

Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative

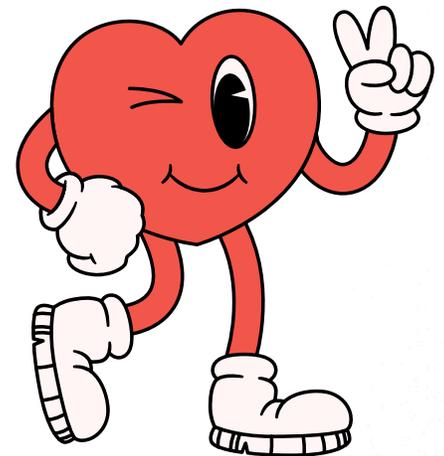
February 2026

Newsletter

Vol. 32

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

February is known for American Heart Month. This time is for raising awareness about heart health and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. We remind ourselves and loved ones to prioritize cardiovascular well-being through exercise, balanced nutrition, and routine check-ups. By embracing these habits, we improve our lives and inspire others to take steps towards a healthier future. Let's commit to caring for our hearts and encouraging others to do the same, creating a ripple of positive change.



FEBRUARY 11 IS WEAR ORANGE FOR TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS DAY!

Show your support by wearing orange and spreading the word about the importance of recognizing and preventing teen dating violence. This day is a powerful reminder to engage in conversations that promote healthy relationships, respect, and safety among young people. By participating, you help to raise awareness and empower teens to build a future free from violence and abuse. Let's stand together, don our orange, and be a beacon of hope and change for the youth in our communities.

American Heart Month

February is American Heart Month focusing on cardiovascular health for all ages, including youth, emphasizing that heart health starts young through building habits like good nutrition, exercise, and CPR knowledge to combat heart disease, the leading U.S. killer, with campaigns encouraging community action and awareness. For youth, this means empowering them to adopt healthy lifestyles early, as childhood habits prevent future risks, and teaching CPR for emergencies.

As the nation observes American Heart Health Month, Indigenous communities across the nation join in raising awareness about cardiovascular disease, which disproportionately affects American Indians and Alaska Natives.

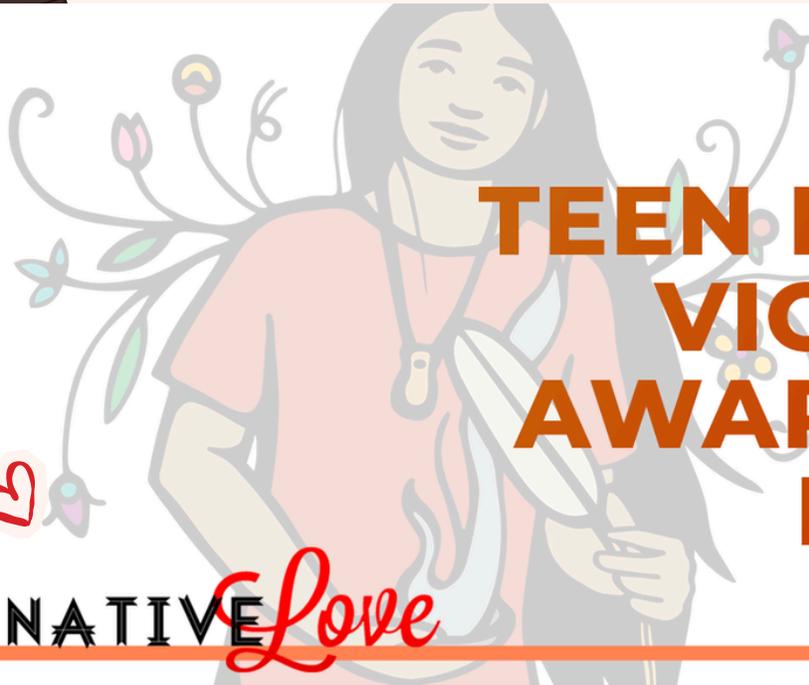
Despite advancements in medical science, cardiovascular diseases persist as the leading cause of global mortality, claiming over 17.9 million lives annually, according to the National Indian Council on Aging. Projections indicate a further rise to over 23.6 million deaths by 2030. Heart disease remains the primary cause of death in the United States.

TIPS FOR EVERYONE TO BECOME HEART HEALTHY

1. **Get Moving:** Be active every day; walk, play, or do something fun for at least 10 minutes at a time to keep your heart strong.
2. **Get Enough Sleep:** Sleep helps your heart stay healthy. Teens should aim for about 8–10 hours of sleep each night. Try a regular bedtime routine.
3. **Know Your Numbers:** High blood pressure can affect your heart. Learn what healthy numbers are and talk to a doctor if you have questions.
4. **Quality Time:** Hanging out with friends or family helps lower stress and keeps your heart healthy, have fun together!

Life's Simple 7





FEBRUARY IS TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

NATIVE *Love*

Strong Hearts, Safe Relationships: Teen Dating Violence Awareness

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. It's a time to raise awareness about unhealthy and abusive relationships and remind teens that everyone deserves to feel safe and respected.

Even though Native cultures value balance and respect, teen dating violence is still a serious issue for Indigenous youth. Dating violence can include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, bullying, and stalking, and it can affect teens' well-being in major ways. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 12 U.S. high school students experiences physical or sexual dating violence each year. Native students report the highest levels of teen dating violence, with about 18.5 % reporting physical or sexual dating violence, higher than the national average of 13.6 %.

Studies also show that Native American adolescents experience violence at rates higher than other groups — for example, over half (about 56 %) report having experienced sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by a partner in their lifetime.

Talking about these issues, recognizing the signs, and supporting healthy relationships are important steps we can take during National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.



SMALL ACTIONS, BIG IMPACT

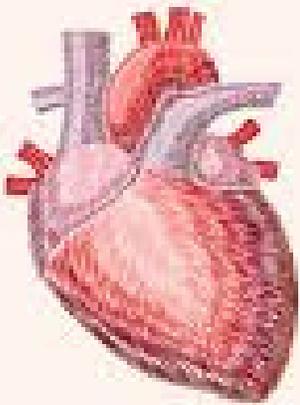
If you know a young relative that is being abused:

- Call or text StrongHearts Native Helpline at 1-844-762-8483 or chat at strongheartshelpline.org.
- Create a safe space and tell them you're concerned about their safety.
- Be a good relative and listen to their story when they're ready to share.
- Let them know the abuse is not their fault and they do not deserve it.
- Ask how you can help them.
- Offer support and encourage your friend's strength and courage.
- Share resources available online or locally from your community.
- Learn about dating violence and the signs of relationship abuse.
- Avoid confronting the abusive person hurting your loved one. It can escalate the situation and put your young relative in danger.



Tobacco & THE HEART

AMERICAN HEART MONTH



Smoking is a major cause of cardiovascular disease. In fact, smoking causes 1 out of every 4 deaths from cardiovascular disease.



How Youth Can be Involved

American Heart Month (February) emphasizes that heart health starts young, focusing on building lifelong habits in youth through family activities like physical play, healthy eating, and learning CPR to combat rising childhood obesity and future heart disease risks, making it a key time for schools, families, and communities to promote heart-healthy lifestyles for all ages, especially kids.

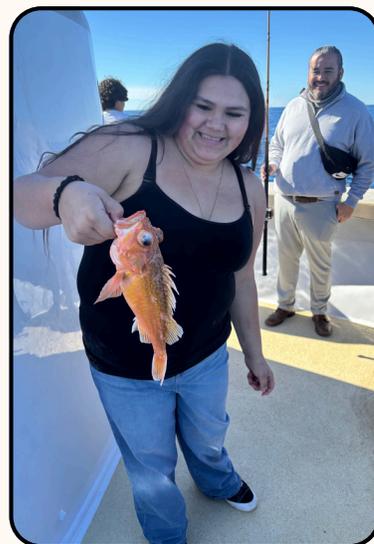
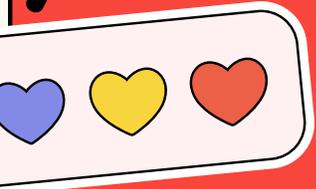
Culture, health awareness are key to reducing heart disease among Native American people

Tobacco has a long and complicated history for American Indians, having been used for religious and therapeutic purposes early on and then later cultivated and traded with European settlers [1]. It is still used today in cultural practices, such as burial offerings, for spiritual protection, or as a gift [1]. Partly due to this history, a mystique surrounding tobacco and American Indians has evolved over time. American Indians have high rates of habitual tobacco use, particularly smoking, although chewing and dipping are also practiced. Smoking rates among adult American Indians are the highest for any race/ethnicity in the United States. In 1999–2001, 40.4% of American Indians aged 18 years and above reported cigarette use during the preceding month compared to the national average of 26.5% [2–4]. In recent times the establishment of smoke shops which function as a source of livelihood in some Indian communities has also promoted this habit. Relatively little has been reported on the cardiovascular health effects of tobacco use among American Indians.





What Youth are up to?



January 19, 2026, a group of youth participated in a day of deep-sea fishing excursion. All youth enjoyed themselves on this beautiful day and were able to go home with at least one sculpin.



DRIVING SCHOOL

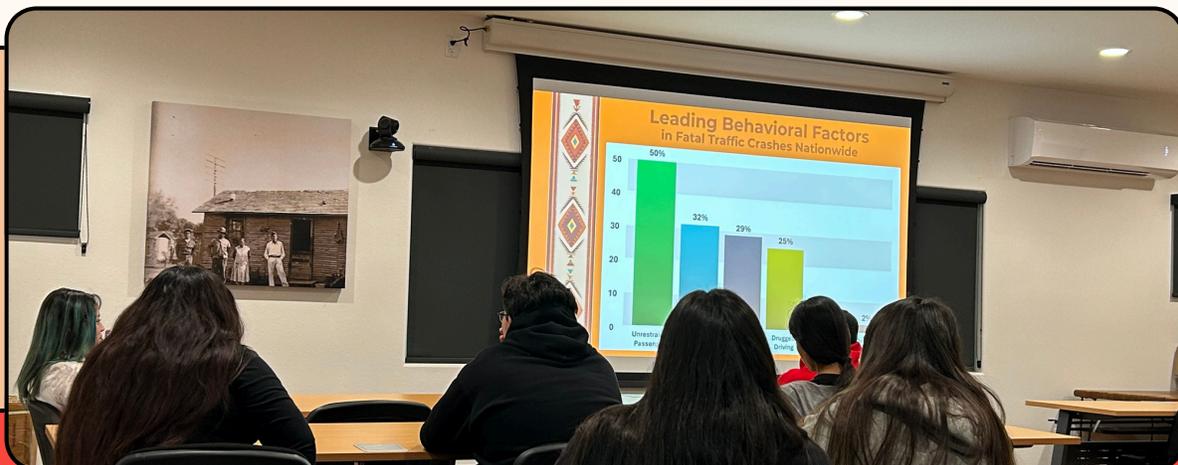
What Youth are up to?



On January 21, 2026, a group of Driving School students participated in the "Honoring Our Ancestors; Protecting Our Future" presentation. This informative session focused on traffic safety within Native American communities, covering topics such as:

- Driving under the influence of alcohol or substances
- Changes in roadways from the past to the present
- Statistics on the causes of roadway accidents

Participants were strongly encouraged to engage in this enlightening presentation, as it highlights the importance of safe driving practices for new licensed drivers within Native American communities.





January cooking class



January cooking class took off in the right direction for the new year. We all came together at the Pala Administration kitchen to prepare, cook and share a meal together.

Everyone enjoyed each others company by sharing stories and laughter by connecting by learning about the importance of food nutrition.

February Cooking Class Starting
February 10th, every Tuesday &
Thursday for 3 weeks
4 : 3 0 p m - 6 : 3 0 p m



PALA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

We Are Open February

FEBRUARY SCHEDULE

Monday - Friday 10:30 am-7 pm

Tuesday and Thursdays 10:30 AM - 6:00 PM

FOR ANY QUESTIONS



Contact Maria Villegas
(760) 315-0104



Valentines Craft Week 2/09-2/13

Monday 2/09:
Valentine's Picture Frames

Tuesday 2/10:
"Love Yourself" Bracelet or Pin

Wednesday 2/11:
Creating Your own Candle

Thursday 2/12: Break the Habit

Friday 2/13:
Valentines Karoke Night

Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative Program
Age 12- 24



Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative Presents

DRIVING LESSONS

Attention all youth enrolled in online driving school classes! The PHRC is offering a space where you can complete your online classes and get answers to any questions you may have about the driving school.

Every Wednesday starting January 14, 2025

4:30 pm-6:30 pm

***check-ins are required**



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



REGISTRATION NOW

Contact: Maria Villegas
(760) 315-0104





PALA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

VALENTINE'S KARAOKE NIGHT

FOOD
CRAFTS
MUSIC

COME SING YOUR FAVORITE LOVE JAMS AND FEEL THE VIBES!

FEBRUARY 13th | **LOCATION PALA HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER** | **TIME 2PM TO 5PM**
AGES 12 TO 24

RSVP YOUR SPACE: (760) 315-0104
Contact Maria Villegas for more information



Car Care Workshop



With
Talena & Megan
of Girlie Garage

Knowledge that will last a lifetime while driving and owning vehicles.
3 Hour session covers:

1. Basic automotive safety
2. Basic automotive maintenance
3. How to navigate a mechanic
4. Emergency situations

When: Wed, Mar 18th 4-7pm

Where: Pala Housing Res. Cent
35990 Pala Temecula Rd. 92059

WHAT TO BRING:

1. Clothes you can get dirty in
2. Closed-toed shoes
3. Car owner's manual (if you have it)
4. Water, a sweater, sunscreen



@GirlieGarage

www.GirlieGarage.com

2026 EVENTS



CELEBRATING
30 Years
GATHERING

Vivian Banks Charter School

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM
AT VIVIAN BANKS CHARTER SCHOOL
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13TH, 2026

FUNDRAISER
\$30 for 30 years!

As we celebrate 30 years, we want to honor Vivian Banks' legacy by meeting the needs of our children and community. Money raised will go towards new programs, services, resources, and school site beautification at Vivian Banks.

Show your support!!!
Donate \$30 per family, \$1 per year.
All Donations are Tax Deductible

DONATE TODAY!!
SCAN ME



Website: vb.bonsallusd.com/
11800 Pala Mission Rd, Pala, CA 92059
Media Contact: Principal, Tina Calabrese



VIVIAN BANKS
MULTI-CULTURAL CELEBRATION
Thursday, March 15th
4:30-6:30

Looking for volunteers to host a booth, to provide a tasting of your culture or a craft.

Examples of Booth:
*Beading
*Frybread
*Indian Tacos
*Tamales
*Salsa * chips
*Agua Fresca (flavored water)

We need performers

Example:
*Storytellers
*Singers & Dancers
*Bird Singers
*Folklorico Dancers



Indian Health Council Is Seeking Local Artists!
HARMONY IN HEALTH
23RD TRADITIONAL INDIAN HEALTH GATHERING

ARTWORK CONTEST
SUBMIT NOW!
FEB. 11, 2026 DEADLINE!

Submit your artwork to represent "Harmony In Health" at the 23rd Traditional Indian Health Gathering!

Cash Prizes for top 3 entries!

\$200 for First Place
\$100 for Second Place
\$50 for Third Place

SCAN FOR DETAILS



Contact David Dawson, Communications Director
ddawson@indianhealth.com for questions.



18TH ANNUAL NATIVE YOUTH CONFERENCE

SAVE THE DATE
APRIL 18, 2026

THIS EVENT IS FOR
NATIVE YOUTH 12-19



SCAN THE QR CODE TO COMPLETE THE DTI 2026 PRE-CONFERENCE SURVEY



CLICK ON THE DTI LOGO FOR MORE INFORMATION

NATIVE YOUTH WHO RESIDE IN SAN DIEGO, RIVERSIDE, ORANGE, LOS ANGELES & SAN BERNARDINO COUNTIES ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE

2026 EVENTS



**Vivian Bank
Charter School**






GAME NIGHT

All Families Welcome
*Free Dinner
*Math Games

Enjoy the Fun




FEBRUARY 23, 2026

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

760-742-3300







MARCH 12TH - 13TH
PARMA PAYNE
GOODALL
ALUMNI CENTER

2026 NATIVE & INDIGENOUS RESEARCH & ARTS SYMPOSIUM



TWO DAY EVENT
Thursday, March 12th from 10 AM to 4 PM
Friday, March 13th from 10 AM to 4 PM



AMAZING PERFORMANCES
From students, alumni, community members, and so much more!



POWERFUL PRESENTATIONS
Topics connected to decolonization, sovereignty, truth, education, growth, indigenous philosophies, identity, health, and wellness

MORE INFORMATION/REGISTRATION:
[BIT.LY/NIRAS26](https://nrc.sdsu.edu/)
<https://nrc.sdsu.edu/>

COMMUNITY Yard Sale

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

February 28, 2026
7am - 1pm
Pala Mission Park
11773 Pala Mission Circle



Furniture & Décor - Tools & Outdoor Gear - Clothes & Accessories - Toys, Books & Games - Kitchen & Home Items

Sellers Must be Pala Community Residents
Set up in the park starts at 6am
For more info contact April @ 760-638-6462





Youth Opportunities





THE Y
YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

TRIPAL OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING & BELONGING

YOUR VOICE MATTERS: HELP IMPROVE HOUSING SERVICES IN SAN DIEGO

YMCA YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

Are you 18–25 years old, living in San Diego County, and have experienced homelessness or housing instability? The Youth Homelessness Systems Improvement (YHSI) Project aims to improve access to housing and homeless services for young people in San Diego County. We want to partner with YOU to improve housing and homeless services for young people in our community.

We're looking for youth who are looking to join an ongoing group, where youth meet to help provide input on how to improve systems and services. Each youth will receive \$75 per meeting.

Your experiences can inspire real change. Help us create a better future for youth in San Diego County. Complete our quick [Interest Survey](#) today to get started!



Let's work together to improve access to housing and support for young people in need.

For questions or to get involved, contact:
Shiwani Lata | slata@ymcasd.org | (619) 827-1829



Pala Tobacco Program

YOUTH TRIP

The Pala Tobacco Program is looking to take youth to Sacramento for the Annual Youth Quest hosted by CYAN (California Youth Advocacy Network). Where they will be promoting youth advocacy in tobacco control

Register Now for Tribal Youth Quest 2026

Tribal Youth Quest: Rising Together



March 22, 2026
9:30 am–6:00 pm PT
California Automobile Museum
2200 Front St., Sacramento, CA 95818



March 23, 2026

Youth Quest is an annual event hosted by the California Youth Advocacy Network (CYAN) to celebrate and promote youth leadership in California's movement to end the burden caused by the tobacco industry in our State. Youth Quest provides an opportunity for youth advocates to demonstrate their commitment to a smoke and commercial tobacco-free California, learn about current tobacco prevention efforts, and build their advocacy skills by sharing their local work with legislators.

REGISTRATION OPENS JANUARY 2026.

Location: SAFE Credit Union Convention Center, Downtown Sacramento

Date: March 22 & 23rd

Youth Trip Opportunity, all travel paid for

Location: SAFE Credit Union Convention Center, Downtown Sacramento

Date: March 22 & 23rd

Youth Trip Opportunity, all travel paid for

Agens 12 and up

RSVP

FEBRUARY 13, 2026

For interested Contact :
Deanndra Molina (760) 893-0769

Pala Tobacco Program

BE THE CHANGE



Pala Tobacco PROGRAM





BE A PART OF :

- Build strong Leadership
- Advocacy
- Promote Cultural Teachings
- Strengthen Community voice

When are Meetings:

- Meetings will be held every 3rd or 4th Tuesday of the month.
- Time 5 PM- 6PM

MORE INFO

Deanndra Molina
dmolina@palatribe.com





**Pala Band of Mission Indians
Pala Social Services**

PALA SOCIAL SERVICES



OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE!

HELP SUPPORT OUR NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES & KEEP OUR NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN IN OUR COMMUNITY!



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
760.891.3502
SOCIALSERVICES@PALATRIBE.COM

Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative



“For Youth By Youth”

WHO WE ARE

The Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative is based on a "For Youth by Youth" approach. We encourage youth to actively be involved with the newsletter, content, training's, podcasts, and activities. We service youth ages 12 to 24 years of age. We strive to provide Pala youth with the life skills needed to become successful adults. Hours of operation Monday through Friday from 11 am-7:00pm.

Meet the Staff



MARIA VILLEGAS
Youth Empowerment Lead
Cell: (760) 315-0104
Email: mvillegas@palatribe.com



PAULA ELLENWOOD
Youth Empowerment
Cell: (760) 638-1676
pellenwood@palatribe.com



DEANNDRRA MOLINA
Tobacco Coordinator
Cell: (760) 893-0769
dmolina@palatribe.com

OUR SERVICES

Life Skills

- Cooking Classes
- Driving School Budgeting
- Workshops
- Resume Building

Personal Skill Development

- After School Tutoring
- GED Classes
- Goal Setting
- Community Service

Community Events

- Youth Training/Field Trips
- Community Outreach
- Social Media

Other Services

- Mentorship Guidance
- Career Development
- Youth Mental Health Guidance



Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative

"FOR YOUTH; BY YOUTH"



HAPPY
Valentine's Day

Location:
35990 Pala Temecula Road
Pala, CA 92059
www.PalaHRC.com

Youth Contact:
Maria Villegas
(760) 315-0104
mvillegas@palatribe.com

Paula Ellenwood
(760) 638-1676
pellenwood@palatribe.com

Deandra Molina
(760) 893-0769
dmolina@palatribe.com

The Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative is based on a "For Youth By Youth" approach. We encourage youth to actively be involved with the newsletter, content, trainings, podcasts and activities.

The Pala Tobacco Program encourages our youth and community to respect the traditional use of tobacco, keeping the culture strong for future generations.