**2025 Annual Members Business Meeting**

**President’s Report**

Osiyo!

I am honored to have served as this association’s president the past year (actually, 14 months)—a time of organizational development and change. Native communities, generally, and the Native legal community, in particular, face renewed challenges at this time, but NNABA is well-positioned to help confront those challenges—to our members and to Native communities—through its advocacy and community building work.

This was another very busy year for NNABA. I am incredibly grateful to the many individuals from our board, member volunteers, and allies at important partners, including the ABA and fellow affinity bar associations, who made contributions of time and resources and otherwise supported our association. That support allowed us to further our goals and pursue our mission.

I’d like to highlight some of the association’s work across this bar year:

1. **Strategic Planning** – NNABA engaged the ABA Center for Bar Leadership to help guide the association through a strategic planning process. The board met several times to develop the plan, including an all-day strategic planning retreat in January in Pheonix, AZ. The plan incorporated feedback gathered from a variety of stakeholders and partners. The plan will help NNABA build upon the achievements of past leaders and chart a course for future success in accomplishing our mission. More details about the plan can be found at Appendix A to this report.
2. **Annual Meeting Changes** – NNABA decided to try something different for its 2025 Annual Meeting. We piloted an approach taken by many of our peer national affinity bars, namely having a moving annual meeting that rotates between areas where NNABA has a state or regional affiliate. NNABA is grateful to be welcomed to Oklahoma in 2025. This year’s Annual Meeting was made possible by hard work by our Annual Meeting Commitee and through collaboration with OIBA and the Sovereignty Symposium. In future years, we expect to host the Annual Meeting in different cities where there are also strong local Native bar association communities.
3. **Community Outreach and Engagement** – NNABA was represented at over 30 events nationwide to strengthen partnerships and raise awareness about justice and inclusion issues facing Native Americans. The list of events is included as Appendix B to this report.
4. **Coalition Building** – NNABA sponsored 8 events or joint initiatives this bar year to deepen our relationships and work with mission aligned organizations including the ABA, other bar associations, and Indian legal organizations. The list of sponsorships and joint initiatives is included as Appendix C to this report.
5. **Advocacy and Policymaking** – NNABA co-sponsored three resolutions in the ABA House of Delegates during the ABA’s Annual Meeting in August 2024, all of which were adopted by the House, thus becoming ABA policy. One of the resolutions urged adoption of the recommendations found in NNABA’s study on the experiences of Native American women attorneys, *Excluded and Alone: The Pather Towards Equity.* NNABA’s success in sponsoring resolution in the ABA House of Delegates is the result of extensive collaboration with the Native American Concerns Committe of the ABA Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice. NNABA’s delegate in the House also serves as the chair of that committee. NNABA also partnered with other bar associations to issue joint statements on important topics. In August 2024, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, I joined other national affinity bar presidents in advocating for law firms, corporations, and other institutions to keep moving forward in their work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. In March 2025, NNABA joined the ABA and other bar associations in support of the rule of law.

In addition, the recently formed Intellectual Property, Traditional Knowledge, and Cultural Property Committee was involved in important advocacy work. This bar year the committee consulted with the USPTO in writing and over a Teams meeting. The PTO then held a second tribal consultation process in 2025 about implementing the patent treaty that was negotiated at WIPO in 2024, both with regards to whether the US should formally agree to it and how the US could implement its requirements in national law. Committee Chair Makalika Naholowaa participated in a webinar hosted by the Implementation Project in February to prepare native stakeholders for that consultation.

1. **Judicial Diversity** – NNABA has an active Judicial Diversity Committee that was co-chaired this year by Geneva Thompson and Torey Dolan. NNABA worked in collaboration with NCAI and NARF to submit letters of support for several judicial candidates. I was interviewed for and quoted in a Law360 article about Natives on the federal bench. NNABA co-sponsored and helped organize with the Institute for Diversity in the Legal Profession a virtual program on Native Americans in the Federal Judiciary, with NNABA Past Presidents Lawrence Baca and Robert Saunooke, and Native federal judges Ada Brown, Shanlyn Park, and Sunshine Sykes. NNABA was also able to send one of our members to a National Judicial College course for those interested in becoming judges. In addition, the Judicial Diversity Committee organized a virtual Fireside Chat with Kevin Washburn about the federal executive branch appointment process.
2. **Communications** – NNABA expanded its presence on social media accounts on LinkedIn and Instagram to help amplify the reach of our work and community.
3. **Governance** – NNABA made necessary updates to its Bylaws, including changes allowing for the Annual Meeting to be held at a time determined by the board. Working with pro bono counsel, the NNABA Foundation also updated its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to broaden the scope of its mission beyond awarding scholarships.

This year has gone by incredibly fast, and inevitably one never gets all the things done that one had hoped to. But my signature initiative, our newly adopted strategic plan, should serve as an excellent blueprint for what the bar should focus on in the next three years. Although this was a challenging year for fundraising for a variety of reasons, including some corporations and law firms pulling back from their support of diversity, equity, and inclusion, I still feel there is a lot of untapped potential for fundraising given our position as the only national Native bar. Increasing our fundraising goes hand in hand with our goal of hiring an executive director who can help us build upon our strong foundation. Our all-volunteer board has done exceptional work this year, and I am proud of what we were able to accomplish given that the bar is not our day job.

I look forward to supporting our next President Rani Williams, and I am confident in her ability to steer this association in the coming bar year. As she works together with our talented board, I know that we are well-positioned to continue fulfilling our mission.

Like my predecessor, I encourage NNABA members to think about how they can actively participate in NNABA. Bar associations can be incredibly powerful and impactful stewards of justice as well as platforms for enabling professional success. But they require engagement. We have an incredible legacy that we have inherited from the past leaders of this association. Let us honor that legacy as we strive to further our mission of supporting Native lawyers and Native justice. I am honored to serve together with you in this important work.

Wado!

Matt Archer-Beck

**Appendix A**

##### National Native American Bar Association 2025-2028 Strategic Plan

##### Mission

Founded in 1973, NNABA serves as the national association for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian attorneys, judges, and law professors. NNABA strives for justice and effective legal representation for all American Indigenous peoples; fosters the development of Native American lawyers and judges; and addresses social, cultural, and legal issues affecting American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Three-Year Vision

Over the next three years, NNABA’s strong organizational foundations will more effectively support and engage its vibrant community of Native American lawyers and judges, and through bolstered advocacy efforts, NNABA will more consistently advance the needs and interests of Native American legal professionals and of indigenous communities.

Values

Rooted in Community Reliability

Inclusivity Intentionality

Integrity Collaboration

Consistency

National Native American Bar Association 2025-2028 Strategic Framework

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| Goal 1:  Serve as the premier community for Native American attorneys to build relationships, learn, and foster collaboration | To achieve this, we will:  Strategy 1: Evolve the Annual Conference to be a vibrant gathering of Native American attorneys  Strategy 2: Strengthen collaboration with regional Native American lawyer organizations and the National Native American Law Student Association  Strategy 3: Ensure there are a range of engagement opportunities and build member awareness |
| Goal 2:  Increase NNABA’s organizational capacity, continuity and stability to enable it to effectively carry out its mission | To achieve this, we will:  Strategy 1: Develop and execute a plan to hire staff  Strategy 2: Implement a plan for consistent constituent communications  Strategy 3: Build governance structures that strengthen organizational continuity |
| Goal 3:  Consistently advocate for Native Americans in the profession and for issues facing our communities | To achieve this, we will:  Strategy 1: Engage in research and advocacy that addresses the opportunities and challenges facing Native American legal professionals  Strategy 2: Educate our constituents about the current state of Indian Law and raise visibility of issues facing Native American communities  Strategy 3: Strengthen pathways to the profession for Native Americans  Strategy 4: Build NNABA’s capacity for advocacy work internally and through external partnerships |

**Appendix B: NNABA Events in the 2024-2025 Bar Year**

* 51st Anniversary Annual Meeting and Justice is Medicine Celebration, Sandia Resort, Albuquerque, NM (April 3)
* MNABA Annual All-Day CLE, Minneapolis, MN (May 3) – Matt Archer-Beck and Veronica Newcomer (MNABA Pres.) attended.
* UW NALSA Salmon Bingo, Seattle, WA (May 3) – Makalika Naholowaa and Eldred Lesansee attended.
* Sovereignty Symposium, Oklahoma City, OK (June 11-12) - Blair Tarman attended.
* Collaborative Bar Leadership Academy, New York, NY (June 26-28) - Matt Archer-Beck, Rani Williams, and Torey Dolan attended.
* ABA President Mary Smith Awarding Presidential Citation to Secretary of the Interial Deb Haaland, Washington, DC (July 8) - Matt Archer-Beck attended.
* ABA Task Force for American Democracy Listening Tour, Madison WI, (July 9) - Torey

Dolan attended. ￼

* National Bar Association Annual Convention, Las Vegas, NV (July 14-18) - Makalika Naholowaa attended.
* ABA Annual Meeting (July 31- August 6) - Many board members attended.
  + NNABA President Matt Archer-Beck spoke on a National Conference of Bar Presidents panel about NNABA’s Native Voting Rights Summit and how bar associations can strengthen democracy. He also joined other affinity bar presidents at the Racial and Ethnic Diversity Caucus meeting to share remarks about NNABA’s work.
  + NNABA board members Torey Dolan and Blair Tarman-Toner, along with Patty Ferguson Bohnee and Nicole Hansen, presented on a CLE panel about Native American voting rights 100 years after the Indian Citizenship Act.
  + NNABA nominee the National American Indian Court Judges Association won the Burnham “Hod” Greeley Award at a reception honoring the judiciary.
  + NNABA nominees Arizona Native Vote Election Protection Project and North Dakota Native Vote won Unsung Heroes of Democracy Awards at the ABA Democracy Luncheon.
  + A NNABA-sponsored travelling exhibit produced by the ABA Standing Committee on the Law Librarian of Congress entitled 100 Years After the Indian Citizenship Act: The Continuing Struggle to Guarantee Voting Rights to Native Americans was prominently displayed for Annual Meeting attendees to encounter.
  + NNABA delegate Heather Torres spoke in the House of Delegates in favor of three Native-focused resolutions co-sponsored by NNABA, all of which were adopted.
* Lavender Law, Washington DC, (August 7-10) - Matt Archer-Beck and Tom Pack attended
* HNBA Annual Meeting, National Harbor, MD (September 4-6) - Matt Archer-Beck and Makalika Naholowaa attended.
* CILA Meeting, Temecula, CA, (October 3-4) - Tom Pack spoke.
* ASU Barrett and O’Connor Center Indian Law Reception, Washington, DC (October 16) - Matt Archer-Beck and Rani Williams attended.
* TICA Meeting, Santa Barbara, CA (October 17-19) - NNABA sponsored and Alexander Mallory attended.
* PLSI Homecoming, Tamaya Resort, Santa Ana Pueblo, NM (November 7-8) - NNABA sponsored and Jordan Oglesby and Brian Garcia attended.
* Northwest Indian Bar Association Annual Meeting, Seattle WA (November 8) - Matt Archer-Beck and Makalika Naholowaa attended.
* NAPABA Annual Convention, Seattle, WA (November 8-9) - Matt Archer-Beck and Makalika Naholowaa attended.
* Virtual Fireside Chat with Kevin Washburn on Federal Executive Branch Appointments (November 12) - NNABA sponsored and Geneva Thompson organized.
* Virtual Program on Native Americans and the Federal Judiciary (November 14) - NNABA co-sponsored with IILP and Matt Archer-Beck and Makalika Naholowaa helped organize.
* ABA Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice Chair Chat (November 21) - Matt Archer-Beck interviewed by ABA Immediate Past President Mary Smith.
* Virtual JAMS Native American Heritage Month Event (November) - Matt Archer-Beck did a presentation on the Past, Present, and Future of Native Lawyers.

* Consumer Financial Protection Bureau National Native American Heritage Month Event, Washington, DC (November) - Matt Archer-Beck was featured speaker.
* Virtual Securities and Exchange Commission National Native American Heritage Month Event (November) - Matt Archer-Beck was interviewed by the SEC’s Denver Regional Office Chair about NNABA and Indian Law.
* Digital Civil Rights Coalition convening on the impact of facial recognition technology on people of color, Washinton, DC (November) - Makalika Naholowaa attended.
* NNABA DC Holiday Party – Matt Archer-Beck attended and announced a fundraising MOU with NABA-DC.
* NNABA Strategic Planning Retreat, Phoenix, AZ (January 29)
* Joint Happy Hour with NABA AZ, Phoenix, AZ (January 29) - NNABA sponsored and many board members attended.
* ABA Midyear Meeting, Phoenix, AZ (January 29-Feb 3) - Many board members attended.
  + Matt Archer-Beck, Veronica Newcomer, NNABA past president Diandra Benally, and TICA’s president Doreen McPaul were on a tribal in-house counsel panel (co-sponsored by NNABA, the ABA State and Local Government Section, and the ABA GPSLD)
  + NNABA nominee Judge Diane Humetewa received the Spirit of Excellence Award
  + Heather Torres represented NNABA in the ABA House of Delegates and Matt Archer-Beck spoke to its Racial and Ethnic Diversity Caucus.
* NNALSA 55th Anniversary Celebration and Moot Court Competition, Las Vegas, NV (February 14-15, 2025). NNABA Sponsored and Eldred Lesansee, Matt Archer-Beck, and Rani Williams attended.
* Fed Bar National Indian Law Conference, Sandia Resort, Albequerque, NM (April 28-29, 2025). NNABA sponsored unity reception and had a table that Roni Newcomer and Eldred Lesansee manned.
* MNABA All-Day CLE, Minneaopolis, MN (May 2025) - Veronica Newcomer attended and presented.
* NNABA Annual Meeting and Justice is Medicine Celebration, OKANA Resort, Oklahoma CIty, OK (June 10-11, 2025).

**Appendix B: NNABA Sponsorships and Joint Initiatives in the 2024-2025 Bar Year**

* 1. ABA 2025 Spirit of Excellence Awards
  2. National Native American Law Student Association 55th Anniversary Celebration
  3. Sponsored Attendees at Collaborative Bar Leadership Academy 2024
  4. NABA-DC MOU on Fundraising through NNABA Foundation
  5. NABA AZ Joint Happy Hour
  6. TICA Annual Meeting
  7. PLSI Homecoming
  8. Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference Unity Reception