MINUTES
of the
FOURTH MEETING
of the
INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

September 21, 2026
Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce
106 United States Route 66
Gallup

September 22, 2026
Sky City Cultural Center and Haak'u Museum
Haak'u Road
Pueblo of Acoma

September 23, 2026
Pueblo of Laguna Administration Building
22 Capital Road
Pueblo of Laguna

The fourth meeting of the Indian Affairs Committee was called to order by Senator Shannon D. Pinto, chair, on Monday, September 21, 2026, at 10:13 a.m. at the Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce in Gallup.

Present
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto, Chair
Rep. D. Wonda Johnson, Vice Chair
Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta
Rep. John Block (9/21)
Sen. Angel M. Charley
Rep. Martha Garcia
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero
Sen. Rex Wilson

Absent
Rep. Joseph Franklin Hernandez
Rep. Charlotte Little
Sen. William E. Sharer
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Advisory Members
Sen. Linda M. López (9/22)
Rep. Patricia A. Lundstrom (9/21)
Rep. Angelita Mejia
Sen. Joshua A. Sanchez (9/22)
Rep. Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson (9/22, 9/23)
Rep. Rebecca Dow
Rep. Yanira Gurrola
Rep. Stefani Lord
Sen. George K. Muñoz
Sen. Cindy Nava
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana
Sen. William P. Soules

Guest Legislator
Rep. Anita Gonzales (9/22)

(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 recorded 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, September 21 — Gallup

Welcome and Introductions (10:13 a.m.)
Senator Pinto welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked committee members, staff and audience members to introduce themselves.

Welcome and Update from the Bahast'lah (Twin Lakes) Chapter (10:21 a.m.)
Marc DePauli, mayor, City of Gallup, welcomed committee members and discussed community priorities in Gallup, including economic development, jobs, education, recreation and affordable housing. Mr. DePauli emphasized the need to expand opportunities and retain residents to support the city's long-term growth. He also spoke about the current efforts to address human trafficking and missing and murdered Indigenous persons. Elouise Johnson, president, Bahast'lah Chapter, Navajo Nation, and Joan M. Nez, vice president, Bahast'lah Chapter, Navajo Nation, discussed the recent flood-related challenges, highlighting the need for continued assistance in completing critical road and highway safety projects, along with housing and community infrastructure improvements.

Update from the City of Gallup (11:02 a.m.)

Frank Chiapetti, city manager, City of Gallup; Mr. DePauli; and Debra Martinez, behavioral health investment zone manager, City of Gallup, provided updates on the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. The panel outlined the city's key priorities, including the unhoused community, behavioral health needs and water infrastructure. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=2.

The Future of Community Economic Sovereignty (12:41 p.m.)

Henry Jake Foreman, program director, New Mexico Community Capital (NMCC), and Liz Gamboa, executive director, NMCC, provided an overview of the NMCC's mission and programs to support Indigenous entrepreneurs and foster economic development in Native and rural communities. Akilah Martinez, entrepreneur and founder, Glittering World Girl, explained how the NMCC's training, mentorship and financial assistance helped her build a successful multimedia business focused on Indigenous language preservation and emerging technologies. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=3.

Public Comment (1:37 p.m.)

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

Housing Opportunities on Tribal Lands: Modular Construction (2:37 p.m.)

Chance Mitchell, president, Fortified Structures, Inc., and Jim Mitchell, owner, Fortified Structures, Inc., discussed the benefits of modular housing for rural and tribal communities, including faster construction time lines, lower costs and reduced material waste. They said that by partnering with the local workforce, the company believes that it can quickly deliver permanent housing with consistent quality.

Senate Bill 3 (2026): Impact on Brain Injury and Brain Health (3:06 p.m.)

Ken Collins, executive director, Hozho Center for Personal Enhancement, spoke about the long-term impacts of traumatic brain injuries and expressed support for Senate Bill 3 (2026), also known as the Behavioral Health Reform and Investment Act. Mr. Collins emphasized the importance of trauma-informed care, stress management and rehabilitation programs. He discussed efforts to establish a youth shelter and the collaboration with community partners in developing programs that address childhood trauma and complex posttraumatic stress disorder, among other behavioral health needs. Robinson Tom, provider, Hozho Center for Personal Enhancement, spoke about

his work mentoring individuals struggling with addiction and housing insecurity and noted the value of lived experience, cultural healing practices and community-based support to help people achieve recovery and stability. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=5.

Update from the McKinley County DWI Court (3:38 p.m.)

Virginia Yazzie, presiding judge, McKinley County Magistrate Court, and Danielle Leekity, DWI Treatment Court program manager, McKinley County Magistrate Court, provided an update on the McKinley County DWI program. The program offers a combination of treatment, peer support and traditional healing services and has served 42 participants since 2022, with 16 individuals graduating and a recidivism rate below the national average. Participant outcomes include sustained sobriety, stable housing, restored family relationships and increased engagement in employment and education. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=6.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 4:27 p.m.

Tuesday, September 22 — Acoma

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 10:05 a.m.

Welcome and Update from the Pueblo of Acoma (10:25 a.m.)

Seth Damon, executive director of operations, Department of Public Safety, Pueblo of Acoma, provided updates on current capital outlay projects and related infrastructure. Mr. Damon discussed efforts to finalize a law enforcement agreement with the New Mexico State Police Division, strengthen fire and emergency services and complete renovations to the pueblo's historic headquarters building. Marsha Leno, executive director, Department of Education, Pueblo of Acoma, addressed the ongoing issues affecting Native students and called for stronger accountability and tribal oversight of education funding. Ms. Leno stressed the importance of continued support for culturally responsive education, language programs and long-term investments in tribal educational infrastructure. Carleen Chino, executive director, Acoma Gaming Commission, Pueblo of Acoma, and Terrance Shutiva, table game manager, Acoma Business Enterprises, urged state leaders to address unregulated online prediction

markets and sports betting platforms, stating that they violate tribal-state gaming compacts and undermine tribal gaming exclusivity and should either be prohibited in New Mexico or included in renegotiated gaming agreements with tribes.

Chris Ahmie, executive director, Department of Utility Authority, Pueblo of Acoma, discussed efforts to upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure, leverage state funding to secure additional investments and develop a centralized utility monitoring system while addressing staffing and capacity challenges. Brandon Pasquale, representative, Department of Health and Human Services, Pueblo of Acoma, addressed health care and social service priorities, including addressing Medicaid reimbursement shortfalls, expanding behavioral health and crisis intervention services and strengthening partnerships with the Children, Youth and Families Department through coordinated case management, cultural competency and recognition of tribal sovereignty. David Martinez, finance manager, Department of the Housing Authority, Pueblo of Acoma, spoke about the need for continued state investment in housing and infrastructure, noting that the authority has invested more than $26 million in 232 housing projects over the past 12 years and is seeking $30 million to develop a 33-acre community with 31 homes and shared community space. Charles P. Riley, governor, Pueblo of Acoma, emphasized the need for continued investment in housing and infrastructure, which is essential for improving residents' quality of life, and for retaining teachers, health care workers and other professionals. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=7.

Update from the Indian Affairs Department (IAD) and the Commission on the Status of Women Regarding Senate Memorial 14 (2026) (11:51 a.m.)

Josett Monette, secretary, IAD; Tsoniki Crazy Bull, capital outlay/Tribal Infrastructure Fund manager, IAD; Karmela Martinez, director, Program Services Division, IAD; and Adelina Gomez, general counsel, IAD, provided an overview of the IAD and efforts to strengthen agency operations, improve transparency, expand outreach and enhance support for tribal governments through funding, technical assistance and policy coordination. The panel discussed investments in tribal infrastructure, health and wellness programs, missing and murdered Indigenous peoples initiatives, Native veterans services and the rebuilding of the Indigenous Youth Council. Jenifer Getz, executive director, Commission on the Status of Women, presented an update on Senate Memorial 14 (2026), which requested that the Commission on the Status of Women and the IAD conduct a collaborative study of forced sterilization, reporting that a multidisciplinary working group of 34 experts and several subcommittees have been established, with a final report due by December 31, 2027. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=8.

Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) Tribal Government and Customer Engagement (1:34 p.m.)

Carlos Lucero, senior manager, State and Local Government Relations, PNM; Cathy Newby, director, Tribal Government Relations and Customer Engagement, PNM; Travis Suazo, senior manager, Tribal Government Relations, PNM; and Pete Atcitty, senior manager, Tribal Government Relations, PNM, provided an overview of PNM's operations, energy transition strategy and tribal relations efforts. Mr. Lucero discussed growing electric demand and emphasized the need for expanded transmission infrastructure, grid modernization and advanced metering technology. He also provided an update on Blackstone Infrastructure's proposed acquisition of PNM, noting that local leadership, tribal relations programs and regulatory oversight would remain in place. Ms. Newby and Mr. Atcitty addressed working with tribal governments on energy policy, infrastructure projects, rights-of-way negotiations, grid modernization and customer service issues. Several tribal initiatives were discussed, including workforce training scholarships, the Light Up Navajo initiative and the transfer of former San Juan Generating Station water facilities to the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project to support long-term regional water needs. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=9.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Tour of the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak'u Museum (2:54 p.m.)

The meeting recessed for a tour of the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak'u Museum.

Prediction Markets: An Existential Threat to Tribal Sovereignty (4:16 p.m.)

Derrick Watchman, chief information officer, Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise; Elizabeth Homer, regulatory counsel, Indian Gaming Association; Eugenia Charles-Newton, delegate and chair, Naabik'íyáti Gaming Subcommittee, Navajo Nation Council; Katherine Belzowski, assistant attorney general, Economic and Community Development Unit, Navajo Nation Department of Justice; and Emiliano Aguirre, outside counsel, Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, discussed concerns about prediction markets and ongoing litigation in New Mexico and other states challenging those platforms. The panel addressed concerns that these platforms constitute gambling, circumvent state and tribal gaming regulations and threaten tribal sovereignty, tribal gaming revenues and tribal-state gaming compacts. They urged continued monitoring of federal regulatory changes and court cases while emphasizing the need to protect

tribal gaming exclusivity, state regulatory authority and the economic benefits that gaming revenues provide to tribal communities.

Remediating the Past, Powering the Future: DISA Uranium Recovery Technology (5:32 p.m.)

Greyson Buckingham, president and chief executive officer, DISA Uranium, discussed DISA's high-pressure slurry ablation technology for remediating abandoned uranium mine waste. Mr. Buckingham stated that the technology can significantly reduce contamination, lower cleanup costs, reduce transportation and disposal needs, minimize ground water contamination risks and recover valuable minerals. He reviewed ongoing work with the Navajo Nation, recent federal funding support and plans for larger-scale uranium mine cleanup projects in the region. Stephen Bryan Etsitty, executive director, Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, discussed long-standing efforts to address abandoned mine contamination, noting that current cleanup approaches may leave future generations with ongoing environmental risks. He expressed support for DISA's technology and the ongoing collaboration in evaluating its effectiveness at the Old Church Rock Mine site. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=11.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 6:56 p.m.

Wednesday, September 23 — Laguna

Reconvene

The meeting reconvened at 10:20 a.m. Wilfred Herrera, Jr., second lieutenant governor, Pueblo of Laguna, introduced representatives from the Pueblo of Laguna in the audience.

Pueblo of Laguna: Broadband, Transportation and Capital Outlay Projects (10:43 a.m.)

Brandon Herrera, chief of operations, Pueblo of Laguna; Marcus Talahaftewa, project manager, Pueblo of Laguna; and Lieutenant Governor Herrera provided an overview of the Pueblo of Laguna's infrastructure priorities, including parks and playgrounds, early childhood and nursing home facilities, broadband expansion and other community initiatives. Mr. Talahaftewa discussed the construction of a fiber-to-the-premises network and a planned network operations center supported by tribal, state and federal funding. The panel stressed the pueblo's commitment to partnering with state agencies to secure funding, advance infrastructure projects and strengthen

government-to-government communication and coordination. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=13.

Pueblo of Laguna: Gaming, Predictive Markets and Protecting Tribal/State Tax Agreements (11:37 a.m.)

Ryan Riley, corporate director, Risk Management and Government Relations, Laguna Development Corporation, and councilman, Pueblo of Laguna, and Lieutenant Governor Herrera addressed the importance of protecting tribal-state gaming compacts, tribal gaming exclusivity and meaningful tribal consultation on gaming and economic development matters. They highlighted the economic contributions of tribal gaming while expressing concern that prediction-market wagering platforms threaten the regulatory framework and economic benefits established under existing agreements. The panel noted that those types of platforms compete for customers without being subject to comparable regulatory requirements. The presentation materials can be found here:

https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=IAC&Date=9/21/2026&ItemNumber=14.

Public Comment (1:04 p.m.)

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

Adjournment and Tour of the Laguna Rainbow Center and Fire Station

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:17 p.m.

Following adjournment, committee members and committee staff were given a tour of the Laguna Rainbow Center and Fire Station.