Hi All,

I hope this letter finds you all doing well. First, I want to tell you what an honor it was to serve as Chair of such an active Caucus. It has been a busy year for our members, and it looks like all of our efforts are paying off. We have members speaking on panels at AALL, writing articles, and changing how libraries and practitioners research Indian law.

As we look to the next year, let us continue our efforts to investigate becoming a Special Interest Section of AALL. Not that being a caucus is not wonderful, but because we are all so busy, more structure will allow us to do more with the same amount of time. An additional benefit would be the ability to raise funds! I would love for this Caucus to eventually be able to offer a scholarship to an up and coming Indian law librarian. And how wonderful would it be to have an existing account for our newsletter? It would be fantastic.

We need to consider how we pass along information from our experienced members to our newer members and focus on recruitment. The history of this Caucus should not be forgotten, and we are losing our most valuable members to retirement. We need to capture as much institutional history as possible, so we can measure where we as a Caucus have come from and where we are going.

The impact of this loss weighs most heavily on me due to Lorraine Lester’s retirement from the University of New Mexico Law Library after 32 years of service. I have worked with her since 2005. Lorraine was one of the founding members of this Caucus and has been an invaluable mentor in the field of law librarianship. She will be missed in the day to day running of the library, but also because of her sense of history for all things.

Last year was my first year at an AALL Annual Meeting, and I was shocked to be nominated for the position of Chair. Afterwards, Lorraine and I chatted, with her telling me about the first meetings of the Caucus. She talked about the radical aspect of having a Caucus for native people and how they were intentionally anti-institutional. It was a place for the handful of law librarians working in native communities to network.

Contrast that 70’s Caucus networking meeting with the current issues affecting our membership, and we and the tribal members and legal communities we work with have indeed evolved. My aspiration is that we as a Caucus can look back and appreciate our past, but also see the road ahead and ready ourselves to become more for the patrons we serve.

I hope you all keep this in mind as we go into a productive and wonderful year!

Best regards,
Sherri Nicole Thomas
NPLC, Chair 2006-07
News From the National Indian Law Library
Native American Rights Fund
submitted by Monica Martens

News blog: NILL is now providing news via a blog. Visit http://nilllibrary.blogspot.com/ to receive regular news about doing research at the library. You can also subscribe to this blog through an RSS feed by copying and pasting the following link into your preferred RSS reader:
http://nilllibrary.blogspot.com/feeds/posts/default

Improved Tribal Law Gateway: The National Indian Law Library's Tribal Law Gateway has a new look. Re-designed -- as an improved portal to the laws of the federally-recognized tribes, Alaska Native villages, and pueblos in the United States - this area of our web site now brings together all of our research tips and tools in one place. Access has been improved to the hundreds of copies of codes, constitutions and other tribal law documents held by the library and found elsewhere.

From one web page, library researchers can access our:
• research tips and guides,
• A-Z directory for finding tribal laws and web sites,
• print and online collections,
• and more.

For tribal leaders, we have developed an informational web page about the library's efforts to collect tribal codes, constitutions, and compacts. To use the Tribal Law Gateway today, go to http://www.narf.org/nill/triballaw/index.htm
News from NILL (cont'd)

"How to Build a Tribal Legal History"

The National Indian Law Library is now hosting a new web site tool: "How to Build a Tribal Legal History"

"Every American Indian tribe and Alaska Native village has a unique legal history. As self-governing sovereigns, these entities are empowered to develop and implement their own internal laws and legal systems." Created by Nancy Carol Carter -- Professor of Law and Director of the Pardee Legal Research Center, University of San Diego School of Law -- this new web resource tool describes a step-by-step process for finding the documents needed to build a tribal legal history. At each of the five steps, researchers are guided to the most authoritative electronic and print sources, offering alternative sources when available. The project was supported by an American Association of Law Libraries, Lexis/Nexis Research Grant. Professor Carter has written extensively on Native American law. Comments, corrections, and suggestions are invited. ncc@sandiego.edu

Second Annual Native Justice PowWow

Faye Hadley, Native Resources Law Librarian
University of Tulsa College of Law

The University of Tulsa College of Law hosted a Native American Pre Law Day and Native Justice PowWow on Sat., February 24, from 8:30 am to 10:00 p.m. The pre-law day and PowWow were made possible through a grant from the Law School Admission Council, and was co-sponsored by the University of Tulsa College of Law, Oklahoma City University School of Law, the Oklahoma Indian Bar Association, and the University of Oklahoma College of Law. TU NALSA students worked hard to organize the PowWow. It was a traditional PowWow in which a free dinner was served to all the attendees. The head staff were all either attorneys or law enforcement officers. Judge Patrick Moore of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation District Court was the honoree of this year's PowWow. The PowWow was very well-attended and well-received. It concluded with a special honoring song that was offered by the drum that indicated that the PowWow was very much appreciated by all who attended.

Arvo Mikkanen
Head Gourd Dancer
Indian Law on State Bar Exams

By Sherri Nicole Thomas
Systems and Research Librarian
University of New Mexico School of Law

It is an exciting time to be an Indian law librarian! New Mexico, Washington and South Dakota recently added federal Indian law to the state specific-section of their bar examinations, and the Federal Bar Association’s Indian Law Section has formed a new section to monitor and assist the progress of other states that want to add Indian law to the list of possible state-specific exam subjects.

As librarians we know that an attorney is only as good as his or her research and that Indian law has the ability to transform otherwise simple legal issues into mires of ambiguity. When an Indian law librarian is asked about jurisdiction, the questions multiply: Civil or criminal? Indian or non-Indian? What tribe? Is it in a Public Law 280 state? And so it continues. Most horrifying to an Indian law librarian though, is a question from someone who has no clue that Indian law has an impact on their legal research. As a reference librarian at the University of New Mexico Law School, I often see experienced attorneys who do not realize that their case had wandered into the arena of Indian law. Of course, this adds a level or two of difficulty to the impromptu instruction session and reference interview.

Placing federal Indian law on state bar exams is a growing trend. There have been rumbles in Montana and Oklahoma about the need for it, but this does not exhaust the list of states where Indian law issues are commonplace. In 2004, the National Congress of American Indians identified California, Arizona, North Dakota, New York, Florida, and other states as appropriate for inclusion of Indian law on the bar exam. This trend is a sign that bar associations understand that the federally recognized tribal entities within their borders have significant impact on the practice of law and that steps must be taken to address the competence of attorneys practicing in states with tribal entities. In furtherance of this, the Federal Bar Association’s Section on Indian Law on State Bar Exams was formed. The section is chaired by Gloria Valencia-Weber of the University of New Mexico. Other members include Gabriel S. Galanda of Williams, Kastner & Gibbs, PLLC, Cheryl Williams of Milberg Weiss & Bershad LLP, Helen Padilla currently Counsel at Tesuque Pueblo, but soon to be Director of the American Indian Law Center, William Bluehouse Johnson Pueblo of Isleta Appellate Court and Judge for Pueblo of Laguna Tribal Court, and myself.

Why is an academic law librarian on the committee? I was surprised, too, but the section chair recognized that Indian law questions from attorneys, students, and Pro Se patrons are frequently addressed at the Reference Desk. Further, she and I have both been witness to the fact that adding Indian law to state bar exams increases the number of students taking Indian law courses and changes the profile of students who take those courses. This will increase the number and types of Indian law questions answered at the reference desk and create a greater need for specialized instruction in Indian law research.

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Indian Law on State Bar Exams
(Cont'd from page 4)

This trend affects us at the reference desk positively, since it guarantees Indian law librarians everywhere will receive more challenging reference questions. I believe that the more challenging the question, the better the opportunity for the patron to learn and the law librarian to refresh his or her skill set. And, it is exciting to see our diverse skill set recognized as we contribute our expertise to the development of practitioner competence not only in the library, but also in the classroom and on the bar exam.

For Further Reading:


Gloria Valancia-Weber and Sherri Nicole Thomas, When the state bar exam embraces Indian law: Teaching experiences and observations, 82 N.D. L. REV. 741 (2006). Available online at: https://repository.unm.edu/dspace/handle/1928/3116


NPLC Surplus Book Bank—Another Success!

The Native People Law Caucus continued its tradition of recycling used and surplus law books to the Native legal community, by setting up a distribution point at the University of Tulsa College of Law table at the Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference in Albuquerque, NM, April 19 and 20, 2007. This project has been coordinated by Faye Hadley who accepts donations of not-too-old (2000 to 2007, depending on the subject area) law books that we as a caucus give away for free to Native judges, attorneys and law students each year at Fed Bar. It’s a great way to recycle surplus books and introduce ourselves to the Native legal community.

Professor Bill Rice and Dean Vicki Limas (both from Univ. of Tulsa College of Law) staff the table that included the NPLC Surplus Book Bank.
Mark your calendars and be sure to attend:

Native Peoples Law Caucus Annual Meeting
Monday, July 16, 2007
11:45 AM - 1:00 PM
EMCC-Room 203 (Ernest N. Morial Convention Center)

Indigenous Government and Law in the Americas

Library of Congress Online Classification: A Gateway to Web Resources?
(TS-SIS Program)
Tuesday, July 17, 2007 — 9:00-10:30 a.m.
EMCC Room 224

Jolande Goldberg, Richard Amelung, David Selden & Monica Martens

American Association of Law Libraries
http://www.aallnet.org/index.asp
Native Peoples Law Caucus Web Site:
http://www.aallnet.org/caucus/nplc/

2006—2007 Officers:
Chairperson — Sherri Nicole Thomas
Webmaster — Monica Martens
Newsletter — Faye Hadley & Gretchen VanDam
Treasurer — Monica Martens
TLCCD - David Selden