MINUTES
of the
THIRD MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

August 10, 2026
Diné College Shiprock South Campus
Classrooms 36 and 37, Math and Science Building
1316 College Drive
Shiprock

August 11-12, 2026
Wild Horse Casino and Hotel
13603 United States Highway 54
Dulce

The third meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, at 9:45 a.m. on Monday, August 10, 2026, at Diné College in Shiprock.

Present
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta (10/10, 10/12)
Rep. John Block (10/10)
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. William E. Sharer
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.
Sen. Rex Wilson

Advisory Members

Rep. Rebecca Dow
Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Sen. Linda M. López
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. George Muñoz
Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana

Sen. William P. Soules
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

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

Staff
Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, LCS
Sheila Keleher, Capital Outlay Programs Coordinator, 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, under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

Monday, August 10 — Shiprock

Welcome and Introductions (9:45 a.m.)
Senator Pinto welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked committee members, staff and audience members to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes (9:56 a.m.)
Upon a motion duly made and seconded and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the June 23-25, 2026 meeting.

Welcome to Diné College (9:57 a.m.)
Harley Interpreter, project and legislative specialist, Office of Legislative Affairs and Special Projects, Diné College, gave a brief history of the college, explained the scope of the college's offerings and provided basic demographic information on the college.

Campus Tour (10:25 a.m.)
The committee toured the Diné College Shiprock south campus.

Update from the Navajo Nation Shiprock Chapter (11:08 a.m.)

Debra Yazzie, vice president, Shiprock Chapter, Navajo Nation, gave an update on projects and activities for the Shiprock Chapter. In addition, she informed the committee of new department heads and project managers. Raymond John, president, Shiprock Chapter, Navajo Nation, welcomed the committee and emphasized the importance of the projects the chapter is pursuing.

Public Comment (12:03 p.m.)

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

Update from Dream Diné Charter School (12:56 p.m.)

Nadine Chatto, head administrator, Dream Diné Charter School, and Andrea Thomas, teacher and reading interventionist, Dream Diné Charter School, provided the history and current status of the Dream Diné Charter School, reviewing specific programs at the school as well as goals and plans for the future. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2026&ItemNumber=4.

Indigenous Geothermal Development and Geothermal Program Update (2:12 p.m.)

Rebecca "Puck" Stair, director, Energy Conservation and Management Division, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, provided an overview of the possibilities for and benefits available to Indian nations, tribes and pueblos in developing geothermal projects. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2026&ItemNumber=5.

Committee Discussion: Capital Outlay and the Navajo Nation (2:54 p.m.)

Representative Abeyta led a discussion on capital outlay issues and suggestions for improvement. Panel members included Katherine Belzowski, assistant attorney general, Navajo Nation Department of Justice; Amber Crotty, delegate, Navajo Nation Council; Gervana Begay, northern/eastern agency representative, Navajo Nation Office of the President; Ms. Keleher; Denise R.E. Copeland, principal archaeologist, Capital Projects Management Department, Division of Community Development, Navajo Nation; and Michelle Peterson, manager, Capital Projects Management Department, Division of Community Development, Navajo Nation.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 5:33 p.m.

Tuesday, August 11 — Dulce

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:54 a.m.

Welcome and Update from the Jicarilla Apache Nation (9:58 a.m.)

Adrian Notsinneh, president, Jicarilla Apache Nation, welcomed the committee and gave a general update of current affairs with the nation. Jimmy Garcia, vice president, Jicarilla Apache Nation, detailed improvement and infrastructure projects completed, ongoing and proposed for the nation. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2026&ItemNumber=7.

Update from the Jicarilla Apache Nation Power Authority (12:45 p.m.)

Charlie Ferrell, general manager, Jicarilla Apache Nation Power Authority, and Vice President Garcia detailed the Jicarilla Apache Nation's capital improvement projects and infrastructure improvement plans, with particular attention to the expansion of electric utility service to nation members. President Notsinneh assisted in answering committee questions.

Update from Navajo Preparatory School (Navajo Prep) and the Code Talkers Museum (1:59 p.m.)

Shawna Becenti, head of school, Navajo Prep, provided an overview of how the school is performing, its ongoing mission and what new programs have been instituted. Ms. Becenti also announced an agreement to build a Code Talkers museum at Navajo Prep. Josett D. Monette, secretary, Indian Affairs Department, joined Ms. Becenti to outline the cooperative agreement between the state and Navajo Prep to build the new museum. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2026&ItemNumber=9.

Approval of Committee Letter in Support of Navajo Prep Capital Outlay Request (3:59 p.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded and without any objections, the committee approved sending a letter to the legislative budget committees supporting the capital outlay requests of Navajo Prep.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, August 12 — Dulce

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:32 a.m.

Overview of Behavioral Health Investments (Senate Bill 3 (2026) Initiatives) (9:34 a.m.)

Stacey Boone, state behavioral health manager, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), and Pamela Trujillo, program manager, AOC, detailed the planning and operations of behavioral health initiatives in the behavioral health regions created by statute throughout the state. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2026&ItemNumber=10.

Geothermal Energy Opportunities on Tribal Lands (11:05 a.m.)

Tom Solomon, New Mexico Geothermal Working Group, provided a general overview of geothermal energy opportunities for Indian nations, tribes and pueblos and suggested legislation the working group might pursue in the next session. Shari Kelley, Ph.D., lead research scientist, Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, spoke about the specifics of the geology of the geothermal resources available on tribal lands. Darien Cabral, Pueblo of San Ildefonso, and Jeff Atencio, Rainstorm Consulting, discussed their specific experiences with starting to develop geothermal resources on tribal lands. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/10/2026&ItemNumber=11.

Adjourn

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.