



COLORADO LAW

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO LAW SCHOOL

**AMERICAN INDIAN LAW
CAREER RESOURCE GUIDE**

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I. Introduction

This guide intends to give Colorado Law students and alumni an opportunity to explore possible internships and career opportunities in American Indian Law, and to expose them to the resources available to them to network and become more knowledgeable about this area of practice.

American Indian law is a broad area of practice that involves attorneys working with resources such as the United States Constitution, federal and state regulations, federal and state case law, federal and state agency decisions and executive orders, and tribal treaties and laws.

According to the [Lexis Hub for New Attorneys' article "So you want to practice Native American Law?"](#), those who practice in this area will likely be tasked with:

- Interpreting treaties and agreements with tribes, federal statutes, and executive orders affecting Native American tribes.
- Representing Native Americans in claims against the federal government.
- Ascertaining eligible recipients of federal benefits, programs and services, including education, health, housing, legal and financial assistance, economic development, and social services.
- Representing clients in challenges to federal agency action under the Administrative Procedure Act, including violations of statutes, treaties, and common law.
- Litigating disputes involving Native American territory, including boundaries and rights in lands, takings of tribal property, and tribal rights in sacred sites and cultural resources.
- Advising clients on the application of federal tax laws to Native Americans and tribes.
- Defending clients from criminal prosecution under the Indian Country Crimes Act and the Major Crimes Act, as well as other sections of the federal criminal code.
- Advising clients on the application of federal environmental laws governing pollution control, waste management, environmental remediation, environmental impact assessment, water quality protection, water rights, and hunting, fishing, and gathering rights.
- Handling child custody determinations involving Native American children under the Indian Child Welfare Act.
- Advising clients on the application of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and conducting gaming activities on Native American lands.

II. University of Colorado Law School Programs, Courses and Initiatives

(The following information was directly obtained from the [Colorado Law website](#)).

Colorado Law's American Indian Law Program provides students with comprehensive opportunities to acquire specialized knowledge of American Indian law, through curriculum, the American Indian Law Clinic, the Certificate Program, National Tribal Court Law Clerks Program, research on federal and tribal Indian law issues, externships, Native American Law Students Association, conferences and events, expert faculty, affiliated organizations, and community outreach. In addition, students enjoy numerous opportunities to assist in scholarship and contribute to the national development of the field of American Indian law. What distinguishes Colorado Law from other law schools is

the incorporation of American Indian law principles in the general law school curriculum, including civil procedure, property, and family law.

Certificate Program

Colorado Law offers an American Indian Law Certificate demonstrating the completion of a concentrated course of study in the legal issues facing America's Native peoples and American Indian tribes. This Certificate is attractive to legal, tribal, and governmental employers, as well as employers seeking to do business with tribes and tribal members.

Certificate requirements include: 1) at least 95 credit hours (89 is required for the J.D.), and 2) at least 18 of the 95 credit hours in designated Indian law and related courses. Visit [Rules of the Law School](#) for complete details.

Required courses after the first year:

- [American Indian Law I](#)
- [American Indian Law II](#)
- [American Indian Law Clinic](#)
- One of:
 - [Foundations of Natural Resources Law and Policy](#)
 - [Water Law](#)
 - [Jurisdiction in Indian Country](#)
 - [North American Indian Acculturation](#) ([CU School of Anthropology](#))
- One of:
 - Advanced American Indian Law Seminar (topics such as: American Indian Gaming Law, Native American Natural Resources Law, Contemporary Tribal Law and Governments, Economic Development in Indian Country)
 - Externship or Research Assistant with American Indian law focus AND/OR Compete in the National Native American Law Students Association Moot Court Competition

Faculty

Colorado Law has six full-time faculty with nationally recognized expertise in American Indian Law.

- [Dean and Professor David Getches](#) is a co-author of the leading American Indian law casebook, *Federal Indian Law*. He has taught water and natural resources law, as well as seminars on American Indian law. Founding director and previous attorney with the Native American Rights Fund, he litigated a precedent-setting American Indian treaty fishing rights case in the State of Washington. He has served as director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and as a special consultant to the Secretary of the Interior.
- [Professor Kristen Carpenter](#) devotes her teaching and scholarship to Property and American Indian Law. Her research examines the real property interests of

Indian nations, as well as issues of culture, religion, language, and interpretation. Before entering academia, Professor Carpenter clerked for the Honorable John C. Porfilio on the United States Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit and then practiced at Hill & Barlow, P.C., in Boston. She has also worked at the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation's Office of Legal Counsel and private Indian law firms in Colorado and Alaska.

- [Professor Richard Collins](#) teaches American Indian law courses and seminars as well as basic courses in property and constitutional law. After clerking for a U.S. Circuit judge, he represented American Indians and tribes while working for California Indian Legal Services, Dinebeiiina Naihiilna Be Agaditahe (Navajo Legal Services), and the Native American Rights Fund. His work included several cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, including *McClanahan v. Arizona Tax Commission*.
- [Professor Sarah Krakoff](#) is a prior Director of the American Indian Law Clinic and teaches American Indian Law, American Indian Law Seminar, and Civil Procedure. She has published several articles on American Indian law and natural resource issues. After clerking for a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judge, she worked as the Youth Law Project Director for DNA-People's Legal Services on the Navajo Nation.
- [Clinical Professor Jill Tompkins](#), an enrolled member of the Penobscot Indian Nation, serves as the Director of the American Indian Law Clinic. An expert on tribal justice systems, she is the founding executive director of the National Tribal Justice Resource Center. Past President of the National American Indian Court Judges Association, she served as chief judge of the Mashantucket Pequot and Passamaquoddy Tribal Courts. She is an appellate justice for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.
- [Professor Charles Wilkinson](#) is considered the leading expert on American West law, history, and society. He is the author of 12 books including *Federal Indian Law*, the standard law texts on federal public land law and books written for a broader audience. He teaches American Indian and natural resources law. He practiced law with the Native American Rights Fund and has advised the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Justice.

American Indian Tribes and Organizations

Colorado Law has long-standing relationships with Colorado's two resident Indian tribes, the [Southern Ute Tribe](#) and the [Ute Mountain Ute tribes](#). With more than 30,000 American Indians living within a 30-mile radius of the CU campus, the Law School is ideally situated in what is referred to as the "Hub of Indian County." The annual [Denver March Powwow](#) is the second-largest American Indian gathering in the United States.

The American Indian Law Program often coordinates with the [Native American Rights Fund](#) and its National Indian Law Library headquartered in Boulder, and with other

major American Indian organizations in the Denver-Boulder area, including the Denver Indian Center, the [American Indian College Fund](#), the Denver Indian Family Resource Center, Denver Indian Health and Family Services, the [Council of Energy Resources Tribes](#), and the [Native American Fish & Wildlife Society](#).

Externships

Students serve as externs with local Indian law firms, non-profit entities serving the Native American community such as the Native American Rights Fund and [Intertribal Council on Utility Policy](#), government agencies such as the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Tribal Programs](#), and the Southern Ute Tribal Court. Students also work under the guidance of Colorado Law faculty on American Indian and tribal law research issues while providing much-needed legal work to those most in need.

Scholarships and Fellowships

The [Colorado Indian Bar Association](#) vigorously raises funds to provide scholarships to individuals studying American Indian law at Colorado Law. The [American Indian Graduate Center](#) posts fellowship opportunities for law students.

Career Opportunities

The quality legal education and clinical experience that our students receive make them highly sought after. Many Colorado Law graduates go on to specialize in the practice of American Indian law, working for the Native American Rights Fund, the Indian Law Resource Center, Indian legal service agencies, tribal governments, tribal courts, and law firms with American Indian law practices. Local law firms with Indian law practices include [Arnold & Porter](#), [Faegre and Benson](#), [Greene, Meyer & McElroy](#), [Hester and Zehren](#), [Holland & Hart](#), [Smith & Jolly](#), Wagenlander & Heisterkamp*, and Whiteing and Smith.*

The [Office of Career Development](#) at Colorado Law works with students to find American Indian Law career opportunities and the Program faculty actively assists students in obtaining positions in the field.

Special Events

The Program often collaborates with Colorado Law's [Natural Resources Law Center](#), the Native American Law Students Association and CU's undergraduate Native American organization [Oyate](#) to host special Indian law focused events. Major events held at the Law School include: special sessions of the [Navajo Nation Supreme Court](#) and Peacemaker Court, scholarly symposiums such as, "Native Americans, Race and the Constitution," and "The Next Great Generation of American Indian Law Judges" an appearance by Native lands activist [Winona LaDuke](#), a two-day Native American Sacred

Lands Forum and distinguished visitor program featuring Executive Director of the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), Tom Goldtooth, overviews of current Indian law litigation, including “More than the Money: Restoring Government Accountability through *Cobell v. Norton*, public meetings of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, and workshops such as “Righting Wrongs for American Indians, or, How to Sue the Government” featuring Native American Rights Executive Director John Echohawk.

** No website available.*

Alumni

Several alumni practice Indian law and were highlighted in the Spring 2009 [Amicus](#). A few representative employers have included: Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP; Cherokee Nation, Office of General Counsel; Fredericks Peebles & Morgan; Greene Meyer & McElroy; Ho-Chunk Nation Judiciary; Indian Law Resource Center; Montana Dept. of Justice, Attorney General’s Office; National Indian Gaming Commission; Navajo Nation Department of Justice; Office of the Navajo Tax Commission; Three Affiliated Tribes; U.S. Department of the Interior; and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe.

III. Tribes

There are over 550 federally recognized [Native American Tribes](#). This website lists the tribes and gives information about individual tribal histories. It also links to approximately 150 other tribal websites. For tribe information, the [Original Tribal Names of Native North American People](#) and the directory of [Tribal Leaders](#) created by the U.S. Department of Interior should also be reviewed.

In addition, the [Tribal Justice Resource Center](#) maintains a listing of [National Job Opportunities](#) with tribes including staff attorney, tribal attorney, prosecutor, public defender, judicial law clerk, legal counsel, victim advocates and judge positions.

IV. Tribal Courts

Some Colorado Law graduates have pursued Tribal Court Clerkships. The [Tribal Court Directory](#) lists the federally recognized tribes and the tribal courts. To find more information about one of the courts listed in the Tribal Court Directory, use Google to search for the tribe’s name to try to link to the tribes website to determine if they have a designated court.

Some Tribal Courts that traditionally have had clerkship positions include, but are not limited to:

[Narragansett Indian Tribe](#)

[Navajo Nation](#)
[Ho-Chunk Nation](#)
[Oneida Nation](#)
[Southern Ute](#)
[Cherokee Nation](#)
[Mississippi Band of Choctaw](#)
[Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians](#)
[Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation](#)
[Passamaquoddy Tribe](#)

Fort Berthold District Court of the Three Affiliated Tribes

As was said above, the [Tribal Justice Resource Center](#) also maintains a listing of [National Job Opportunities](#) with tribes including staff attorney, tribal attorney, prosecutor, public defender, judicial law clerk, legal counsel, victim advocates and judge positions.

If students are interested in doing an externship or internship with a tribal court, please make an appointment with the [Office of Career Development](#) and also visit the [National Tribal Court Law Clerkship Program](#), which is a new initiative on behalf of the University of Colorado Law School's American Indian Law Clinic, the National Native American law Students Association, and the National American Indian Court Judges Association that aims to provide externship opportunities for law students nationwide.

V. Legal Services, Non-profits and Bar Associations

Indian Bar Associations

- [American Bar Association](#) - Native American Resources Committee
- [Colorado Indian Bar Association](#)
- [Federal Bar Association, Indian Law Section](#)
- Indian Law Sections of State Bar Associations
- [National Native American Bar Association](#) - This association provides links to state Indian Bar Associations.
- [Northwest Indian Bar Association](#)
- [Oklahoma Indian Bar Association](#)
- [State Bar of New Mexico-Indian Law Section](#)
- [Washington State Bar Association](#) – Indian Law Section

Public Interest Organizations and Resources

[Findlaw.com -- State Legal Aid Resources](#)

Directory of Legal Aid and Defender Offices in the United States and Territories, National Legal Aid and Defender Association (2002). Contact the CU Law Library for assistance accessing this material.

[Guide to Legal Resources for Native American Indians](#)

[Indigenous Law Institute](#)

[Legal Services Corporation -- Get Legal Assistance](#)

[Native American Rights Fund](#)

[Native American Rights Fund's Guide to Legal Assistance Resources](#)

[National Association of Indian Legal Services](#) (Wisconsin Judicare, Inc. Indian Law Office)

[Neighborhood Legal Services, list of legal services by state](#)

[Pine Tree Legal Assistance -- Links to Other Legal Services Organizations](#)

[Social Services and other Native American Indian Organizations](#)

VI. Federal Government Agencies:

There are a number of federal agencies that work on Native American Indian Issues. Listed below are a few key government agencies that most closely address Native American issues; however, a full listing can be found at the [Tribal Court Clearinghouse](#).

[U.S. Department of Interior](#)

[Bureau of Land Management](#)

[Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)

[Bureau of Reclamation's Native American Affairs Office and Program](#)

[Minerals Management Service](#)

[U.S. Department of Justice](#)

[U.S. Office of Tribal Justice](#)

[U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#)

[Administration for Native Americans](#)

[Indian Health Service](#)

[U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development](#)

[Office of Native American Programs](#)

VI. State Government Opportunities

Each state has different offices that are charged with handling issues affecting American Indians. Each state must be researched specifically to find out which offices handle such legal work.

[Attorney General's Office – Choctaw](#) The office prosecutes all criminal cases on the reservation; represents the Tribe in youth court matters; is the primary liaison between the Tribe and the State of Mississippi; serves as in-house counsel to all Tribal agencies and enterprises; handles land acquisition for the Tribe; pursues large-scale consumer protection matters; advises the Tribe in contractual matters; and provides in-service training to all Tribal entities.

[Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs](#) In 1976, the Colorado General Assembly created, within the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA). The Lieutenant Governor serves in the statutory role as chair of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs. The Commission was designed to be the official liaison between the two Ute Tribes and the State of Colorado

[Maine Tribal-State Commission](#) The Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission is an inter-governmental entity created by the Maine Implementing Act of 1980. Responsibilities of the Commission include continually review the effectiveness of the Act and the social, economic, and legal relationship between the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Indian Nation, and the State.

VII. Law Firms and Private Practice

Below is a listing of a number of law firms with American Indian Law practices. This information was obtained from [PSLawNet](#), and the University of Washington Law School's Office of Career Development. *This list is not all inclusive.* Please also see [Chambers & Partners Profiles of Firms with Native American Law practices](#) and visit [Martindale-Hubbell](#) to conduct local state and city searches by practice area.

- [Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP](#), Los Angeles, CA; Washington, DC & San Antonio, TX
- [Arnold & Porter](#), Denver, CO and nationally
- [Best & Flannigan](#), Minneapolis, MN
- [Bluedog, Paulson & Small](#), Minneapolis; MN
- [Bracewell & Giuliani, LLP](#), Washington, DC; New York, NY; Houston, TX
- [Carder Law Firm](#), Denver and Northern Colorado
- [Crowe & Dunlevy](#) Norman, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, OK
- Dickstein and Merin, Sacramento, CA*

- [Doerner, Saunders, Daniel & Anderson](#), Oklahoma City, Tulsa, OK
- [Dorsey & Whitney](#) Minneapolis, MN & Seattle, WA
- [Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP](#), Washington, DC
- [Elk River Law Office PLLP](#), Billings, MT
- [Faegre & Benson](#) Boulder, Denver, CO & Minneapolis, MN
- [Fredericks Peebles & Morgan, LLC](#) Sacramento, CA; Louisville, CO; Omaha, NE & Sioux Falls, SD
- [Greenberg Traurig](#), Denver, CO and nationally
- [Godfrey & Kahn](#), Appleton, Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Waukesha, WI
- [Hall, Estill, Hardwick, Gable, Golden & Nelson](#) Fayetteville, AR; Oklahoma City, Tulsa, OK, Washington, DC
- [Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Wilder](#), Sacramento, CA; Washington, DC; Oklahoma City, OK & Portland, OR
- [Holland & Hart](#), Denver, CO
- [Holland & Knight](#), Los Angeles, San Francisco, CA; Washington, DC; Chicago, IL & New York, NY
- [Hughes Hubbard & Reed, LLP](#), Los Angeles, CA; New York, NY
- [Hufford, Horstman, Mongini, Parnell & Tucker, P.C.](#) Flagstaff, AZ
- [Jacobson Buffalo Magnuson Anderson Hogen](#), St. Paul, MN
- [Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis, LLP](#), Anchorage, AK; Washington, DC; Harrisburg, PA & Seattle, WA
- [Kanji & Katzen](#), Ann Arbor, MI; Seattle, WA
- Law Offices of Bruce R. Greene & Associates, Boulder, CO
- Law Offices of Patrick Guillory San Francisco, CA
- [Maynes, Bradford, Shipps and Sheftel](#), Durango, CO
- [Miller Nash](#), Portland, OR & Seattle, Vancouver, WA
- [Morisset, Schlosser, Jozwiak & McGaw](#), Seattle WA
- [Nordhaus Law Firm](#), Washington, DC; Albuquerque, Santa Fe, NM
- [Olson Bzdok & Howard, P.C.](#), Traverse City, MI
- [Offices of McElroy, Meyer, Walker & Condon](#), Boulder, CO
- [Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP](#), Los Angeles, Orange County, Sacramento, San Francisco, Silicon Valley, CA; Washington, DC; New York, NY; Pacific Northwest
- [Patton Boggs, LLP](#), Anchorage, AK; Washington, DC
- [Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP](#), Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Silicon Valley, CA; Washington, DC
- [Quarles & Brady](#), Phoenix, Tuscan, AZ; Madison, WI
- [Smith, Jolly, Shelton & Ragona](#), Denver, CO

**No website available*

- [Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal](#), Phoenix, AZ; Los Angeles, San Francisco, CA; Chicago, IL; Washington, DC & St. Louis, MO

- [Sonosky Chambers Sachse Endreson & Perry, LLP](#), Anchorage, AK; San Diego, CA; Washington, DC & Albuquerque, NM
- [Stinson Morrison Hecker LLP](#), Phoenix, AZ; Washington, DC; Kansas City, MO & Omaha, NE
- [Stoel Rives](#), Portland, OR & Seattle, WA
- Wagenlander & Heisterkamp LLC Denver, CO*
- Whiteing & Smith, Boulder, CO*
- [Williams Kastner](#), Seattle, WA
- [Ziontz, Chestnut, Varnell, Berley & Slonim](#), Seattle, WA

VIII. Tribal and Intertribal Organizations

(The following information was directly obtained from the www.nativeamericans.com)

NativeAmericans.com maintains a full listing of American, Tribal, Social Services and Environmental Organizations that work on behalf of American Indian causes. Also consider the following Intertribal Organizations.

- [Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians](#)
Tribal consortium covering Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington.
- [Ani Gasaguali](#)
Founded by Cherokee with intertribal membership.
- [Arctic Athabaskan Council](#)
Promoting Arctic Athabaskan heritage and representing the interests of Athabaskan peoples at the international forum of the Arctic Council.
- [Bristol Bay Native Association](#)
Network of Alaskan Native Councils throughout the Bristol Bay region.
- [Cahuilla Inter-Tribal Repatriation Committee \(CITRC\)](#)
Native Cahuilla Indian tribes seeking repatriation of cultural objects, artifacts, burial sites and human remains.
- [Four Winds Intertribal Society](#)
Fosters historical cultural awareness among native peoples of Fort Hood and throughout Texas.
- [Great Lakes Intertribal Council](#)
Coalition of 12 Indian tribes of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.
- [Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada Network](#)

**No website available*

- [Intertribal Council of Arizona](#)
Phoenix-based organization since 1958, comprised of 21 local bands.

- [Intertribal Deaf Council](#) Furthering the traditions, languages and cultures of First Nations members who are deaf, deaf-blind, and hard-of-hearing.
- [Intertribal Timber Council](#)
- [Manataka American Indian Council](#) Non-profit society promoting American Indian history and culture.
- [Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council](#)
Blackfeet, Northern Arapaho, Eastern Shoshone, Fort Peck, Chippewa Cree, Salish and Kootenai, Northern Cheyenne, Little Shell Chippewa, Crow, and Fort Belknap.
- [Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council](#)
Ten member intertribal organization.
- [Morning Star Lodge Association](#)
Providing an intertribal and cultural home to millions of individuals who share Native American ancestry with other ethnic roots.
- [National Congress of American Indians](#)
- [Oregon's Native American Leadership Institute](#)
Emerging nonprofit organization publishing the newspaper Redbird's Journal and providing programming to create leaders in Indian Country.
- [Santa Cruz, California Chapter of the Nastao Nation](#)
Native American medicine society promoting culture and social issues.

IX. Searching for Jobs

[National Native American Law Students' Association](#) (NNALSA)

[Federal Jobs](#)

[Tribal Justice Resource Center](#)

[Directory of Internships & Fellowships for Native Americans](#)

X. Other Useful Native American Indian Law Resources

[The University of Oklahoma College of Law](#) publishes *The American Indian Law Review*, which serves as a nationwide scholarly forum for the presentation and analysis of developments in Indian Law and Indian affair. It also maintains the Native American Constitution and Law Digitization Project which provides access to Tribal Codes, Constitutions, and other legal documents.

The [American Indian Law Center](#), housed at the University of New Mexico, is the oldest existing Indian controlled and operated legal and public policy organization in the country. The AILC provides preparatory legal education to individuals, training and technical assistance to tribes and their courts, and policy analysis.

[Cornell University Law School](#), through the Cornell Legal Information Institute, provides a general overview of American Indian Law including links to important legal documents.

[Gonzaga University School of Law Library](#) provides a research guide for American Indian Law, which includes a national database of Tribal Codes, Treatises, and other resources.

XI. Conclusion

American Indian Law is an important and growing field. For those interested in doing an externship or internship, or seeking a full-time position in this area of practice, please make an appointment with the [Office of Career Development](#) for counseling and resources.