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San Manuel Band of Mission Indians donates \$12.6M to support local and tribal initiatives

by: Israel J. Carreón Jr.
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One of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians' grant recipients is the Make-A-Wish Orange County & Inland Empire. (Make-A-Wish Orange County & Inland Empire/Submitted)
congenital heart condition

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians has announced the distribution of more than \$12.6 million in grants targeting 228 causes across the Inland Empire and Native American communities nationwide. This year's grant cycle places a significant focus on Native American causes, with 50% of the funding going toward initiatives that preserve cultural heritage, strengthen tribal communities and support tribal nations.

San Manuel Senior Public Relations Specialist Robin Alcantara says grants come from the Tribe. Alcantara said, "Each year, the Tribe opens the grant application in February. Qualified nonprofits may apply. Our philanthropy teams works diligently to process hundreds of applications and recommend funds for those aligned with the Tribe's giving priorities." According to Alcantara, San Manuel has already begun to distribute funds.

The Tribe's philanthropic efforts highlight its commitment to helping underserved communities. Chairwoman Lynn Valbuena emphasized the core values guiding the Tribe's philanthropy. Valbuena said, "The Spirit of Yawa', acting on one's beliefs, is at the heart of everything we do and has guided us since the days of our ancestors to serve those in need." She added that the Tribe is honored to make a difference locally and nationally for Native people.

One of the major areas of concern for the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians is the lack of philanthropic funding for Native American communities. Data shows that less than 1% of U.S. philanthropic funds are directed toward Native American causes despite significant need. In addition, nonprofit organizations in the Inland Empire are underfunded, receiving only \$26 per capita in charitable support compared to the state average of \$262 per capita.

Among the grants awarded this cycle, the Native American Land Conservancy (NALC) received \$100,000. NALC focuses on preserving Indigenous heritage and biodiversity through the acquisition and protection of lands where sacred sites are located. The San Manuel grant will help NALC maintain two sacred sites, Mamapukaiv and Coyote Hole, and increase access to Morongo Canyon. NALC Board President Michael Madrigal expressed gratitude for the Tribe's support, saying, "The Native American Land Conservancy is thankful to the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians for their financial support, as well as the other ways in which the Tribe assists in our management of sacred sites. We could not do what we do without such support."

In addition to the grant awarded to NALC, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians made several other notable donations in this funding cycle. These include a \$2.4 million grant to the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians. The funding will enhance the Tribe's capacity to provide adequate power to the new Bad River Health and Wellness Center, which will serve 2,400 tribal community members. The Tribe also awarded \$500,000 to the Time for Change Foundation, which will use the funds to increase emergency shelter capacity, expand affordable housing, enhance employment development programming, and provide mental health services to people experiencing homelessness.

Other significant contributions include a \$450,000 grant to Make-A-Wish Orange County & the Inland Empire. This donation will enable the organization to fulfill at least 78 wishes for children living with critical illnesses in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, addressing the backlog of

children waiting for wishes due to a lack of funding. The Tribe also awarded \$100,000 to the Native Forward Scholars Fund to support scholarships for Native American students, advancing educational goals and opportunities.

San Manuel also supports the Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians, awarding \$83,000 to the Tribe's Youth Regaining Cultural Identity Program. The funds will allow the program to expand its language and cultural programming throughout the year, helping to preserve and pass on traditional knowledge to younger generations.

Since 2003, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians has donated more than \$400 million to various causes.

To learn more about the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians' philanthropy, visit SanManuelCares.org.

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