Program Overview

The Indian Legal Program was established in 1988 and has grown into one of the most respected Indian law programs in the country. Situated in the heart of the Southwest, with connections to Arizona’s 22 tribes, it is the perfect location to study the developing field of Indian law. The nationally recognized faculty members are leading scholars in their fields and produce scholarly research and publications, as well as provide outreach and public service.

The Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University is home to one of the highest concentrations of Native American students and Indian law students in the nation. ASU Law has an active Native American Law Students Association that hosts events, participates in pro bono activities, and mentors incoming students. Students have an instant network to support them academically, professionally, and socially. The Indian Legal Program alumni are making a difference in Indian country. Graduates are working for tribes, in public service, private practice, and nonprofit organizations. The center’s positive reputation is in large part due to the success and support of its graduates.

Indian Law and Policy Center

ASU Law students can participate in many programs and projects.
- **Indian Law Certificate** for students who finish 21 hours of relevant curriculum, write a substantial paper, and complete practical work in the Indian Legal Clinic.
- **Rosette LLP, American Indian Economic Development Program** provides an innovative and challenging curriculum for students; hosts annual conferences that focus on tribal economic development for students, attorneys, tribal leaders, tribal citizens, policymakers, entrepreneurs, developers, and financial advisers; and is creating a community outreach component.
- **National conferences and lectures** that invite top scholars and attorneys to present contemporary legal issues in Indian country.
- **Native Vote Election Protection Project** allows students to assist voters and tribal communities to prevent voter disenfranchisement.
- **Tribal Court Trial Skills College** provides three days of training for tribal court advocates.
- **Native American Pipeline to Law Initiative** invites students and attorneys to assist in community outreach, mentorship, and pre-law advising to help improve access to justice in tribal communities.

Indian Legal Clinic

The Indian Legal Clinic provides students with an opportunity to participate in real cases dealing with Native peoples and Indian issues. The clinic serves both Indian country and the nation’s urban Indian populations by providing high-quality legal services, with attention to the special legal and cultural needs of Native people. The clinic works with tribal courts handling criminal prosecutions and defense actions, undertakes tribal legal development projects, such as drafting tribal code provisions and court rules for Indian tribes, represents individuals in civil actions, and works on federal policy issues affecting Native people, such as federal recognition.

Highlights include:
- Amicus briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court and U.S. Court of Appeals
- 2008 ASU President’s Medal for Social Embeddedness Award for the Native Vote – Election Protection Project
- Testimony on the federal acknowledgement process for the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hearings and traveling to Washington, DC, to observe the hearings
- Comments on proposed federal acknowledgment regulations and the proposed process rule
- Indian Child Welfare Act proceedings for Indian children, parents, and tribes

Faculty Expertise

Trevor Reed, Patty Ferguson-Bohnee, Helen Burtis and Robert Miller (left to right)

- Federal Indian Law
- Tribal Recognition
- Gaming
- Natural Resources
- Tribal Law
- Election Law
- Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Treaties
- International Indigenous Rights
- Voting Rights
- Constitutional Law
- Cyber Law
- Civil Procedure
- Intellectual Property
Indian Law

Student Opportunities

The Indian Legal Program Traveling Classes
The Indian Legal Program provides students the opportunity to see the law in action with two traveling classes. Students have the opportunity to leave Arizona and learn from experts in the field. In Federal Advocacy for the Tribal Client, students attend class during fall break at the ASU Washington Center in DC with former Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Carl Artman and visiting lecturers from the DC area providing instruction. This class introduces students to the practical application of the relationship between tribes and the federal government, including the development of federal Indian policy. While in DC, students visit different offices and network with professionals working in the field. In Contemporary Issues in Tribal Economic Development, students attend class in Winnebago, Nebraska, during spring break at the corporate headquarters of Ho-Chunk Inc. with Lance Morgan, CEO of Ho-Chunk Inc., instructing the class. Ho-Chunk Inc. is an award-winning economic development corporation owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Established in 1994 with one employee, Ho-Chunk Inc. has grown to over 1,000 employees with operations in 10 states and four foreign countries. Topics covered include tobacco and gas operations and tax compacts, tribal corporate structures, government contracting, a new tribal farming initiative, as well as numerous other subjects.

Native American Law Students Association
Native American Law Students Association at ASU Law is a large and active group of Native and non-Native law students. It is committed to promoting the understanding of Native American cultures and legal issues affecting indigenous people. It organizes community service activities, social activities, and mentorships. The student mentorships provide incoming students with academic support, advice, and friendship. The ASU Chapter is an active member of the National Native American Law Students Association organization, competes in the annual national moot court competition, and co-sponsors the Indian Legal Program /Native American Law Students Association graduation celebration.

Testimonials

“Both in the classroom and beyond, ASU Law gave me the background and support necessary to start and nurture a career working on legal and policy issues at a national level.”
– Charles Galbraith, JD ’06
Attorney, Kilpatrick, Townsend & Stockton

“The ASU Law’s Indian Legal Program is the best out there. From the classroom lectures to interacting with real clients and arguing before judges, the program offers an extraordinary breadth of intellectual training and practical experience. The program’s staff are not just the nicest people around but they are seasoned legal experts that are on the cutting edge of what is happening in Indian Country. There is no one word that could describe my experience but the one that comes closest is probably ‘amazing.’ The faculty and staff were like family to me, and the curriculum shaped how I approach my work today. ASU Law exceeded my expectations in every way.”
– Michael-Corey Hinton, JD ’11
Attorney, Drummond Woodsum

“Law school was hard, not just because of the content but also because of its character which was so foreign to me as an indigenous person. For me, as a Native student focused on getting through the barriers in order to serve my people, being part of the ASU Indian Legal Program not only helped me through the challenge, it strengthened me with the love and support of our caring Native community. I could not have made it through this experience without it.”
– Elizabeth Medicine Crow, JD ’05
President/CEO, First Alaskans Institute

“I simply can’t explain how great my experience with the ASU Law’s Indian Legal Program was in a short, snappy quote. I know I couldn’t have found another place where the combination of encouraging staff, amazing professors, and the camaraderie of students was on the same level or even close. I’ll always be grateful.”
– Jordan Hale, JD ’09
Staff Attorney, Dilkon Judicial District, Navajo Nation