



Tribal Pesticide Program Council

Spring 2025

TPPC Member Spotlight on Diania Caudell

Diania Caudell is a member of the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians, Luiseño Nation. Since 2003, she's been a member of the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA) and currently serves on the board. She has also been a member of the TPPC going on 13 years now. Prior to Diania's involvement with CIBA and TPPC, she was an advocate for Indian education and was instrumental in bringing Indian education to San Juan Capistrano School District. Today, she actively continues her pursuit of bringing Indian education to schools, and the community at large, through her work with CIBA and TPPC.



Learning Patience

"When I came out of surgery, I lost everything from my waist down. I had no use in my legs. It took me over 18 months to even learn to walk again, and the surgeons came in, and the doctors are talking to me and saying, 'Well, Diania, you're going to have to learn patience.' I'm an accountant by trade...But patience wasn't one of my virtues." --Diania.

Diania injured her back, leading to major surgery where the lower half of her body was immobile, leaving her with a long road to recovery. When the doctors told her she was going to have to learn patience to recover, she recounts her feelings saying, "When they said patience, I just didn't know what to do." Diania soon realized that basketweaving was the obvious choice. The simple nature of basketweaving requires patience, time, and commitment to complete a basket: there is no instant gratification. Although Diania grew up around weavers, this was never something she latched onto at a younger age. To Diania, basketweaving became the pathway to patience and in turn, the key to her recovery efforts.

Diania took charge of her recovery during the early post-surgery days, reaching out to a top weaver for guidance, "I called up a top weaver, Teeter Romero, and she laughed at me. She says, 'Diania, you're not a weaver,' and I says, 'I know I'm not but I need to learn patience.'" This marked the start of her basketweaving journey. Diania spent several months flat on her back until she was able to get up and sit in a wheelchair, noting, "So once I was able to get in a wheelchair, the weavers came to me and I started to learn how to

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weave with rafia and pine needles, the coiling technique just going round and round and round.” Diania did not engage in more traditional gathering until she was able to use a walker to get around. She says, “...they weren’t going to go out there and gather for me...they took me to some tough terrain, and I was there with a walker. I think I was very fortunate to have top weavers come and help me.” Fast forward to today, Diania is a board member of CIBA, going on roughly 17 years. Her advocacy and involvement in Southern California basketry, which stemmed from an unlikely post-op recovery, allowed her to find a passion she wasn’t expecting.

Pathway into Pesticides



“I felt a burning sensation, but I didn’t think anything, because it’s...it’s very potent, right? And my cousin looked at me, and he says, ‘Oh, my gosh, Diania, your whole face is turning red’ and I went ‘What?’...and I says ‘Well, then, take me to the clinic.’” -- Diania

On the day referenced above, Diania and her cousin were delivering deergrass to some of the tribes in the area after becoming aware of an organization that was taking the deergrass out and treating it like a weed, unaware that it is one of the traditional plants used in basketweaving. After they finished delivering the deergrass, they were making their way home and she spotted a plant on the side of the road. “I went ‘Oh my God! That’s so-and-so plant.’ and so I had him stop.” She explained that the only way to identify this particular plant was by the distinct smell, noting, “The only way you can identify this plant is if you get a branch and you snap it and you sniff it. And you get that...pungent smell...well thank goodness I only sniffed it in one nostril!” Shortly after she sniffed it, Diania began to feel a burning sensation that she didn’t think much of in the moment, until her cousin noticed her face was turning red. Luckily, they were only about 10 miles from the clinic and drove straight there.

When Diania arrived at the clinic, it looked like half her face had been painted red as a result of the reaction she was experiencing. The doctor asked her what she had been doing, and she explained she was identifying a plant and told him the location. “I had a a chemical reaction. It was either herbicides, pesticides, etc. that that was on this plant. It was my first time I’ve had steroids, meaning shots. And I was like, whoa, okay, this is new to me all right, with the pesticides,” Diania says.

Turns out, the plant was growing near a golf course, which she noted is notorious for using chemicals, “Golf courses are the worst. They want to use all these different chemicals because they want the grass to be really green...people don’t realize there’s a lot of chemicals, you know, out there, and if they don’t take consideration of the drift, and this is what happened, that plant probably got a drift. And that’s how I got into pesticides, you know, since I got affected by it.”

Diania’s direct exposure to pesticides sparked her involvement in advocating for weavers when it comes to pesticides. She later got connected with TPPC through her involvement with CIBA, which was invited to be on a committee with TPPC after they wrote a white paper regarding pesticides in Northern California, “...because gatherers or weavers were getting cancer in their mouths, and they couldn’t figure out what that was.” When the water was tested, there were chemicals that were being dumped in the water and this was significant because weavers use their mouth as a third hand “...we will chew it, or something like that because it’s much easier,” Diania says. She went on to explain, “...the willow roots were absorbing the water and then when the weavers cut it and everything, and then placed it in their mouth, they were getting the

TPPC Spotlight on Diania Caudell (continued)

chemicals. So that's how CIBA got involved with pesticides." When TPPC was formed, CIBA was invited as an organization to be a part of TPPC and Diania was selected by CIBA to represent them.

Indigenous Education and Community Involvement

"I was very strong in Indian education, trying to get the schools to teach about our people...teach about the tribes that are in California...they don't study the Indigenous people, you know, within the schools. So, I was an advocate on that, because I didn't want my children to grow up asking questions like I did. So, I became an advocate in the school district there in South Orange County." --Diania

Diania moved around frequently as a child due to her father's work as a heavy construction operator, and attended many schools growing up. One thing that was consistent through all the moves was her frustration with what was being taught about Native Americans. She says, "I fought the school district everywhere I lived at." She remembers going home and talking to her family about what was being taught in school and asking them, "How come they say that about us? We don't do that?" In turn, she was told, "Just be quiet, don't say nothing." However, staying quiet only lasted for so long. Once Diania had her own children, she became a fierce advocate for change in the school district, saying, "Mine aren't gonna go through that...I took on the school board." She successfully helped implement the Indian Education Program in San Juan Capistrano Unified School District and notes, "It's still going on today."



Diania continues to work with the school district in various ways. She holds up a small basket that fits in her palm and says, "This is the type of basket I teach in schools...this is the Cherokee style basket." She noted that she got permission to teach this style of basket, and makes small baskets with the students so they can walk away with something tangible after the lesson. She also volunteers at Daley Ranch where they host an outdoor education experience for all seventh graders in the Escondido Unified School District. Diania says, "I volunteer at Daley ranch with exhibits and share about the importance of Indigenous people in the past and present...I hand out the pesticide brochures to the teachers of each class." Her reach extends to college students as well; noting her work with Cal State San Marcos, she says, "I work with their ethnobotany classes, and I do the talks with TPPC, with CIBA, basketry, plants, etc."

Beyond the classroom, Diania helps create brochures with CIBA for basketweavers, to tell the basketweavers what they should know when they are out gathering and how to identify if a plant has been sprayed. She credited TPPC and EPA with their help on the brochures.



Diania also discussed the major role CIBA had in changing the traditional gathering policy in California, explaining that in the state of California, "If you're not a federally recognized tribe, you don't have the same privileges of gathering, you have to go through permits, etc." CIBA fought for all tribes, regardless of federal recognition, to be able to gather on US Forest Service and BLM lands in California. CIBA presented the issue to TPPC and garnered support from the tribes, which she credits as a key piece in the fight for gathering rights. Eventually, CIBA took it all the way to Washington, DC and the gathering policy in California was changed. As Diania reflects on the various accomplishments of CIBA and her involvement with the TPPC, she notes, "I've learned a lot, and I appreciate the backup that I've had for California Indian Basketweavers Association. The people on TPPC are fantastic."

TPPC Spring Meeting Recap

The TPPC's Spring meeting was held on March 5 & 6, 2025. Due to funding concerns and constraints on EPA participation around the change of administration, the meeting was held entirely virtually rather than having an in-person component in Washington, DC as is typical for this meeting. Despite not being able to meet in-person, we had a productive and enjoyable meeting with a number of informative presentations from TPPC members, state pesticide control organizations, industry representatives, and federal & academic scientists. We also scheduled two TPPC work sessions for members to work on issues of importance to the group. The first work session focused on updating the TPPC's outreach materials, for members to take to meetings and conferences to get the word out about the TPPC, and recruit new members. The second work session was set aside for members to review the group's 2025 priorities and discuss ways to advance those goals throughout the year.

Materials from the meeting are available on the TPPC's website at <https://tppcwebsite.org/meetings/#pastmeetings>, including a copy of the agenda with embedded links to the presentations, the notes from the meeting, an attendee list, and results from the meeting evaluations. Thanks to everyone who attended and/or presented for making the meeting a success!



Vacant Executive Committee Representative Positions

The Executive Committee consists of TPPC Members elected by their peers to represent their regions on the Council. When fully staffed the Executive Committee includes the Chair and Vice-Chair, representatives from each of the ten EPA regions as well as one from Alaska, and four At-Large positions. Executive Committee members are responsible for ensuring that their region's tribes are represented at TPPC meetings in order to determine and raise issues of importance to these tribes, and relay information back to them. Executive Committee members are encouraged to communicate with their Regional Tribal Operations Committee (RTOCs) and EPA Regional Offices prior to TPPC meetings in order to identify pesticide program needs and issues.

The TPPC is currently seeking regional representatives to fill several vacancies on the Executive Committee and represent their Tribes' and/or Tribal Organizations interests' related to pesticides and environmental concerns. Representatives must be nominated by a TPPC member from their region or may nominate themselves, and the representative must have an authorization letter on file. If you are interested in representing your region or have questions about participating in the Executive Committee, please contact TPPC Coordinator Mark Daniels at mark.daniels@nau.edu or (928) 523-8897. Current vacancies include: **Region 1, Region 3, Region 4, Region 7, Region 8, and Alaska.**

Updates and Announcements

Conferences and Meetings:

Full SFIREG Meeting

The State FIFRA Issues, Research, and Evaluation Group (SFIREG) will hold its semi-annual full SFIREG meeting virtually on June 2-3, 2025. For more information click [here](#).

Trainings and Courses:

Worker Protection PIRT

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) will provide a training with a focus on worker protection on **May 12-15** in Grand Rapids, MI. To learn more click [here](#).

Senior Executive Program Management PREP

The Pesticide Regulatory Education Program (PREP) will provide a training with a focus on leadership on **June 24-26** in Fort Collins, CO. To learn more click [here](#).

Tribal PIRT

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) will provide a training for Tribal Residential Pesticide Inspection on **July 21-24** in Polson, MT. To learn more click [here](#).

Comprehensive Combo PREP

The Pesticide Regulatory Education Program (PREP) will provide a Comprehensive Combo PREP training on **August 4-7** in Fort Collins, CO. To learn more click [here](#).

Structural Pest Control Issues or Endangered Species Combo PREP

The Pesticide Regulatory Education Program (PREP) will provide a training on either Structural Pest Control Issues or Endangered Species (to be determined) on September 8-11 in Fort Collins, CO. To learn more click [here](#).

Tribal Consultation and Public Comment Opportunities:

Reopening Comment Period for Proposed ESA Listings of Monarch Butterfly and Others (closes **May 19**)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reopening the comment periods for the proposed listing under the Endangered Species Act of three insect species, including the monarch butterfly, bleached sandhill skipper, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee. For more information click [here](#).

Upcoming Efforts to Revise the Definition of "Waters of the United States" (**ends May 20**)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of the Army are initiating consultation with federally recognized Tribes on certain topics related to the implementation of the definition of "waters of the United States" under the Clean Water Act. For information click [here](#) or reach out to Laura Shumway at CWAwotus@epa.gov or Elliott Carman at elliott.n.carman.civ@army.mil.

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(Vacant)
At-Large Representative

The TPPC is a member-based organization with more than 95 members from 59 Tribes and tribal organizations as of April 2025, whose activities are funded by a cooperative agreement with the EPA. The Council serves as a tribal technical resource, and provides a forum for dialogue between Tribes and the EPA on program and policy development relating to pesticides issues and concerns. Assistance provided to Tribes includes support in building tribal pesticide programs and conducting pesticide education and training, and the preparation of resources for Tribes interested in specialized issues such as Integrated Pest Management and pollinators. Through its interaction with the EPA, the TPPC keeps Tribes informed of developments in the regulation of pesticides and pesticide use, and provides feedback to the EPA on such matters from a tribal perspective (though it is important to note that communication between the EPA and the TPPC does not substitute for direct government-to-government consultation).

For information about how to join the TPPC, contact Mark Daniels at mark.daniels@nau.edu or (928) 523-8897.

