

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

**June 23-25, 2026
Inn of the Mountain Gods
287 Carrizo Canyon Road
Mescalero**

The second meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, at 10:14 a.m. on June 23, 2026 at the Inn of the Mountain Gods in Mescalero.

Present

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair (6/23, 6/24)
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta (6/23, 6/24)
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley (6/23, 6/24)
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. Rex Wilson
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent

Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.

Advisory Members

Rep. Rebecca Dow (6/23)
Sen. Linda M. López (6/23)
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Sen. George K. Muñoz
Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules

Guest Legislator

Rep. Micaela Lara Cadena (6/23)

(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.

Tuesday, June 23

Welcome and Introductions (10:14 a.m.)

Senator Pinto welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked committee members, staff and audience members to introduce themselves.

Welcome and History of the Mescalero Apache Tribe (10:25 a.m.)

Tanis Torres, councilwoman, Mescalero Apache Tribe, provided an update on the unprecedented challenges of the past two years, given the devastating South Fork and Salt wildfires, followed by the catastrophic flooding of the Rio Ruidoso. Ms. Torres reported that housing remains the top critical need, with other priorities being health care, broadband, roads, utilities and infrastructure. Current tribal projects include the elder center, the sawmill, the emergency management building and the fire station. The tribe continues to engage in economic development projects while promoting wildfire mitigation, sustainable forest management and stewardship over water resources and other natural resources.

Jacob Daukei, historic preservation director, Mescalero Apache Tribe, and Holly Houghten, tribal historic preservation officer, Mescalero Apache Tribe, presented a short history of the three bands of the Mescalero Apaches (Lipan, Chiricahua and Mescalero) and their ancestral homelands. The Mescalero Apache Tribe reservation, which was formally established in 1873 by President Ulysses S. Grant, originally was one million acres but over the years was reduced to 463,000 acres.

Navigating the New Mexico Gaming Compact: Understanding the Compact and Legislative Process (11:16 a.m.)

Nelva Cervantes, general counsel, Mescalero Apache Tribe, gave a brief introductory review of the state gaming compact. Under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, tribes are required to establish government-to-government agreements known as gaming compacts. Ms. Cervantes emphasized that Indian gaming allows for economic development and self-sufficiency for tribes. The federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, created by Congress in 1988, provides a regulatory structure for the gaming compacts, while the National Indian Gaming Commission provides regulation on the federal level. Tribal lands that were established after 1988 are prohibited from obtaining gaming compacts. Currently, 17 Indian nations, tribes and pueblos in

New Mexico have gaming compacts; however, only 14 of them have class 3 gaming. The last state compact was negotiated in 2015. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=6/23/2026&ItemNumber=2>.

Approval of Minutes (12:18 p.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the May 26, 2026 meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 1:32 p.m.

Wednesday, June 24

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:30 a.m.

Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act (Senate Bill 3, 2025) Update: Region 12 (9:40 a.m.)

Ross Coleman, director of strategic planning and resilience, Behavioral Health Region 12, discussed the community outreach meetings that are being conducted in Behavioral Health Region 12 in response to the Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act. Mr. Coleman outlined the five priorities identified by behavioral health clinicians as: crisis continuance service; residential treatment expansion; justice and diversion services; recovery and withdrawal management services; and navigation and transportation.

Fire and Flood Recovery and Response (11:08 a.m.)

Bryan Shendo, tribal administrator, Mescalero Apache Tribe, gave an overview of the current and proposed watershed projects, many of which are recovery efforts, following last year's massive flooding from the South Fork and Salt wildfires. Mr. Shendo noted that it is essential that the tribe coordinate with the Village of Ruidoso and the community on recovery efforts. Mr. Shendo outlined current projects for sediment removal from basins, dredging Eagle Lake of debris and constructing the Bear Canyon and Eagle Creek steel trash racks, which were originally designed by the Mescalero Apache Tribe to stop debris and slow the water flow going into the canyon. Another ongoing recovery effort is the removal of sediment from the riparian wetlands, including planting cattails, willows and cottonwood trees. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=6/23/2026&ItemNumber=4>.

Public Comment (12:15 p.m.)

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

Tour of Mescalero Apache Sawmill, Emergency Response Building and Housing Project (2:00 p.m.)

Committee members and committee staff toured the Mescalero Apache sawmill, the emergency response building and a community housing project.

Thursday, June 24

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:40 a.m.

Overview of the Native American Social Work Studies Institute (NASWSI): New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) (9:41 a.m.)

Rachell Tenorio, Ph.D., director and assistant professor, NASWSI, NMHU, gave an overview of the NASWSI, which provides social work students with educational and cultural training needed to enhance their work in tribal communities. Rebecca Maldonado Moore, Ph.D., professor, Facundo Valdez School of Social Work, NMHU, reviewed the Indigenous Knowledge Pathways program, which focuses on community engagement and professional development, as well as culturally and linguistically responsive curricula. Alicia Lineweaver, student, NMHU, discussed various efforts in place to reach out to Native American students in the social work field. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=6/23/2026&ItemNumber=5>.

Native American Student Success: Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU) (11:04 a.m.)

Ryan Trosper, president, ENMU-Ruidoso, and Edna Yokum, Ed.D., dean of technical education, ENMU-Roswell, presented an overview of the ENMU campuses in Roswell, Portales and Ruidoso and their respective educational and technical programs. Dr. Trosper discussed the importance of the partnership between ENMU-Ruidoso and the Mescalero Apache Tribe community, including the indigenous student programs and the timber-grading program with the tribe's sawmill. Bailey Roanhorse, student coordinator, Office of Indigenous Affairs, ENMU-Portales, and Edith Morgan, student, ENMU-Ruidoso, discussed Native American student success initiatives and outreach programs at ENMU. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=6/23/2026&ItemNumber=6>.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.