

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

November 7, 2023

**Proclaiming November 2023 as Native American Heritage Month and Investing in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities**

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. Despite historical and contemporary injustices, Native peoples have resisted, persisted, survived, and carried on their cultural and linguistic traditions.

This year, the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) selected *A Community Embracing the Future* as this year’s NAHM theme. Each year the LANAIC selects outstanding Los Angeles County AIAN community members to recognize as NAHM

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honorees. This year's 2023 NAHM honorees are: Jimi Castillo (Tongva/Acjachemen) - Spirit of Tradition posthumous, Roberta Javier (Cherokee/Sac & Fox) - Spirit of Community, and Chris "Spanto" Printup (White Mountain Apache & Seneca) - Spirit of Creativity posthumous.

### **Jimi Castillo (Tongva/Acjachemen) - Spirit of Tradition posthumous**

Jimi Castillo, a Tongva/Acjachemen Pipe Carrier and Sun Dancer, was a proud member of the Statewide Bear Clan Society and a Marine Corps veteran (1960 to 1965) having served in the Vietnam War for which he received the Warriors Medal of Valor. For several decades, he served Native youth in California Prisons. Working as Native American Spiritual Leader for the California Youth Authority, Jimi led sweat lodge ceremonies for imprisoned Native American youth creating a space to ease tensions, practice equality, and resolve gang differences. In 2010, Jimi Castillo ran for Lieutenant Governor on the Green Party hoping to make a difference in California.

Jimi and his wife, Jeanette Castillo are well known on the Southern California pow wow trail, as he was often called upon to act as a spiritual leader. Mr. Castillo worked at American Indian Changing Spirits providing sweat lodge for the clients as well as acting as Spiritual Counselor.

In 2016, Jimi and his wife, Jeanette, received President Obama's Volunteer Service Lifetime Achievement Award for their service to the Native American Community, and the same year received the Aquarium of the Pacific Heritage Award. On August 30, 2021, Jimi was asked to open the ceremony at the opening of the Academy Awards Museum with Mayor Garcetti and was featured on KTLA's Gayle Anderson's series on "Rethinking Thanksgiving." Mr. Castillo passed away on Friday, April 21st at 12:40 am accompanied by the Bear Songs

from his Clan Brothers.

Uncle Jimi taught the Native American community about selflessness, humility, kindness, tenacity, and integrity. His service as a spiritual leader for incarcerated Native American youth and Native men in recovery is emblematic of his humility and fundamental belief that everyone is redeemable and deserves healing. Despite the physical pain he endured in his latter years, Uncle Jimi would still pick up the phone to check on others and volunteer his time when he could. Uncle Jimi's story of incredible service and character deserves to be told and recognized as an integral part of the fabric of Los Angeles.

### **Roberta Javier (Cherokee/Sac & Fox) - Spirit of Community**

Roberta Javier was born in Nampa, Idaho, and grew up in Arizona, Oklahoma, and California. Her ancestors are Cherokee and Sac and Fox. From 1958, when she was six years old, to 1968, Roberta was raised in Los Angeles County foster homes. During those years, she was strictly forbidden to explore her Native heritage or connect with other Natives. She married at age 16 and raised a son and three daughters. Once her children were grown, Roberta returned to school, receiving a bachelor's degree in Social Welfare from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2005 and a master's degree in social work from California State University, Los Angeles, in 2009. She then worked in the American Indian Unit of Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services for 12 years. Roberta continues to volunteer and serve on various boards within the Native American community giving back to our people. Roberta plans an annual holiday toy drive for Native foster youth, providing gifts and memories specific to their needs and wishes. Roberta supports Native children in achieving their dreams and building self-confidence and self-worth. She is a true gift to the Native American community.

## **Chris “Spanto” Printup (White Mountain Apache & Seneca) - Spirit of Creativity posthumous**

Chris "Spanto" Printup (White Mountain Apache & Seneca) was born and raised in Venice and was a co-founder of the iconic Los Angeles-based streetwear brand Born X Raised. “Born X Raised is like a love letter to the city that I once grew up in, that’s gone now,” he said, referencing the impact of gentrification on his neighborhood. Spanto's initial design was of a Native American man surrounded by the phrase, "Gentrification is genocide," which is what sparked a conversation and eventually a partnership between Spanto and his co-founder, 2Tone. Spanto unfortunately passed away in June 2023 but will be remembered for all of the communities he represented, including the heartfelt representation of his Native American community.

Although Spanto's company saw much success through large partnerships with the LA Dodgers, Kings, Lakers, Rams, and so on, this success came after a life of learning, grit, and finding a way to channel his experiences. From growing up poor to stints of incarceration, and a diagnosis of terminal cancer, which he beat, Spanto found art as a way to convey emotions that were felt universally.

Born x Raised collaborated with the dance troupe Indigenous Enterprise to drop a collection of pieces worn by Navajo elders. More recently, a Born x Raised collaboration with Levi's to pay homage to Spanto's late father Butch, where he also collaborated with various Indigenous creatives in the campaign. Spanto was no stranger to the local Native community, having attended Los Angeles Indigenous People's Day celebrations, and ensuring Native participation in his well-known Sadie Hawkins Winter Formal.

In his collaborations with the Native community, he uplifted artists by not only sharing his platform but also bringing his full presence and genuine kindness to every interaction. Spanto was larger than life, and his impact on Los Angeles as a whole and beyond will last forever. His legacy will be remembered by generations to come.

The month of November is not only a time to celebrate Native American legacy and culture and acknowledge the challenges Native peoples have and continue to face but also an opportunity to take meaningful action towards better supporting local tribes and the AIAN community. In 1976 the County, in partnership with LA City, established the LANAIC due in great part because of advocacy from the AIAN community. For nearly 50 years the LANAIC has provided a critical platform to elevate the needs and concerns of AIAN communities to LA County and LA City. On May 18, 2021, the LANAIC took action on recommending that the Board of Supervisors affirm and strengthen its commitment to the AIAN population through the creation of a Tribal Relations Office or Initiative. The LANAIC shared that this type of dedicated office would promote culturally grounded, long-term, positive relationships and decision-making processes through government-to-government consultation with Tribal governments and engagement with the urban AIAN community and develop focused and long-term strategies to improve programs and services for all AIAN people living in the County. This need has been included in the Board's unmet needs as well as included as a recommendation made by AIAN community members in multiple reports filed to the Board including *Report Back on Indigenous Peoples Day 2020 (Item No. 9, Agenda of September 29, 2020)* (filed September 24, 2021), *Report Back on Development of Land Acknowledgement (Item No. 41-A, Agenda of October 5, 2021 and Item No. 53-C, Agenda of October 4, 2022)*

(filed October 26, 2022), *We are Still Here: A Report on Past, Present, and Ongoing Harms Against Local Tribes* (filed February 15, 2023).

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

1. Proclaim November 2023 as “Native American Heritage Month” in Los Angeles County and encourage County Departments and residents to participate in Native American Heritage Month events and programming.
2. Acknowledge and celebrate the 2023 Native American Heritage Month Honorees - Jimi Castillo (Tongva/Acjachemen) - Spirit of Tradition posthumous, Roberta Javier (Cherokee/Sac & Fox) - Spirit of Community, and Chris “Spanto” Printup (White Mountain Apache & Seneca) - Spirit of Creativity posthumous.

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

1. Instruct the Chief Executive Officer to conduct an in-depth review and study to explore the establishment of an Office of Tribal Affairs, as well as an assessment of the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission as it relates to roles and responsibilities shared between the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles.
2. Provide a written report responding to the above within 180 days.

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AGN. NO.