

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, 2020
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Center, Inc.

Pre-Law Summer Institute



Goals for this Meeting

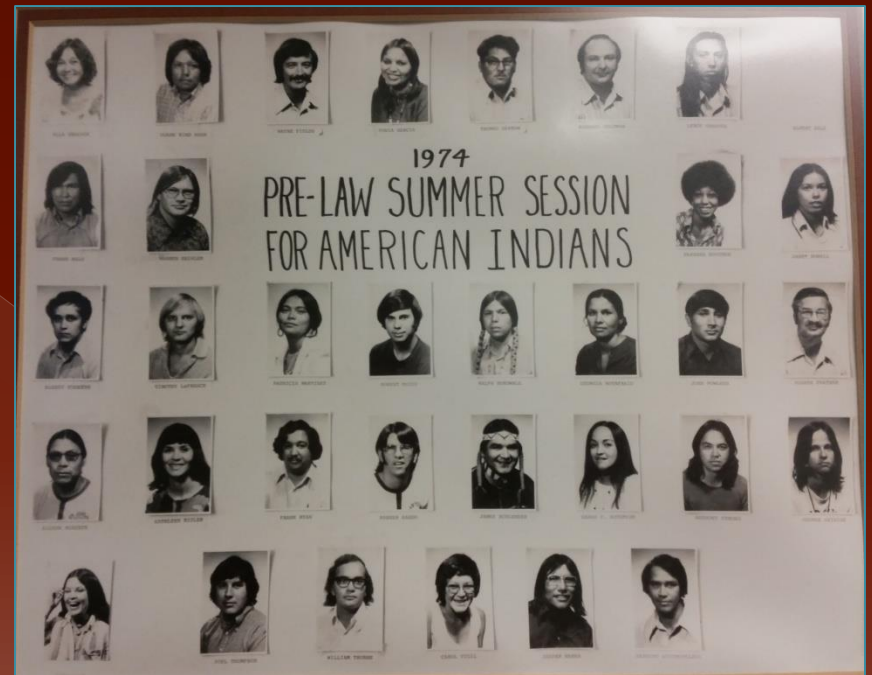
- Promote awareness of PLSI and opportunities available for American Indians and Alaskan Natives interested in law
- Connect to Tribal Education Departments, Tribal Colleges, Tribal Universities, and other advisors and mentors to Native pre-law students

Demand for Native Attorneys

- More laws and regulations affect American Indians and Alaska Natives, and their lands, 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 and PLSI

- ❖ Designed to address barriers faced by Native students, including lack of:
 - Knowledge of law school admission process
 - Access to resources
 - Native lawyer role models
 - Funding/Financial Aid



Pre-Law Summer Institute

- ❖ Offers an additional consideration for admission to law school for Native students.
- ❖ Celebrated 50th Anniversary in September 2017.

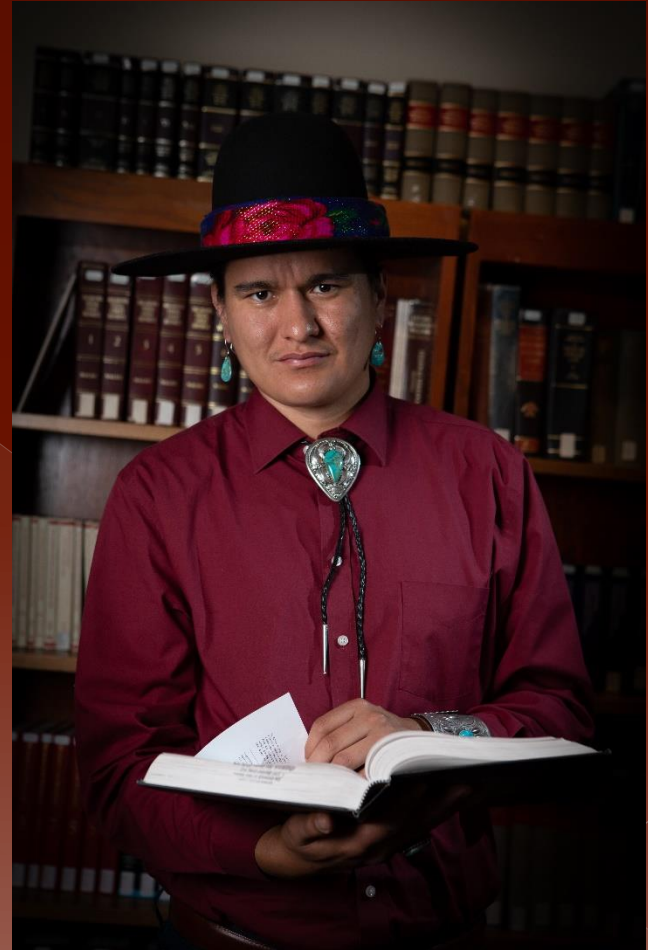


Pre-Law Summer Institute

- ❖ Program's goal is to produce successful Indian law students
 - Rigorous academic program
 - Strong connections to law school admission personnel
 - Accurate and honest placement efforts



PLSI's Academic Program



PLSI's Academic Program

- **3 substantive law classes**
 - Indian law class
 - 2 first-year classes (rotating among contracts, torts, property, civil procedure, criminal law, constitutional law)
- **Advocacy (writing class)**
 - Legal memo
 - Appellate brief
 - Oral arguments before a 3 judge panel

PLSI's Academic Program

● Faculty

- Law school professors from ABA accredited law schools
- Usually from schools with Native law student population
- Many are Native
- Prepared to teach regular law class for first-year law students
- Written evaluations of students

PLSI's Academic Program

● Teaching Assistants

- From previous year's class
- Completed first year of law school
- Provide workshops on briefing and outlining



PLSI's Academic Program

● Skills needed for law school

- Identifying issues
- Legal Analysis
- Briefing and Outlining
- Time management
- Test taking skills



Law School Connections

- Outreach to law schools for referrals to PLSI
- Work with law schools on conditional admissions
- One-on-one appointments with law school personnel during the program
- Provide law school admissions offices' contact information on our website

Law School Placement

- Professor provides two evaluations for each student
 - Midterm evaluation
 - Final evaluation with (and sometimes without) a recommendation for law school
- Law Schools rely on our honest and accurate evaluations

Pre-Law Summer Institute Funding

❖ Funding

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

Financial considerations for students

- Commitment to the program means no employment during summer
- Ask tribes to help with funding
- Living allowance for students without tribal funding
- Responsible for finding housing but we provide a list of local sublets
- Program provides all textbooks
- Students need their own laptops

PLSI

- ❖ Still follows the original model.
 - Intensive 2-month program
 - Based on sound legal education principles
 - Prominent law professors from around the country
 - Cohort of Native students and supported by a strong network of Native lawyers.





Applying to PLSI

Similar to law school application

- Application form
- LSAC Academic Summary Report
- Official transcripts
- LSAT scores
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statement
- Resume
- Proof of membership in federally recognized tribe
- Proof of law school application

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
- 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 four years: clerks in NM Court of Appeals, Arizona Supreme Court, North Carolina 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
- Outreach to tribal education departments and tribal colleges



Connection to Alumni

- Integrate alumni components into the summer program
- Reunions
- CLEs highlight alumni and faculty
- Attorney coaching program
- Networking opportunities at conferences



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 number of 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



Thank you!



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