

Strengthening the Pipeline: Native Attorneys from Pre-Law to Practice

The Pre-Law Summer Institute – The
History and Impact of the Program

Pathways to the Legal Profession: Pre-Law
Advisors Training
February 5, 2019
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American Indian Law Center, Inc.

Goals for this Meeting

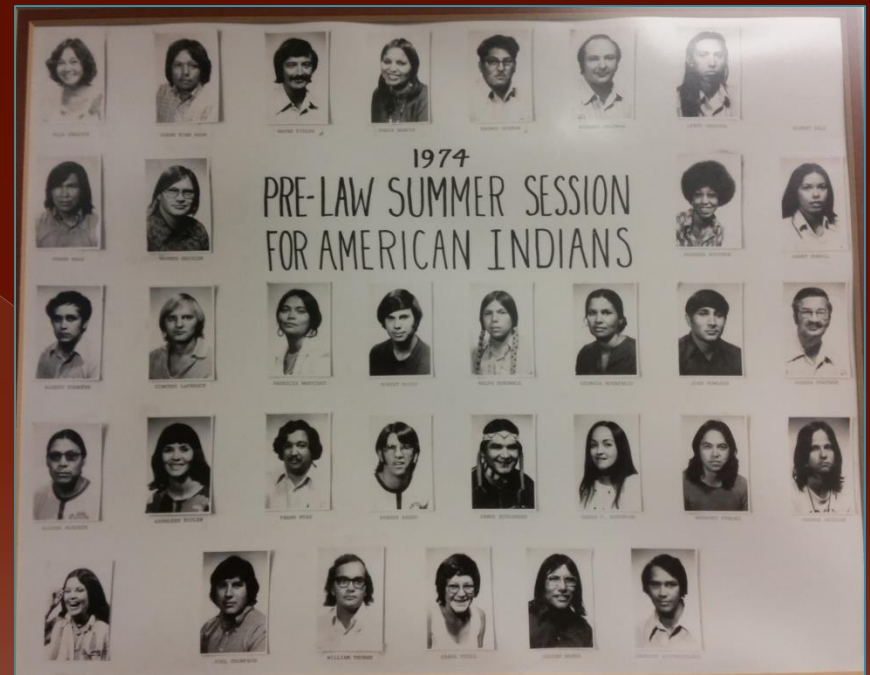
- Promote awareness of PLSI and opportunities available for American Indians and Alaskan Natives interested in law
- Connect to Tribal Education Departments, Tribal Colleges, Tribal Universities, and other advisors and mentors to Native pre-law students

Demand for Native Attorneys

- American Indians and Alaska Natives, and their lands, are affected by laws and regulations more than any other group in the United States.
- Tribes and tribal entities need attorneys to advise on daily matters.
- More than 50 years ago, PLSI initiated a pipeline to law for American Indians and Alaska Natives and continues to develop programs and services to support Native law students.

Special Scholarship Program in Law for American Indians

- ❖ Began in 1967 at the University of New Mexico School of Law.
- ❖ 8 week summer session
- ❖ Started with 20-30 Indian students per class.



Special Scholarship Program

- ❖ Designed to address barriers faced by Indian students, including lack of:
 - Confidence and ability to become lawyers;
 - Indian lawyer role models;
 - Knowledge of law school admission process; and
 - Funding/Financial Aid.

Special Scholarship Program

- ❖ Challenged traditional admission standards by offering an alternative basis for admission to law school for Indian students.
- ❖ Celebrated 50th Anniversary in September 2017.



Special Scholarship Program

- ❖ Program's goal – produce successful Indian law students.
 - Strong recruitment program.
 - Rigorous academic program.
 - Accurate and honest placement efforts.



Pre-Law Summer Institute (PLSI)

❖ Funding

- Bureau of Indian Education grants
- Law School Admission Council
- Private contributions - mostly PLSI alumni, Indian law firms, and the Federal Bar Association

PLSI

- ❖ Still follows the original model.
 - Intensive 2-month program
 - Based on sound legal education principles
 - Prominent law professors from around the country
 - Students provided tuition, text books, and small living allowance
 - Cohort of Native students and supported by a strong network of Native lawyers.



PLSI

- ❖ By the end of summer, students will have:
 - Completed 8 weeks of 3 substantive law school courses and 1 advocacy course
 - Taken mid-term and final exams
 - Written a legal memo and an appellate brief
 - Presented a moot court argument



PLSI's Judicial Clerkship Program

- Looking past law school graduation for opportunities for PLSI alumni
- Relationship between judicial clerkships and securing judicial positions
- ABA Judicial Clerkship Program
 - > 3-day program at ABA mid-year meeting
 - > Research and writing project
 - > Q&A session with panel of judges and clerks

PLSI's Judicial Clerkship Program

- Past two years: clerks in NM Court of Appeals, Arizona Supreme Court, U.S. Courts of Appeals for Ninth and Tenth Circuits
- Q&A with panel of past clerks (PLSI alumni) every summer



PLSI's Native American Bar Passage Initiative

- Bar Review Course Reimbursement
- Attorney Coaching Program
- Examinee Cohort Development
- Resources for examinees
- Also available to Native Americans who did not attend PLSI



Pre-law Outreach

- Pipeline to Law Initiative for Native Americans
- Early outreach
- Working with NALSA to administer Practice LSAT



Connection to Alumni

- Integrate alumni components into the summer program
- Reunions
- National NABA report on Native American Attorneys
- Outreach through social media and email



PLSI's Impact

- ❖ Approximately 1300 students from over 200 U.S. tribes have attended the program
- ❖ Estimated 90% graduation success rate
- ❖ Recruitment increased from one school to over a dozen
- ❖ Students have attended 60 different law schools from across the country.



PLSI's Impact

- ❖ Assisted in the increase in Indian lawyers from 25 to over 2500
- ❖ Five Assistant Secretaries of Indian Affairs - Department of the Interior
- ❖ First Native American Congresswomen, Deb Haaland and Sharice Davids, are PLSI alumnae.



PLSI's Impact

- ❖ Revolutionized the inclusion of Native Americans in the legal profession
- ❖ Nationally recognized and respected
- ❖ Recipient of the prestigious 2012 ABA Council's for Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Educational Pipeline Award
- ❖ Strongly endorsed by a wide variety of both state and private law schools nationwide
- ❖ PLSI's goal continues to focus on preparing Indian law students to do well in law school



PLSI IMPORTANT DATES 2019

- March 22, Application Deadline
- May 29-30, Registration
- May 31, Mandatory Orientation
- June 3, Classes Begin
- July 26, Program Concludes



Thank you!



www.ailc-inc.org

Facebook: American Indian Law Center, Inc.

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Resources

- ❖ Philip S. Deloria, *The American Indian Law Center: An Informal History*, 24 N.M. Law Rev. 285 (1994)
- ❖ Heidi Nesbitt, former PLSI Director
- ❖ Helen B. Padilla, Director, AILC