

Tribal Court State Court Forum – Meeting Summary

March 28, 2025

Virtual meeting via Zoom

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Tribal Court Co-Chairs: Hon. Mary Ringhand and Hon. Phil Brodeen

State Court Co-Chairs: Hon. Sarah Wheelock and Hon. Matti Adam

The purpose of the Tribal Court State Court Forum is to enhance tribal court and state court relationships, provide an opportunity to address issues arising from the courts' concurrent jurisdictions, collaborate on development and delivery of judicial education and training, recommend revisions to Minnesota's procedural rules of court, and work on issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

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1. **Welcome, Blessing, and Introductions** – Judge Sarah Wheelock shared the purpose of the Forum to set the tone for the meeting. Judge Wheelock introduced Miriam Friesen as the new Tribal Court State Court Forum support staff. Miriam said a few words about herself.
2. **Agenda and Meeting Summary** – Judge Sarah Wheelock
 - a. Additions to the agenda:
 - i. Opportunities for tribal court judges to attend state court judges' investitures. Consensus that it would help in building relationships for tribal court representatives to be invited to state court investitures. The message needs to reach court administrators (who typically coordinate investitures) to include tribal court judges on invites.
 - ii. Bois Forte Tribal Court 50th Anniversary celebration is May 22 at 2:00pm, at the Nett Lake Court Facility.
 - iii. Training on tribal court at new district judge orientation. Judge Wheelock will reach out to Susan Love about this.
 - iv. For a future agenda item: Recording of tribal court orders in recording offices. TCSCF member Judge Shauna Coons could present on this topic at a future meeting.
3. **Strategic Planning for TCSCF** – Judge Sarah Wheelock
 - a. The group discussed a future strategic-planning process to identify TCSCF goals and upcoming projects. Dates and format of such a planning process

should take into account factors that are likely to increase attendance and participation by all of TCSCF. This strategic planning process could be held in two three-hour blocks of time in conjunction with the September MDJA conference (likely the Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning before that conference). The State Court Administrator's Office could likely provide facilitation and State Tribal Partnership Grant may be able to provide funds for facility costs.

4. Rules of Public Access – Judge Mary Ringhand

- a. This agenda item was tabled until the June meeting.
- b. Update of advisory committee on Rules of Public and discussion of any impact on tribes.

5. Updates from State-Tribal Partnership Committee – Miriam Friesen, State Tribal Partnership Coordinator, in Judge Phil Brodeen's absence (Co-Chair of STP Committee)

- a. The State Tribal Partnership Committee is a broad multi-disciplinary group that meets every other month. The first year of meetings was focused on identifying specific project goals. Ongoing projects include scheduling intentional visits between tribal courts and ICWA courts judges to seek feedback on ICWA Courts and best practices; evaluating options for pre-petition advocacy, multidisciplinary wrap-around advocacy that helps families avert court involvement; providing ABA Safety Guide training for judges and attorneys on prioritizing safety in decisions around reunification and placement.

6. Increasing Visibility of TCSCF – Judge Matti Adam

- a. The group continued the standing discussion of the need to increase visibility of the TCSCF. Judge turnover at district court may mean that many new judges are not aware of the TCSCF or its purpose.
- b. Judge Adam will lead effort to put regular informational articles in Branching Out or the Source
 - i. Intro to tribal court structures, where they are located, and who the tribal court judges are
 - ii. Info about the forum, including which district court judges serve on the forum from each district.
 - iii. Practice example – what has been done in past to promote partnership
 - iv. Repurpose presentation by Judges Treuer and Hogan on the history of TCSCF.

- c. Are there other outreach/relationship-building efforts to carry out in 2025?
 - i. Include tribal court administrators and tribal appellate judges in TCSCF invitations
 - ii. Consider inviting district court judges to tribal courts for visits or ride-alongs.

7. Future Meetings and Announcements – Judge Matti Adam

- a. June 20 – at Bois Forte
- b. September – at MDJA Conference
- c. December – State-court hosted at Annual Conference of Judges (Bloomington)