

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



DAMON J. CLARK
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL NALSA

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Yá'át'ééh!

Welcome back to our returning 2L and 3L students, and a special welcome to our 1Ls and new law students. National NALSA has spent the summer preparing for an exciting year ahead, and we look forward to seeing you at our events, competitions, and gatherings throughout Indian Country.

As we begin this year, I encourage each of us to “be a good Indigenous legal relative.” Support one another, build relationships across our chapters and communities, and remember the people we serve through this profession.

We are excited for the year ahead. Welcome back, and let's have a great year!

MEET THE 2026-2027 EXECUTIVE BOARD



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MEET THE 2026-2027 AREA REPRESENTATIVES



AREA 1
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Native Hawaiian



AREA 2
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Colorado River Indian Tribes, Chemehuevi, Navajo



AREA 3
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AREA 4
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Mashpee Wampanoag Nation



AREA 7
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AREA 8
Case Guinn
Cherokee Nation, Delaware Tribe

NALSA CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF LAW



UW NALSA had a busy 2025–26 year centered on supporting Native students. A major achievement was launching the Matching Scholars Award with UW Law Admissions, providing an incoming student \$12,000 over their time at UW. The chapter also provided textbook reimbursements, Kyle Rearden Memorial Scholarships for students providing tax assistance in rural Alaska, emergency financial assistance, and seat-deposit support.



Community remained central to UW NALSA's work. Its annual Salmon Bingo fundraiser brought together students and the Native and Indian law community, featuring Washington Supreme Court Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis as keynote speaker. The chapter also hosted a screening of *Fish War*, followed by a Q&A with treaty-rights leaders Ed Johnstone and Ramona Bennett-Bill.



Looking ahead, UW NALSA plans to grow scholarships, deepen community engagement, strengthen Native student recruitment and retention, and connect students with the Native legal community. Their advice to other chapters? Meet regularly, build relationships with administration, faculty, alumni, student organizations, and your local Indian law community—and have fun. As UW NALSA puts it, “Time (and tedious tasks) flies when you’re having fun.”

NATIVE EXCELLENCE: A Conversation with National NALSA Writing Competition Daisy Evariz

What inspired your winning paper, and why was this topic important to you?

Before law school, I worked at a veteran disability law firm and saw how difficult the VA system can be to navigate. At the University of Denver, I interviewed legal advocates representing Navajo Veterans seeking disability benefits. As a descendant of the Indigenous Peoples of Mexico and tribal ally, I wanted to amplify voices too often talked past rather than listened to.

What did participating in the National NALSA Writing Competition mean to you?

It challenged me to turn interview data and doctrinal analysis into a novel legal argument. It also affirmed that legal writing can be a vehicle for advocacy and meaningfully inform how Navajo Veterans and their advocates pursue relief.

What advice would you give future competitors?

Start with the people, not just the doctrine. Grounding my analysis in interviews gave my argument weight and specificity. Follow the doctrine where it leads and pay attention to procedural mechanics—they can separate an interesting argument from a viable one.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW? NATIONAL NALSA ALUMNI - RACHEL EVANGELISTO



STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE

MITCHELL HAMLINE SCHOOL OF LAW, CLASS OF 2026

LAW FELLOW, EARTHJUSTICE — TRIBAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

2025–26 NATIONAL NALSA SECRETARY | FORMER MITCHELL HAMLINE NALSA PRESIDENT

How did NALSA shape your law school experience?

NALSA gave me the community, support, and guidance I needed throughout law school. With Native students still underrepresented in law schools, having a space to share our experiences and build lifelong friendships was one of the greatest privileges of my experience.

What advice would you give today's Native law students?

Take advantage of every scholarship, mentorship opportunity, and source of support available to you. Remember that you did not get here alone—the strength and support of your Nation and community are behind you.

What is one thing you wish you knew as a law student?

3LOL is real, Themis is the best (in my opinion), take bar prep seriously, and take an extra real estate class if you can. Apply for every opportunity you are remotely qualified for—don't count yourself out before giving someone else the opportunity to say yes.

What does supporting the next generation of Native attorneys look like to you?

It means mentorship, sharing resources, opening doors, and creating spaces where Native students feel supported and connected. We have a responsibility to make the path more accessible for those coming after us.



ON OUR RADAR: IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN FEDERAL INDIAN LAW/TRIBAL LAW

Tribal Lands at the Supreme Court?

The U.S. Department of the Interior has asked the Supreme Court to review *Department of the Interior v. Shoshone-Bannock Tribes*, a dispute involving the federal government's authority to dispose of lands previously acquired from the Tribes. The petition was filed July 20, and the Tribes' response is currently due September 21, making this an important case to watch as the Court approaches its 2026–27 Term.

ICWA: Federal Investment in Keeping Native Families Together

On August 17, Indian Affairs announced \$2 million in Indian Child Welfare Act grants to seven Native organizations providing off-reservation child and family services. The funding supports culturally appropriate services designed to strengthen Native families, prevent unnecessary family separation, and keep Native children connected to their communities—putting ICWA's principles of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination into practice beyond the courtroom.

Tribal Jurisdiction Continues to Develop in the Courts

Jurisdiction remains one of the busiest areas of Indian law. Recent federal, state, and Tribal court matters involve questions ranging from Tribal jurisdiction over nonmembers and sovereign immunity to criminal jurisdiction and ICWA, while the Tenth Circuit recently reheard consolidated federal criminal-jurisdiction cases *United States v. Ruiz* and *United States v. Hebert en banc*. For Native law students, these developments are another reminder that the boundaries of Tribal, federal, and state authority remain actively contested and shaped through litigation.

STUDENT VOICES FROM ACROSS INDIAN COUNTRY

Erin Keplin

**2L at University of North Dakota School of Law
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians**

Why I Chose Law:

Growing up on the Turtle Mountain Reservation shaped how I understood the law. I saw early that laws and policies are not abstract—they affect our families, communities, and opportunities. I chose law because I wanted to advocate for underserved people whose voices have historically been ignored or overlooked.

What I Wish I Knew Before 1L:

I wish I knew everything was going to be okay. Law school can make you question yourself, and as Native students, we sometimes carry more into these spaces than people realize. Give yourself grace to step away, regroup, and get back at it. Generational trauma may be woven into our stories, but so are resilience, strength, and perseverance.

Finding Community:

Some of the best people I have met have been through law school. Having people to study, laugh, vent, celebrate, and struggle with taught me that we do not have to do this alone. Those relationships have become one of the most meaningful parts of my experience.

Being the Only Native Student in the Room:

Being the only Native person in the room can feel like you are carrying more than your own opinion. But our voices belong in classrooms, courtrooms, firms, and every place decisions affecting our communities are made. Speak even when your voice falters. Ask the question. Challenge the assumption. Our voices, experiences, and people matter.

Why NALSA Matters:

NALSA creates family—a place where Native law students are understood, supported, and encouraged to succeed. It also prepares future attorneys to engage thoughtfully with the complex issues affecting Indian Country. Most importantly, it creates a space where Native students know they belong.



NATIONAL NALSA ALUMNI

— WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU —

National NALSA is reconnecting with alumni across the country and celebrating the Native attorneys, advocates, judges, scholars, leaders, and changemakers who have been part of our community.

Were you involved with NALSA during law school? We want to hear from you.

Share where your journey has taken you, stay connected with National NALSA, and help us inspire the next generation of Native law students.

Your story may be featured in an upcoming **National NALSA newsletter** or **social media Alumni Spotlight**.

[ALUMNI SURVEY HERE](#)



ON THE ROAD: MID-YEAR CONFERENCE

CUTTING SIGN TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION

2026



NATIONAL NALSA FALL CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 16 – 17, 2026



S.J. QUINNEY COLLEGE OF LAW
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

CHART YOUR PATH INTO THE LEGAL PROFESSION AT CUTTING SIGN, A TWO-DAY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR LAW STUDENTS INTERESTED IN INDIAN LAW AND WORKING WITH NATIVE NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES.

STUDENTS WILL HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- ✓ STRENGTHEN NETWORKING AND INTERVIEWING SKILLS
- ✓ DEVELOP AN AUTHENTIC PROFESSIONAL BRAND AND ELEVATOR PITCH
- ✓ CONNECT WITH NATIVE LAW PROFESSIONALS, PEERS, AND EMPLOYERS
- ✓ LEARN FROM ATTORNEYS PRACTICING IN INDIAN LAW AND WITH NATIVE COMMUNITIES
- ✓ PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEWS WITH EMPLOYERS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

FUNDING AVAILABLE

THE PROGRAM'S GOAL IS TO FULLY FUND PARTICIPATION COSTS FOR ALL STUDENT ATTENDEES, WITH FUNDING AWARDED ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS.



PRELIMINARY REGISTRATION CLOSES
OCTOBER 2 AT 5 P.M. MT.



REGISTER TODAY →
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STAY CONNECTED. STAY INFORMED. STAY EMPOWERED.



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NALSA TOOLKIT: BUILDING A STRONG NALSA CHAPTER

A strong NALSA chapter is more than a student organization—it can become a source of community, mentorship, professional development, and connection to Indian Country. Whether your chapter is well established or rebuilding, start with the basics:

Build Community First.

Recruit early, especially among incoming 1Ls, and create opportunities for members to connect outside formal programming. Students are more likely to stay involved when NALSA feels like a community rather than another obligation.

Create Consistency.

Set regular meetings, communicate often, and establish a few dependable programs each year. You do not need an event every week—a smaller number of intentional, well-attended events can have greater impact.

Connect Beyond Campus.

Build relationships with Tribal Nations, Native attorneys, judges, alumni, professors, local bar associations, and other NALSA chapters. These relationships can lead to speakers, mentors, internships, sponsorships, and collaborative programming.

Plan for the Next Board.

Keep records of contacts, budgets, event plans, passwords, funding processes, and lessons learned. Strong chapters should not have to rebuild from scratch every time leadership changes.

Use National NALSA as a Resource.

Stay connected with your Area Representative and National NALSA. We want to help chapters collaborate, share ideas, access opportunities, and strengthen the national Native law student community.

NEXT TOOLKIT: Recruiting & Engaging 1Ls

CONNECT WITH NATIONAL NALSA

— STAY CONNECTED. STAY INFORMED. STAY EMPOWERED. —



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GIVE BACK

making a difference in Indian Country

SINCE 1970, NATIONAL NALSA HAS SUPPORTED
NATIVE LAW STUDENTS AND STRENGTHENED THE
FUTURE OF ADVOCACY IN INDIAN COUNTRY.

YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS:

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS- Reducing financial barriers for Native law students.

LOCAL NALSA CHAPTERS - Supporting student programming, service, and community.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Connecting students with opportunities, mentors, and the Native legal community.

NATIONAL PROGRAMMING - Supporting Moot Court, the Writing Competition, conferences, and other National NALSA initiatives.

SUPPORT NATIVE LAW STUDENTS. INVEST IN INDIAN COUNTRY.

