

Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

February 2026 – Volume 29 Issue 2

Tatiana Gonzalez: Mother of Two Is Also A Learner And Innovator

By Lucy Luna, Career Development Specialist, Pala TANF

Tatiana Gonzalez, a single mother of two from San Pasqual, recently completed 600 hours in the full-time Engineering Technician Program at Mira Costa College Community Education and Workforce Development.

The program required 40 hours a week of hands-on, rigorous training over four months. Tatiana- a participant at Pala TANF since 2021 - completed the program in December. Her achievement is nothing short of remarkable.

From September through December, Tatiana- who graduated from San Diego State with an engineering degree in 2020 - immersed herself in a program designed to equip participants with real-world engineering skills. Her culminating project was inspired by her busy life as a mom: she designed a smart soil-sensor system that detects when soil is dry, and automatically activates a sprinkler system until the soil reaches optimal moisture. This innovation allows her to maintain a garden on the reservation without taking time away from her children—a perfect blend of creativity, technical skill and practicality.

From Day One, the program supported Tatiana's career readiness with resume workshops, interview training, "dress to impress" courses, and field trips to meet potential employers, connecting classroom learning directly to real-world opportunities.

"It's been nice to rebuild confidence," Tatiana said. "The program was like a boot camp for the brain. It was really awesome. The engineering people know it's a big commitment to change your

(Continued on page 2)



Tatiana Gonzalez, right, with her two children, and instructor Kate MacArevey-Collelo

Tribes Mourn Deaths of Two Former Chairmen: Daniel Tucker of Sycuan and Paul Cuero of Campo

By Gary P. Taylor, for SCTCA TANF

Near the end of 2025, two former tribal chairmen - Daniel James Tucker of the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation and Dr. Harry Paul Cuero Jr. of the Campo Band of the Kumeyaay Nation- died within a span of six weeks.

Tucker died on October 24. He was 73. Cuero died on December 6 at the age of 65.

Their deaths came after decades of leadership within their own tribes and throughout Southern California Native American communities.

Tucker- known as Danny by family and friends- spent over 30 years in elected office in Sycuan. He was first elected to the Tribal Council at 18 and eventually served



Daniel Tucker



Paul Cuero Jr.

(Continued on page 4)



LA POSTA
BAND OF MISSION INDIANS





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The purpose of the Tribal TANF Newsletter is to provide the tribal communities with information about services provided by the TANF Programs and other important issues concerning our rural/urban communities and families.

SCTCA provides services to San Diego, Orange and Santa Barbara counties and the following reservations:

Agua Caliente	Los Coyotes	Santa Rosa
Barona	Manzanita	Santa Ysabel
Cahuilla	Mesa Grande	Santa Ynez
Campo	Morongo	Soboba
Ewiaapaapayp	Pala	Sycuan
Inaja/Cosmit	Pauma	Torres Martinez
Jamul	Rincon	Viejas
La Jolla	San Manuel	
La Posta	San Pasqual	

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(Continued from top of page 1)



Tatiana Gonzalez, right, with her daughter, and Lucy Luna of Pala TANF

life, to enter into a program full-on hitting the ground running. Mentally it was very challenging. But there was always someone there to help you in any way that you needed."

A big part of that commitment, Tatiana acknowledged, was the time required to complete the course. She was leaving early in the morning from the reservation in San Pasqual, traveling to Mira Costa College in San Diego five days a week to complete eight hours of instruction. And then driving home. All of this took 11 hours a day for four consecutive months.

"I went from a full-time parent to a full-time trainee," she said.

Tatiana said she was concerned about how her children would react to her being away so much so suddenly. "I was wondering how they would do," she said of her two little girls. "But they were fine with it."

Once she was immersed in the program, Tatiana said it was a whirlwind of work, instruction, coursework and professional development. "We would go on industry tours, visiting manufacturers and other businesses. We did mock interviews where we would dress up professionally and answer questions about our resume. We had help with our resumes and designing cover letters."

Tatiana said the coursework also required each student to work with universal robots, complete designs using 3-D manufacturing processes and also use pneumatic systems. In addition, she had to design and finish a final project- her soil-sensor system, which she created to provide water to plants and trees on the reservation.

When she completed the course, Tatiana received her certification from the program verifying she had 600 hours of hands-on engineering experience.

Tatiana said The Semi Foundation was also crucial in helping everyone in the program (there were 18 people in the course). The Foundation advised and helped with not only cover letters but also paid for Tatiana's tuition fee for the engineering program, which totaled \$7,000.

Tatiana also said her course instructor, Kate MacArevey-Colello, was "such a great teacher" who helped her with creating a LinkedIn post, updating it, and directing her towards existing engineering networks. "Kate was a stay-at-home mom for 10 years, so she really understands what it's like to be a parent and then get back into the workforce," Tatiana said. "She's also big into getting women in STEM."

Now that she has completed the course, Tatiana said she has the confidence to apply for an engineering position- probably entry-level in the semiconductor industry.

"That's what I'm really interested in," she said enthusiastically. "I want to hitch my wagon to that industry. If I can keep my low-budget mentality, then get a job offering a big salary, that would be great."

Now, Tatiana is confident, self-assured, and ready to enter the workforce. She has come a long way, building not only her skills but also remarkable self-confidence along the journey.

Battle of Little Bighorn: After 150 Years, Some Quotes Remain Unforgettable

By Gary P. Taylor, for SCTCA TANF



Drawing of Battle of Little Bighorn, by Amos Bad Heart Bull

In June of 1876, the Battle of Little Bighorn was fought for two days along the ravines and steep bluffs of southern Montana.

The fight was between nearly 2,000 warriors of the Lakota Sioux, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes and soldiers from the 7th Regiment of the US Cavalry, under the command of General George Armstrong Custer. He was countered by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.

When it was over, Custer was dead - as were all 210 men he led into battle, after making the crucial tactical mistake of splitting his forces before the battle. It remains the single worst defeat in American military history.

In the years after the battle - regarded as the most famous during the Indian Wars of the 19th century - there were many quotes about what happened. The following are a few of the most unforgettable:

"There are not enough Indians in the world to defeat the Seventh Cavalry."

- George Armstrong Custer

"They say we massacred him, but he would have done the same to us had we not defended ourselves and fought to the last."

- Crazy Horse

"They say I murdered Custer. But it was a lie. He was a fool who rode to his death."

- Sitting Bull

"Custer did not drink; he didn't have to. His emotional effusions unhinged his judgment in ways that went far beyond alcohol's ability to interfere with clear thinking."

- Nathaniel Philbrick, author of *The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn*

"The very earth seems to be growing Indians!"

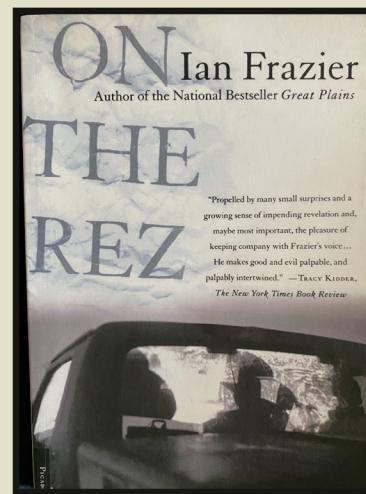
- Major Marcus Reno, second in command under Custer

"We shoot, we ride fast, we shoot again. Soldiers drop, and horses fall on them."

- Two Moons, Cheyenne warrior

—DISPATCHES—

SOUTH DAKOTA



The first sentence in the book *On The Rez* says it all, plain and simply:

"This book is about Indians, particularly the Oglala Sioux who live on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota, in the plains and badlands in the middle of the United States."

In its following 311 pages, author Ian Frazier's book is completely devoted to stories, anecdotes and notes

about the Oglala Sioux, from the tribe's beginnings to life on the reservation in the modern era. When it was published 25 years ago, *On The Rez* was widely lauded as a truthful, well-researched and intensely personal depiction of modern Native Americans.

In its review, the *New York Times* said the book was "propelled by many small surprises and a growing sense of revelation." Henry Kisor, in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, declared that *On The Rez* was a display of Frazier's "awesome storytelling skills full of precise detail and unexpected humor." Both descriptions are accurate.

Frazier spent months in the late 1990s traveling to Pine Ridge, where he came to know dozens of tribal members, including Le War Lance, a distant relative of Crazy Horse. The book is filled with stories about Lance - and countless stories from other tribal members. Some are serious; many are funny; others are sentimental or deeply disturbing. All are unforgettable.

From tribal member Floyd John, recalling the American Indian Movement's (AIM) occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota in 1973, and the government's response: *"There was armored personnel carriers, choppers, reconnaissance planes. After the occupation was over they burned down the church, so nobody could tell from all the holes in it that they'd been using 50-caliber machine guns."*

From Frank Fools Crow: *"Alcohol is the bitterest curse we have, and it has done more to weaken and destroy us than anything else."*

Frazier, on the government's unlawful seizure of the Black Hills, quoting Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun in 1973: *"A more ripe and rank case of dishonorable dealings will never, in all probability, be found in our history."*

Frazier concludes his book with several chapters about SuAnne Big Crow, a teen-age high school basketball phenom who leads Pine Ridge's girls team to a state championship in 1989. Her story - one of joy, pride, unity - ultimately unravels in unending sadness, one Frazier writes with great sympathy for her, and everyone living on the reservation.



Daniel Tucker

three terms as vice chairman and four terms as chairman.

His leadership was decisive and he was a driving force behind the success of Propositions 5 and 1A in California two decades ago. Those changes to state law and the state constitution were instrumental towards establishing tribal gaming.

Cuero- known as Paul or Junior- was dedicated as Campo tribal chairman to preserving traditional Kumeyaay culture. He was a Bird Singer for most of his life and was regarded as one of the tribe's spiritual leaders. His songs- which he sang at events ranging from small tribal gatherings in Campo to the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. - focused on life, death, spiritualism, nature and tribal history.

In 2011, San Diego State University bestowed Cuero with the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition of him as a cultural icon, mentor, leader, and oral historian.

The following are passages regarding the lives of Tucker and Cuero, including their professional accomplishments and personal impacts.

Daniel Tucker

Tucker was a member of the Sycuan General Council when it voted to approve bringing high stakes bingo to the reservation in 1983. In the years that followed, Tucker rose to Chairman, where he "vaulted into state-wide and national prominence as a tireless fighter for tribal sovereignty and tribal government gaming," as noted in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. He was elected Chairman of

California Nations Indian Gaming Association (CNIGA) and vice chairman of the then-named National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA).

Tucker's determination to establish tribal gaming not only in Sycuan but throughout California resulted in "dozens of tribes throughout the state creating hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs in the tribal government gaming sector, mostly filled by non-Native Americans," according to the *Union-Tribune*. As his family noted in his obituary: "Perhaps even more vital are footprints left by Danny visible in restored and preserved tribal languages and cultural programs; expanded critical services like health and medical, public safety, water and sewer; and new homes and educational facilities for tens of thousands of Native Americans to enjoy.

"Danny had hundreds of very close friends. He enjoyed spending his spare time with family, golfing, singing karaoke, and travelling in his motorhome across the country. He remained active with his tribe after serving as chairman, and remained in close contact with those who loved him and tribal leaders across the country."

In a 2013 interview with *East County Magazine*, then-Chairman Tucker said he believed it was important to "do the right thing for our people- not just one individual, but everybody." He also spoke about the importance of helping the broader community. "We live in San Diego. We're part of our community. We've always been taught by our elders, give something back. We're doing the right thing. We are giving back to our community."

Anthony Pico, former Viejas Tribal Chairman, told *East County Magazine* he first met Tucker when they were children, with Pico a few years older than Tucker. Pico said he remembers watching Tucker excel at playing baseball as a youth, and years later watched Tucker regale groups of people as a comedian, singer and entertainer. He was unparalleled in his ability to make people feel good, Pico said.

Tucker is survived by his wife Lori; daughters Deedra and Dawnda; sisters Charlotte, Lela Mae and Delores; and his brother Willie.

Paul Cuero Jr.

Cuero served as Campo treasurer, cultural chair and was elected Chairman in 2004 when he was 44. It was in this role he rose to prominence as an advocate for indigenous sovereignty and indigenous cultural preservation, both at the state and national level.

Tribal leaders praised Cuero for his work and determination in the drafting and refining of the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the Kumeyaay-Diegueño Land Conservancy (KDLC), and the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

But it was Cuero's interpretation of the Bird Songs that is one of his greatest legacies to the Kumeyaay Nation, inspiring many Kumeyaay young people to embrace their heritage through singing, dancing, and a strong connection to tribal traditions, noted *East County Magazine*:

"He was known for mastering the *takut*, a cycle of 300 Bird Songs. He performed at the White House and at the opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, as well as leading a group of Kumeyaay youth in a performance with the San Diego Symphony exploring links between traditional indigenous and contemporary American cultures."

Cuero once described Bird Songs this way: "The song begins, the sun goes down, darkness comes, a constellation appears and moves across the night sky and then the sun rises. All the little stories in between the sun setting and the sun rising are the stories of life, and no one goes through life alone. That is the lesson of the Bird Songs."

Cuero was honored by the San Diego American Indian Health Center in 2022 for his dedication to preserving Kumeyaay traditions through his work with tribal youth. "I try to give them pride in who they are, in their belief system and culture. If you really understand who you are, you can fit in anywhere. We bridge the gap between cultures by getting educated and then filtering what we learn through our own cultural lens."

In his obituary, Cuero's family wrote: "Junior now traverses the cosmos, guided by the same stars he once taught us to admire. Though his physical presence is no longer felt, his spirit continues to permeate our lives through our songs, ceremonies, courage, and love for one another. His voice resonates, his teachings inspire, and his legacy forever resides within the hearts of his people."

He is survived by his wife, Jodene Cuero; their children, Janelle and William; and their grandchildren, Mathayus, Troy, and Logan.



Paul Cuero Jr.



In 2026 Kumeyaay and Luiseño Calendars, A Reflection on 20 Years of Milestones

By Gary P. Taylor, for SCTCA TANF

In the new 2026 Kumeyaay and Luiseño calendars, there are colorful photographs and Native American words marking the days, weeks and months of the year.

But this year, there are also reflections on milestones marking the 20th anniversary of creating, designing and publishing the two calendars.

"The 2026 Calendar marks a significant milestone—twenty years of the Calendar Project created by Hunwut Turner and the Rincon Indian Education Center (RIEC), with the enduring support of the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association (SCTCA)," according to the calendar introduction. "This anniversary edition is both a celebration and a reflection, offering a retrospective on two decades of community creativity, cultural pride, and dedicated language revitalization."

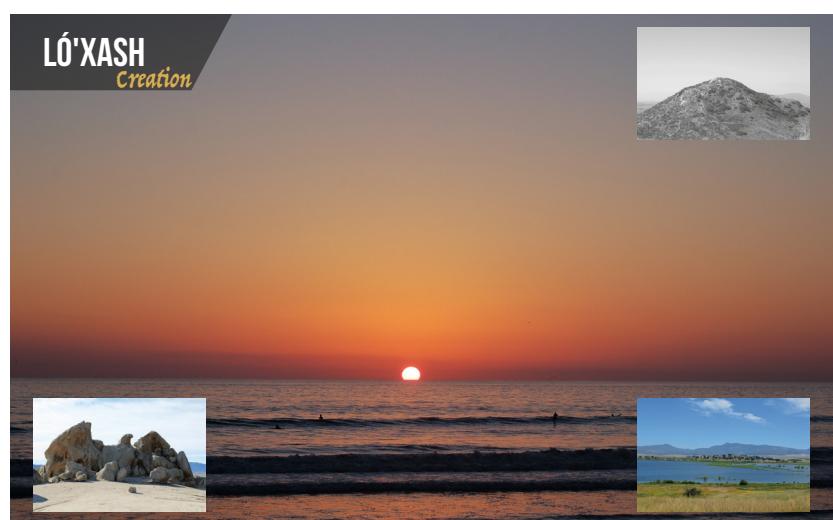
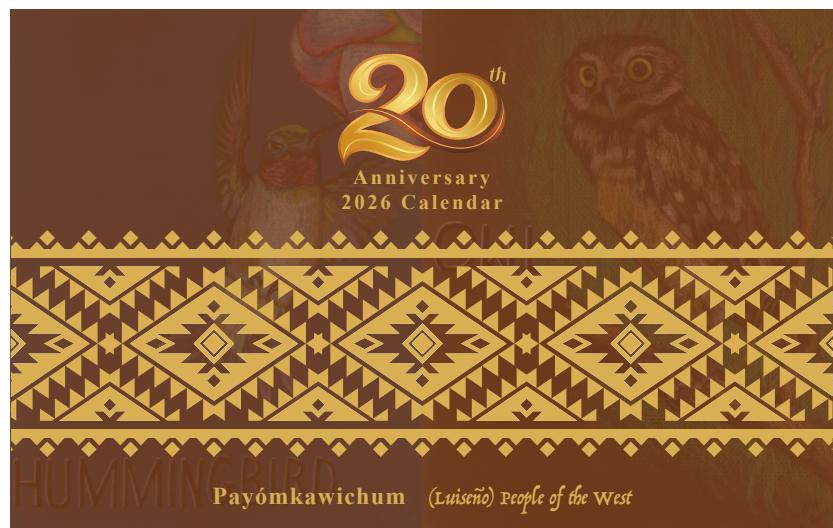
In the 20th anniversary edition, the two calendars are slightly different, as in the past, with each calendar having a few different pictures and their own Native words. The calendars feature Native American words for days ('Enyaa Hewak - Tuesday, in Kumeyaay); months (*Halantca* - February, in Kumeyaay); and other words (*Mi'isilash* - Church, in Luiseño); and '*Eskanaxish* (Art, in Luiseño) appear throughout the pages.

There are also descriptions of the culture and traditions of the Luiseño (*Payómkawichum* - People of the West) and the Kumeyaay (People Facing the West).

But the way the calendars appear now is not how they originally looked when they were first published in 2006. As the 2026 version notes:

"For those who may not know the history, the Calendar Project began in 2006 with artwork from the Rincon Headstart Language Program: simple, powerful chalk drawings of animals on black canvas pages. The idea for a community calendar grew out of the vision and commitment of the Rincon Cultural Committee—originally chaired in 1998 by Patti Duro, with committee members Maveny Verdugo, Birdie Osuna, Hunwut Turner, and Sam Reed.

Early calendars were printed entirely in English, but each year the team worked intentionally to add more Payómkawichum and Kumeyaay, eventually incorporating the months, days of the week, and numerals. The goal has always been clear: to create an everyday language tool that brings our languages

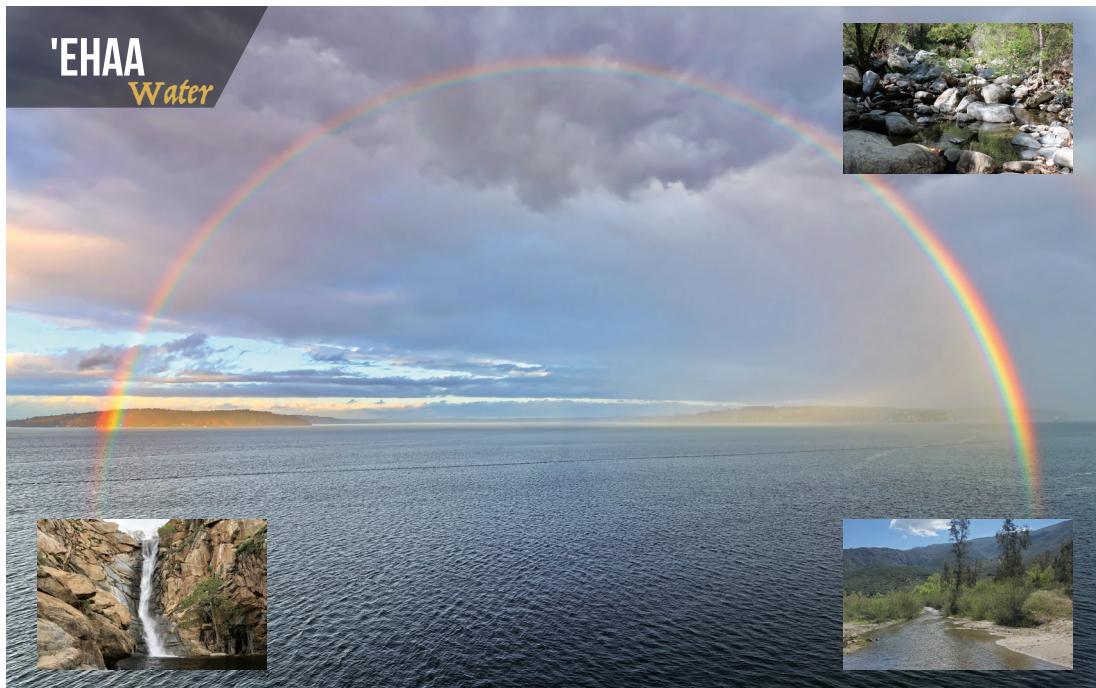


into homes, classrooms, and community spaces, allowing people to see, read, and practice the language daily.”

Over the past two decades, the calendars “have explored themes central to our shared histories and lands—boarding school experiences, tribal elders and ancestors, fire, landscapes, baskets, birds, water and ocean relatives, art, animals, flowers and plants, and places found in our creation stories,” noted the 2026 introduction. “These themes have served as reminders of both our resilience and our relationships to land, culture, family, relationships, and community.”

As noted in the 2026 calendars, those themes are revisited, including the “stories, artwork, and teachings that have shaped the Calendar Project since its beginning. This retrospective invites us to reflect on the progress we have made in our language reclamation efforts and to honor the many people whose creativity, labor, and care have carried this project forward.

“We express deep gratitude to all who have contributed to its design, production, and distribution—ensuring that the calendars continue to reach our families, local schools, clinics, community centers, and administration buildings.”



From First Practice to Championship Rings: Cheyanne Toledo's Flag Football Success Story

Editor's note: At the SCTCA Orange County Tribal TANF Office, Education Coordinator Laura De La Torre Baeza encouraged Tribal TANF youth Cheyanne Toledo to share her Flag Football journey as a major accomplishment.

De La Torre Baeza noted: "In her own words, Cheyanne's journey has been filled with growth, excitement and unforgettable moments. Cheyanne has developed her skills, built confidence and discovered the value of being dedicated to her goals. Each step of her experience highlights her commitment to improving and her enthusiasm for Flag Football." The following is Cheyanne's story, in her own words:

Hello, my name is Cheyanne Toledo. I am from the San Carlos Apache Tribe and I play Flag Football.

I started playing Flag Football two years ago because my sister wanted me to do a sport. After playing for some time, I soon realized that I had fallen in love with the sport. I kept working on myself by going to multiple trainings.

Tribal TANF has been a huge help in my journey with Flag Football. Tribal TANF has given me the Youth Community Enrichment Allowance that paid for many of the Flag Football camps that helped me be seen by scouts. This helped me go to a USA camp that had tryouts to be seen by scouts - and the scouts did see me. I was selected out of hundreds and thousands of athletes in America to be on the USA's Junior Olympic Team. I went to play and took home the USA gold medal in the tournament.

After that, I continued to grind until my sister got an email saying that I was selected for the All-American tryouts. I was so excited for this! I went to play and showed out! I brought the gold medal back to California and waited for my tryout results to come back. I waited for about two days. When we got the email, it said I got accepted to play with the USA All-American team. I was so happy because my best friend, Noel, also got accepted.

Even though all of this was the biggest achievement of my life, it would not have happened without Tribal TANF, hard work, and my family. I have so much support that just makes my drive more and more hungry. I am just too excited because I have really come far. I used to be a non-athletic person- and now I am one of the best athletes in the flag football world. I am one of the youngest to be on the USA Junior Olympic team. I now have around 8 rings and 20 medals.

You will be seeing me in the 2028 Olympics and around the nation! Thank you so very much TANF!

De La Torre Baeza expressed TANF's support and enthusiasm for Cheyanne's family and her accomplishments.

"The Orange County Tribal TANF Office expresses pride in supporting Cheyanne, her mom, Linda Lutu, and family throughout her flag football journey," De La Torre Baeza said. "Cheyanne's dedication and hard work both on and off the field is evident. She demonstrated perseverance, commitment and growth as an athlete. She is a reflection of the strong support system surrounding her. Cheyanne's accomplishments reinforced TANF's mission to uplift Native students and Native families as they work toward their goals. Congratulations Cheyanne and the Lutu Family!"



Cheyanne Toledo, above, and with her championship rings, below



What Are Love Languages?

Have you ever thought about how you like to receive love? Gary Chapman came up with the “Five Love Languages”. These are five different ways that you can show or how others can show you love. Relationships can continue to grow when we understand and communicate better with each other. Everyone receives

love differently and when we understand what the other person needs it can help to strengthen the relationship. Below are some examples of the 5 love languages. See if you can pick the one that sounds like your love language and then see if you can pick out the one your loved one might pick. If you are unsure what your love language is you can take a short quiz to find out. If you are interested in taking the quiz you can reach out to me for more information.

Physical Touch

Being close to and physically touched by others.

Ask yourself: How do you feel when others show affection through touch?

Examples: Holding hands, kissing, hugging or cuddling. If these things make you feel the most loved and happy, physical touch may be your primary love language.

Quality Time



Spending meaningful time with others.

Ask yourself: How do you feel when others give you their undivided attention and you engage in meaningful conversation or activities?

Examples: planning an activity to do together, watching a movie or tv show together, taking a walk together and actively listening without interruptions like the phone. If these things make you feel the most loved and happy, quality time may be your primary love language.

Words of Affirmation

Saying supportive things to others.



Ask yourself: How do you feel when you hear others offer encouraging, positive and affirming words, and compliments?

Examples: Your boss congratulates you, tells you "great job!", someone pays you a compliment, thanks you for something or says "I love you". If these things make you feel the most loved and happy, words of affirmation may be your primary love language.

Giving/Receiving Gifts



Gifts that say you were thinking about them.

Ask yourself: How do you feel when you receive a thoughtful gift?

Examples: Giving/receiving flowers, a favorite snack or something homemade. The value is not only in the gift itself but the time and effort put in to choosing it. If these things make you feel the most loved and happy, receiving gifts may be your primary love language.

Acts of Service



Doing helpful things for others.

Ask yourself: How do you feel when others help you with tasks that reduce your burden or ease your stress.

Examples: they perform a chore for you, run an errand for you, or takes care of something without having to be asked? If these things make you feel the most loved and happier, acts of service may be your primary love language



Class of 2026

SAVE THE DATE

Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association
High School Graduation Ceremony

Thursday, May 14, 2026

more details to come by invitation

* If you are a High School Senior Tribal member of a
SCTCA Consortium Tribe, graduating in 2026,
contact your Tribal office to be honored at the Ceremony.

Scan the QR code to view current SCTCA Tribal TANF Contractor Class Schedules and Calendars.

Schedules include training offered through our approved contractors.

Schedules are updated monthly.



Commodity Distribution Schedule February 2026

FOOD DISTRIBUTION SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY 2026

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
FEB 3 RD , TUESDAY	VIEJAS BARONA	9 AM – 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
FEB 5 TH , THURSDAY	MESA GRANDE SANTA YSABEL	9 AM – 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
FEB 9 TH , MONDAY FEB	CAMPO	10 AM – 12 PM
11 TH , WEDNESDAY FEB	SAN PASQUAL	8 AM – 12 PM
12 TH , THURSDAY FEB	LOS COYOTES LA JOLLA	9 AM - 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
17 TH , TUESDAY	RINCON	8 AM – 12 PM
FEB 18 TH , WEDNESDAY	PECHANGA PAUMA	9 AM – 10 AM 11 AM – 12 PM
FEB 19 TH , THURSDAY	PALA	9 AM – 11 AM
FEB 23 RD , MONDAY	MANZANITA OLD CAMPO	930 AM- 1030 AM 11 AM – 12 PM

OFFICE CLOSURES: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH - PRESIDENTS' DAY

A HOUSEHOLD CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN THE FOOD COMMODITY PROGRAM IF THEY ARE ON THE CALFRESH (FOOD STAMPS) PROGRAM. YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN ONLY ONE OF THE ABOVE PROGRAMS.
WRONG INFORMATION ON APPLICATION, DUAL PARTICIPATION, SELLING, OR EXCHANGING USDA FOOD COMMODITIES COULD BE A BASIS FOR DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE FOOD COMMODITY PROGRAM.
IF YOU DO NOT PICK UP ON YOUR SCHEDULED RESERVATION DAY, YOU MUST MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO PICK UP AT THE WAREHOUSE. CALL OUR OFFICE FOR AN APPOINTMENT. **(760) 749-5608**



Coming in March:

- Nutrition and Family Health
- Healthy Eating on a Budget
- Awareness of Teen Dating Violence