

# PALA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

# Newsletter

MARCH 2026

VOL. 34

## TEEN MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



Teen mental health matters every single day. Between school, sports, family responsibilities, and social media, it can feel overwhelming. It's important to remind our youth that asking for help is a sign of strength.

Let's continue building safe, supportive spaces where teens feel heard, respected, and valued.

If you're struggling, talk to someone you trust, you are not alone.



## NATIONAL WOMENS DAY

In March we honor National Women's Day and celebrate the strength, resilience, and leadership of Indigenous women.

Indigenous women are the heart of our communities, culture keepers, language protectors, caregivers, advocates, and leaders. Your wisdom guides future generations, and your strength carries our traditions forward.

We see you. We honor you. We uplift you, today and every day.



TEEN MENTAL

# Health Awareness

March 2nd

March is Teen Mental Wellness Month, a time to focus on emotional health, self-care, and supporting one another. Teens face many pressures, from school and social media to relationships and future goals, and it's important to remember that mental health matters. Taking care of your mind can look like talking to someone you trust, getting enough rest, staying active, connecting with culture, or asking for help when things feel overwhelming. Needing support is a sign of strength, not weakness. You are not alone. Help and support are always available.

## 10 WAYS TO SUPPORT NATIVE YOUTH MENTAL WELLNESS

1. **Listen without judgment:** Let teens share their feelings and experiences and feel heard.
2. **Encourage cultural connection:** Language, traditions, ceremonies, and cultural activities strengthen identity and belonging.
3. **Promote trusted support systems:** Elders, family members, counselors, coaches, and mentors matter.
4. **Create safe spaces:** Youth need places where they feel respected, accepted, and supported.
5. **Normalize asking for help:** Remind teens that reaching out is a strength, not a weakness.
6. **Support healthy routines:** Sleep, movement, balanced meals, and time outdoors support mental wellness.
7. **Encourage creative expression:** Art, music, writing, dance, and crafts help teens process emotions.
8. **Stay connected:** Regular check-ins show youth they matter and are not alone.
9. **Teach coping skills:** Breathing, grounding, journaling, and talking things out can help manage stress.
10. **Celebrate strengths and resilience:** Acknowledge the strength, history, and resilience of Native youth and communities.



**“YOUR FEELINGS ARE VALID, YOUR VOICE MATTERS, AND ASKING FOR HELP IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH, NOT WEAKNESS.”** ♥

# National Women's Day



**WILMA MANKILLER**

**DEB HAALAND**



## Celebrating Women's History Month & National Women's Day

March is Women's History Month, a time to recognize the strength, leadership, and achievements of women throughout history. Within this month, national Women's Day (March 8) is celebrated worldwide to honor women's contributions and to continue advocating for equality and opportunity for all.

The roots of International Women's Day trace back to the early 1900s, when women organized and advocated for fair wages, voting rights, and better working conditions. Over time, it has grown into a global movement that celebrates progress while reminding us of the work still ahead.

**Let this month be a reminder: You are powerful. You are capable. You are the next generation of leaders.**

For Tribal communities, Women's Day holds deep meaning. Native women have long been leaders, culture bearers, and protectors of tradition. In many Tribal Nations, women are honored in leadership, family, and ceremony. This day reminds our young girls that their voices, stories, and dreams truly matter.

Tribal youth can look to role models like Wilma Mankiller, the first female Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, and Deb Haaland, one of the first Native American women in Congress and now U.S. Secretary of the Interior. They show that Native girls can lead at the highest levels while staying grounded in culture and community.

This March, we celebrate the strength and leadership of women everywhere, especially the Tribal women and girls who carry our communities forward.

# Mental Health



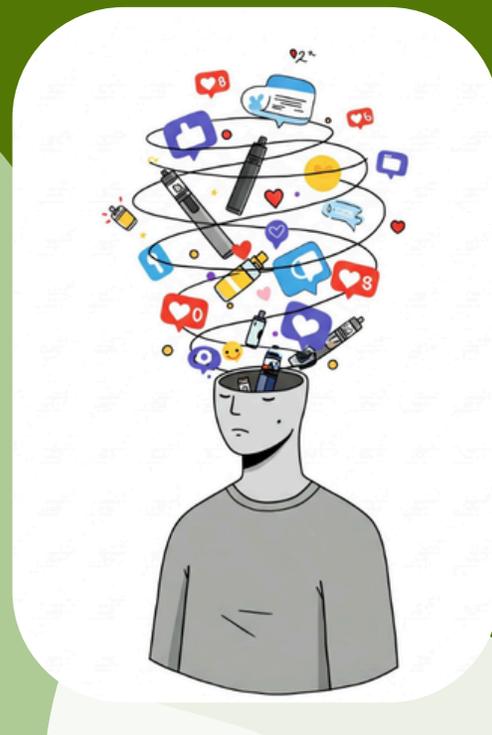
Pala Tobacco  
PROGRAM

# & TOBACCO



## Mental Health & Nicotine

Youth with mental health struggles, including anxiety, depression, and high stress, are significantly more likely to use nicotine products, particularly e-cigarettes. Nicotine addiction often exacerbates these symptoms, creating a cycle where youth use tobacco to cope with withdrawals such as irritability or sadness that the nicotine itself causes.



### Supporting Teen Mental Health

Healthy coping skills help teens manage stress without turning to tobacco or vaping. Communities can support youth by encouraging positive habits like:

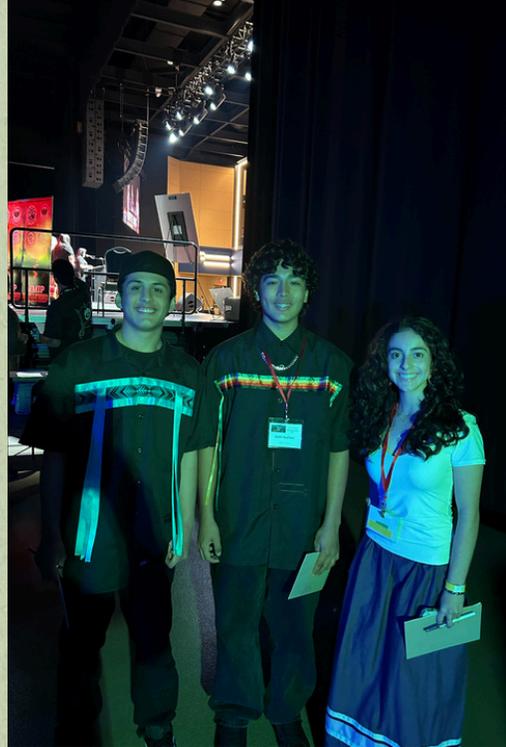
- Physical activity and sports
- Cultural activities and traditions
- Talking openly about emotions
- Creative hobbies and learning new skills
- Spending time with supportive friends and family

Building strong connections and healthy habits helps youth stay both mentally and physically well.

it's   
not to  
be 



# What the Youth are up too?



The Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative recently took several youth to Sacramento to attend a Missing and Murdered Indigenous People movement summit. Three of our youth bravely took the stage as part of a youth panel, speaking in front of more than 500 people to advocate for policy changes and share their perspectives as Tribal youth impacted by this issue.

Their courage and leadership were inspiring, and it was a powerful reminder that these young voices are the future leaders of our communities.



# What the Youth are up too?



The Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative continues to see youth actively participating in cooking classes, driving school, and fun community events. These activities give youth ages 12-24 a chance to build skills, connect with others, and enjoy being young. Last month, we also celebrated a big milestone as one of our youth proudly earned their driver's license.



# PHRC EVENTS 2026

PALA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE

## We Are Open March

**MARCH SCHEDULE**  
Monday - Friday 10:30 am-7 pm

FOR ANY QUESTIONS  
Contact Maria Villegas  
(760) 315-0104




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




## TRIBAL YOUTH LISTENING SESSION

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
4 pm-7 pm  
Pala Housing Resource Center  
35990 Pala Temecula Rd, Pala, CA  
Dinner will be served, Raffle Prizes

**Calling For Tribal Youth with Lived Experience of being unhoused!**

- ✓ Talk about your experiences being unhoused.
- ✓ Uplift your needs, stories, and best practices directly to state leaders and policy makers
- Compensation for up to 33 participants is available for sharing your time and expertise, with youth with lived experience having priority.
- Limited travel reimbursement funds are available for those in need who travel more than 40 miles, until funds are expended.
- No identifying information will be collected.

**This event is for:**

- Tribal Youth and Young Adults with lived experience of being unhoused or homeless, ages 14-26.
- Tribal service providers that have experience working with Tribal Youth who are unhoused.

For more information contact:  
Maria Villegas (760) 315-0104

REGISTER NOW >



IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE



California Interagency Council on Homelessness





## 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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

**Girlie GARAGE**



@GirlieGarage

www.GirlieGarage.com

# PHRC EVENTS 2026



## Native Youth Focus Group

Share your ideas  
to help prevent sexual violence in our communities.

We want to share what we've been working on — and hear your ideas.

Join us to:

- See how community voices shaped this work
- Share what you think should change or improve
- Help guide next steps for safer communities

**ENJOY DINNER  
AND RECEIVE A  
GIFT CARD**



**No commitment required.  
New participants welcome.  
Your voice matters.**

**NEXT MEETING:**

**Thursday March 26**  
**4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.**

PALA HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER  
35008 PALA TEMECULA ROAD, PALA CA 92059

**RSVP OR QUESTIONS?**  
Contact Joy  
☎ 760-644-4174 ✉ joy@shnwc.org

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## FINANCIAL LITERACY Workshop

**Our Speaker**  
Wells Fargo Bank  
Ages 12- 24

**MARCH  
TUESDAY 31<sup>ST</sup>**

📍 Pala Housing Resource Center  
🕒 From 4 pm to 4:30 pm

**RSVP WITH  
MARIA (760) 315-0104**





## Wiwish WORKSHOP



Learn the traditional acorn preparation process with a modern twist using everyday kitchen appliances. Participants will explore cultural teachings and learn how to make Wiwish while honoring tradition.

**April 2<sup>ND</sup>**  
**2:00 PM - 5:00 PM**  
**ALL AGE EVENT**

📍 **PALA ADMINISTRATION KITCHEN**  
RSVP WITH MARIA (760) 315-0104



## FIRST AID & CPR TRAINING

**Get Certified in  
First Aid & CPR  
4 Hour Class**

**Space is limited!!  
Register today!**

**For Age 12 to 24**

**Saturday  
April 25 at 10 am - 2pm**

**Pala Housing  
Resource Center**

**Training includes:**

- Learning about Emergency Situation
- Basic Life Supports
- Get Started with CPR
- Get Started with First Aid
- Real-life Demonstration
- Focusing on Adults, Children, and Infants

**CONTACT PAULA ELLENWOOD (760) 638-1676**



# Tobacco Programs EVENTS 2026



## Youth Public Speaking Workshop

03.11.2026 | 4:30-6 PM  
Pala Housing Resource Center

"Helping youth believe in their voice and their potential."

**What will you learn?**

- Build your own personal speaking style
- Overcome stage fright and speak with confidence
- Practice expressing your thoughts clearly and proudly
- Learn how to tell your story and be heard



**"Your Voice is Power"**

Register :  
Deandra Molina  
dmolina@palatribe.com  
760-893-6907

**Ages: 14 and up**



## Tobacco Bingo

Join us for a night of fun and games at the Tobacco Bingo Night!

**Learn tobacco prevention**

**AGES 12 and up**

**MARCH 19, 2026**  
START AT 4PM | Pala Housing Resource Center

More info contact: Deandra Molina  
(760) 893-0769

**17 MARCH**

## Coalition MEETING

Come together as a community to grow, learn, and uplift one another. Grounded in culture and care for future generations, this gathering will share the vision and plans of the Pala Tobacco Program for the year ahead.




March 17, 2026  
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm  
Pala Housing Resource Center



## Community Clean up

The Tobacco Program is looking to clean up at the Pala Park

Join us for a day of fun and action as we work to improve the reservation.

**22 APRIL**

MEET AT PHRC  
4 pm-5:30 pm  
CONTACT DEANDRA  
(760) 893-0769

**Agess 12 and up**

**\*\*Community Service available**





# Community EVENTS 2026

**WHITE SAGE, OQSHILY PLANT SALE**

All proceeds are going towards a Drumset for the Pala Youth Center Music Program.

**Date: Wednesday, March 11**  
**Time: 3pm -5pm**  
**Pala Youth Center Garden**

Qqshily. White Sage is OVERHARVESTED.  
 Be part of the solution and plant qqshily.

**\$10 ONE GALLON**      **\$25 FIVE GALLONS**

**2026 NATIVE & INDIGENOUS RESEARCH & ARTS SYMPOSIUM**

**MARCH 12<sup>TH</sup> - 13<sup>TH</sup>**  
 PARMA PAYNE GOODALL ALUMNI CENTER

**TWO DAY EVENT**  
 Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> from 10 AM to 4 PM  
 Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup> 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/>

**PALA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE PROGRAM**

**Limited Space**      **HURRY UP!**

**SIGN - UPS**  
 FOR DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE  
**\*\* AGES 12-17**  
**BY APRIL 02, 2026**

**DTI SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2026**  
**AT CAL STATE SAN MARCOS**

If interested contact:  
**Paula (760) 638-1676**

**DTI DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE**  
**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**

# EVENTS 2026

2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL  
**SOCALINDIGENOUSARTS.COM**

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
**INDIGENOUS CULTURE & ART FESTIVAL**

IN COLLABORATION WITH:  
Eyaay Ahuun FOUNDATION  
ESCONDIDO City of Choice  
FNX

PRESENTED BY  
IPA1

CELEBRATING ACCM:  
April is Arts, Culture and Creativity Month (ACCM) for the City of Escondido. SCIA is honored to support and be a part of the community celebrations!

**APRIL 18 2026**  
GRAPE DAY PARK  
10AM - 4PM

ARTS & CULTURE  
**WECHAAWCH EWIP**  
HONORING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRD SINGING & DANCING

**CELEBRATING 30 Years GATHERING**

Vivian Banks Charter School

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM  
AT VIVIAN BANKS CHARTER SCHOOL  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13<sup>TH</sup>, 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 Charter School

**Exciting News!**

Open Enrollment for TK - 5 Grade

Enroll Now

nancy.mata@bonsallusd.com

760-742-3300

SCAN ME

Free TK

SAVE THE DATE

**HONORING OUR RELATIVES**

MMIP Community Awareness Gathering

Thursday, May 21  
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM  
Location: TBA

Join us as we come together in unity to honor our missing and murdered Indigenous relatives and raise awareness within our community.

Together, we stand for remembrance, awareness, and action.

Hosted by  
Pala Band of Mission Indians

HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER MMIP PROGRAM

**This gathering is reserved for the Pala community.**



"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-7:30 pm and every other Saturday from 9 am -5 pm

### 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

#### Deandra 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 and Career
- Development Youth Mental
- Health Guidance

# Pala Youth Empowerment Initiative

"For Youth, by Youth"



HAPPY  
ST. PATRICK'S  
DAY



Location:  
35990 Pala Temecula Road  
Pala, CA 92059  
[www.PalaHRC.com](http://www.PalaHRC.com)

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

Paula Ellenwood  
(760) 638-1676  
[pellenwood@palatribe.com](mailto:pellenwood@palatribe.com)

Deandra Molina  
(760) 893-0769  
[dmolina@palatribe.com](mailto: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 our culture strong for future generations.