2025 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous persons



The Point-In-Time (PIT) population estimates presented here are for persons experiencing homelessness who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous within the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC); it includes persons with multiple racial or ethnic identities. The LA CoC covers all of LA County except Pasadena, Glendale, and Long Beach. Data from the 2025 Greater Los Angeles Point-In-Time Count estimate the number and demographic characteristics of the homeless population on a single night in Feb 2025. Data presented reflect the estimated number of persons unless labeled as a household count. If you have any questions about the data, please submit a ticket at <https://lahsa.freshservice.com/support/home> including "HC 2025 Data Summary" as the subject.

A margin of error is the difference between an estimate and its upper or lower confidence bounds. Margins of error presented here are based on a 95 percent confidence level.

*This year, we introduce a **precision scale** to help the public understand the likelihood of the presented statistical estimate reflecting the state of homelessness on the night of the 2025 Homeless Count. The scale has four levels: Very Precise (VP), Moderately Precise (MP), Moderately Imprecise (MI), and Very Imprecise (VI). To determine the level of uncertainty, multiply the margin of error by 2. That number is then compared to the original unsheltered estimate to determine the precision level the estimate falls into.*

- > *Very Precise (VP) : The value is less than 15% of the estimate*
- > *Moderately Precise (MP) : The value is between 15% and 66% of the estimate*
- > *Moderately Imprecise (MI) : The value is between 66% and 130% of the estimate*
- > *Very Imprecise (VI) : The value over 1.3 times the estimate*

In the precision scale column, LAHSA has noted where on the scale each estimate falls. LAHSA does not recommend using estimates labeled as Very Imprecise. LAHSA also advises readers to use extreme caution when using Moderately Imprecise estimates. Both Imprecise categories are less likely to reflect state of homelessness for their population on the night of the Homeless Count.

Population	Total	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Margin of Error	Precision Scale	Prevalence in Homeless Pop. (%)
Total American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness						
All Persons	2,474	415	2,059	± 594	MP	4%
All Households	2,400	379	2,021	± 598	MP	4%

The following data report the prevalence in the American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous (AIANI) population only.

Population	Total	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Margin of Error	Precision Scale	Prevalence in AIANI Pop. (%)
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION <i>A Household has one or more members. A Family Household is composed of at least one minor (under 18), and at least one person over 18.</i>						
Individuals (those not in family units)	2,319	315	2,004	± 592	MP	94%
Family Households (at least 1 child under 18)	81	64	17	± 84	VI	3%
All Family Members	155	100	55	± 41	VI	6%
Family Members 18+	61	42	19	± 57	VI	2%
Family Members under 18 (children)	94	58	36	± 40	VI	4%
CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS: <i>A household is considered chronically homeless if any members have (1) a long-term disabling condition; and (2) been homeless for 12 months or more within the last 3 years as specified by HUD.</i>						
People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness (all)	1,454	168	1,286	± 504	MI	59%
Chronically Homeless who are individuals	1,420	141	1,279	± 504	MI	57%
Chronically Homeless Family Members (all)	34	27	7	± 6	VI	1%

2025 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count

American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous persons



Population	Total	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Margin of Error	Precision Scale	Prevalence in AIANI Pop. (%)
GENDER: <i>The categories below include persons who identify with the gender category alone or in combination with other genders; persons with multiple identities will be represented in multiple categories. Categories were updated based on HUD HMIS Data Standards.</i>						
Woman (or girl, if child)	966	198	768 ± 404	MI	39%	
Man (or boy, if child)	1,495	212	1,283 ± 486	MI	60%	
Culturally Specific Identity (e.g. Two-Spirit)	2	-	2 ± 4	VI	0%	
Transgender	5	5	- ± N/A	N/A	0%	
Non-Binary	7	4	3 ± 6	VI	0%	
Questioning	1	1	- ± N/A	N/A	0%	
Different Identity	9	-	9 ± 41	VI	0%	
RACE / ETHNICITY: <i>The categories below include persons who identify with the race/ethnicity category alone or in combination with other races/ethnicities; persons with multiple identities will be represented in multiple categories. Categories were updated based on HUD HMIS Data Standards.</i>						
American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Indigenous	2,474	415	2,059 ± 594	MP	100%	
Asian or Asian American	101	3	98 ± 74	VI	4%	
Black, African American, or African	470	50	420 ± 174	MI	19%	
Hispanic/Latina/e/o	697	236	461 ± 306	VI	28%	
Middle Eastern or North African	19	-	19 ± 31	VI	1%	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	34	3	31 ± 37	VI	1%	
White	699	69	630 ± 296	MI	28%	
AGE						
Under 18	94	58	36 ± 40	VI	4%	
18 - 24	53	28	25 ± 22	VI	2%	
25 - 54	1,716	232	1,484 ± 570	MI	69%	
55 - 61	349	49	300 ± 184	MI	14%	
62 and Over	262	48	214 ± 202	VI	11%	
The following data are reported for 18+ AIANI population only.						
Population	Total	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Margin of Error	Precision Scale	Prevalence in 18+ AIANI Pop. (%)
SEXUAL ORIENTATION						
Straight	2,217	331	1,886 ± 586	MP	93%	
Gay or lesbian	69	10	59 ± 83	VI	3%	
Bisexual	82	14	68 ± 71	VI	3%	
Questioning	12	2	10 ± 20	VI	1%	
HEALTH & DISABILITY <i>Health & disability indicators are not mutually exclusive; a single person may report more than one condition and thus be represented among more than one health & disability subpopulation.</i>						
Substance Use Disorder	796	50	746 ± 528	VI	33%	
HIV/AIDS	82	7	75 ± 67	VI	3%	
Serious Mental Illness	948	131	817 ± 380	MI	40%	
Developmental Disability	359	79	280 ± 249	VI	15%	
Physical Disability	988	90	898 ± 414	MI	42%	
DOMESTIC / INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE						
DV/IPV Experience	1,582	111	1,471 ± 543	MI	66%	
Homeless Due to Fleeing DV/IPV	283	37	246 ± 158	MI	12%	