

REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

November 1, 2022

AND JANICE HAHN

**Proclaiming Native American Heritage Month and Adopting the Countywide Land**

**Acknowledgment**

Each November, we recognize and celebrate the cultures and vast contributions of the Native American population, the original stewards of this land. It is also an opportunity for us to acknowledge the First Peoples of what is now known as Los Angeles County, the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, and Chumash as well as the region’s American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) population, comprised of members from more than 200 tribes.

Native American Heritage Month (NAHM) is an opportunity for Native American people to share their culture and traditions and is an opportunity for all people to dedicate time to learn about and celebrate the contributions that Native Americans have made and continue to make to society. NAHM provides a platform for Native American people to share history and provide insight into some of the challenges they have and continue to face. Such as discriminatory policies that denied the existence of tribal government powers well into the 20th century. The legacies of these shameful policies remain even today, leading to erasure from the historical record, landlessness, and disproportionate health and economic burdens.

Despite these historical injustices, Native peoples have resisted, persisted, survived, and

**MOTION**

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carried on their cultural and linguistic traditions. This year the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) selected *Stronger Together* as this year's NAHM theme.

Additionally, the LANAIC selected outstanding Los Angeles County AIAN community members to recognize as the 2022 NAHM honorees: Phoenix Family (Tohono O'odham) - Spirit of Tradition, Cast & Crew of *Reservation Dogs* - Spirit of Creativity, and Dr. Carrie Johnson (Wahpeton Dakota) - Spirit of Community.

During this month, we not only celebrate Native American legacy and culture and acknowledge the challenges Native peoples have and continue to face, but also take the opportunity to make meaningful first steps toward combatting erasure and advancing truth, healing, and transformation with the County's local Tribes and AIAN community.

A Land Acknowledgment is a statement that recognizes an area's original inhabitants who have been forcibly dispossessed of their homelands and is a step toward recognizing the negative impacts these communities have endured, and continue to endure, as a result. In recent years, institutions, often colleges, universities, and cultural organizations, have increasingly adopted Land Acknowledgements. Although relatively uncommon among the city, county, and state governments in the United States, a Land Acknowledgment is a common protocol within Native communities and a standard practice in both Australia and Canada.

A lack of federal recognition, exacerbated by various County policies and procedures, has resulted in numerous land access issues for local tribal people, including an inability to use lands for cultural and ceremonial purposes such as gathering plant material and visiting sacred or culturally significant sites. For Native people, control over and access to land is directly linked to the free exercise of culture and religion because many Native cultural and religious practices are tied to specific landscapes. Ancestral homelands and particular locations may be inextricably

linked to a Tribe's identity, and cultural and religious practices may be effectively prohibited without meaningful access to certain sites.

On October 3, 2017, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) passed a motion authored by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis directing County Counsel to “create an ordinance to remove all references to Columbus Day as an official County holiday and recognize Indigenous Peoples Day instead.” On May 1, 2018, the Board formally adopted the ordinance.

Ongoing issues related to accessing County-owned and other public lands for Native cultural practices were highlighted by stakeholders during a convening of tribal and Native American communities held in May 2019 in support of the development of the Our County Sustainability Plan (Plan), which was adopted by the Board in August 2019. Based on the stakeholder feedback, the Plan includes a short-term action, Action 78, which directs the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to “collaborate with local Tribes to identify and address barriers to the observance of traditional practices such as harvesting and gathering, particularly on County-owned land.”

Concurrently in November 2019, the Los Angeles Mayor's Office Civic Memory Working Group convened its first meeting. The group consisted of 40 historians, Indigenous elders and scholars, architects, artists, curators, designers, and other civic and cultural leaders. Its main charge as it worked across 2020 and into 2021 was to produce a series of recommendations to help Los Angeles engage more productively and honestly with its past—especially where that past is fraught or has been buried or whitewashed. The Working Group's report was released on April 15, 2021, with 18 key recommendations, essays and photo essays, and interviews and roundtable discussions on significant topics. One of the key recommendations: *Begin the process of adopting an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Policy for the Mayor's Office and the*

*City, in close collaboration with the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC).*

On October 5, 2021, the Board of Supervisors directed the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture (Arts and Culture) to work with the LANAIC to:

- Hire a consultant to facilitate the development of Land Acknowledgement and Land Access policies, protocols, and toolkits for Los Angeles County, in accordance with the Countywide Cultural Policy, and gather input to inform ways in which the County has harmed local tribal nations.
- Fund honorariums to pay tribal leaders or their designees for their time and knowledge.

Twenty-two tribal nations, from generally five ancestral communities that have ties to the Los Angeles County region as identified by the State of California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), were invited to be part of this process. Seven tribes with traditional lands that intersect with Los Angeles County's boundaries expressed interest in participating in this work.

From April 15 – September 30, 2022, four facilitated sessions with tribal leaders from six local Tribes took place focused on the development of a Land Acknowledgment policy, protocol, and toolkit for the County. The LANAIC and Arts and Culture have taken great strides to design a multi-step process informed by the needs and wishes of these tribal leaders and their Tribes. Throughout the process, those participating have provided valuable input and feedback on key elements that should be included in a formal Land Acknowledgment for the County, as well as guidelines for its use.

On October 18, the LANAIC met and approved language for a Countywide Land Acknowledgment. On October 19, the LANAIC and Arts and Culture transmitted that language

to the Board for adoption, under the directive in the October 4, 2022 motion authored by Supervisor Solis.

**WE I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors,

1. Proclaim November 2022 as “Native American Heritage Month” in the County of Los Angeles and encourage County Departments and residents to participate in Native American Heritage Month programming.
2. Acknowledge and celebrate the 2022 Native American Heritage Month Honorees - Phoenix Family (Tohono O'odham) - Spirit of Tradition, Cast & Crew of Reservation Dogs - Spirit of Creativity, and Dr. Carrie Johnson (Wahpeton Dakota) - Spirit of Community.
3. Adopt the following language to be used as a formal Land Acknowledgment for the County of Los Angeles and, effective on December 1, 2022, open all Board meetings with the following Land Acknowledgment, to be verbally announced and displayed visually:

*The County of Los Angeles recognizes that we occupy land originally and still inhabited and cared for by the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, and Chumash Peoples. We honor and pay respect to their elders and descendants -- past, present, and emerging -- as they continue their stewardship of these lands and waters. We acknowledge that settler colonization resulted in land seizure, disease, subjugation, slavery, relocation, broken promises, genocide, and multigenerational trauma. This acknowledgment demonstrates our responsibility and commitment to truth, healing, and reconciliation and to elevating the stories, culture, and community of the original inhabitants of Los Angeles County. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on these ancestral lands. We are dedicated to growing and sustaining relationships with Native peoples and local tribal governments, including (in no particular order) the*

- *Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians*
- *Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council*
- *Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians*
- *Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation*
- *San Manuel Band of Mission Indians*
- *San Fernando Band of Mission Indians*

*To learn more about the First Peoples of Los Angeles County, please visit the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission website at [lanaic.lacounty.gov](http://lanaic.lacounty.gov).*

**WE I, FURTHER, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive Officer to find \$150,000 in one-time funding to continue the Land Acknowledgment work as designed in the Cultural Policy so as not to cause additional harm through delays of implementation.
2. Direct Arts and Culture to work with the LANAIC to develop a toolkit and training resources that establish standards and protocols for County Departments and agencies to implement the Countywide Land Acknowledgment and when and how to engage with local tribal governments. The toolkit and resources should also be shared with other County municipalities, cultural institutions, and arts and culture organizations.

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