



NORTHWEST INTERTRIBAL COURT SYSTEM

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NORTHWEST TRIBAL COURT APPELLATE OPINIONS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE AND IN A LIBRARY-QUALITY REPRINT

The Northwest Intertribal Court System (NICS) is pleased to announce that it has launched a powerful online database providing attorneys and the public free access to hundreds of tribal court appellate opinions from thirty Indian tribes in the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and Northern California. NICS will also be reprinting the entire series of its Tribal Court Appellate Opinions (also commonly referred to as NICS' appellate reporters) in a library-quality binding suitable for display and use in courthouses, council chambers, law libraries, and other places where tribal members and tribal officials may seek access to the opinions of their tribe's court of appeals.

The new NICS Tribal Court Appellate Opinions website features a "Boolean" search engine, hyperlinked subject matter and tribal indexes, a mobile application, and U.S.-based technical support, all for no charge. Other online legal publishers, like Westlaw and LexisNexis, charge a substantial fee for similar services. While federal, state and many tribal courts publish their decisions online, NICS is not aware of any other court system, federal, state or tribal, that offers online access to its decisions with all of the features NICS is offering free of charge. Publishing these appellate court opinions online with such a powerful search engine and making it available for free puts NICS and the many tribes participating in this project on the cutting edge of using technology to promote access to justice.

The hard copy reprint NICS is offering will include the entire series of NICS' Tribal Court Appellate Opinions in a library-quality, expandable binder. This special print edition will include, for the first time ever, a comprehensive, professionally-prepared, cumulative subject matter index spanning all twelve volumes. Although NICS will be charging a modest one-time fee for the reprint to cover our costs of production and mailing, purchasers of the reprint will then receive all future opinions as they are issued via email for no additional charge, as well as semi-annual updates of the indexes, also for no additional charge.

Judges, attorneys, *pro se* litigants, and legal scholars will all benefit from these new publications. For the first time, tribal members who represent themselves in the tribal courts administered by NICS can tap into the collective wisdom of hundreds of tribal court jurists with a free and easy-to-use online database. And those who lack online access or computer skills will still be able to do advanced research using the comprehensive new subject matter index that will accompany both the online and print versions. These features should also reduce costs for those who are able to afford a spokesperson or attorney, and should reduce the overall cost of administering tribal justice systems, by making legal research quicker, easier and more effective. Judges, tribal law practitioners, and legal scholars will also benefit from being able to access and research this rich resource, which now spans over 27 years of court decisions and will be continually updated as new opinions are issued by NICS-administered courts.

NICS recognizes that choosing to have NICS administer a court, and participating in the publication of appellate court opinions, are both significant exercises of tribal sovereignty. Publishing court opinions strengthens sovereignty by making the participating courts more efficient and effective while also demonstrating the quality, values, and credibility of a tribe's system of justice regarding both law enforcement and the resolution of civil disputes. The search capabilities of NICS' online database, combined with the comprehensive subject matter index included in both the print and online editions, should help reduce the costs of court administration and the costs of litigation by substantially reducing the amount of time needed for legal research. These enhancements will also promote justice by ensuring that judges, parties, and others involved and interested in each tribe's justice system have access to the precedent-setting court opinions that will often determine the outcome of new cases.

The conversion of NICS' appellate reporters to an online database was funded in part by grants from the charitable funds of the Tulalip, Muckleshoot, and Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribes. Pro bono legal assistance for the project was provided by Lauren King of Foster Pepper PLLC by arrangement of Wayside (formerly Washington Attorneys Assisting Community Organizations). The online conversion was done by Code Publishing Company, Inc. of Seattle, Washington. The subject matter index was created by Neil Savage, J.D., of Lake Forest Park, Washington.

NICS is currently taking pre-orders for the library-quality print edition. An order form is attached. The online database can be accessed, and additional order forms downloaded, through NICS' website: www.nics.ws.

Questions and comments about these publications should be directed to:

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