

Indian Education Advisory Committee (IEAC) Meeting Summary

March 25, 2026

Time	Meeting began at approximately 9:16 AM; working session continued after a mid-morning break
Location	University of Nevada, Reno campus, with online participation
Format	In person and online
Source	Prepared from the March 25, 2026 meeting transcripts (Part 1 and Part 2)

Attendance

Voting Members	In-Person Participants	Online Participants
Fawn Hunter, Chair	Emily Underwood, Office of Indigenous Relations, University of Nevada, Reno	Kelly Benoit, Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Tribal Liaison
Kari Emm, voting member	Eileen Williams, Tribal Academy / doctoral student	Lynn Manning John, Principal, Owyhee
Lance West, Vice Chair	Sarina Nez, Nevada Department of Native American Affairs	Josh Marhevka, Deputy Director for DETR and Tribal Liaison
Fredina Drye-Romero, voting member	Amy Martinez, Nevada Department of Education Indian Education Department	Deanne Moyle Hicks, Washoe County School District
Margaret Gunshows, voting member	Fran Maldonado, Nevada Department of Education	
Sarah Twiss, voting member	Harrison Eben, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Johnson-O'Malley Director	
	Edward Ely, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Vice Chairman	
	Dr. Joshua Bonde, Stewart Indian School Cultural Center & Museum	
	Markie Wilder	

Meeting Overview

The March 25, 2026 Indian Education Advisory Committee meeting opened after roll call established a quorum and included in-person and online introductions from Tribal education leaders, state agency staff, higher education representatives, and local school district personnel. The early portion of the meeting also served as an information-sharing forum, with participants

announcing upcoming cultural, language, youth, and university events. Those announcements reinforced that Native education work in Nevada is being carried through many different programs at once, ranging from language revitalization and college readiness to youth camps and community-based cultural activities.

After public comment, the committee turned to follow-up work from its earlier Stewart meeting. Members had divided into smaller working groups and used this meeting to report back and test ideas in public. The tone was that of a working session rather than a routine advisory meeting. The committee concentrated on three linked areas: protecting the Native American fee waiver, clarifying the use of MOUs and FERPA-based information-sharing arrangements between Tribes and school districts, and improving survey tools so future recommendations are grounded in better data.

Community Announcements and Public Comment

Public comment reflected the breadth of Native education activity across the state. Sarina Nez reminded participants about the annual Stewart powwow scheduled for June 19–21. Sarah Twiss shared details on Walker River’s spring break walkabout on Paiute lands, describing a three-day cultural learning experience supported by cultural and language keepers. Fawn Hunter reported on Washoe County School District grant activity, including Native American language work at Natchez Elementary, language assessment development with community support, Title VI programming, the Paiute Language Bowl, and high school Seal of Biliteracy efforts.

Additional updates came from Kari Emm, who announced upcoming youth camps, and from Emily Underwood, who shared information about the University of Nevada, Reno powwow and Future Scholars Day. Together, these announcements underscored a recurring theme in the meeting: there is already significant work underway, but the committee still needs stronger systems to connect efforts, measure impact, and make sure communities know what supports are available.

Subcommittee Reports and Core Discussion Areas

1. Native American Fee Waiver

Kari Emm reported that the fee waiver subgroup intends to prepare a white paper after the Indian Education Summit. Members emphasized that the waiver should remain a first-dollar benefit rather than being converted to a last-dollar benefit, because that change would reduce the practical value of the waiver for students who rely on other aid for books, housing, and living expenses.

The discussion quickly turned to legislative readiness. Participants asked who should be responsible for alerting the committee and Tribal communities when waiver-related legislation appears. Lynn John noted that Idaho’s Indian education structure includes a board member who reports legislative activity directly to the committee, prompting discussion of whether Nevada needs a clearer reporting path from K–12 and NSHE leadership.

Members also discussed advocacy tools that should be prepared in advance rather than at the last minute: template letters, testimony training, student impact statements, videos, and better

coordination with Tribal leaders. The group made clear that if the waiver is challenged again, it wants a more organized statewide response.

2. MOUs, FERPA, and School–Tribal Coordination

Sarah Twiss and Margaret Gunshows reported on the MOU working group. Their aim is to create a practical presentation that helps Tribes and school districts think through what an effective MOU or MOA should contain while recognizing that each community’s situation is different. Sarah explained that Walker River’s multi-county setting complicates educational coordination and makes the issue more than a one-district problem.

Discussion showed that some communities use formal agreements while others depend on FERPA releases, longstanding informal relationships, or narrower arrangements tied to truancy or attendance. Fawn Hunter explained that in some cases the underlying issue is not the absence of support, but the fact that information-sharing tools look different from one community to another.

A useful example came from Lynn John, who described a focused agreement between the Elko County School District and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Court covering truancy intervention and school re-engagement. Transportation and county-boundary issues were also raised, especially for rural students who face barriers to school attendance and extracurricular participation.

3. Surveys, Dashboards, and Data Quality

Lance West reported on the survey and data subgroup, which has been reassessing earlier committee surveys to make them more useful. The group wants better information about student needs, service awareness, and attendance-related barriers without overwhelming stakeholders with repeated requests. Survey fatigue was openly acknowledged as a real concern.

The afternoon session then moved into a working review of a draft tribal leadership survey. Participants discussed question design, neutral response options, who should complete the survey, and what kinds of district data tools already exist. Fawn Hunter described how Washoe County School District uses Title VI forms, Infinite Campus identifiers, and dashboard tools to track Native student information for consultation and support.

By the end of the discussion, the committee appeared aligned around several basic principles: keep the survey concise, make the target audience clearer, seek tribal leadership feedback before finalizing it, and recognize that higher education questions may need a different review process than K–12 questions.

Key Contributions

Fawn Hunter, Chair

- Helped keep the meeting focused on practical next steps and not just general discussion.
- Shared detailed updates from Washoe County School District on language, Title VI, assessment, and parent-engagement work.
- Explained how district dashboards, Tribal indicators, and FERPA-based information sharing function in practice.

Sarina Nez

- Managed quorum, introductions, public comment, and transitions between sections of the agenda.
- Represented DNAA and highlighted the need for better communication pathways around Native-related legislation.
- Helped orient the meeting around follow-through and continued subcommittee work.

Kari Emm

- Led the fee waiver discussion and stressed the need to protect it as a first-dollar support.
- Proposed a white paper after the Indian Education Summit and pushed the group to think about testimony, messaging, and student advocacy.

Lance West

- Reported on survey redesign efforts and emphasized the need for stronger data on absenteeism, service gaps, and community awareness.
- Argued for shorter, more actionable surveys that can support real decision-making.

Sarah Twiss

- Provided the main overview of the MOU work and explained how cross-county realities shape Walker River's educational coordination needs.
- Helped keep the MOU discussion grounded in local practicality rather than one-size-fits-all policy.

Lynn John

- Offered a concrete example of a school-tribal agreement through the Elko County School District and Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Court truancy and re-engagement process.
- Added comparative insight from Idaho on legislative communication and committee structure.

Closing and Next Steps

The meeting closed with a clearer working agenda rather than a major vote. The committee signaled that it will continue meeting quarterly while relying on subcommittees to do more detailed work between formal meetings. Members invited additional participation from stakeholders who want to help with the fee waiver strategy, MOU development, or survey refinement.

Overall, the March 25 meeting marked a shift from broad concern to more structured problem-solving. It did not resolve the fee waiver issue, standardize MOUs statewide, or finalize a survey instrument. But it did clarify the committee's direction, surface useful models from around the state, and identify the practical barriers—communication, data access, transportation, timing, and legislative readiness—that continue to shape Native student outcomes in Nevada.