



# THE PURSUIT OF INCLUSION: OVERALL FINDINGS

## An In-Depth Exploration of the Experiences and Perspectives of Native American Attorneys in the Legal Profession

The National Native American Bar Association (NNABA) conducted this research in order to provide the first comprehensive picture of the issues confronting Native American attorneys across all settings, including private practice; government practice in state, federal and tribal arenas; the judiciary; corporate legal departments; and academia. Ultimately, NNABA and others will use the findings in this study to develop educational materials and programs that will help improve the recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement of Native American attorneys in the legal profession.

The study is about Native American attorneys and their pursuit for full inclusion in the legal profession.

**This summary provides an overview of the entire research report.**

### METHODOLOGY & GENERAL SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

The study includes as Native Americans the following groups: American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

#### QUANTITATIVE SURVEY & SURVEY SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Quantitative Survey: 527 Native American attorneys took the survey, a 20% participation rate of the approximately 2640 Native American attorneys in the US. Women comprised 57.18% and men comprised 42.82%.

Qualitative Research: consisted of 1 focus group, and 54 self-selected and confidential telephone interviews.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

- Generational Representation: Traditionalists (born before 1946) - 4.59%; Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) - 32.91%, Gen X (born between 1965 and 1980) - 47.7%, and Gen Y (born after 1980) - 14.8%.
- Over 60% practiced in Indian law or federal Indian law.

## OVERALL FINDINGS

1. The most satisfied attorneys were working in the tribal sector, and the least satisfied attorneys were working for the federal/state government or law firms; however, tribal politics/cliques, overwhelming workloads, and not being able to make an impactful difference were cited as primary sources of dissatisfaction even in the context of being generally satisfied.
2. 40.65% of the attorneys overall in the study reported experiencing demeaning comments or other types of harassment based on their race, ethnicity, and/or tribal affiliation; and 33.63% reported experiencing one or more forms of discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, and/or tribal affiliation.
3. Pipeline challenges faced by Native American lawyers are unique and require specialized solutions.
4. Native American attorneys faced racial, ethnic, gender, and other professional challenges in workplaces that were not addressed by traditional diversity and inclusion programs.
5. Native American lawyers faced high levels of isolation in the workplace and need higher levels of awareness about their issues in the legal profession.

## THE PATH TO INCLUSION

The following are the areas of change that the attorneys in this study most felt would have a *positive impact* on their careers:

- Substantive training and development opportunities and being included in informal and formal networks.
- Specific inclusion of Native Americans in diversity and inclusion policies in their workplace.
- Greater focus on maternity/flexibility policies integrated into overall understanding of diversity and inclusion policies.
- Training for supervisors to develop teams that include Native American attorneys.
- Greater opportunities to influence decisions on matters/cases on which they work.
- More colleagues who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native.
- More effective accountability systems to govern the ways in which supervisors develop, train and evaluate.
- More racially/ethnically diverse supervisors.



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