



NEW MEXICO LEGISLATURE

INDIAN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

2025 INTERIM FINAL REPORT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SERVICE
490 OLD SANTA FE TRAIL, SUITE 411
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501
(505) 986-4600
WWW.NMLEGIS.GOV

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTERIM SUMMARY

WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE

AGENDAS AND MINUTES

INTERIM SUMMARY

Indian Affairs Committee 2025 Interim Summary

In 2025, the Indian Affairs Committee held meetings across New Mexico, including in Tohatchi, Pinedale, Taos, Alamo, To'hajiilee, Albuquerque and Santa Fe, to address issues affecting Native American communities. Host chapters, colleges and health centers provided updates on local priorities, community needs and ongoing projects.

The committee focused on state-tribal relations, receiving presentations on the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, capital outlay and state-federal litigation concerning Indian water rights settlements. The Indian Affairs Department, Cultural Affairs Department, Office of the State Engineer, State Department of Justice and Navajo Nation provided key updates on intergovernmental coordination.

As in previous years, tribal education remained a major theme for the committee's interim work. Navajo Technical University, Diné College, Navajo Preparatory School, the NACA Inspired Schools Network, Six Directions Indigenous School and the Santa Fe Indian School presented to the committee on academic programs, language revitalization and capital needs. The committee received multiple updates on the *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* lawsuit from the plaintiffs and from advocates and state agencies. The Higher Education Department presented to the committee on federal funding for tribal education.

Economic development and housing presentations to the committee highlighted tribal entrepreneurship, gaming and Native housing justice, with updates from the Gaming Control Board, the Tribal Homeownership Coalition and the Tribal Entrepreneurship Enhancement Program at the University of New Mexico. Officials with the Navajo/Gallup Water Supply Project also presented to the committee on infrastructure needs. Public health and safety topics addressed this interim included behavioral health services, veterans' support, county and tribal health councils, the Turquoise Alert system, human trafficking awareness and the impacts of extreme weather on community health and traditional practices.

WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE

**2025 APPROVED
WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE
for the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Members

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez

Rep. Charlotte Little
Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Nicholas A. Paul
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Advisory Members

Rep. Rebecca Dow
Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Sen. Linda M. López
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Angelita Mejia

Sen. George K. Muñoz
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

Work Plan

The New Mexico Legislative Council created the Indian Affairs Committee (IAC) on April 28, 2025. The IAC addresses issues and policies that affect Native Americans in New Mexico. IAC meetings are essential to the work of the legislature in addressing the issues affecting this segment of its constituency.

The IAC will address the following topics affecting Native Americans during the 2025 interim, including updates that include or address:

A. State-Tribal Relations:

1. presentations from Native American liaisons or similarly tasked individuals from state executive agencies regarding outreach efforts, challenges and successes;
2. a presentation on the transportation of uranium between various chapter houses on the Navajo Nation;
3. funding for tribal capital projects;
4. an update from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives Task Force and the State Department of Justice's missing indigenous persons specialist;
5. an update on tribal gaming, sports betting and alcohol on gaming floors;

6. an update from the Veterans' Services Department and tribal veterans' affairs organizations on veterans' affairs in tribal communities;
7. presentations from the Indian Affairs Department, the Department of Environment and the New Mexico Finance Authority on water infrastructure needs on tribal land;
8. a report from the Department of Transportation, the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation and the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs on tribal roads and construction;
9. an update from the secretary of state and the Native American Voters Alliance on tribal election issues;
10. an update from the Children, Youth and Families Department on the Indian Family Protection Act;
11. a presentation on the Indian Resources Development Program;
12. a presentation on the liquor excise tax and tobacco tax and potential uses for those funds;
13. updates on substance use issues, suicide prevention, drug trafficking, youth violence and behavioral health in New Mexico;
14. an update on housing, poverty, food insecurity and employment issues for Native Americans;
15. a presentation on domestic violence shelter funding on tribal lands;
16. updates on fire and flooding concerns on tribal lands;
17. an update on the Navajo Code Talkers Museum;
18. an update on public safety and cross-commissioning of law enforcement officers;
19. an update from Indigenous Women Rising;
20. a presentation from the State Department of Justice on the department's work with tribal communities;
21. a presentation from the Aging and Long-Term Services Department concerning services available to Native Americans; and

22. proposed legislation regarding Native American affairs;

B. Economic Development:

1. broadband access on tribal lands;
2. updates from the Economic Development Department, the Indian Affairs Department and the Workforce Solutions Department on the Energy Transition Act;
3. tribal energy development;
4. the status of abandoned, uncapped and converted oil and gas wells; and
5. the impact of tribal gaming;

C. Education:

1. the *Zuni v. State of New Mexico* lawsuit and the state equalization guarantee distribution, impact aid and funding formula;
2. an update on *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* and the state's action plan;
3. preservation of Native American languages and language equity;
4. Native American teacher retention and increasing access to Native American teachers;
5. culturally relevant early learning programs;
6. Bureau of Indian Affairs salary parity and infrastructure concerns; and
7. tribal education for health care providers; and

D. Annual Reports from Executive Agencies:

1. reports from the Office of the State Engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission regarding:
 - a. *Aamodt* settlement obligations and effects on federal funding;
 - b. the status of proposed Indian water rights settlements requiring state financing;

- c. the distribution of funds from the Indian Water Rights Settlement Fund to implement approved settlements and the proposed timing of the distributions;
 - d. recommendations on the level of funding for the Indian Water Rights Settlement Fund necessary to timely implement Indian water rights; and
 - e. water line updates;
2. a report from the Indian Affairs Department regarding:
- a. the compiled reports from all state agencies on activities pursuant to the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, including information on policies, plans, contact individuals, training, programs and services from each agency; and
 - b. the department's priorities and initiatives, as well as updates on current issues that tribal communities are facing; and
3. a report from the Tribal Infrastructure Board regarding the total expenditures from the Tribal Infrastructure Project Fund for the previous fiscal year, the purposes for which expenditures were made, an analysis of the progress of the projects funded and proposals for legislative action in the subsequent legislative session.

**Indian Affairs Committee
2025 Approved Meeting Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
June 2	Santa Fe
July 16-18	Tohatchi/Church Rock
August 14-15	Taos
September 25-26	Alamo
October 22-24	To'hajiilee/Albuquerque
November 13-14	Santa Fe

AGENDAS AND MINUTES

**TENTATIVE AGENDA
for the
FIRST MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**June 2, 2025
State Capitol, Room 322
Santa Fe**

Monday, June 2

- 10:00 a.m. **Call to Order and Introductions**
—Senator Shannon D. Pinto, Chair, Indian Affairs Committee
—Representative D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair, Indian Affairs Committee
- 10:15 a.m. (1) **[Discussion of Focus Area, Work Plan and Meeting Schedule](#)**
—Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, Legislative Council Service
- 12:00 noon **Adjourn**

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

**June 2, 2025
State Capitol, Room 322
Santa Fe**

The first meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, on June 2, 2025 at 10:09 a.m. in Room 322 of the State Capitol in Santa Fe.

Present

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent

Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Nicholas A. Paul

Advisory Members

Sen. Linda M. López
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

Rep. Rebecca Dow
Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Sen. George K. Muñoz
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

Staff

Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, LCS
Sheila Keleher, Researcher, 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, June 2

Welcome and Introductions (10:09 a.m.)

Senator Pinto welcomed everyone to the meeting. Committee members, staff and audience members introduced themselves.

Discussion of Focus Area, Work Plan and Meeting Schedule (10:24 a.m.)

Ms. Waguespack presented the proposed work plan and meeting schedule for the 2025 interim. Committee members made suggestions and discussed additions to the work plan and meeting schedule. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee adopted the 2025 work plan and meeting schedule, as amended. The approved work plan and meeting schedule can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Publications/Work_Plans/IACworkplan25.pdf.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Revised: July 15, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA
for the
SECOND MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**July 16, 2025
Tohatchi Chapter House
PO Box 287
Tohatchi**

**July 17-18, 2025
Pinedale Chapter House
Milepost 5 Navajo Service Route 11
Church Rock**

Wednesday, July 16 — Tohatchi Chapter House

- 9:00 a.m. **Call to Order and Introductions**
—Senator Shannon D. Pinto, Chair, Indian Affairs Committee
- 9:15 a.m. (1) **[Welcome and Status Update from Tohatchi Chapter and Other District 14 Chapters](#)**
—Elvis Bitsilly, President, Tohatchi Chapter
—Lee Rodgers, Vice President, Tohatchi Chapter
- 10:00 a.m. **Public Comment***
- 11:00 a.m. **Tohatchi Tour****
- 12:00 noon **Lunch**
- 1:00 p.m. (2) **[Alcohol Harms Alleviation Coalition](#)**
—Representative Micaela Lara Cadena
—Senator Antoinette Sedillo Lopez
- 2:00 p.m. (3) **[Update from Navajo Technical University \(NTU\) Nursing Program](#)**
—Casmir Agbaraji, Ph.D., Dean of Undergraduate Studies, NTU
—Cristina Carpenter, Ph.D., Nursing Director, NTU
—Michelle Kahn-John, Ph.D., Nursing Consultant, NTU
- 3:00 p.m. (4) **[Update from Diné College \(DC\)](#)**
—Glennita Haskey, Acting President, DC
—Leon Jackson, Director, Capital Projects, DC
—Francetta Begaye, Director, Dual Credit Program, DC
—Kimberly Dominguez, Director, Teacher Education Project, DC

4:00 p.m. **Public Comment***

4:30 p.m. **Recess**

Thursday, July 17 — Pinedale Chapter House

9:00 a.m. **Reconvene**

9:15 a.m. (5) **Welcome and Status Update from Pinedale Chapter (PC)**

- Sarah Jackson, President, PC
- Sylvia Morgan, Vice President, PC
- Clara Daye, Secretary/Treasurer, PC
- Titus Nez, Community Services Coordinator, PC

10:00 a.m. (6) **New Mexico Redistricting Task Force**

- Leonard Gorman, Executive Director, Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission

11:00 a.m. (7) **Six Directions Indigenous School**

- Rebecca Niiha, Head Administrator, Six Directions Indigenous School

11:45 a.m. **Public Comment***

12:00 noon **Lunch**

1:00 p.m. (8) **The Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico Lawsuit**

- Wilhelmina Yazzie, Plaintiff
- Melissa Candelaria, Education Director, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty

2:00 p.m. (9) **Update on the Navajo/Gallup Water Supply Project: Bureau of Reclamation**

- Bart Deming, Acting Area Manager, Western Colorado Area Office, United States Bureau of Reclamation

3:00 p.m. (10) **Update on the Navajo/Gallup Water Supply Project: City of Gallup**

- Louis Bonaguidi, Mayor, City of Gallup
- Frank Chiapetti, City Manager, City of Gallup

4:00 p.m. (11) **Human Trafficking in the Transit Industry**

- Bernadine Beyale, Executive Director, 4Corners K-9 Search and Rescue
- Louie Greek, Training Specialist, Truckers Against Trafficking

4:30 p.m. **Public Comment***

4:45 p.m. **Recess**

Friday, July 18 — Pinedale Chapter House

10:00 a.m. **Reconvene**

10:15 a.m. (12) **[Update on Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico](#)**
—TBD, Public Education Department (invited)

11:30 a.m. **Public Comment***

12:00 noon **Lunch**

1:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Indian Affairs Committee [web page](#).

**This is an invitation-only tour for committee members and staff.

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

**July 16, 2025
Tohatchi Chapter House
PO Box 287
Tohatchi**

**July 17-18, 2025
Pinedale Chapter House
Milepost 5 Navajo Service Route 11
Church Rock**

The second meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, on July 16, 2025 at 9:24 a.m. at the Tohatchi Chapter House in Tohatchi.

Present

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley (7/16, 7/17)
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez (7/17, 7/18)
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. William E. Sharer (7/16, 7/17)
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent

Sen. Nicholas A. Paul

Advisory Members

Sen. Linda M. López (7/16)
Rep. Stefani Lord (7/16)
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. George K. Muñoz (7/17)
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules (7/16)
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

Rep. Rebecca Dow
Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez

Guest Legislators

Rep. Micaela Lara Cadena (7/16)
Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez (7/16)

(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, Researcher, LCS

Guests

The guest list is in the meeting file.

Handouts

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References to Webcast

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Wednesday, July 16 — Tohatchi Chapter House**Welcome and Introductions (9:24 a.m.)**

Senator Pinto welcomed everyone to the meeting. Committee members, staff and audience members introduced themselves.

Welcome and Status Update from Tohatchi Chapter and Other District 14 Chapters (9:49 a.m.)

Elvis Bitsilly, president, Tohatchi Chapter, and Lee Rodgers, vice president, Tohatchi Chapter, provided a brief history of the chapter and the establishment of the Red Willow Farms. One of the chapter's high-priority projects is lighting on United States Highway 491 because of heavy traffic and safety concerns for students, parents and school staff. Ella Wilson, vice chair, Bahast'lah Community Land Use Planning Committee (CLUPC), gave a brief update on the work of the CLUPC and the current projects and concerns of the Bahast'lah Chapter. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

Public Comment (10:17 a.m.)

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

Tohatchi Tour (11:00 a.m.)

Committee members toured the Tohatchi Senior Center. Mr. Bitsilly led legislators on a driving tour of the Tohatchi Chapter area, which included the Navajo Head Start school, the Ch'ooshgai Community School, the Ch'ooshgai School fire station and the new high school currently under construction.

Public Comment (1:27 p.m.)

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

Alcohol Harms Alleviation Coalition (1:45 p.m.)

Representative Cadena; Senator Sedillo Lopez; and Jennie Wei, M.D., Gallup Indian Medical Center, addressed the issue of alcohol harms from excessive alcohol use. With New Mexico having the highest state rate of alcohol-related mortality in the country since 1997, the impact of alcohol taxes and alcohol control policies was discussed, as well as alcohol tax proposals brought before the legislature in recent years. They discussed the legacies of colonialism, structural violence and intergenerational trauma that have intensified alcohol harms in New Mexico's indigenous populations. The panel emphasized the critical need for broader alcohol harm prevention and more treatment initiatives in the state. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Update from Navajo Technical University (NTU) Nursing Program (3:30 p.m.)

Casmir Agbaraji, Ph.D., dean of undergraduate studies, NTU, and Cristina Carpenter, Ph.D., nursing director, NTU, gave an overview of the new nursing program that reopened in 2024, with current funding from the New Mexico Nursing Expansion grant. Dr. Carpenter outlined the program's needs and accomplishments, citing the capability for simulation being a high priority, along with simulators and the necessary faculty training and support. The new nursing program is also in need of additional funding. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Motion to Draft Letter of Support (4:04 p.m.)

The committee approved, without objection, a motion to draft a letter of support for the Federal Occupational Health program's Environmental Health and Safety Services team to the Program Support Center of the United States Department of Health and Human Services to expedite the Tohatchi Senior Center's inspection and permit to operate.

Approval of Minutes (4:04 p.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the June 2, 2025 meeting.

Update from Diné College (DC) (4:08 p.m.)

Harley Interpreter, legislative affairs specialist, DC, presented a brief history of the College, which was founded in 1968 as the first tribal college in the country. Having been recently classified as a research institution in the updated Carnegie Classifications of Institutes of Higher Education, Diné College saw a 30% increase in enrollment over the past two years. Kimberly Dominguez, director, Teacher Education Project, DC, gave an overview of the

Northwest New Mexico Teacher Education Program, which was born out of a grant that DC wrote to address many of the deficiencies outlined in the *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* lawsuit from a higher education perspective. The goal of the program is to recruit and develop teachers who have the ability to teach with culturally and linguistically responsive skills. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

Public Comment (4:56 p.m.)

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

Recess

The meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, July 17 — Pinedale Chapter House

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:27 a.m.

Welcome and Status Update from Pinedale Chapter (PC) (9:29 a.m.)

Clara Daye, secretary/treasurer, PC, and Titus Nez, community services coordinator, PC, spoke about the new Navajo tribal library that has recently opened, as well as the chapter's traditional Summer Youth Employment Program. They also discussed a tribal road infrastructure project and internet expansion for community members living in the valley. One high-priority project underway is the establishment of a community cemetery. Megan Yazzie, who is currently crowned Miss Pinedale Community and is employed with the Summer Youth Employment Program, introduced herself to the committee.

New Mexico Redistricting Task Force (11:30 a.m.)

Leonard Gorman, executive director, Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, gave an overview of the recommendations developed by the 2020 New Mexico First Redistricting Task Force and its goals to support legislation to improve transparency and fairness in the redistricting process. Kathleen Burke, project coordinator, Fair Districts for New Mexico, reviewed the current task force members and the proposed meeting schedule and topics for future discussion. Ms. Burke stated that the 2025 Fair Districts for New Mexico Redistricting Task Force will release a final report by October 15, 2025. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

Six Directions Indigenous School (12:59 p.m.)

Rebecca Niiha, head administrator, Six Directions Indigenous School, gave an overview of the state-chartered public secondary school, which uses an indigenous-centered model focused on native languages, land-based learning, restorative justice and project-based instruction. Ms.

Niiha also outlined the challenges and obstacles in obtaining capital outlay funding, given that the school does not own the school building. Wilhelmina Yazzie, plaintiff, *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico*, joined Ms. Niiha in support of Six Directions Indigenous School. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=7>.

Public Comment (1:40 p.m.)

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

The *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* Lawsuit (1:59 p.m.)

Ms. Yazzie; Melissa Candelaria, education director and attorney, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty; and Alisa Diehl, senior education attorney, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, presented an overview and update of the *Yazzie/Martinez* lawsuit, including the April 2025 ruling that found that New Mexico's public education system is still violating the constitutional rights of at-risk students, including Native American students, English learners, students with disabilities and students from low-income families. The Public Education Department (PED) was ordered to develop a comprehensive plan to correct ongoing constitutional violations. The panel outlined the key components of an action plan identified by plaintiffs for establishing an equitable education system for all students. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=8>.

Update on the Navajo/Gallup Water Supply Project (NGWSP): City of Gallup (4:03 p.m.)

Louis Bonaguidi, mayor, City of Gallup; Frank Chiapetti, city manager, City of Gallup; and Mark DePauli, P.E., P.S., DePauli Engineering and Surveying, LCC, outlined the history of Gallup's long-term reliance on ground water and concerns about declining water levels within aquifers. The panel discussed the ongoing NGWSP and the current challenges the city is facing. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=10>.

Update on the NGWSP: Bureau of Reclamation (4:28 p.m.)

Bart Deming, acting area manager, Western Colorado Area Office, United States Bureau of Reclamation, reviewed the history of the NGWSP and discussed the implementation of the Navajo Nation San Juan River Basin water rights settlement. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=9>.

Human Trafficking in the Transit Industry (5:24 p.m.)

Bernadine Beyale, executive director, 4Corners K-9 Search and Rescue, and Louie Greek, training specialist, Truckers Against Trafficking, gave an overview of efforts to find missing indigenous persons and combat human trafficking, which commonly occurs at truck stops near tribal lands. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=11>.

Public Comment (5:42 p.m.)

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

Recess

The meeting recessed at 5:53 p.m.

Friday, July 18 — Pinedale Chapter House**Reconvene**

The meeting reconvened at 10:07 a.m.

Update on *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* (10:07 a.m.)

Gregory Frostad, assistant secretary of education, PED, and Damian Wierzbicki, deputy director, Indian Education Division, PED, reviewed amendments to the New Mexico Administrative Code implementing the Indian Education Act. Mr. Frostad and Mr. Wierzbicki noted key changes that provide for fixed base funding to every Indian nation, tribe and pueblo and are intended to strengthen tribal sovereignty and local control over the design and implementation of educational programs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=7/16/2025&ItemNumber=12>.

Public Comment (11:59 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 12:26 p.m.

Revised: August 12, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA
for the
THIRD MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**August 14-15, 2025
Taos Civic Center, El Taoseno Room
120 Civic Plaza Drive
Taos**

Thursday, August 14

- 10:00 a.m. **Call to Order and Introductions**
—Senator Shannon D. Pinto, Chair, Indian Affairs Committee
- 10:15 a.m. (1) **[An Overview of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act](#)**
—Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service
- 11:00 a.m. (2) **[Breaking Ground: Removing Roadblocks for Tribal Homeownership](#)**
—Christopher Billey, Executive Director, Tribal Homeownership Coalition
of the Southwest (THOCSW)
—Crystal Carr Cook, Ph.D., Policy and Data Specialist, THOCSW
- 12:00 noon **Lunch**
- 1:00 p.m. (3) **[Navajo Preparatory School Update](#)**
—Shawna Allison Becenti, Head of School, Navajo Preparatory School
- 2:00 p.m. (4) **[Update from the Office of Indian Elder Affairs at the Aging and Long-Term Services Department \(ALTSD\)](#)**
—Emily Kaltenbach, Secretary, ALTSD
—Melissa Sanchez, Director, Office of Indian Elder Affairs, ALTSD
- 3:00 p.m. (5) **[Update on the Turquoise Alert System](#)**
—Lieutenant Philip Vargas, New Mexico State Police Division, Department
of Public Safety (NMSP)
—Sergeant Ricardo Breceda, NMSP
- 4:00 p.m. **Public Comment***
- 4:30 p.m. **Recess**

Friday, August 15

9:45 a.m. **Reconvene**

10:00 a.m. (6) **The 2025 Regular Session by the Numbers**
—Anthony "T.J." Trujillo, Trujillo Law Group
—Jennifer Trujillo, Trujillo Law Group

10:30 a.m. (7) **Review of State-Federal Litigation**
—Anjana Samant, Deputy Counsel for Impact Litigation, State Department
of Justice

11:30 a.m. **Public Comment***

12:00 noon **Adjourn**

*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Indian Affairs Committee [web page](#).

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

**August 14-15, 2025
Taos Civic Center, El Taoseno Room
120 Civic Plaza Drive
Taos**

The third meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, at 10:10 a.m. on Thursday, August 14, 2025, at the Taos Civic Center in Taos.

Present

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair (8/15)
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block
Rep. Rebecca Dow*
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Advisory Members

Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules

Absent

Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Martha Garcia
Sen. Nicholas A. Paul
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.

Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Sen. Linda M. López
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. George K. Muñoz
Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

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

*Appointed by the speaker of the house or the president pro tempore of the senate as a voting member for this meeting only.

Staff

Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, LCS
Sheila Keleher, Researcher, 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.

Thursday, August 14

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

Senator Pinto welcomed everyone. Members of the committee and the public introduced themselves.

An Overview of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act (10:14 a.m.)

Mr. Estok presented an overview of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, beginning with its formulation and passage and moving through the annual information publication required by the act. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

Breaking Ground: Removing Roadblocks for Tribal Homeownership (11:11 a.m.)

Christopher Billey, executive director, Tribal Homeownership Coalition of the Southwest (THOCSW), and Crystal Carr Cook, Ph.D., policy analyst and data specialist, THOCSW, gave a presentation detailing the THOCSW's mission. Mr. Billey presented historical and current data on homeownership on tribal land and approaches to expanding homeownership by tribal members throughout the state. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Navajo Preparatory School (NPS) Update (2:11 p.m.)

Shawna Allison Becenti, head of school, NPS, presented a video documenting achievements at the school and outlined new and continuing educational opportunities for students at the school. Ms. Becenti; Darah Tabrum, Ph.D., associate head of school for

advancement and outreach, NPS; and Robert Apodaca, consultant and lobbyist, NPS, responded to questions. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Update from the Office of Indian Elder Affairs at the Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD) (3:27 p.m.)

Emily Kaltenbach, secretary, ALTSD, and Melissa Sanchez, director, Office of Indian Elder Affairs, ALTSD, gave an overview of the ALTSD and highlighted the department's accomplishments and goals for the next four years centered around the department's State Plan on Aging. Kaltenbach submitted the ALTSD's 2025 State-Tribal Collaboration Act report for the committee's consideration. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

Motion To Send Letters (4:25 p.m.)

On a motion made by Representative Hernandez and seconded by Representative Block, the committee voted without objection to send letters of support to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Taxation and Revenue Committee, encouraging increased funding for several special projects at NPS.

Approval of Minutes (4:26 p.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the July 16-18, 2025 meeting.

Update on the Turquoise Alert System (4:26 p.m.)

Lieutenant Philip Vargas, New Mexico State Police Division, Department of Public Safety (NMSP), and Sergeant Ricardo Breceda, NMSP, provided a description of the requirements of the new Turquoise Alert System and outlined how the system has been used since its inception.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 5:43 p.m.

Friday, August 15

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:55 a.m.

The 2025 Regular Session by the Numbers (9:55 a.m.)

Anthony "T.J." Trujillo, Trujillo Law Group, and Jennifer Trujillo, Trujillo Law Group, gave a presentation that looked at the New Mexico legislature and the 2025 regular session,

breaking data into numerous categories and reviewing the legislative process. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=8/14/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

Review of State-Federal Litigation (10:56 a.m.)

Anjana Samant, deputy counsel for impact litigation, State Department of Justice (NMDOJ), reviewed litigation by the NMDOJ against the federal government and federal agencies, primarily over federal funding due the state.

Motion To Draft Letter (11:30 a.m.)

On a motion made by Representative Abeyta and seconded by Representative Hernandez, the committee voted to have a letter of support drafted supporting increased funding for the NMDOJ for litigation challenging federal government action. The committee will review the letter at its September 25-26, 2025 meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

Revised: September 24, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA
for the
FOURTH MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**September 25-26, 2025
Alamo Chapter House
#10
Alamo**

Thursday, September 25

- 9:00 a.m. **Call to Order and Introductions**
—Senator Shannon D. Pinto, Chair, Indian Affairs Committee
- 9:15 a.m. (1) **Welcome and Status Update from Alamo Chapter House**
—TBD
- 10:00 a.m. (2) **Update from the New Mexico Tribal Entrepreneurship Enhancement Program (NMTEEP)**
—Cecilia Becenti, Economic Development Specialist, NMTEEP, UNM Rainforest Innovations, University of New Mexico
—Lisa Kuuttilla, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Economic Development Officer, UNM Rainforest Innovations, University of New Mexico
- 11:00 a.m. (3) **Update from the Gaming Control Board (GCB)**
—Van Billops, C.P.A., Interim State Gaming Representative, GCB
- 12:00 noon **Lunch**
- 1:00 p.m. (4) **The Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) Sacred Beginnings Learning Tour**
—Joannie Suina, Ed.D., Assistant Secretary for Native American Early Childhood Education and Care, ECECD
—TBD
- 2:00 p.m. (5) **How Heat and Other Extreme Weather Events Impact Public Health**
—Shelley Mann-Lev, M.P.H., Executive Director, Healthy Climate New Mexico (HCNM)
—Christine Dobbin, M.P.H., Member, Board of Directors, HCNM
—Charles Goodmacher, M.A., Policy Advisor, HCNM

3:00 p.m. (6) **Northern New Mexico Climate and Traditions and the Impact of Climate Change on Traditional Ways of Life**
—Stephanie Moraga-McHaley, M.S., Member, Board of Directors, HCNM
—Melissa Riley, Ph.D., Member, Board of Directors, Native Community Development Associate, HCNM

4:00 p.m. **Public Comment***

4:30 p.m. **Recess**

Friday, September 26

9:30 a.m. **Reconvene**

9:35 a.m. (7) **Overview of Cross-Commissioning**
—Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council Service

10:00 a.m. (8) **Economic Impact and History of Tribal Gaming in New Mexico**
—James Rivera, President, Cornerstone Group, LLC

11:00 a.m. (9) **Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 Accommodations for State Employees**
—Sunny Gonzales, Union Steward, Communications Workers of America Local 7076

12:00 noon **Public Comment***

12:30 p.m. **Adjourn**

*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Indian Affairs Committee [web page](#).

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

**September 25-26, 2025
Alamo Chapter House
#10
Alamo**

The fourth meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, at 9:55 a.m. on September 25, 2025 at the Alamo Chapter House in Alamo.

Present

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair (9/26)
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent

Rep. Charlotte Little
Sen. Nicholas A. Paul
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.

Advisory Members

Rep. Rebecca Dow
Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Sen. Linda M. López
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. George K. 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 those members not present for the entire meeting.)

Staff

Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, LCS
Gabriel Suazo, Intern, 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.

Thursday, September 25

Welcome and Introductions (9:55 a.m.)

Senator Pinto welcomed the committee, and members of the committee and LCS staff introduced themselves.

Welcome and Status Update from Alamo Chapter House (10:15 a.m.)

Nigel Secatero, vice president, Alamo Chapter, and Yvette Betone, secretary/ treasurer, Alamo Chapter, welcomed the committee and discussed the chapter's needs, including pavement of roads and border fencing, assistance with a drug rehabilitation facility, local law enforcement to address high rates of drug use and a police substation for when people are apprehended.

Joseph Pies, grant and contract officer, The Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc., and Rick Padilla, president, The Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc., spoke on the needs of the Alamo Chapter and discussed wastewater management and community needs such as electricity, housing and water.

Cecil Abeyta, member, The Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc., discussed improvements in test scores, graduation rates and the increased number of students pursuing higher education in the state. Additionally, Mr. Abeyta mentioned that if education were to close in Alamo, new schools would have to open in Magdalena, and the state would have to provide transportation for students. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/25/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

Update from the New Mexico Tribal Entrepreneurship Enhancement Program (NMTEEP) (11:12 a.m.)

Cecilia Becenti, economic development specialist, NMTEEP, UNM Rainforest Innovations, University of New Mexico (UNM), discussed the NMTEEP's goal to create more

opportunities, wealth and job growth by enhancing entrepreneurship in tribal communities across New Mexico, in particular for people struggling with coal mine closures.

Lisa Kuuttila, chief executive officer and chief economic development officer, UNM Rainforest Innovations, UNM, mentioned that UNM Rainforest Innovations realized that it was underrepresenting a segment of people in the Native American population. Therefore, the City of Santa Fe partnered with UNM Rainforest Innovations to hire a funding liaison that could help grow the economy in tribal communities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/25/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Update from the Gaming Control Board (GCB) (11:37 a.m.)

Van Billops, C.P.A., interim state gaming representative, GCB, gave an overview of tribal gaming regulations. Mr. Billops also discussed exclusion lists, which encourage responsible gaming initiatives, and the need for collaborative work with tribes to provide education, prevention and treatment of gaming addiction. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/25/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) Sacred Beginnings Learning Tour (1:15 p.m.)

Joannie Suina, Ed.D., assistant secretary for Native American early childhood education and care, ECECD, spoke about the 243 scholarships that were awarded to Native American students pursuing early childhood education degrees in fiscal year 2025. Additionally, 170 indigenous and bilingual students received \$1,500 stipends for higher education pathways. New Mexico has a number of Native American early childhood education programs, including on the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Pueblo of Sandia and the Navajo Nation. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/25/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

How Heat and Other Extreme Weather Events Impact Public Health (2:09 p.m.)

Shelley Mann-Lev, M.P.H., executive director, Healthy Climate New Mexico (HCNM); Christine Dobbin, M.P.H., member, Board of Directors, HCNM; and Charles Goodmacher, M.A., policy advisor, HCNM, mentioned that New Mexico is one of the states that is rapidly getting hotter. They discussed research that shows that when temperatures exceed 86 degrees Fahrenheit, health impacts and emergency department visits increase across New Mexico. Rural isolation significantly compounds heat vulnerability due to substantial distances to health care facilities and longer response times for emergency services. For this reason, HCNM helped to

develop the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan, in anticipation of extreme heat, wildfires, droughts, storms and health risks. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/25/2025&ItemNumber=5>.

Northern New Mexico Climate and Traditions and the Impact of Climate Change on Traditional Ways of Life (2:57 p.m.)

Stephanie Moraga-McHaley, M.S., member, Board of Directors, HCNM, and Melissa Riley, Ph.D., member, Board of Directors, Native Community Development Associate, HCNM, discussed climate and health in New Mexico, including the West Nile Virus and its impact in the Native American community. Additionally, Ms. Moraga-McHaley and Ms. Riley spoke on the impacts of climate change on Native American ways of life, stating that sacred sites and ceremonial practices face increasing risks from extreme weather, drought, wildfires and shifting seasonal cycles. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/25/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

Public Comment (4:00 p.m.)

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

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:09 p.m.

Friday, September 26

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:46 a.m.

Overview of Cross-Commissioning (9:47 a.m.)

Mr. Estok gave an overview of cross-commissioning of law enforcement officers and mutual aid agreements.

Economic Impact and History of Tribal Gaming in New Mexico (10:18 a.m.)

James Rivera, president, Cornerstone Group, LLC, and Frank Chaves, chair, New Mexico Indian Gaming Association, presented a letter sent to United States Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell on July 29, 2003 related to the hearing from the same year on the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/25/2025&ItemNumber=8>.

Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) Accommodations for State Employees (11:32 a.m.)

Sunny Gonzales, union steward, Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 7076; Megan Green, president, Executive Board, CWA 7076; and Dylan Pell, agency vice president, Department of Health, CWA 7076, discussed how the CWA's disability committee was initiated in September of 2024. Through research, the CWA noted extreme delays in implementation of the ADA, a denial of accommodations, a lack of safety procedures and inaccessible facilities, among other issues. The CWA's goal is to remove barriers related to disabilities to ensure people's success.

Approval of Minutes (12:15 p.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the August 14-15, 2025 meeting.

Public Comment (12:15 p.m.)

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

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

Revised: October 17, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA
for the
FIFTH MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**October 22, 2025
Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center
129 Medicine Horse Drive
To'hajiilee**

**October 23-24, 2025
Central New Mexico Community College-Westside
Westside II Building
10549 Universe Boulevard NW
Albuquerque**

Wednesday, October 22 — Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center

- 9:00 a.m. **Call to Order and Introductions**
—Senator Shannon D. Pinto, Chair, Indian Affairs Committee
- 9:05 a.m. (1) **[Welcome from and Tour of the Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center \(CBNHC\) and To'hajiilee Community](#)**
—Ronnie Hurley, President, To'hajiilee Chapter, Navajo Nation
—Willinda Castillo, Chief School Administrator, To'hajiilee Community School
—John Billison, Interim Chief Executive Officer, CBNHC
—Carolyn Morris, Ph.D., Behavioral Health Director, CBNHC
- 10:15 a.m. (2) **[Update from the Veterans' Services Department \(VSD\)](#)**
—Eric James, Deputy Secretary, VSD
—Beverly Charley, Tribal Liaison, VSD
- 11:00 a.m. (3) **[Strengthening County and Tribal Health Councils for a Healthy New Mexico](#)**
—Valeria Alarcón, Executive Director, New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils (NMAHC)
—Gerilyn Antonio, Tribal Liaison, NMAHC
—Sarah Bitsui, Ats'íís Naabik'íyáti Health Council Coordinator
—Carolyn Morris, Ph.D., Behavioral Health Program Director, CBNHC
- 12:00 noon **Lunch**

- 1:00 p.m. (4) [Indian Affairs Department: Update on the State-Tribal Collaboration Act and Capital Outlay](#)
—Josett Monette, Secretary, Indian Affairs Department
- 2:00 p.m. (5) [Advancing Native Housing Justice: From Crisis to Stability, Safety and Sovereignty in Tribal, Rural and Urban Communities I](#)
—Dawn Begay, Vice President, Cicuye Consulting
—Gwen Packard, Tentative Director, STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center, and Program Specialist, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
- 3:00 p.m. (6) [Update from the NACA Inspired Schools Network \(NISN\) Diné Language Mentor and Apprentice Program](#)
—Geneva Becenti, Ph.D., Director, NISN Diné Language Initiatives and Policy Program
- 4:00 p.m. **Public Comment***
- 4:15 p.m. **Recess**

Thursday, October 23 — Central New Mexico Community College (CNM)-Westside

- 9:30 a.m. **Reconvene**
- 9:35 a.m. (7) [Welcome and Status Update from CNM](#)
—Nireata Seals, Ph.D., Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success, CNM
—Felecia Caton-Garcia, Ph.D., Executive Director, Office of Organizational Culture and Effectiveness, CNM
- 10:00 a.m. (8) [Santa Fe Indian School \(SFIS\) Presentation and Project Endorsement](#)
—Christie Abeyta, Superintendent, SFIS
—Gary Lujan, Director of Land Grant Management, SFIS
- 11:00 a.m. (9) [New Mexico's Food Banks: Partners in Addressing Hunger and Poverty Across the State](#)
—Jill Dixon, Executive Director, The Food Depot
—Katy Anderson, Vice President of Strategy, Partnerships and Advocacy, Roadrunner Food Bank
- 12:00 noon **Lunch**
- 1:30 p.m. (10) [Approval of Committee Letter and Minutes](#)
—Senator Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
—Representative D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair

2:00 p.m. (11) [Advancing Native Housing Justice: From Crisis to Stability, Safety and Sovereignty in Tribal, Rural and Urban Communities II](#)
—Dawn Begay, Vice President, Cicuye Consulting
—Chenoa Bah Stilwell-Jensen, Ph.D., Southwest Indigenous Housing Justice and Diné Regional Health Officer, Health Sciences Center, University of New Mexico

3:00 p.m. **Public Comment***

3:15 p.m. **Tour of Public Safety Programs at CNM-Westside — Fire Science and Law Enforcement****

4:30 p.m. **Recess**

Friday, October 24 — CNM-Westside

9:30 a.m. **Reconvene**

9:35 a.m. (12) [Overview of the Native American Professional Parent Resources \(NAPPR\) Organization](#)
—Elaine Sanchez, Executive Director, NAPPR

10:35 a.m. (13) [Update and Request from the Tribal Homeownership Coalition of the Southwest \(THOCSW\)](#)
—Christopher Billey, Executive Director, THOCSW
—Crystal Carr Cook, Ph.D., Policy and Data Specialist, THOCSW

11:35 a.m. **Public Comment***

12:00 noon **Adjourn**

*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Indian Affairs Committee [web page](#).

**This is an invitation-only tour for committee members and committee staff.

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

**October 22, 2025
Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center
129 Medicine Horse Drive
To'hajiilee**

**October 23-24, 2025
Central New Mexico Community College-Westside
Westside II Building
10549 Universe Boulevard NW
Albuquerque**

The fifth meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, on October 22, 2025 at 9:15 a.m. at the Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center in To'hajiilee.

Present

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley (10/22)
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair
Rep. Martha Garcia
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.

Advisory Members

Rep. Rebecca Dow (10/22, 10/23)
Sen. Linda M. López (10/22, 10/23)

Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. George K. Muñoz
Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

Guest Legislators

Rep. Joy Garratt (10/22)
Rep. Javier Martínez (10/22)

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

Staff

Nicole Waguespack, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Paul Estok, Staff Attorney, LCS
Gabriel Suazo, Intern, 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.

Wednesday, October 22 — Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center**Welcome and Introductions (9:15 a.m.)**

Senator Pinto welcomed the committee. Members of the committee and staff introduced themselves.

Welcome From and Tour of the Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center (CBNHC) and To'hajiilee Community (9:32 a.m.)

Ronnie Hurley, president, To'hajiilee Chapter, Navajo Nation; Willinda Castillo, chief school administrator, To'hajiilee Community School; John Billison, interim chief executive officer, CBNHC; and Carolyn Morris, Ph.D., behavioral health director, CBNHC, discussed local issues such as the lack of a local chapter house, no police presence, insufficient social services, no post office and a housing crisis. Committee members and staff toured the CBNHC and To'hajiilee. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

Update from the Veterans' Services Department (VSD) (1:18 p.m.)

Eric James, deputy secretary, VSD, and Beverly Charley, tribal liaison, VSD, talked about the VSD's dedication to collaborating on any veterans' issues related to New Mexico's Indian nations, tribes and pueblos. The VSD wants to ensure that Native American voices and

needs are heard and respected. Some of the challenges involve demand for updated veterans count data, outreach efforts to tribal lands and frequent turnover in tribal leadership. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Strengthening County and Tribal Health Councils for a Healthy New Mexico (2:09 p.m.)

Valeria Alarcón, executive director, New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils (NMAHC); Gerilyn Antonio, tribal liaison, NMAHC; Sarah Bitsui, Ats'íís Naabik'iyáti Health Council coordinator; and Carolyn Morris, Ph.D., behavioral health program director, CBNHC, gave an overview of the NMAHC. The presenters mentioned that there are 33 county and 10 tribal health councils that provide local representation of diverse and underserved communities statewide. Health councils are community health hubs with intimate knowledge of the barriers and challenges their communities face. Some of their services include critical functions of public health statewide, emergency response, prevention and intervention, ensuring access to critical services and health education. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Indian Affairs Department: Update on the State-Tribal Collaboration Act and Capital Outlay (3:22 p.m.)

Josett Monette, secretary, Indian Affairs Department, gave an overview on the State-Tribal Collaboration Act and capital outlay. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

Advancing Native Housing Justice: From Crisis to Stability, Safety and Sovereignty in Tribal, Rural and Urban Communities I (4:40 p.m.)

Dawn Begay, vice president, Cicuye Consulting, and Gwen Packard, tentative director, STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center, and program specialist, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, discussed Albuquerque's gap between Native and white home ownership and spoke about advocacy at tribal, municipal, state and federal levels. Ms. Begay discussed a three-phase plan that includes a mass design fund, preliminary guidance and programming that will help reflect the community's values and close the home ownership equity gap. This also includes collaboration among different entities regarding Native experiences, needs and preferences regarding housing in Albuquerque.

Update from the NACA Inspired Schools Network (NISN) Diné Language Mentor and Apprentice Program (5:37 p.m.)

Geneva Becenti, Ph.D., director, NISN Diné Language Initiatives and Policy Program, gave an overview of the 520 Native American Language and Culture Certification program,

which allows Indian nations, tribes and pueblos in the state to develop and establish criteria for Native language competency that is accepted as college credit. She said the program has certified 92 Diné language teachers who give instruction in 116 Diné language programs or classes in New Mexico. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=6>.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 6:17 p.m.

Thursday, October 23 — Central New Mexico Community College (CNM)-Westside

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:43 a.m.

Welcome and Status Update from CNM (10:02 a.m.)

Nireata Seals, Ph.D., vice president of enrollment management and student success, CNM, and Felecia Caton-Garcia, Ph.D., executive director, Office of Organizational Culture and Effectiveness, CNM, said CNM is seeking permanent workforce training. Additionally, CNM is working to improve the transfer student experience and financial aid process by creating a system that seamlessly connects CNM students with other colleges. Dr. Caton-Garcia discussed CNM's efforts in providing occupational support, an inclusive culture and community engagement. As a whole, CNM serves 2,100 students who identify as American Indian. Students get guidance through scholarship opportunities, cultural events, credit for prior learning and religious travel.

Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS) Presentation and Project Endorsement (11:18 a.m.)

Christie Abeyta, superintendent, SFIS, and Gary Lujan, director of land grant management, SFIS, talked about the SFIS's amphitheater fund project and discussed previous funding allocations. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=8>.

Approval of Committee Letter and Minutes (11:35 a.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the committee approved the committee's October 23, 2025 letter regarding the SFIS's request for \$8 million in state funding to complete the renovation and reconstruction of the school's Paolo Soleri Amphitheater, with amendments.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the September 25-26, 2025 meeting.

New Mexico's Food Banks: Partners in Addressing Hunger and Poverty Across the State (11:39 a.m.)

Jill Dixon, executive director, The Food Depot, and Katy Anderson, vice president of strategy, partnerships and advocacy, Roadrunner Food Bank, presented on the activities of food banks to address hunger and poverty across New Mexico and discussed the importance of strong safety net programs to help people meet basic needs and create healthier, more resilient communities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=9>.

Advancing Native Housing Justice: From Crisis to Stability, Safety and Sovereignty in Tribal, Rural and Urban Communities II (2:00 p.m.)

Dawn Begay, vice president, Cicuye Consulting; and Chenoa Bah Stilwell-Jensen, Ph.D., Southwest Indigenous Housing Justice and Diné regional health officer, Health Sciences Center, University of New Mexico, stated that Native families face some of the nation's highest rates of overcrowding, substandard housing and homelessness due to workforce shortages, safety gaps and limited access to land for development. The presenters noted that systematic barriers to homeownership and wealth accumulation continue to widen the racial wealth gap, extending intergenerational inequities in Native American communities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=11>.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Tour of Public Safety Programs at CNM-Westside — Fire Science and Law Enforcement (3:46 p.m.)

Members of the committee and staff toured CNM-Westside's public safety programs.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 3:46 p.m.

Friday, October 24 — CNM-Westside

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:35 a.m.

Overview of the Native American Professional Parent Resources (NAPPR) Organization (9:36 a.m.)

Elaine Sanchez, executive director, NAPPR, stated that NAPPR has four different programs, which serve 700 individuals per month in New Mexico, southern Colorado and El

Paso, Texas. The organization's goal is to support and work with young children and families by providing lifelong well-being through such services as risk assessments, health screenings, education, resources, supplies and therapies. All of the NAPPR's services are free and are designed to help children aged 0 to 3, pregnant people and Native and non-Native Americans. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=12>.

Update and Request from the Tribal Homeownership Coalition of the Southwest (THOCSW) (10:51 a.m.)

Christopher Billey, executive director, THOCSW, discussed adult home buyer certificate programs in at least 10 tribal communities. The THOCSW collaborates with high schools to provide homeownership training in at least five schools serving large tribal populations. The coalition delivers leadership development for a minimum of 50 tribal housing and homeownership professionals and tribal leaders and staff with the goal of strengthening tribal capacity for accurate housing data collection and analysis to inform policy and investment. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=10/22/2025&ItemNumber=13>.

Public Comment (12:04 p.m.)

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

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Revised: November 12, 2025

**TENTATIVE AGENDA
for the
SIXTH MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**November 13-14, 2025
State Capitol, Room 317
Santa Fe**

Thursday, November 13

- 9:00 a.m. **Call to Order and Introductions**
—Senator Shannon D. Pinto, Chair, Indian Affairs Committee
- 9:05 a.m. (1) **Overview of the Federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act**
—Debra Garcia y Griego, Secretary, Cultural Affairs Department (CAD)
—Danyelle Means, Director, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, CAD
- 10:00 a.m. (2) **New Mexico Memorial and Truth and Reconciliation Commission — Forced Sterilization of Indigenous Women**
—Elena Giacci, Trainer and Advocate, Office of Family Representation and Advocacy
—Rachael Lorenzo, Executive Director, Indigenous Women Rising
—Keely Badger, Founder and Chief Marketing Officer, 360 MEDIA Consulting
- 11:00 a.m. (3) **Update from the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) on Indian Water Rights Settlements**
—Nat Chakeres, General Counsel, OSE
—Tanya Trujillo, Deputy State Engineer, OSE
- 12:00 noon **Lunch**
- 1:00 p.m. (4) **Navajo Nation Division of Community Development Perspective on Capital Outlay**
—Sharilene Jeff, Senior Program Project Specialist, Division of Community Development, Navajo Nation
- 2:00 p.m. (5) **Update and Request from the Fort Sill Apache Tribe**
—Joel Davis, Attorney, JD Law
—Jennifer Heminokeky, Board Chair, Fort Sill Apache Tribe
—James Buckner, Treasurer, Fort Sill Apache Tribe
—Naomi Hartford, Member, Business Committee, and Cultural Coordinator, Fort Sill Apache Tribe

3:00 p.m. (6) [Overview of the Haak'u Health Center](#)
—Kurt Riley, Chairman, Health Board, Pueblo of Acoma

4:00 p.m. **Public Comment***

4:15 p.m. **Recess**

Friday, November 14

9:30 a.m. **Reconvene**

9:35 a.m. (7) [Higher Education Department: Federal Funding Impacts on Tribal Education](#)
—Stephanie Rodriguez, Secretary, Higher Education Department (HED)
—Gerald Hoehne, Chief of Staff, HED

10:35 a.m. (8) [Navajo Nation Department of Justice Perspective on Capital Outlay](#)
—Katherine Belzowski, Assistant Attorney General, Navajo Nation
Department of Justice

11:35 a.m. (9) [Consideration of Legislation for Endorsement](#)
—TBD

12:30 p.m. **Adjourn**

*Members of the public may make virtual public comments during the public comment period of the meeting by following the instructions under the "Additional Information" section of the Indian Affairs Committee [web page](#).

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

**November 13-14, 2025
State Capitol, Room 317
Santa Fe**

The sixth meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, on November 13, 2025 at 9:36 a.m. in Room 317 of the State Capitol in Santa Fe.

Present

Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Charlotte Little
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Absent

Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair
Sen. William E. Sharer

Advisory Members

Sen. Linda M. López (11/13)

Rep. Rebecca Dow
Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Rep. Stefani Lord
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. George K. Muñoz
Sen. Cindy Nava
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson

Guest Legislator

Rep. Micaela Lara Cadena (11/13)

(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
Gabriel Suazo, Intern, LCS

Minutes Approval

Because the committee will not meet again this interim, the minutes for this meeting have not been officially approved by the committee.

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.

Thursday, November 13**Welcome and Introductions (9:36 a.m.)**

Representative Roybal Caballero welcomed the committee. Members of the committee and staff introduced themselves.

Overview of the Federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (9:40 a.m.)

Debra Garcia y Griego, secretary, Cultural Affairs Department (CAD), and Danyelle Means, director, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, CAD, discussed the NAGPRA's history as a federal law passed in 1990 and updated in 2024, which strengthened tribal authority and consent. The NAGPRA provides a process for the return of ancestral and cultural items to culturally affiliated Native tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations and protects Native graves on federal and tribal lands by establishing a procedure for the treatment of accidentally discovered ancestral remains or cultural items during construction or other activities. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=11/13/2025&ItemNumber=1>.

New Mexico Memorial and Truth and Reconciliation Commission — Forced Sterilization of Indigenous Women (10:51 a.m.)

Elena Giacci, trainer and advocate, Office of Family Representation and Advocacy; Rachael Lorenzo, executive director, Indigenous Women Rising; and Keely Badger, founder and chief marketing officer, 360 MEDIA Consulting, discussed the history of forced sterilization of Indigenous women in the United States and presented a proposed memorial that would call for a study of the issue. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=11/13/2025&ItemNumber=2>.

Update from the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) on Indian Water Rights Settlements (12:14 p.m.)

Nat Chakeres, general counsel, OSE, and Tanya Trujillo, deputy state engineer, OSE, gave an overview on Indian water rights settlements. The OSE and the Interstate Stream Commission are working with Indian nations, tribes and pueblos in New Mexico to settle water rights claims. The presenters provided an update on the status of tribal water rights settlements requiring state financing. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=11/13/2025&ItemNumber=3>.

Navajo Nation Division of Community Development (DCD) Perspective on Capital Outlay (1:00 p.m.)

Sharilene Jeff, senior program project specialist, DCD, Navajo Nation, said that the DCD operates several programs and departments focused on planning, construction, community housing, project management and administrative services. These programs work collaboratively to develop and maintain essential infrastructure, such as community buildings, roads, utilities and housing. The DCD assists chapters of the Navajo Nation with land use planning, financial reporting and grant and contract management and works to ensure that vetting requirements and training obligations are met. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=11/13/2025&ItemNumber=4>.

Approval of Committee Letter and Minutes (2:34 p.m.)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the committee approved the committee's November 12, 2025 letter requesting that the Legislative Finance Committee add its endorsement to the Native American Community Academy Inspired Schools Network's (NISN) request for approximately \$512,000 in state funding to continue the NISN Diné Bizaad Bee Na'nitin Yíhoo'aah Mentor + Apprentice Program, as amended.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, and without any objections, the committee approved the minutes of the October 22-24, 2025 meeting.

Update and Request from the Fort Sill Apache Tribe (2:37 p.m)

Joel Davis, J.D., attorney, Law Office of Joel A. Davis; Jennifer Heminokeky, board chair, Fort Sill Apache Tribe; James Buckner, treasurer, Fort Sill Apache Tribe; and Naomi Hartford, member, Business Committee, and cultural coordinator, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, noted that the Fort Sill Apache Tribe has 814 members who remain connected to homelands and travel to perform tribal cultural activities. Community plans and requests include investing in a fire station, a community center, housing, health care and renewable energy. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=11/13/2025&ItemNumber=5>.

Overview of the Haak'u Health Center (3:42 p.m)

Kurt Riley, chairman, Health Board, Pueblo of Acoma, discussed the Haak'u Health Center, which is an ambulatory clinic, including the health center's history and needs, including staffing and infrastructure.

Public Comment (4:37 p.m)

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

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:40 p.m.

Friday, November 14

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 9:43 a.m.

Higher Education Department (HED): Federal Funding Impacts on Tribal Education (9:45 a.m.)

Stephanie Rodriguez, secretary, HED, and Gerald Hoehne, chief of staff, HED, discussed federal cuts by program type in tribal colleges and universities, including canceled grants, decreases in project budgets, program suspensions, project delays and terminations and stop work orders. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=11/13/2025&ItemNumber=7>.

Navajo Nation Department of Justice Perspective on Capital Outlay (11:04 a.m.)

Katherine Belzowski, assistant attorney general, Navajo Nation Department of Justice, gave an overview of the Navajo Nation's capital outlay process.

Public Comment (11:46 a.m.)

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

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.



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