

**MINUTES  
of the  
THIRD MEETING  
of the  
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**August 10-11, 2023  
Student Services and Technology Center, Room 200  
University of New Mexico-Gallup  
705 Gurley Avenue  
Gallup**

The third meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Representative D. Wonda Johnson, chair, at 10:11 a.m. on August 10, 2023 in Room 200 of the Student Services and Technology Center at the University of New Mexico (UNM)-Gallup in Gallup.

**Present**

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Chair  
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Vice Chair  
Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon  
Rep. Anthony Allison  
Rep. John Block  
Rep. Charlotte Little  
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.  
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

**Absent**

Rep. Tara Jaramillo  
Sen. Brenda G. McKenna  
Sen. Bill B. O'Neill  
Sen. Cliff R. Pirtle  
Sen. Nancy Rodriguez  
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero  
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez  
Sen. William E. Sharer

**Advisory Members**

Sen. Linda M. Lopez (8/10)  
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom (8/10)

Rep. Gail Chasey  
Rep. Harry Garcia  
Sen. Stuart Ingle  
Rep. Derrick J. Lente  
Sen. Michael Padilla  
Sen. William P. Soules  
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

(Attendance dates are noted for those members not present for the entire meeting.)

**Staff**

Lenaya Montoya, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service (LCS)  
Markela Clinton, Committee Coordinator, LCS  
Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, LCS  
Angela Dakan, Staff, LCS

**Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

## **Handouts**

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

## **References to Webcast**

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at [www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov), under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

## **Thursday, August 10**

### **Welcome and Introductions (10:11 a.m.)**

Representative Johnson welcomed everyone and asked members of the audience, staff and committee to introduce themselves.

### **Welcome and Thank You (10:21 a.m.)**

Kyle Tom, president, Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Association, welcomed everyone to Gallup and talked about the annual Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial. The event is in its one-hundred-first year and welcomes tribes and visitors from around the world to trade cultural events such as performance and art showcases, rodeo events, ceremonial pageants and more. He said the unofficial theme of the ceremonial this year has been to honor women, with the event's living treasure honoree, poster artist and grand marshal of the parade — Representative Johnson — all being women. He also discussed the parade route and road closures and highlighted upcoming events for the weekend.

### **Welcome and Status Update (10:36 a.m.)**

Sabrina Ezzell, chancellor, UNM-Gallup, provided an update on the campus's enrollment, which is trending up and could further increase if more students take advantage of the state's opportunity scholarship, and grant priorities that include projects such as a Native American student center, Indigenous knowledge and language conferences and renovation of the campus's fine arts department, which has not been updated since 1985. She also announced that daycare services are now being offered at the campus, which she is hopeful will help to increase the rates of graduation among single mothers. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/IAC%20081023%20Item%202%20UNM-Gallup%20Welcome%20and%20Status%20Update.pdf>.

### **Update from the Office of the Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council (11:22 a.m.)**

Crystalyne Curley, speaker, 25th Navajo Nation Council, thanked the committee and introduced Seth Damon, delegate, 25th Navajo Nation Council. Speaker Curley discussed the governing body of the Navajo Nation, which celebrated its centennial anniversary this year.

Mr. Damon discussed council priorities and recommendations for state action, including the reauthorization of capital outlay projects; tribal member displacement issues and whether

New Mexico is experiencing the same fraudulent activity identified in Arizona's Operation Rainbow Bridge; infrastructure improvements for individual Navajos who live on state land; and the council's need for updated state district maps.

Amber Kanazbah Crotty, delegate, 25th Navajo Nation Council, discussed priority issues as they relate to missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives being those of jurisdiction, data-sharing agreements with state law enforcement agencies and services for surviving families, especially children. Ms. Crotty also discussed other public safety priorities, including the need for a detention center and public safety headquarters in Shiprock and a mutual aid agreement with the state for natural disasters and other public health emergencies.

Nathan Notah, delegate, 25th Navajo Nation Council, briefly stated his confidence that community development projects currently on hold will be completed. Speaker Curley provided final comments and took statements and questions from committee members. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2023&ItemNumber=4>.

#### **Presentation on Transportation of Uranium Between Chapter Houses (2:11 p.m.)**

Susan Gordon, Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment; Teracita Keyanna, Red Water Pond Road Community; and Jonathan Perry, Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining, discussed the Quivira Mine and options for proposed cleanup and transportation of the mine's waste. Ms. Keyanna talked about the health issues experienced by communities near the mines. Mr. Perry discussed the many chapter houses within the eastern region of the Navajo Nation and said that there are more than 100 abandoned uranium mine sites within the region. Ms. Gordon said that the legislature can support cleanup efforts by funding the agencies that provide oversight of and education about these sites. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2023&ItemNumber=5>.

#### **Update on DWI Treatment Courts (3:11 p.m.)**

The Honorable Virginia A. Yazzie, magistrate judge, McKinley County; Shanell K. Franklin, DWI drug court coordinator, DWI Treatment Court-Problem Solving Courts, McKinley County Magistrate Court; and Jodie Schwebel, court executive officer, 11th Judicial District, discussed the court's DWI treatment program and progress the program has made, positive impacts of the program and the court's need for community outreach, establishment of judicial centers at chapter houses, development of an after-care program and a dedicated building for problem-solving courts in order to provide more services. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/IAC%20081023%20Item%206%20Update%20on%20DWI%20Treatment%20Courts.pdf>.

**Public Comment (3:59 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

**Recess**

The meeting recessed at 4:24 p.m.

**Friday, August 11****Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 10:14 a.m.

**Update on the Navajo Code Talkers Museum (10:15 a.m.)**

Regan Hawthorne, Navajo Code Talkers Museum Corporation, acknowledged three members of the audience who are descendants of code talkers and talked about challenges the museum board is experiencing, including negotiations related to a contract for land, the lack of current office space and problems raising, matching and tracking funds for the project. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/IAC%20081023%20Item%208%20Update%20on%20the%20Navajo%20Code%20Talkers%20Museum.pdf>

**Update from the Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital (RMCH) (10:56 a.m.)**

Robert Whitaker, chief executive officer, Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services, began by thanking individuals for support of the RMCH and announced that the hospital has hit major milestones in getting critical-access designation. He discussed the hospital's need for infrastructure improvements, including funding for labor and delivery, provider recruitment and employee retention. He noted that as part of the change to a critical-access hospital, the RMCH can now offer skilled nursing care and the urgent care clinic has been able to expand its hours. He said that the RMCH plans to develop scholarship and other programs to bring in nontraditional students for training.

**Public Comment (11:50 a.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.