

The City of Albuquerque
Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
(CAIANA)
Accomplishments, Key Findings, and Recommendations
Report Year Ended 2022

Introduction

The Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs (CAIANA) was established by City Council Resolution in 1994 as the forum for government-to-government relations and as an advocate for Native American resident affairs within the City of Albuquerque. The Commission serves as an advising body to the Mayor and City Council in developing and providing recommendations, guidance on tribal consultation, and supporting activities as tasked. Efforts of the Commission are coordinated with the Albuquerque Office of Native American Affairs and Office of Equity and Inclusion

In 1994, the Commission of Indian Affairs was established through City Ordinance §§ 2-6-6-1. In August 2015, the Native American Homelessness Task Force was launched in a response to the murders of Mr. Allison Gorman and Mr. Kee Thompson, two Native men experiencing homelessness in Albuquerque. The Task Force presented fourteen recommendations including the reconstitution of the Commission of Indian Affairs (CIA) leading to its amendment in 2016. Five Commission members were selected and appointed: Ronald Solimon, Esq., William F. Riding In, Laurie Weahkee, Michael Canfield, and Dr. Lloyd L. Lee. Accomplishment reports were presented to Mayor Richard J. Berry for the time period between 2016-2017 and to Mayor Tim Keller for 2017-2018. Since 2016, the Commission has evolved and increased to 11 members and has held consistent monthly meetings since 2016. This document intends to capture the overall activities, issues, and recommendations of the current Commission.

This Commission is tasked by the amended 2016 City Ordinance “to promote the health, safety and general welfare of its citizenry through the creation of a Commission on Indian Affairs to serve as an advocate of Indian affairs to investigate, study and consider the subject of Indian conditions within the City of Albuquerque, including, but not limited to, matters of employment, education, economy, health, environment, government, and access to services in the City.” The Commission’s composition shall be to:

- (A) Serve as an advocate of Indian affairs by acting as a liaison between the City and the Indian community in order to bring Indian concerns to the City's attention; by educating the City on the problems of Indian citizens of Albuquerque; by researching the economic

conditions of Indians in Albuquerque and the economic contributions of Indians to the City; and by researching the social, economic, environmental, health, educational, and governmental problems which affect Indian people.

(B) Improve the employment opportunities of Indians in the City's public and private sectors by monitoring the employment of Indians in the work force and encouraging parity of employment; by developing methods to enable employers to recruit, hire, train and promote Indians; and by developing and maintaining a hiring pool of qualified Indians for employment consideration.

(C) Work with the Indian community to increase awareness of and access to services and programs in the City of Albuquerque and monitor statistical data and advise the Mayor regarding the number of Indian citizens accessing City services.

(D) Support economic development for Indian entrepreneurs including educating Indian business enterprises as to the process(es) for acquiring government contracts.

(E) Make recommendations to the Mayor for placement of Indians on City boards, committees and commissions.

(F) Provide an opportunity for the presentation and exchange of ideas in respect to Indian affairs of the City by all interested persons.

(G) Submit annually a written report of its activities and an evaluation of the effectiveness of §§ 2-6-6-1 et seq. to the Mayor and the City Council with recommendations for changes.

Commission Structure

Commission members have conducted their work together through a combination of in-person and virtual monthly meetings held regularly on the third Wednesday evening of each month. The Commission consists of a Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, At-Large Members, Sector Members, and Tribal Representatives. The current list of members and term end dates are provided below.

Commission Member Name	Commission Member Role	Commission Terms
Rebecca Riley	Chair and Health Sector	First Term: December 2019-October 2022
Kyle Tapaha	Co-Chair and At-Large Member	First Term: December 2019-October 2022 – will continue for a 2 nd term

Thelma Antonio	Secretary and Tribal Representative for Pueblo of Laguna	First Term: January 2020-present
Dr. Lloyd L. Lee	Education Sector	First Term: 2016-2019 Second Term: December 2019-October 2022
Kimberly Gleason	At-Large Sector	First Term: December 2019-October 2022 – will continue for a 2 nd term
Lorenzo Jim	Culture Sector	First Term: November 2020-2023
Kim Benally	At-Large Member	First Term: December 2019-October 2023
Marissa Naranjo	Environment Sector	First Term: July 2021-2024
Raven Begay	Workforce/Employment Sector	First Term: March 2021-2024
Jimmy Secatero	Tribal Representative for Tó'hajiilee (Navajo Nation)	Determined by Tribe
Ron Looking Elk	Tribal Representative for Pueblo of Isleta	First Term: July 2022-Present
VACANT	Government Sector	-
VACANT	Tribal Representative for Pueblo of Sandia	-
VACANT	Tribal Representative for Pueblo of Santa Ana	-
VACANT	All Pueblo Council of Governors (APCG)	-

During 2020 both previously and newly recruited Commission members were able to meet in-person during the months of January (at the Hispano Chamber of Commerce) and February (at the First Nations Community Healthsource) until March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic impacted New Mexico communities. The Commission was not equipped to move immediately to virtual meetings until June 2020. For the months of March, April and May, Commission meetings did not occur. Since June 2020, Commission meetings have been held virtually with little disruption, although challenges to conduct virtual meetings still exist. The Commission has supported virtual meetings in an effort to keep fellow Native people, Tribes, and communities safe. The plan to move to hybrid meetings (a combination of in-person and virtual meetings) is the goal of the group, with adequate support. The first in-person meeting is tentatively planned for late 2022.

Virtual Commission meetings are typically held in the evenings for an average of 2.5 hours from 5 p.m.- 7:30 p.m. Agendas and meeting minutes are posted on the Commission’s website at <https://www.cabq.gov/office-of-equity-inclusion/about-office-of-equity-inclusion/native-american-affairs/commission-on-american-indian-alaskan-native-affairs/caiana-homepage> .

Supporting CABQ staff are Dawn Begay, CABQ Native American Affairs Liaison and contractor Terry Sloan, CABQ Intergovernmental Tribal Liaison. While the Commission does receive support by these two roles, the time and capacity these roles are able to allocate to the Commission are limited and shared by the Liaisons primary duties to the Mayor. The Intergovernmental Tribal Liaison position is currently a contracted position and therefore not permanent within the CABQ Office of Native American Affairs.

The Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs is pleased to submit our report to Mayor Tim Keller. We have organized our report into three sections: (I) Commission Accomplishments (II) Key Findings and (III) Commission Recommendations.

I. Commission Accomplishments:

- a. **Establishment of CAIANA Strategic Plan** – In January 2020, Commission members began development and implementation of a strategic plan to help guide the vision and forthcoming work with newly recruited Commission members and to reaffirm efforts set forth in previous years. Discussions were facilitated in collaboration with the American Indian Chamber of Commerce. This working document includes goals, activities, and proposed outcomes for the next 1-2 years. The Commission also created its mission, vision and set of values by which to uphold itself:

Mission

The mission of the CAIANA is to support, strengthen, and promote understanding, recognition and respect of Native American culture and contributions through the work of the City of Albuquerque Office of Native American Affairs.

Vision

A shared vision where Native people, community, and culture are nurtured, respected, safe, and celebrated in the City of Albuquerque.

Guiding Values

Advocacy

We are amplifiers of the issues and challenges of the Native community who reside in Albuquerque and work together to strengthen the government-to-government

relationship between the City of Albuquerque and Native tribes whose tribal citizens reside in the City and surrounding communities.

Community

We honor all Relatives, relationships, togetherness, healing, and our connections to each other and the environment, past, present and the future.

Respect

We have respect for each other, our diverse beliefs, practices, heritages, and perspectives.

Service

We are committed to community service, accountability, and integrity for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Stewardship

We believe in respect and care for our natural landscape and its resources which include the land, water, air, climate, natural resources, economic resources, and people.

Wellness

We support Native communities and individual physical, mental, social-emotional, and spiritual lifestyle choices which fosters empathy, compassion, humility, and diversity.

- b. **Working Through the Pandemic** – In March 2020, during the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic in New Mexico, Commission meetings paused. All members of the Commission were from Tribes and Nations that were greatly impacted. However, the Commission was able to shift to virtual meetings and resumed in June 2020. Virtual meetings, although challenging, enabled Commission members to join from home and share meeting links on a social media platform with the creation of the Commission website that same year.
- c. **Meeting with and Learning from Native Community Organizations and Community Partners.** A priority of the Commission during meetings has been to allot time on the agenda to better understand the current resources available to Native Americans living in Albuquerque. We invited organizations and individuals to share with us their capacity and manner in which they serve the Native American community and requested how the Commission could be of support to them through support letters, dissemination of information and resources via email, social media,

and networking, as well as providing input when requested. We met and received presentations by the following city departments and affiliated organizations:

2020

- First Nations Community Healthsource

2021

- Albuquerque Indian Center
- Americans for Indian Opportunity
- APS Indian Education Department
- Native Women Lead
- National Indian Youth Council
- Native American Voters Alliance
- All Pueblo Council of Governors
- APD Ambassadors Program

2022

- CABQ Parks and Recreation Department
- APS Indian Education Department
- ABQ Tiny Home Village
- Saad K'idilyé - Language Immersion Nest, Warlance Chee
- Gateway Center, Christina Parajon
- One Generation, Heidi MacDonald (Indian Education Policy)
- Southwest Women's Law Center, Terrilyn Massey (Childcare Policies)
- UNM Hospital Spiritual Care & Education, Skip Murphy, Chaplain

Community Partner Meetings CAIANA Members Regularly Attend or Provide Representation:

- ABQ Native Leadership Collective (monthly)
- ABQ Cemetery/4-H Park Working Group (monthly)
- All Pueblo Council of Governors
- New Mexico Sustainable Economic Advisory Council
- APS Indian Parent Committee
- APS Tribal Summit (Spring and Fall)
- Metropolitan and Tribal Police Public Safety
- Gateway Recommendations and Input

- d. **Support Letters and Statements** – Since 2020, the Commission has provided a number of support letters and statements concerning issues that have been brought to the Commission's attention by the public or Commission members. Here is a list

of letters and statements that have been published by the Commission and are housed on the Commission's website:

- June 22, 2020 - The City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Issues this Statement on the Removal of Juan de Oñate Statues and Related Issues.
- September 2020 - The City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Calls for the Immediate Action and Unblocking of Fresh Water to the Community of Tó'hajiilee (Navajo Nation).
- December 2020 - The City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs (CAIANA) Statement on the Petroglyph National Monument tasing incident on December 27, 2020.
- October 6, 2021 - CAIANA Public Statement on ABQ Indigenous Peoples' Day
- September 2021 - Recommendations on Albuquerque Indian Boarding School Cemetery Site/4-H Park.
- May 23, 2022 - Request for Transparency of Albuquerque Public School Indian Education Senior Director Vacancy and Process.

- e. **Albuquerque Indian School Cemetery/4-H Park Work** - The Commission has participated in ongoing efforts regarding the City's strategies to address the Albuquerque Indian School Cemetery/4-H Park. Various Commission members have participated in all City lead Community Listening Sessions and Tribal Consultation Meetings. Commissioner Riley and Commissioner Antonio are members of the City's Work Group regular and ongoing meetings in which they provide consultation and participate in all planning discussions. The Commission issued a Recommendations Report to the Mayor in September 2021 and received an apology letter from the New Mexico Presbyterian Church regarding this issue.
- f. **Native Relatives Experiencing Homelessness** - Commissioner Tapaha attends several meetings including the Native Americans Accessing City Homeless & Housing Service and the Native American Housing & Homelessness Recommendations with Deputy Director of Housing & Homelessness Lisa Huval to provide representation for the Commission and give feedback and recommendations. Commissioner Tapaha joined Albuquerque Police Department officers to do outreach to homeless individuals on Coors and Iliff giving out backpacks, supplies, and information on city services, and as a result, Commissioner Tapaha volunteers with the Albuquerque Police Department with the Native Ambassador Program. Commissioner Tapaha joined Early Morning Collaborative Outreach to homeless individuals on Central Ave and Grove St NE

with Hopeworks and First Nations Community Healthsource giving out supplies and information.

Commissioner Tapaha regularly offers insight and culturally relevant information for recommendations to improve the Gateway Center with Cristina Parajon, Gateway Administrator. Commissioners Kyle Tapaha and Commissioner Kim Benally attend CABQ Chiefs of Police Safety meetings to bring awareness to the Missing Murdered Indigenous Women crisis and provide feedback to strengthen relationships for ongoing support to federal, city and tribal law enforcement agencies. This resulted in creating additional partnerships with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the Albuquerque Field Office. Dawn Begay and Commissioner Tapaha attended monthly Tribal Chief of Police meetings and helped identify important issues including the need for improved communication and partnerships concerning jurisdictional issues. Chief Medina has offered APD training and resources to assist Tribal police. The relationship-building and trust are integral steps toward long-term community partnerships between Native American people and the city.

II. Key Findings:

a. **CABQ Office of Native American Affairs.**

The Office of Native American Affairs is not a permanent entity within the city of Albuquerque. It is housed in the Office of Equity & Inclusion. While the Office of Equity & Inclusion has been very supportive of the Office of Native American Affairs, the lack of sustainable responsibility by the City Council and city government creates some doubt among Native peoples as to the city's commitment to them.

b. **CAIANA's Ability to Fulfill Roles and Purpose Remain Limited.**

It remains a critical concern of Commissioners that the commission is not afforded a budget or recurring funding by the City to effectively and sustainably accomplish priority goals set forth in its strategic plan to provide advocacy, guidance, and recommendations to increase the quality of life for Native Americans living in Albuquerque and the surrounding area. There are at least eight objectives the Commission aims to accomplish and twelve goals of the Commission. Without proper funding, resources, and support, the Commission must continually reassess and reprioritize in light of limited time, capacity, and resources available.

c. **CAIANA to Continue to Diversify and Increase Commission Membership.**

The current Commission roles Native residents of Albuquerque are able to apply for include 6 sector roles, 3 At-Large roles, 5 Tribal Representative roles, and 1 for the All Pueblo Council of Governors representative. With the current titles and roles

that exist, they tend to rather exclude other areas of expertise that are needed to build a robust and diversified Commission. Sector role titles need to be changed and should include applicants with the following experiences:

- A Native resident who has experienced homelessness.
- A Native resident who has social work, mental health, or behavioral health experience.
- A Native resident who has experience working in K-12 and/or higher education.
- A Native resident who has experience working in early childhood education.
- A Native resident who has medical provider experience.
- A Native resident who has experience working in business and finance.
- A Native resident who has experience working in the Arts.
- A Native resident who is a licensed attorney.
- A Native resident who is currently a student and/or between the ages 18-24.
- A Native resident who is not a member of the 19 Pueblos, Navajo Nation, or Apache Tribes, but who is a tribal member of a federal or state recognized Tribe.
- A Native resident who has had experience working in government-to-government relationships, policy, and/or in past tribal administration/leadership positions.
- A Native resident who has agriculture and environmental sustainability experience.

d. Native American Population Experiencing Homelessness

- A major concern of the CAIANA is the high rate of American Indians/Alaska Natives in the Albuquerque metro area experiencing homelessness and the fact this remains as an on-going issue. Among unsheltered Native Americans, experiences regarding stigma, distrust, and concern for safety still continue. Albuquerque is a place offering employment and education opportunities to improve an individual, however improving the Native American community needs a better understanding of the complex systems of tribal life which a Native American resident may have trouble translating. Any improvement to providing cultural programs and services help increase urban Indigenous involvement and representation.

III. Commission Recommendations:

- a. The Commission should be provided recurring funding to include a full-time staff person who can fully assist and support the Commission in its relation to the City Office of Native American Affairs and the Mayor's Office, to ensure broader partnerships can be fully established, and that a comprehensive strategy to improve the quality of life among all Native American constituencies can be envisioned and meaningfully implemented.
- b. The Commission should be provided clarification of the city charter and the role the Commission can take in order to be an effective advocate and liaison between the Native American community and the city.
- c. The city should continue to report to the Commission city efforts to include, serve, and assist the Native American community.
- d. The city should evaluate the perspectives of Native people experiencing or have experienced homelessness and housing as a population most impacted, in order to be part of developing solutions going forward and continue to understand and incorporate the diversity of Native American people's cultures and traditions in regard to practices of health and wellness.
- e. It's important to explore ways the Commission and city can collaboratively begin to obtain useful data to help identify successful programs and the challenges collectively faced in building a good quality of life for urban Native Americans.
- f. The Commission proposes to help plan, develop, and host an annual City of Albuquerque summit for New Mexico Tribal leaders and Native American service providers.
- g. The Commission should be provided adequate staffing and support; currently it relies on the shared availability of the CABQ Native American Affairs Liaison and CABQ Intergovernmental Tribal Liaison.
- h. The Office of Native American Affairs needs to be a permanent entity within city government.
- i. The City of Albuquerque needs to provide funding to continue the Indigenous Life Celebration event every year on the first Saturday of November for Native American Heritage Month.
- j. The City of Albuquerque should begin the process of establishing a state-of-the-art Urban Indigenous Resource Center.
- k. The City of Albuquerque should support and engage with Indian owned businesses with development and opportunities.