

## ABOUT US

New Mexico Legal Aid, Inc. is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), law firm that provides free legal services to indigent clients and groups. The Native American Program (“NAP”), based out of the Santa Ana office, provides representation to the Pueblos, the Mescalero tribe, and their tribal members on a range of legal issues.

Currently, NAP consists of one Managing Attorney (*currently vacant*), four Staff Attorneys (Simon Tuck, Sean Kinniry, Adelina Gomez (*Isleta Pueblo*), and Jordan Hale (Navajo)), one Paralegal (Erica Valdez (*Santa Ana Pueblo*)) and one Secretary (Annette Trancosa (*San Felipe Pueblo*)). There is also an AmeriCorps Medical-Legal Partnership Staff Attorney, (*currently vacant*), which is overseen by the NAP Managing Attorney. That position is, generally, physically located in the Santa Ana office and the First Nations Community HealthSource clinics.



## HISTORY OF NMLA NAP

- In 1966, the Zuni Legal Aid and Defender Program started, which was the first legal aid program to serve a pueblo population living in poverty.

- In 1975, the Zuni Program evolved into Indian Pueblo legal Services (IPLS). IPLS expanded its services to Laguna and Acoma Pueblos and opened an office in Laguna.

- In 1978, the Santa Ana office opened to service the Rio Grande Pueblos. IPLS also began to serve the eight northern Pueblos.

- In 1981, IPLS assigned a full-time attorney to the eight northern pueblos and established an office in Ohkay Owingeh (fka San Juan Pueblo). Because of the lack of on reservation office space, IPLS converted mobile homes into office space located on reservation lands provided by the host pueblo.

- In 2000, Indian Pueblo Legal Services merged with Northern New Mexico Legal Services to form Community and Indian Legal Services.

- In 2003, Southern New Mexico Legal Services, Legal Aid Society of Albuquerque, and Community and Indian Legal Services merged to form New Mexico Legal Aid. At that same time, Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation was added to the Native American Program and a Mescalero office opened later that year.

- NAP’s office has been physically located on the Pueblo of Santa Ana for over 40 years.

- NAP provides unique legal services due to changes in federal law, the growth and development of tribal judicial systems, and the complexity of legal issues Native Americans endure.



## NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAM

51 Jemez Canyon Dam Rd.,  
Suite 102  
Santa Ana Pueblo, NM 87004

**NAP Intakes:**  
**Office: (505) 867-3391**  
**Fax: (505) 216-2997**

**Office Hours: Monday-Friday**  
**8:30 A.M. to 12:00 Noon**  
**1:00 PM to 5:00 PM**

**Statewide Intake Line:**  
**1-833-545-4357**

**[www.nmlegalaid.org](http://www.nmlegalaid.org)**

## **NAP OFFERS FREE LEGAL SERVICES TO LOW INCOME PERSONS WITH AN INDIAN LAW ISSUE.**

NAP provides free legal services to low income individuals, based on the Federal Poverty Guideline, as published annually in the Federal Register by the Legal Services Corporation (“LSC”). NAP’s mission is to protect and preserve individual rights in tribal court through legal assistance, education, and advocacy.

Applications for assistance are taken by telephone, in person, or by appointment. Applicants must be financially eligible, according to the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and must have a legal issue that arises within an area of law that is a program priority.

### **SERVICE AREA**

Pursuant to LSC, NMLA receives the Native American Grant funding to serve “Native Americans living on or near the Mescalero Indian Reservation & the Pueblo Indian Reservations of Santa Ana, San Felipe, Santo Domingo, Cochiti, Jemez, Zia, Isleta, Sandia, Zuni, Acoma, Laguna, Taos, Tesuque, San Ildefonso, Picuris, Santa Clara, Pojoaque, San Juan, and Nambe”.



### **TYPES OF CASES**

•**Government Benefits** - public benefits access and retention.

•**Consumer Rights** - vehicle repossession, debt collection, warranty problems, unfair sales practices.

•**Family Law** - child custody, child support, divorce, adult & minor guardianships, domestic violence, abuse & neglect, CHINS cases.

•**Civil Rights Issues** - denial of rights guaranteed by the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, tribal constitutions, and customary or traditional law. Cases may include criminal defense in tribal courts, in courts without a Public Defender, application of the Indian Child Welfare Act, tribal court jurisdiction and tribal law matters.

•**Community Education** - legal problems confronting Native American families and individuals.

•**Native American Issues** - Indian housing and tribal employment rights, customary and traditional law.



### **LEVELS OF SERVICE**

•NAP may provide legal advice, brief service, and/or legal representation in tribal, state, or federal court on Indian Law issues.

•NAP may prepare *pro se* legal pleadings, forms and/or filings for individuals who can represent themselves in court or an administrative proceeding.

•NAP may advise clients about legal rights and procedures to vindicate such rights under tribal, state, or federal law.

•NAP may provide training and educational outreach to tribal courts, law enforcement, other tribal agencies and communities.

### **NAP CANNOT TAKE ALL CASES**

NAP recognizes that many clients have issues that are important and may impact their lives, however, not all issues can be resolved by legal intervention or advocacy. NMLA NAP evaluates applications to determine whether legal intervention and advocacy will achieve family and economic stability and advance access to justice.

Cases are evaluated by attorneys who consider the merits of the case, NAP’s available resources, and the potential for a favorable outcome through NAP’s intervention.