



THE PURSUIT OF INCLUSION: EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG NATIVE AMERICAN ATTORNEYS

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 focuses on the findings related to the experiences of young Native American attorneys.

Quantative Survey

527 Native American attorneys took the survey, a 20% participation rate of the approximately 2,640 Native American attorneys in the U.S. Women comprised 57.18%, and men comprised 42.82%.

Generational Representation

Traditionalists (born before 1946): 4.59%
Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964): 32.91%
Gen X (born 1965 to 1980): 47.7%
Gen Y (born after 1980): 14.8%.

Age of Graduation

- 25 to 34 (68.78%)
- 24 or younger (16.5%)
- 35 to 44 (12.69%)
- Over the age of 45 (2.03%)

Experiences of Young Attorneys

- Generational differences were particularly pronounced. Overall, younger attorneys expressed more frustration with their experiences than more senior attorneys.

Many younger respondents commented on generational differences in how “being Indian” is perceived.

- Some younger attorneys focused on how the legal market itself was different for the younger generations, and there was less opportunity now than there was a decade ago. One respondent commented: *“It’s already harder for our generation because there aren’t as many opportunities, but we have it even harder than other people because people don’t see us as adding value.”*
- Younger female attorneys who are Native often experience a “double whammy” which is the result of them being “twice removed” from those in power—white men—as both their race and gender are different.

A Few Generational Trends

1. The generational trends affecting the larger legal profession are prevalent among Native American youth and attorneys as well.
2. Given the tuition increases in law schools, pre-law programs, law school applications, and financing literature should actively focus on attracting and communicating with Native American students.
3. Law schools should increase the dialogue with and support of Native American law

student organizations in order to increase the number of students thriving and ready for the profession.

4. Law schools and legal workplaces (including legal workplaces within tribal reservations) should work together to provide support systems to transition from school into the workplace.
5. Gender differences regarding work-life balance concerns and needs are influenced by generational differences.
6. In the private sector, investment in the career development of future lawyers through internship, clerkship and fellowship programs should ensure effective outreach to Native American students.

Generational Inclusion Strategies

- Increase awareness and integration of generational differences in hiring, training, development, and advancement efforts of Native American lawyers. What worked for more senior attorneys may not work for junior attorneys.
- Recognize and integrate an understanding of how generational differences may impact how younger Native American attorneys identify, express and manifest their Native American identities.



NATIONAL
NATIVE AMERICAN
BAR ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 11145, Tempe, AZ 85284

www.nativeamericanbar.org