

**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.