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# Michigan Indian Legal Services, Inc.

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James J. Sandman, President  
Legal Services Corporation  
3333 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20007

Re: LSC Pro Bono Awards

Dear Mr. Sandman:

It is with great pleasure that I write to nominate Angela Sherigan for the LSC Pro Bono Awards. Ms. Sherigan is the managing partner at Wojnecka & Sherigan, in Macomb County. In addition to her full time law practice Ms. Sherigan is also the Associate Judge for the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians in Manistee, which is located on the opposite side of the state from her law practice. Despite the heavy demands of practicing law, managing a law firm, travel and her judicial duties, Ms. Sherigan finds time to serve her profession as the Chair of the State Bar or Michigan Standing Committee on American Indian Law, the Chair-Elect of the American Indian Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan and as the current President of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan.

Ms. Sherigan also serves the low income clients of Michigan Indian Legal Services (MILS) by accepting numerous referrals and providing services pro bono. Ms. Sherigan's pro bono assistance is particularly valuable because she and her firm accept the difficult and emotionally draining family law cases that are difficult to place. Ms. Sherigan and her firm have provided pro bono assistance in child support, child custody and child welfare cases.

Finally I would like to highlight a very important the pro bono project Ms. Sherigan has been leading for 10 years. Ms. Sherigan volunteered her time and professional services to the Michigan Anishinaabek Cultural Preservation, a non-profit charitable organization seeking to protect the human remains culturally related to the present day alliance of thirteen Michigan tribes.

Repatriation of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and items of cultural patrimony is one of the highest priorities for Native American people and our tribal governments. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is a Federal law passed in 1990. NAGPRA provides a process for museums and Federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items -- human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony -- to lineal descendants, and culturally affiliated Indian tribes and



Native Hawaiian organizations. MACPRA was established in 2000 pursuant to a consensus agreement between all the tribes in Michigan and consists of eleven federally recognized tribes and two state history tribes. This agreement authorized MACPRA to speak on protection and repatriation issues of interest to all the tribes and the goals of MACPRA are:

- Facilitating the repatriation of "Ancestral" remains removed from their original burial sites.
- The protection and preservation of all cultural resources on lands within our tribal ancestral and historic territories.
- Education of the public as to land conservation and protection for future generations.
- Education of private landowners so that they have knowledge to make informed decisions concerning the discovery of burial sites, funerary objects and artifacts on their private land.
- Providing information to private landowners on the proper way to protect burial sites on their land.
- Providing information on financial programs that are available to protect historic sites.
- Providing information to private landowners on how to respectfully return native ancestors to the tribes.

Ms. Sherigan performs all the corporate work for MACPRA, including the drafting of their by-laws and achieving 501(c)(3) status for the group. She performs all the legal work for the requests made of the museums and other federally funded institutions to return remains and items. When those institutions fail to comply with the requests, Ms. Sherigan then works with the museums to ensure compliance with the federal NAGPRA.

The work that Ms. Sherigan and MACPRA performs is extremely important to our clients, the American Indian communities in Michigan. Ms. Sherigan and MACPRA have facilitated numerous successful repatriations and continue to advocate for NAGPRA compliance at institutions that have yet to fully comply. When Ancestors and cultural items are returned to MACPRA, they are then disseminated to the appropriate tribal communities. The communities come together for a public reburial and ceremony. Not only is the reburial important for the ancestors who have walked on, it is part of the healing process for the American Indian communities of Michigan.

Therefore, I strongly urge the acceptance of our nomination for an LSC Pro Bono award. Thank you for taking the time to consider my thoughts and opinions. If you have any additional questions, I would be happy to respond to them.

Sincerely,



James A. Keedy

