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**Southern California Tribe Gives \$1 Million to Hard Hit Small Businesses**  
***San Manuel Band of Mission Indians surprises 50 business owners with \$20,000 each***

**Highland, CA** (January 29, 2021) – Today the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians surprised 50 small businesses with \$20,000 each in a virtual live stream event. In collaboration with the Inland Empire Economic Partnership (IEEP) the Southern California tribe announced the San Manuel Cares \$1 Million Small Business Relief Fund. The Tribe was inspired to support small businesses based in their ancestral territory that have been devastated by the impact of COVID-19.

The selected businesses represent industries hardest hit by the pandemic, such as restaurants, personal care services, and others deemed “non-essential”, yet so critical to the region’s economic recovery. The 50 business owners were invited to a virtual event where San Manuel Band of Mission Indians Chairman Ken Ramirez made the surprise announcement that each of them would receive a \$20,000 grant.

During the event, Chairman Ramirez said, “We all look forward to the day when you can fully reopen your doors for good and welcome your customers back. Until then, you have a hand up from San Manuel to cover expenses and keep your employees on the payroll.”

Qualifying businesses were selected in part because of their commitment to their communities on the Tribe’s ancestral lands, spanning the San Bernardino valley, up the San Bernardino Mountains and outward to the High Desert. The financial grants will provide the business owners assistance in paycheck protection to fund their current workforce, and cash flow assistance to cover operational expenses, debt relief and business improvements.

“Our San Manuel Cares team contacted each of these 50 businesses to learn more about their hardships and find the best way to provide assistance,” said Ramirez. “I hope that what we do here today prompts others to do the same; support your local small businesses, give as much as you can, and do your part to keep our communities and economy thriving.”

Paul Granillo, president and CEO of IEEP, set the stage for the announcement by sharing the devastating effects the pandemic has had on the Inland Empire economy, noting that that almost 50% of the small businesses in the IE reported a large negative effect from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Confetti cannons popped as San Manuel Chairman Ramirez presented a \$20,000 bill to three selected representatives of the fund recipients: Jovi’s Diner, Mi Cocina, and Viva La Boba. The three owners joined the socially distanced event and cheered with the others that participated via Zoom or tuned in with family, friends and customers via livestream.

Since ancient times, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians has expressed themselves through a culture of giving. Today, the Tribe answered the call of Yawa' (Serrano word meaning “to act on one's beliefs”) through partnerships with those in need, including restaurants, salons, and retail shops right here in the local community.

**We didn’t want you to miss a thing! See the reactions in the [livestream](#)**

**Access photos, logos and video footage [here](#)**

**A full list of all business recipients can be found [here](#)**

**About San Manuel Band of Mission Indians**

The San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians is a federally recognized American Indian tribe located near the city of Highland, Calif. The Serrano Indians are the indigenous people of the San Bernardino highlands, passes, valleys and mountains who share a common language and culture. The San Manuel reservation was established in 1891 and recognized as a sovereign nation with the right of self-government. As an indigenous community the origins and history of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians stem from our relationship with the land and to all who share it. For more information, visit <http://www.sanmanuel-nsn.gov>.

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