AGN. NO.

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL November 10, 2026

Proclaiming November 2026 as Native American Heritage Month

November is nationally recognized as Native American Heritage Month, a time to honor the rich histories, traditions, diverse cultures, and significant contributions of Native American, and Indigenous peoples throughout the United States.

Los Angeles County (County) is home to numerous First Peoples, including the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, Chumash, Fernandeño, Gabrielino, Gabrieleño, Gabrieleno, and Yuhaaviatam, whose ancestral lands we inhabit, as well as a diverse Native American and Alaska Native population representing more than 200 Tribal Nations. Native American Heritage Month provides an opportunity to recognize the resilience, creativity, and enduring contributions of Native peoples, whose art, leadership, traditions, and cultural heritage continue to enrich the County and the nation.

This year is particularly significant as the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission (LANAIC) commemorates 50 years of service to Native American communities throughout the region. Established in 1976, LANAIC has advanced collaboration among Native American communities, the City of Los Angeles,

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and the County, helping to ensure that Native voices are represented in public policy, civic engagement, and community initiatives. LANAIC's legacy reflects what is possible when government and community partners work together to address inequities, preserve cultural knowledge, and expand opportunities for future generations. As we recognize Native American Heritage Month, we also honor the past and present commissioners whose leadership, service, and advocacy have helped advance the well-being of Native American communities throughout the County.

In recent years, the County has taken steps to elevate Native voices in policymaking, support cultural preservation efforts, strengthen engagement with Tribal Nations and Native communities, and expand educational initiatives that promote awareness of Native histories and contemporary experiences. At a time when Native American communities continue to advocate for greater visibility, recognition, and equitable access to resources and opportunities, the County reaffirms its commitment to advancing equity, inclusion, and meaningful partnerships with Tribal Nations and Native American communities.

Throughout this month, LANAIC also selects three American Indian and Alaska Native community members to recognize as honorees. This year’s honorees are Zahn McClarnon - Spirit of Creativity, Rudy Ortega Jr. - Spirit of Community, and Victor Chavez - Spirit of Tradition.

Spirit of Creativity - Zahn McClarnon

Award-winning film and television actor Zahn McClarnon is the lead and one of the executive producers and directors of the critically acclaimed AMC series *Dark Winds*, which recently wrapped production on its fifth season. Based on Tony Hillerman’s Leaphorn & Chee novels, the series follows two Navajo police officers in the 1970s Southwest as they investigate a string of seemingly unrelated crimes, confronting outside forces, personal demons, and each other along the way. *Dark Winds* is also executive produced by George R.R. Martin and the late Robert Redford, whose leadership guided the first four seasons.

McClarnon is also widely recognized for his role as Hanzee Dent in the second season of FX's critically acclaimed *Fargo*, his portrayal of Akecheta on HBO's *Westworld*, the recurring role of Officer Mathias on *Longmire*, as well as most recently playing Officer Big on FX's award-winning *Reservation Dogs*.

Zahn was a series regular on National Geographic's *Barkskins*, opposite Marcia Gay Harden and David Thewlis, and on AMC's *The Son*. His film credits include *The Silencing*, with Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, and Mike Flanagan's adaptation of Stephen King's *Doctor Sleep*. On television, he has recurred on Disney+'s *Hawkeye* and Marvel Studios' *Echo*. Additional credits include Hulu's *History of the World, Part II,* the Jennifer Lawrence comedy *No Hard Feelings*, and Tony Tost's *Americana*. He also voiced Olrox in Netflix's animated series *Castlevania: Nocturne*

Spirit of Community - Rudy Ortega Jr.

Born and raised on his ancestral homelands in the San Fernando Valley, Rudy Ortega, Jr. has dedicated his life to serving Native communities throughout Los Angeles and beyond. Following in the footsteps of his late father, respected Tribal leader Rudy Ortega Sr., Rudy began advocating for his people at an early age and has become one of the most sought-out leaders in the Los Angeles Native community.

As the elected Tribal President of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, Rudy has led the Tribe through one of the most significant periods in its history. Under his leadership, the Tribe recently achieved a major milestone in its decades-long pursuit of federal recognition—a critical step toward restoring the rights, sovereignty, and acknowledgment long denied to the Fernandeño people. Through unwavering persistence, strategic leadership, and a deep commitment to future generations, Rudy continues to move his Tribe closer to achieving this long-overdue recognition.

Beyond his service to the Fernandeño Tataviam community, Rudy has been a tireless advocate for Native peoples throughout the County. As a former leader of LANAIC, he played a key role in advancing the effort to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day, helping ensure that Native histories, cultures, and contributions are recognized and honored across the region.

Rudy's impact extends even further through his recent appointment to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Board of Commissioners, making him only the second Native American to serve in this important role overseeing the largest municipal utility in the United States. His appointment represents not only a personal achievement, but a meaningful step toward greater Indigenous representation in civic leadership.

A respected cultural practitioner, educator, advocate, and Tribal leader, Rudy embodies the values of service, humility, resilience, and integrity. His leadership has strengthened communities, elevated Native voices, and inspired a new generation of Indigenous leaders. For his lifelong commitment to sovereignty, justice, cultural preservation, and community advancement, we are honored to recognize Rudy Ortega, Jr. with the Spirit of Community Award.

Spirit of Tradition- Victor Chavez – Diné (Navajo Nation)

Victor Chavez is a long-time Los Angeles resident and a proud citizen of the Diné Nation whose dedication, leadership, and service have made him a cornerstone of the Native community throughout Southern California.

If you attend local powwows or Native community gatherings, chances are you know Victor. For many years, he has been a trusted presence in the Los Angeles Native community, frequently called upon to serve as Arena Director for powwows and cultural events. His patience, professionalism, cultural knowledge, and steady leadership have earned the respect of dancers, singers, organizers, and attendees alike, making him one of the most respected and sought-after Arena Directors in the region.

While Victor owns and operates a successful contracting business, his true passion has always been serving his community. He consistently volunteers his time and energy to support powwows and cultural gatherings, ensuring that these events run smoothly, remain organized, adhere to cultural protocols, and honor longstanding traditions. Through his dedicated leadership behind the scenes, he helps create meaningful spaces where Native traditions are celebrated and families and communities can come together in a good way.

Alongside his wife, Mary, Victor is a familiar and welcoming presence at powwows, community celebrations, and Native events throughout the year. Whether serving as Arena Director, supporting organizers, or simply visiting with friends and relatives, he embodies the spirit of generosity, humility, and service that strengthens our community.

Victor's unwavering commitment to the Native community, his decades of volunteer service, and his genuine love for bringing people together make him a deserving recipient of the Spirit of Culture Award. His leadership reminds us that community is built not only through words, but through consistent service, dedication, and a willingness to show up whenever and wherever needed.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Proclaim November 2026 as Native American Heritage Month in Los Angeles County and encourage County Departments and residents to participate in Native American Heritage Month events, activities, and educational programming.
2. Recognize and celebrate the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission on the occasion of its 50th anniversary and acknowledge its decades of service, leadership, and advocacy on behalf of Native American communities throughout Los Angeles County.
3. Acknowledge and celebrate Zahn McClarnon - Spirit of Creativity, Rudy Ortega Jr. - Spirit of Community, and Victor Chavez - Spirit of Tradition as this year’s Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission honorees.

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