

SAN DIEGO TRIBAL VISIT BY SHLB

JUNE 26-28, 2024

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SHLB
SCHOOLS, HEALTH & LIBRARIES
BROADBAND COALITION

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INTRODUCTION

ON JUNE 27, 2024, the staff and board of the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) conducted a site visit to the **La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians**, thanks to SHLB board member Adam Geisler. Adam is the President and COO of Tribal Ready and a member of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians, one of nine local tribes in the North County area of San Diego County, California.

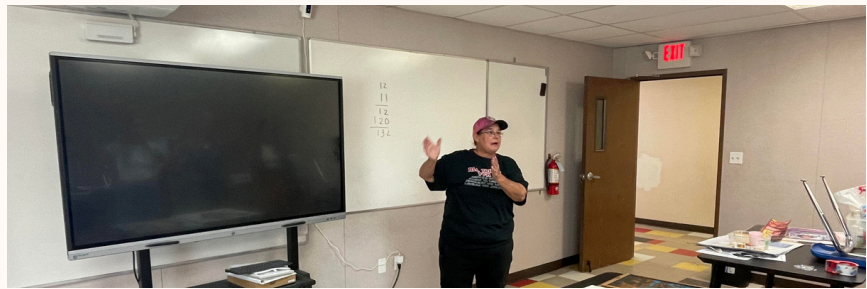
Tribal Ready, a Native-owned and governed company, was formed to help facilitate the gathering of data that accurately represents the broadband needs of Indian Country. This trip was funded in part by Tribal Ready, a SHLB member.



Broadband funding is currently being allocated by the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA), primarily using a broadband map created by the FCC. Much of Indian Country is left out by incorrectly labeling the area as “served” or simply omitting data points.

SHLB is always looking for ways to increase the visibility of the excellent work done by “anchor institutions” (like schools, healthcare centers, and libraries) to connect communities. Adam arranged for the SHLB team to tour a school, a healthcare clinic, and a community center to see how rural tribes are ensuring connectivity and digital equity for their communities.

ALL TRIBES AMERICAN INDIAN CHARTER SCHOOL

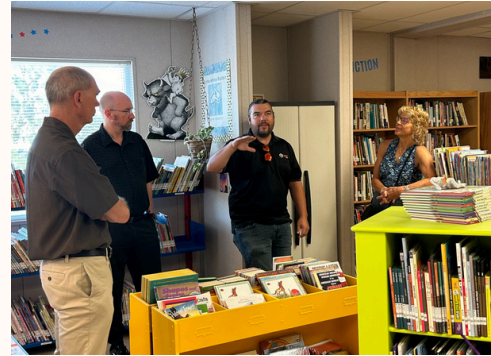


Imagine walking into a classroom equipped with two large flat-panel screens for hybrid instruction, every student with a Chromebook, and STEM robotics powered by Gig-speed Internet. Is this a private school in a wealthy neighborhood? No, it's the All Tribes American Indian Charter School (All Tribes) in Valley Central, CA. Led by Michelle Parada, a passionate Future Farmers of America (FFA) advocate, the school offers a vision of top-notch education.

Michelle explains how All Tribes is fostering an intergenerational shift in American Indian education. Open to the surrounding community, the school took time to gain recognition for its excellence. "There used to be this idea that if it was on the reservation, it was 'less than,'" Michelle says. Now, alumni have enrolled their own children, and parents inquire about tuition, assuming it's a private school. Michelle assures them it's a public school and always free. She also initiated an adult education program for parents who never graduated, offering them more than just a GED but the full educational experience.

ALL TRIBES AMERICAN INDIAN CHARTER SCHOOL (CONT...)

Understanding students' needs, Michelle addressed middle schoolers' lack of problem-solving skills by organizing monthly camping trips to foster independent thought and critical thinking. For fidgety students, she permits movement as long as they keep part of their body touching the desk.



During the pandemic, Michelle ensured teachers visited each student's home, spending at least an hour with caregivers to teach them how to operate Chromebooks and submit assignments. She also led a project where students built a BBQ pit to serve drive-thru food, raising funds to attend a national conference.

Michelle leverages broadband access to enhance education, from being a digital navigator to implementing digital farming for students to grow produce and careers. However, she locks away students' phones at the start of the day to prevent distractions and guide their use of technology.

The school has expanded from a few classes to a full K-12 program. Michelle attributes her success to a deep connection with her community and a memorable fundraising experience where a federal grant officer encouraged her to request fifty times more funding. She continually seeks ways to grow the school, guided by the philosophy: "If students don't learn the way we teach them, we must teach the way they learn."

INDIAN HEALTH COUNCIL, INC.

The **Indian Health Council's** (IHC) 51,000-square-foot state-of-the-art complex provides various health services, including medical, dental, pharmacy, mental/behavioral, and community education and outreach. The IHC has served the nine tribes of North San Diego County for over 50 years, with over 6,000 clients receiving services.



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EMPOWERING NATIVE WELLNESS

IHC collaborates with different organizations to support community health and is committed to providing comprehensive healthcare services to the tribal community.

The Indian Health Council (IHC) is dedicated to inspiring, educating, and supporting Native individuals pursuing healthcare careers. The organization also aims to enhance the professional experiences of Native people currently involved in college studies, research, and development.

"Empowering Native Wellness" is the core mission of the IHC, and we noticed signs displaying this motto in every department during our tour. We met with IHC's CEO, Orvin Hanson, to discuss how this anchor institution serves the community.



INDIAN HEALTH COUNCIL, INC. (CONT...)



Despite rural challenges, IHC has expanded telehealth services. In Valley Central, CA, where the health center is located, connectivity varies. While fiber exists near a nearby casino, halfway up the mountain, there's no cell phone service.

Fixed wireless is an option but limited in bandwidth. Providers have adapted by using phone calls when video calls aren't feasible due to connectivity issues.

Cybersecurity remains a priority after a ransomware attack in 2020. IHC enhanced security measures, changed passwords, and implemented multi-factor authentication. The breach affected 5,769 individuals, highlighting the importance of proactive security measures.

Despite challenges like the cyber attack and the COVID-19 pandemic, IHC remains resilient. CEO Orvin Hanson emphasizes the power of working together as partners to efficiently care for people and communities.

IHC exemplifies how broadband can streamline services across disciplines, ensuring holistic care for Native communities.

CONNECTED LEARNING CENTER

The final stop on our tour of anchor institutions was the Connected Learning Center, located within the Rincon Education Department. This center is part of a cluster of essential facilities, including a health center, the Wa\$xayam Pomki Museum & Library, and a senior center. Education Manager Jason Marks guided us through the facility.



Funded by an AT&T grant, it is the first tribal Connected Learning Center, the fifth in California, and the 21st nationwide.

The computer center, the first room you enter in the building, features symbols, art, and cultural artifacts, including rattles, gourds, and baskets. The community can use the computer center for job interviews, printing, telehealth, college classes, banking, and more.

Jason described traditional basket weaving and bird songs that preserve the history and migrations of Southern California Native American peoples. These songs, accompanied by gourd rattles, emphasize the importance of Waxáam Pitóo Éxngay (yesterday, today, and tomorrow) for the Luiseño people.



CONNECTED LEARNING CENTER (CONT...)



The Connected Learning Center extends the functions of the museum, library, and school. It hosts after-school and summer student programs and runs digital literacy programs to teach computer skills. Jason also plans to expand senior programming to engage with the nearby senior center.



Although Jason has only been on the job since September, he has plans to expand the center's programming. He aims to have it authorized as a Pearson VUE test center, allowing community members to take the GED and earn certifications in various fields, from dermatology to driving and real estate to risk management. Jason envisions offering certification exams that can advance people's careers.



FINAL STOP

Our final stop was Adam Geisler's welcoming home, where we were greeted by his family. We visited his farm's cows and chickens and toured the one-room schoolhouse where Adam's children are home-schooled. Over tacos and Indian Fry Bread, Adam shared insights into the life of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians, highlighting their resilience, entrepreneurship, and deep connection to the land.



FINAL STOP (CONT...)

Joining us for dinner were Steve Cope, Chair of the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians, and Erica M. Pinto, Chair of the California Tribal Chairpersons' Association and Chair of the Jamul Indian Village of California. These leaders are making significant strides in improving social determinants of health in their communities by ensuring essential broadband access.



Reliable internet connectivity addresses disparities in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Broadband enables remote learning, telehealth services, and participation in the digital economy, fostering greater independence and self-sufficiency. These efforts exemplify innovative solutions needed to close the digital divide and serve as models for broader policy initiatives.

These conversations aim to inspire expanded policy interest areas for SHLB. Closing the digital divide requires collaboration and creative solutions like those demonstrated in these remarkable communities.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

We deeply appreciate Calix and Tribal Ready for generously supporting SHLB and making this site visit possible.



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