

Faculty

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

Hon. Anne K. McKeig, Associate Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court



Judge McKeig is a former Assistant Hennepin County attorney where she worked for over 16 years handling child protection cases and adoption matters with a specialty in cases involving the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Judge McKeig was appointed to the district court bench in 2008. She served as Presiding Judge in Family Court in the Fourth Judicial District in Hennepin County located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In September 2016, she was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Judge McKeig is a co-author of a law school curriculum entitled Child Abuse and the Law, which she currently teaches at William Mitchell College of Law as an Adjunct Professor.

She is currently a member of the Speakers Bureau for the National Child Protection Training Center. She is also a past board member of the Minnesota Organization of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and member of the Governor's Task Force on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and a current chair of the board of the Division of Indian Work located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is currently a member of the Department of Human services foster care work group and a member of the State/Tribal Court forum.

Judge McKeig, White Earth Band of Ojibwe, is a native of Northern Minnesota where she grew up on the Leech Lake reservation. She is a proud mother of five children. She is a former board member of the *Native American Children's Alliance*, an inter-tribal membership organization whose mission is to promote excellence in child abuse prevention and intervention in native communities.

Jessica L. Ryan, Tribal Attorney at Ryan Skeesuck Law Firm, P.C.

Jessica is an enrolled member of the Brothertown Indian Nation, where she also serves as an elected Tribal Council member. She graduated from Hamline Law School in 1997. Ms. Ryan has clerked for State and Tribal Court Judges and currently represents Indian Bands and Tribes in both state and tribal court proceedings. Ms. Ryan recently started her own law firm, where she is committed to working with Indian Tribes and families, to help restore balance and harmony.

Ms. Ryan is admitted to practice law in Minnesota and several Tribal Courts, and serves as a Tribal Court Judge.

She is active in legislative policy analysis affecting Indian families and collaborates with various tribes, counties and states to develop policy and practice that better serves American Indian families. Ms. Ryan was actively involved in collaborating to revise the Tribal/State Agreement; participated in developing the Judge Judge's Juvenile Protective Benchbook – ICWA Chapter; and has served on numerous Supreme Court Committees, including the Race Bias Task Force, the Minnesota Tribal Court/State Court Judges; and the Juvenile Protection Rules Committee.

Ms. Ryan helped establish the Hennepin County ICWA Guardian ad Litem panel and subsequently served as a guardian ad litem for ICWA cases for several years. She has served on the Board of Directors for a number of American Indian non-profit organizations.



Shannon Smith, Executive Director, Indian Child Welfare 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. She has over 15 years of experience working in the field of Indian child welfare. She has provided direct legal representation to hundreds of families impacted by the child protection system in state and tribal courts. She has provided ICWA training to local and national audiences.

Ms. Smith is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School class of 1999, where she 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. She 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 Tribal / State Agreement drafting committee.

Hon. Korey Wahwassuck, District Court Judge, Itasca County

Judge Korey Wahwassuck was a founding member of the joint jurisdiction courts in Cass and Itasca County, Minnesota. She served as a tribal court judge for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribal Court from 2006 until 2013 when she 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 is 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 and Minnesota Supreme Court's Racial Fairness Committees, and the Safe Harbor Statewide Model Protocol Judges Work Group, and currently serves on the Committee for Equality and Justice, and Chairs the Ninth District Equal Justice 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 Tribal Advisory Committee to the Indian Law and Order Commission.

Judge Wahwassuck earned her bachelor's degree and JD from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She 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 serves on the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' Tribal Leadership Forum, and previously served on the NCJFCJ's Tribal Court Committee and as an Advisory Member of NCJFCJ Diversity Committee.