

THE JOURNAL RECORD

Gavel to Gavel: Mining the future – When rare earth deals run through Indian Country

By: [Ethan Mock](#) // [GableGotwals](#) // June 4, 2026



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The global race for critical minerals is no longer a future prospect; it is a current economic and national security imperative. As highlighted in [recent reporting](#) by *Bloomberg Law*, the surge in demand for rare earth metals, essential for everything from electric vehicle batteries to defense technologies, has propelled a specialized niche in the legal sector.

The tribal frontier of critical minerals

The Bloomberg Law analysis underscores that many of the most significant untapped deposits of critical minerals are located on or near tribal lands. However, unlocking this potential requires navigating a jurisdictional landscape that many law firms find impenetrable.

Navigating the intersection of tribal law and business requires more than legal knowledge. It requires trust, relationships, and cultural understanding built over time. Having counsel with deep ties to Native American tribal governments, including attorneys who are tribal members themselves, can make the difference in achieving meaningful and lasting [economic development](#) outcomes. It's important to have a law firm that understands the nuances of tribal sovereignty and the essential role of [tribal nations](#) as partners in the global [energy](#) transition.

Transactional precision meets federal insight

Successful [mining](#) deals in Indian Country require more than just an understanding of the minerals; they require a mastery of the “machinery” of the [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#) (“BIA”). The complexity of subsurface leasing is where projects often stall, trapped in the regulatory requirements of Title 25 of the Code of [Federal Regulations](#). Our team includes attorneys with direct, “inside-the-agency” experience at the BIA.

This specialized background is important to ensure the success of projects as it provides:

- **Regulatory Fluency:** Deep knowledge of the Indian [Mineral Leasing](#) Act and the Indian Mineral Development Act to structure flexible, high-value agreements.
- **Navigational Expertise:** An intimate understanding of BIA Standard Operating Procedures and the internal flow of lease approvals, ensuring that environmental and appraisal standards are met without unnecessary delays.

- **Risk Mitigation:** Transactional experts who can draft and negotiate complex joint ventures and development agreements while ensuring strict compliance with federal trust responsibilities.

Ready for the mining paradigm shift

As the market for [rare earth minerals](#) evolves, the legal counsel supporting it must be equally sophisticated. Whether you are a tribal nation seeking to leverage your subsurface assets for the next generation of energy, or a commercial developer looking to navigate the federal trust landscape, hiring the right law firm with the expertise to move your mining project from prospecting to production is essential.

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