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Bio

Joe Sarcinella, Co-Leader of the firm's Tribal Nations Practice Group, has served Indian Country as either an attorney, advocate, or in nonprofit management for over two decades. Joe's family is First Nations Lakota/Nakota from Canada, and his wife and children are citizens of the Navajo Nation.

He advises Tribal Nations, Tribally-owned entities, Native owned businesses, and entities looking to collaborate with Tribes. His practice includes providing legal services, strategic counsel, and national advocacy specific to Indian Country, in the areas of renewable energy, financial services, economic development, government affairs, Tribal Nation building, transportation, environmental/natural resources, water rights, human rights, cultural resources, sacred sites and places, government contracting (SBA 8a contracting), gaming, energy, and tribal youth programming.

Recognizing the intersection of climate security, clean energy, and Indian Country, Joe strategically counsels his clients in all areas related to renewable energy, including structuring, development, navigating the cross sections of Tribal law and federal law, leasing, and government relations. He strategizes with energy stakeholders to document understandings, option agreements, leasing, intergovernmental agreements, and pilot agreements. He further advises clients in risk analysis and mitigation alternatives with extensive knowledge of the multi-jurisdictional process of regulations related to solar development across Indian Country and the southwestern United States.

Prior to Drummond Woodsum, Joe was the General Counsel of a successful tribal holding company in Montana. While in that role, he

Practice Areas

Business & Corporate
Energy & Public Utility Law
Environmental & Natural
Resources
Government Relations &
Campaigns
Tribal Nations Law
Federal Indian Law
Tribal Nations Business
Enterprises
Tribal Nations Labor &
Employment

Admissions

Arizona
U.S. District Court for the
District of Columbia

managed a multimillion-dollar legal portfolio, successfully led multiple litigation teams, and developed litigation strategies that ultimately saved his client millions of dollars on multiple occasions. Additionally, he successfully negotiated and structured a multimillion-dollar investment between two tribal nations' economic development arms, and led the corporate formation of a tribal hemp company, including the development and implementation of the Tribe's hemp code and USDA-approved tribal hemp regulations.

He also served as the Chief Operations Officer and General Counsel for the Native American Financial Services Association (NAFSA), where he lobbied Congress daily regarding tribal parity in financial services and economic development.

As an appointee under the Obama administration, he served as the Senior Advisor & Liaison for Native American Affairs for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. While at DoD, Joe was the lead official monitoring Department of Defense and Military compliance with all applicable federal laws, treaties, and executive orders relating to government-to-government relationships, cultural resources, and all matters pertaining to Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and Native Hawaiian Organizations. Joe also managed the Native American Lands and Environmental Mitigation Program, a DoD environmental cleanup program specifically addressing military environmental impacts on Tribal land. Additionally, he was charged with the creation of the federal government-wide training outlining the responsibilities of federal employees and contractors to Tribal Nations regarding Sacred Sites and Places, which is still used today.

As a Federal appointee, on two separate occasions, Joe preserved tribal access to DoD business programs, avoiding litigation brought by tribal governments against the Department of Defense, claiming a lack of formal government-to-government consultation and notice when the DoD changed internal policy interpretations that would have denied Native access to DoD business programs and government contracting opportunities. This work earned Joe recognition as the 2016 National Indian Country Advocate of the Year by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development.

Joe also worked as a Subject Matter Expert to the National Congress of American Indians, a government and legislative affairs advocate for the Navajo Nation Washington DC office, where he lobbied Congress and federal agencies on a daily basis on a broad range of subjects impacting the Navajo Nation, and as the staff attorney and clerk of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Court.

Joe's broad and expansive portfolio of subjects he has handled in Indian Country over the span of his career has awarded him not only keen and comprehensive insight into positive pathways to assist his clients but a broad network of contacts and colleagues across Indian Country and the

federal government that are an invaluable resource for his clients.

Joe's family has a rich cultural heritage; his paternal grandparents were first-generation Americans; both his maternal grandparents were of mixed Native & European ancestry; his younger cousins are enrolled members of the Coyote Valley Pomo; his nieces are enrolled White Mountain Apache, and his in-laws are Navajo, primarily residing on the Navajo Nation.

Outside of work, Joe is an avid writer and published children's book author. He has trained as a Strong Man, has run a 100-mile ultramarathon, is a retired competition powwow dancer, and played Division 1 college football on a full scholarship for Boise State University and Sacramento State University. Joe splits his time between Flagstaff, AZ, The Navajo Nation, and Washington, DC.

Recognition

Chambers USA, Nationwide, Native American Law, Band 2

Tribal Advocate of the Year, National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

Education

Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, J.D.,
Indian Legal Program Certification

Arizona State University, M.S., Justice & Social Inquiry with a
Concentration in Native American Justice

Sacramento State University, B.S., International Business & Political
Science

Judicial Clerkships

Chief Judge of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Court

Community/Public Service

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Volunteer

Flagstaff YMCA
Board Member