

Richard J. Frias, Esq.

Admitted to practice in New Mexico State, Pojoaque Tribal Court

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Work Experience

Executive Director, NAFOA

July 12, 2021, to Present

Responsible for management of the affairs of the Native American Finance Officers Association (“NAFOA”). Responsibilities include setting the overall policy goals and objectives as well as strategies for achieving them; preparing annual budget and ensuring compliance; and high-level oversight of educational programs of the NAFOA Institute. In addition, responsible for the two annual national conferences each with an attendance between 700 and 1,000 people, including setting the agenda, selecting panel topics and speakers, site selection, and inviting speakers. Identify potential grant opportunities and work with staff to submit applications. Responsible for approving all external communications including weekly newsletter and social media posts.

Chief General Council, Pueblo of Pojoaque

September 1, 2020, to July 9, 2022

Oversee general operations of the Legal Department including both in-house and outside counsel as well as administrative staff. Prepare the annual budget with a twenty percent (20%) reduction due to COVID-19 and ensure Department operates within the budget limits. Areas of representation include, but not limited to: trespass issues surrounding county maintained roads on Pueblo lands; investment agreements on behalf of Pueblo owned corporations; negotiations involving rights of way and disallowed costs from construction projects; ACA compliance issues with the IRS; draft and implement policies for corporate and government employees regarding COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines; review investment strategies and agreements on behalf of Pueblo corporations to ensure best interests of Pueblo are protected. Also worked to ensure overall compliance with Pueblo and federal law.

General Counsel, Pueblo of Pojoaque

April 2020 to August 2020

Draft Pueblo codes and policies as needed. Represented the Pueblo and its corporations in negotiations with state and federal agencies. Provided general legal assistance to tribal members. Draft and review contracts for the Pueblo and its subsidiaries including gaming entities. Provide guidance on employment issues to corporate and government H.R. At start of pandemic draft policies in response to changing guidance from CDC and other entities to protect the Pueblo, its members, and the public.

Founding Partner - Frias Indian Law and Policy, Santa Fe, NM.

February 2017 to April 2020

Evaluate economic development opportunities on behalf of clients. Draft transactional documents for clients. Negotiate financial transactions and financing opportunities. Advise non-tribal clients about working in Indian country, including issues of tribal sovereign immunity and jurisdiction. Work with tax exempt entities on corporate governance issues and compliance with internal revenue code.

Board of Directors - New Mexico Wildlife Federation

January 2018 to January 2019

Attend quarterly meetings and oversee the business of the Federation, including hiring of senior staff; setting the annual budget; and ensuring compliance with all relevant laws and regulations.

Advisory Board Member - Tribal Gaming Protection Network

March 2017 to Present

Advise Board of Directors on issues of corporate governance, rules governing tax exempt entities, and corporate structures. Review and negotiate partnership opportunities on behalf of the organization, and other issues as needed.

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Chief Counsel to the Governor, Pueblo of Pojoaque, Santa Fe, NM.

November 2015 to February 2017

Advise Governor, elected Tribal Officials, and business entities on legal and policy matters. Advise tribal officials on matters related to the Pueblo's bonds and bondholders to ensure compliance with all applicable securities laws and regulations. Oversaw restructuring of the Pueblo's corporations as well as adoption of revised Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. Review business opportunities and negotiate transactions on behalf of the Pueblo. Draft and review transactional documents as needed including contracts related to gaming and the operation of the Pueblo's two hotels and three gaming facilities. Serve as legal counsel to the Pueblo of Pojoaque Gaming Commission and the Pueblo of Pojoaque Athletic Commission. Draft resolutions for Tribal Council. Develop policies for administration of tribal government. Negotiate government to government relations between the Pueblo and Federal, State and Local governments.

Special Counsel, Pueblo of Pojoaque, Santa Fe, NM.

October 2014 to November 2015

Revise Pueblo of Pojoaque ordinances and regulations. Conduct internal investigations into abuse of power and spending irregularities on behalf of Pueblo. Draft Tribal law and regulations to allow for new economic development opportunities. Drafted a secured transaction code for the Pueblo. Draft charter, bylaws, and regulations for tribal authority to oversee online lending enterprise. Draft tribal code provisions to decriminalize cannabis for medicinal purposes and to allow for medicinal use among tribal members.

Legislative Director, National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA), Washington, D.C.

September 2012 to May 2014

Liaise with multiple stakeholders including tribal leaders and representatives of national and regional tribal organizations, to develop cooperative strategies. Consult federal agencies on policies and regulations. Draft policy statements on important Indian law cases and legislative issues. Analyze legislation, regulations, and court decisions for impact on tribal governments, programs, and individuals. Represent NIGA at national and local conferences. Deliver keynotes, speeches, and presentations before tribal leaders, state legislators and industry representatives on legislative outlook, NIGA policies, and changes in NIGC regulations. Meet with members of Congress to advocate on behalf of tribal interests. Develop strategies for achieving legislative goals. Draft testimony to be presented before Congress. Work with NIGC on regulatory changes.

Legislative Coordinator, National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA), Washington, D.C.

June 2011 to August 2012

Analyze emerging legislation, regulations, and court decisions for impact on tribal communities; prepare policy statements for distribution to members of Congress; help coordinate bi-annual legislative summits and conferences; meet with members of Congress to advocate for tribal positions in legislation. Consult with Members of Congress, staff, and federal agencies to advocate on behalf of tribal interests. Serve as NIGA representative to national and local conferences.

Legislative Intern, National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA), Washington, D.C.

Summer 2009 and 2010

Research and retrieve original treaty documents in the National Archives & the Library of Congress, track pending legislation pertaining to gaming and other general Indian law issues.

Education

Juris Doctor, Indian Law Certificate

August 2008 to May 2011

University of New Mexico School of Law, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Honor Roll (Fall 2009 Spring through Spring 2011), President of Native American Law Student Association (2009-10), *Tribal Law Journal* (2009-2010), Southwest Indian Law Clinic (Spring 2009), Domestic Violence/DWI Prosecution Clinic (Fall 2010) Research Assistant to Professor Gloria Valencia-Weber (2010-2011).

B.A. English, Creative Writing

August 1988 to June 1990

University of California Irvine, Editor in Chief *La Voz Mestiza*, (UCI's Chicano/Latino newspaper)