



LOS ANGELES CITY/COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF OCTOBER 21, 2025

The October 21, 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

Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor called the meeting to order at 6:31 P.M. and read the Los Angeles County Land Acknowledgment.

Invocation

No invocation was provided during the meeting.

Roll Call

Present: Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor
Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith
Treasurer Denise Escoto (left at 7:10 p.m.)
Dr. Andrea Garcia
Vivian Garcia
Dawn Jackson
Mona Morales Recalde
Rudy Ortega Jr. (arrived at 6:57 p.m.)
Rich Toyon
Rene' William

Absent: Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog (Excused)
Caroline Bhalla (Excused)
Chrissie Castro (Excused)
John Only A Chief (Excused)
Ted Tenorio (Excused)

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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Public Comment

A member of the public, Teri Red Owl submitted the following public comment via email:

Manahuu (Hello). Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment at your October 21, 2025 meeting. The Owens Valley Indian Water Commission (OVIWC) hopes to make an in-person presentation to LANAIC at a future meeting. For now, we would like to let you know that with the LADWP Board of Commissioner's seat recently vacated by George McGraw that the OVIWC is making a push to have Mayor Karen Bass appoint a Native American to that seat. We are starting a letter writing campaign to Mayor Bass and will provide the LANAIC with a sample letter that we request you send to your contacts and colleagues urging Mayor Bass to fill this vacancy with a Native American.

I have included links to a Los Angeles Times article that appeared in the October 18, 2025 edition along with a video by LA Times writer Ian James. This article highlights some of our issues in Payahuunadü (Owens Valley) that we hope to present to the LANAIC at a future meeting.

*Here is the article which appears on the front page of the LA Times on 10/18/25:
<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2025-10-18/owens-valley-tribes-water>*

And a short video: <https://www.latimes.com/00000199-eeb3-d2ee-a99b-eef7f7190000-123>

Manahobu (Thank you).

Teri Red Owl

A member of the public, Diego Zapata, spoke on Item 6.3 as a community activist and organizer of G.R.O.W. Lincoln Heights. He stated that Flat Top Rock has long been a part of the community and expressed his complete solidarity with the Gabrieleno Tongva. He implored the commissioners to adopt the letter and offered himself as a resource in any appropriate capacity. As a biologist, he emphasized the abundance of natural resources at Flat Top Rock. He also took a moment to honor Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde for her advocacy for the preservation of Flat Top Rock.



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Action Items

6.1 Adopt absentee excuses

A motion was made by Commissioner Rene' Williams and seconded by Commissioner Rich Toyon for Chairperson Shawn Imitates Dog, Commissioner Caroline Bhalla, Commissioner Chrissie Castro, Commissioner John Only A Chief, and Commissioner Ted Tenorio's absentee excuses for the October 21, 2025, meeting.

The motion passed.

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

6.2 Approve the August 19, 2025, Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) Unapproved Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Rich Toyon and seconded by Treasurer Denise Escoto to approve the unapproved August 19, 2025, LANAIC Meeting Minutes as presented.

The motion passed.

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



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6.3. Adopt the draft letter to the LA City Council requesting the Preservation of Flat Top Rock

A motion was made by Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith and seconded by Commissioner Vivian Garcia to adopt the draft letter to the LA City Council requesting the Preservation of Flat Top Rock.

The motion passed. The letter is adopted as amended during the meeting.

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

6.4. Adopt the draft letter to LA City Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson recommending that the LA City Council rename 3446 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90004 to "Ernest Stevens Sr. Square"

A motion was made by Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia and seconded by Commissioner Dawn Jackson to adopt the draft letter to LA City Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson recommending that the LA City Council rename 3446 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90004 to "Ernest Stevens Sr. Square."

The motion passed.

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

Discussion Items

7.1 Discuss AIAN Homelessness in LA County

Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia shared a report titled Native American Community Input on How to Move from Houselessness to Home in Los Angeles. The key takeaway from this two-page document is that there is strong desire for Native American cultural district is calling, tribal consultation, equity in data, policy, and resources, as well as meaningful representation. A diagram on the second page outlines the types of support that correspond to these asks.



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While the language in the report still requires strengthening, Commissioner Garcia shared that it is nearing its final form. Commissioners are encouraged to read it, especially if they plan to engage in conversations with Supervisors or elected officials, as the report can serve as a valuable resource.

Additionally, Commissioner Dr. Garcia shared that she would like to circulate the two-page document, along with a previously shared video, in late October. This will be accompanied by an email reiterating key asks in anticipation of Native American Heritage Month. This late October action will serve as a preview for NAHAM and potentially aligning with the release of ARDI's AIAN Homelessness data dashboard. Ideally, the email and dashboard will help anchor the advocacy efforts.

Looking ahead to November, Commissioner Dr. Garcia plans to place a formal letter on the agenda to be sent to local leaders, offering briefings at their offices. She is more than willing to attend these briefings if requested. An initial email will be sent at the end of this month to begin that outreach.

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde suggested adding language in the 2-pager regarding funding support for local tribes, She also recommended that any mention of Native organizations be expanded to include local tribes explicitly. Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia asked if anyone has visual design skills to assist with formatting or presentation of materials. She welcomes any support. The body agreed that all elected appointed members of the commission will send the drafted email with the updated 2 pager to their respective appointed offices and Cc Chair Shawn Imitates Dog, Commissioner Garcia and Alexandra.

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

Treasurer Denise Escoto reported that, due to the ongoing Federal government shutdown, CalFRESH assistance may not be issued to recipients in November. She raised this concern during the SGB meeting earlier that day, asking whether there are resources available to support the community in the event of a disruption.

The SGB team responded with several thoughtful ideas to help address potential gaps in food assistance.

7.3 Discuss LA City Parks Needs Assessment Steering Committee Updates

Commissioner Rich Toyon reported that the current LA Park Needs Assessment closed on October 15. All public comments were submitted by that deadline, and a substantial number were received. The updated assessment will be released on November 18 and forwarded to the appropriate municipalities for discussion and potential adoption.

While most meetings have concluded, Commissioner Toyon shared that a tribal listening session is scheduled for November. The assessment process is a significant undertaking, and the team is currently reviewing and digesting the public feedback.



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Alexandra suggested to Commissioner Toyon that Thompson with the Parks Needs Assessment team reach out to her to coordinate the LA City team's presence at the next commission meeting. Commissioner Toyon emphasized that having the team attend in person would be far more beneficial than participating via Zoom

7.4 Discuss FY 26-27 LANAIC Budget Priorities

Alexandra provided background on the Commission's budget letter process. She shared that this item is agendaized as a discussion to begin discussing what priorities might be included in a FY26-27 Budget Request Letter to the Board of Supervisors and Mayor Karen Bass. She shared about some items from previous letters that have yet to be funded including dedicated City staff to support the AIAN community and the LANAIC as well as dedicated staffing at the County to support addressing AIAN homelessness. Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia emphasized the importance of prioritizing staffing to support this work, particularly advocating for individuals who will oversee Native homelessness initiatives.

Alexandra also noted the upcoming move of the Department of Mental Health's American Indian Counseling Center into a new office space and the importance of ensuring that space is culturally resonate with Native communities. Commissioner Dr. Garcia shared that her Department of Mental Health office will be relocating next month, and if budget allows, funding could be used for culturally significant design elements. She suggested ideas such as framing photos from the County's Harms Report and installing a permanent land acknowledgment.

Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde added that LA County Parks has a compelling example of a land acknowledgment which could serve as inspiration.

Regarding funding, Commissioner Morales Recalde inquired whether the recommendations from the Harms Report had been incorporated into the current budget request. Alexandra responded that this moment presents an opportunity to amplify those recommendations. She noted that additional guidance may be available next month and emphasized the need to be strategic in advancing the Harms Report recommendations.

7.5 Discuss the Draft LA City/County Native American Indian Commission FY24-25 Annual Report

Alexandra reminded the Commission that one of its key responsibilities is to complete and adopt an annual report and that a draft version is included in the meeting packet. She shared that much of the content is carried over from previous years, and the document remains a working, evolving list of the Commission's accomplishments.

Commissioners are encouraged to review the draft and identify any missing items. Alexandra requested that recommendations and edits be submitted in writing. The finalized version will be placed on the November agenda for formal adoption.



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Presentations

8.1 Presentation on the County of Los Angeles American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) People Experiencing Homelessness Dashboard - Tolu A. Bamishigbin (Wuraola) (Principal Analyst, LA County Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative)

Los Angeles County Office of Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) Principal Analyst Tolu A. Bamishigbin (Wuraola) presented on the County of Los Angeles American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) People Experiencing Homelessness Dashboard.

Commissioner Rene' Williams asked whether ARDI is combining with other Continuum of Care (CoC) systems. Tolu responded that they were able to integrate with one other CoC—Long Beach. However, Pasadena and Glendale present challenges because they disaggregate racial data differently.

Tolu noted that Commissioner Dr. Andrea Garcia had expressed interest in understanding what AIAN (American Indian/Alaska Native) homelessness looks like across other CoCs. In response, the team will work to pull relevant data.

Tolu also shared that one challenge in presenting AIAN-specific data is the difficulty of obtaining precise figures due to small sample sizes. Despite this, she emphasized that AIAN data consistently reflects some of the most acute outcomes.

Alexandra, referencing the alarming nature of the data, stressed that it must be referenced in this year's budget request letters.

Commissioner Dr. Garcia proposed that meetings and communications should be released sooner to capitalize on the urgency of the moment.

Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith identified a potential opportunity to elevate the issue to the state level by aligning with the California Climate Change Assessment. He suggested this could be a strategic avenue for broader impact.

Commissioner Dr. Garcia gave a heartfelt shoutout to Tolu for her persistence and consistency in compiling and advancing this important work.



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Chair's Report

9.1 General Updates

This item was tabled until the November 18, 2025, meeting.

Executive Director's Report

10.1 General Updates

Alexandra provided updates on the website migration. Commissioners are asked to review the history section and suggest any new accomplishments from the annual report that should be added. Updated headshots and bios should be submitted by the end of October to Alexandra via email, A group photo would also be a welcome addition and Alexandra shared she would look into have a County photographer attend an upcoming Commission meeting.

Alexandra shared via email that the Tribal Consultation Policy project is off to a strong start. The team is expected to present at a Commission meeting in early 2026 to discuss high-level scope of work.

The County was contacted by the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians who requested that the County's Land Acknowledgment be updated to reflect their new official name, the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation. Additionally, additional tribes who supported the County developing the land acknowledgement toolkit had previously asked to be added to the land acknowledgement when it was updated next. Alexandra shared the Board of Supervisors plans to make these changes and she anticipates they will do soon via a Board Motion.

Alexandra shared that Supervisor Hilda Solis will recognize all NAHM honorees at the November 4, 2025 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Finally, Alexandra shared that the Commission must hold the 2026-2027 Executive Committee elections in November since the body does not have a meeting in December. Alexandra shared that she would be soliciting nominations via email and then providing commissioners an opportunity to remove their names from consideration before finalizing the nominations document for the November meeting.

Committee & Ad Hoc Committee Reports

11.1 Executive Committee

Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith tabled the item.

11.2 Self Governance Board

Alexandra noted that updates were shared during the SGB meeting held earlier the same day. However, there have been no changes to the CSBG program since the August 2025 meeting.



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11.3 2025 Native American Heritage Month Ad Hoc Committee

Secretary Bryce Lewis-Smith shared that the Native American Heritage Month event at the Bridge Gallery will take place on November 7, 2025, with a ribbon cutting scheduled for 9:30 AM. The exhibition will feature 18 participating artists and 32 pieces, including photography, textiles, paintings, and quilts. Installation is planned for October 29.

Following the ribbon cutting, the program will transition into a council.. A request has been made for the Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians to perform a song, and Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor noted he would bring the request back to his tribal council for discussion. The event will continue with a segment honoring the Native American Heritage Month honorees, followed by remarks recognizing tribal firefighters.

11.4 LANAIC Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee

There are no updates from the Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee

Commissioner General Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Commissioner Rudy Ortega Jr. was invited in his Tribal President capacity to speak at the APA California Conference in Monterey, which brought together policymakers, administrators, and members of the Natural Resources Committee. Commissioner Ortega shared that the panel he spoke on had an audience of 300 people. He also share that he helped announce Proposition 4 funding, which will support enhancements to city parks.

In addition to the funding announcement, the event focused on advancing policies related to land acknowledgment and strengthening relationships with tribes and local governments. The broader goal was to explore how government entities can better support Native communities.

Announcements/Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Rene' Williams encouraged the Native community to participate in the upcoming election and exercise their right to vote. Commissioner Mona Morales Recalde announced that the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians will be partnering with United American Indian Involvement, Inc. to host a Native Market on December 6 and that a call for vendors will be release soon.

Commission Adjournment

Vice Chairperson Mark Villasenor announced that the next LANAIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 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.