



Faculty and Planning Committee

Understanding and Applying ICWA: Purpose, Strategies, Practice, and Resources

Jacqueline Beaulieu, Senior Assistant Hennepin County



Jacqueline Beaulieu is a Senior Assistant Hennepin County Attorney in the Child Protection Division, where she has been since 2018. Jacqueline works primarily on ICWA cases. From 2003 to 2018 Jacqueline was the Litigation Director and a Staff Attorney at the ICWA Law Center, representing families involved in ICWA cases in both state and tribal courts. Jacqueline has spent most of her legal career working in child welfare with Native families.

Jacqueline is a descendant of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Jacqueline graduated from the University of California Berkeley in 1996, with a B.A. in Economics and a minor in Native American Studies. Jacqueline graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1999.

Jacqueline currently serves on the Board of Proof Alliance, with special interest on their outreach for reducing the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in Indian Country through the Our Children Are Sacred Program. Jacqueline is also a member of the Minnesota Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) Advisory Board which advises the staff of the state MMIR office.



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Hon. Jamie Cork, District Court Judge, Dakota County



Judge Cork was appointed to the First Judicial District Bench in August 2016, where she presides over a variety of cases including criminal, civil, juvenile, probate, and family cases.

Judge Cork chairs the Juvenile Protection Rules Committee, co-chairs the Dakota County Domestic Violence Coordinated Community Response Team and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Elimination of Racial Bias Committee, she is also a Board of Director for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, an active member of the First District Equal Justice Committee, Minnesota Children's Justice Initiative (CJI), CJI Indian Child Welfare Act training faculty and subcommittee, and CJI Parent Representation subcommittee.

Judge Cork is a former Assistant Hennepin County Attorney where she worked for over 18 years in the Child Protection Division. She specialized in Sexually Exploited Youth and Indian Child Welfare Act cases, including traditional child protection, long term foster care, educational neglect, runaway, sexually exploited youth, Rule 20 incompetent delinquent, and truancy cases. Judge Cork worked with Indian tribes and communities in an attempt to assure that families and children were able to obtain culturally appropriate education and services.

Judge Cork is an adjunct professor at The University of Minnesota School of Law teaching Law and Policy of Human Trafficking and at St. Thomas School of Law teaching Child Abuse and the Law. She further educates through local, state, national, and international presentations to judges, attorneys, law enforcement, human services, advocates, public health workers, and medical personnel regarding Human Trafficking. Judge Cork received her juris doctor in 1998 from Hamline University School of Law with concentration in criminal law and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice.



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Prior to law school she worked as a law enforcement officer, a correctional officer, a group home counselor and a 911 dispatcher.

Hon. Anne McKeig, Associate Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court



Justice McKeig worked for over 16 years handling child protection cases and adoption matters with a specialty in cases involving the Indian Child Welfare Act, as a former Assistant Hennepin County Attorney.

Justice McKeig was appointed to the district court bench in 2008 and served as Presiding Judge in Family Court in the Fourth Judicial District in Hennepin County located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Justice McKeig spearheaded the Family Court Enhancement Project, a demonstration project to improve outcomes for families facing issues of domestic violence. In September 2016, Justice McKeig was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court, becoming the first Native American woman in the United States to be appointed to a state's highest court.

Justice McKeig currently teaches at Mitchell Hamline School of Law and St. Thomas School of Law as an Adjunct Professor and is co-author of a law school curriculum entitled "Child Abuse and the Law".

Justice McKeig, White Earth Band of Ojibwe, grew up on the Leech Lake reservation in Northern Minnesota. Justice McKeig is a proud mother of five children and a Johnny Cash super fan.



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Jessica Ryan, Tribal Attorney, and former Tribal Court Judge



Jessica Ryan was appointed to serve as the Chief Judge for the Lower Sioux Indian Community in 2016 and was appointed to serve on the Court of Appeals for the White Earth Nation in 2017.

Jessica now represents parents, guardians, and legal custodians through Hennepin County's Adult Representation Unit. Jessica's private practice represents Bands and Indian families, primarily in the areas of child welfare. A large portion of Jessica's practice has focused on child welfare: seeking to support families in finding a sense of balance and harmony, so families remain together in a good way. Jessica has extensive litigation experience in several tribal and state courts. Jessica is active in policy analysis affecting Indian families; and collaborates with tribes, counties, and states to develop policy and practice that better serve American Indian families. Jessica has been invited to speak locally, regionally, and nationally regarding implementation of the ICWA and related laws in a way that honors the letter, spirit, and intent of the law.

Since graduating from Hamline Law School in 1997, Jessica clerked in state district court and two tribal courts, helped establish the Hennepin County ICWA Guardian ad litem Panel, and served as volunteer guardian ad litem for ICWA cases. Jessica has drafted legislation for tribes and states, was a key player in renegotiating the Minnesota Tribal/State Agreement and has sought to improve application of the law through rule revisions and creation of written materials to assist stakeholders in implementation in a good way over the years.

Most recently, Jessica was re-appointed to the Juvenile Protection Rules Committee, and co-chairs the ICWA Subcommittee. Jessica has served on the Board of Directors for several American Indian non-profit organizations and is on the Site Council for the local school.



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Jessica is enrolled with the Brothertown Indian Nation and remains active with Tribal activities.

Shannon Smith, Executive Director, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Law Center



Shannon Smith has served as Executive Director of the ICWA Law Center since July 1, 2004. Shannon has been with the ICWA Law Center since 2000 and has over 20 years of experience working in the field of Indian child welfare. Shannon has provided direct legal representation to hundreds of families impacted by the child protection system in state and tribal courts. Shannon has provided ICWA training to local and national audiences.

Shannon is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School class of 1999; Shannon graduated with honors and earned the MJF Volunteer of the Year Award in 1999. Prior to joining the ICWA Law Center, Shannon clerked for the Honorable Robert A. Blaeser of the Hennepin County Juvenile Court.

Shannon is highly regarded as a leader in the field of Indian child welfare and has served on several committees impacting the interests of Indian children, their families, and their tribes, including the Supreme Court Juvenile Protection Rules Committee, the Legal Service Advisory Council Emerging Leaders and the Minnesota Tribal/State Agreement drafting committee.



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Rebecca Vanden Hanen, Staff Attorney, Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office



Rebecca (“Becca”) Vanden Hanen has worked with the Minnesota Judicial Branch for the past 15 years. Becca serves as a Staff Attorney for the Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI), a collaborative effort between the Minnesota Judicial Branch and the Minnesota Department of Human Services designed to address systems change in the juvenile court process. Becca staffed the Tribal Court State Court Forum and has contributed to the Child Focused Parenting Time Guide Workgroup.

Prior to Becca’s work with the State Court Administrator’s Office, Becca was a staff attorney with the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s Self-Represented Litigant Program. Becca provided direct service to self-represented litigants in family court and juvenile court matters and worked closely with the bench and court administration in Hennepin County and throughout the State of Minnesota to improve access to justice for children and families.

Becca holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and received her Juris Doctor degree from the University of St. Thomas School of Law in 2008.



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Hon. Korey Wahwassuck, District Court Judge, Itasca County



Judge Wahwassuck (Cree) served as a tribal court judge for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribal Court from 2006 until 2013. Judge Wahwassuck was appointed by Governor Mark Dayton to serve as a Minnesota District Court Judge for the Ninth Judicial District. Previously, Judge Wahwassuck served as a Kansas Supreme Court Certified Mediator, and practiced law for 15 years, specializing in Indian law, child welfare, and juvenile delinquency.

Judge Wahwassuck was a founding member of the first Joint Tribal-State Jurisdiction Wellness Courts in the nation and authored “The New Face of Justice: Joint Tribal-State Jurisdiction” for the Washburn Law Journal and “Building a Legacy of Hope: Perspectives on Joint Tribal-State Jurisdiction” for the William Mitchell Law Review. Judge Wahwassuck was also a member of Project T.E.A.M. (“Together Everyone Achieves More”), helping other jurisdictions create tribal-state collaborative courts of their own.

Judge Wahwassuck served as a member of the Minnesota Supreme Court’s Drug Court Initiative Advisory Committee, the Minnesota Supreme Court’s Racial Fairness Committee, and the Safe Harbor Statewide Model Protocol Judges Workgroup, the Committee for Equality and Justice, and the Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Committee. Judge Wahwassuck currently serves on the Children’s Justice Initiative Lead Judges Workgroup, co-chairs the Minnesota Tribal Court State Court Forum, and co-chairs the State-Tribal Partnership Committee. Judge Wahwassuck also served as a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and was a member of the Tribal Advisory Committee to the Indian Law and Order Commission. Judge Wahwassuck served on the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ (NCJFCJ) Tribal Leadership Forum and the NCJFCJ’s Tribal Court Committee and as an Advisory Member of the NCJFCJ Diversity Committee.



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Judge Wahwassuck earned a Bachelor's degree and Juris Doctor degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Judge Wahwassuck has taught courses on Native American Spirituality and Sovereignty, Treaty Rights and Tribal Sovereignty, Tribal Court-State Issues, and Juvenile Delinquency Guidelines at Penn Valley Community College in Kansas City, Missouri, Leech Lake Tribal College, the National Judicial College, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Wahwassuck also serves as a trainer for the State of Minnesota on subjects ranging from the Indian Child Welfare Act to creating trauma-responsive justice systems.

Tricia Allen, Training and Development Specialist, State Court Administrator's Office



Tricia Allen has worked with the Minnesota Judicial Branch since 2020, Tricia serves as a Training and Development Specialist in the State Court Administrator's Office and supports the work of the Children's Justice Initiative (CJI). Tricia also serves as a staff person for the Committee for Equality and Justice.

Prior to Tricia's work with the State Court Administrator's Office, Tricia served as a public educator from 2008 - 2019, teaching high school social studies, alternative learning, and special education.

Tricia earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.