



WILLIAM MITCHELL
COLLEGE OF LAW

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Tribal Code Writing Clinic at William Mitchell College of Law

William Mitchell College of Law seeks to improve the practical legal skills of law students interested in tribal law while providing a free legal resource for tribal nations. William Mitchell's mission is to promote "practical wisdom" and the Clinic has been established to create a unique opportunity to pursue a mutually beneficial practical partnership between the College and tribal governments. There is no cost to tribal nations for work done by the Clinic students. However, due to high demand, the Clinic may not be able to assist all interested tribal nations in a given academic year.

In the Clinic, trained William Mitchell law students assist the governments of tribal nations with specific code writing and revision projects. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, the Clinic will focus on revising and drafting tribal criminal laws, with a particular focus on violent crime and compliance with the Tribal Law and Order Act and the Violence Against Women Act. All students are supervised by a full-time William Mitchell faculty member with expertise in tribal law. The 2014-2015 code writing clinic is supervised by Sarah Deer, a citizen of the Mvskoke (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma.

The objectives of the Clinic include:

1. Provide an academic and educational atmosphere and opportunity for law students to study federal, state, and tribal laws affecting tribal nations and their citizens;
2. Provide research and drafting assistance for specific tribal statutory reform projects; and
3. Establish and cultivate relationships between William Mitchell College of Law and tribal nations.

Project Details

1. Each tribal nation will designate a liaison(s) to work directly with the student(s), and all work assignments will be coordinated between the liaison and the faculty supervisor. When financially and logistically possible, the clinic students may visit the reservation to receive assignments and work directly with tribal leaders. When in-person visits are not possible, the Clinic will arrange for conference calls with the liaison and other tribal leaders to ask questions about the specific needs of the tribal nation.

2. The clinic faculty and students will abide by all ethical and confidentiality rules applicable to an attorney-client relationship with regard to their work for tribal nations and, in particular, will not publish any confidential information about the tribal nation without the Tribe's permission. It is the intent of the Clinic that the attorney-client and attorney work product privileges will apply to communications between the students, the Faculty Supervisor and the tribal nation, and to work product produced by the Faculty Supervisor and the students in furtherance of the project. Prior to beginning work, the students will be asked to sign any additional confidentiality agreement or project guidelines requested by the tribal nation and approved by the Faculty Supervisor. The tribal nation may also, at its discretion, require Supervising Faculty or students to join any existing tribal bar association.
3. Attorney work product and other Project-related materials may be shared between the Faculty Supervisor, any supervising attorneys, and any students or staff involved in the Clinic without violating confidentiality provisions or waiving privileges. Confidential client materials will not be shared with any other party absent permission from the tribal nation. No faculty member or student affiliated with the Clinic will publish, or otherwise publicly release, research relating to confidential client matters without express written permission from the tribal nation
4. Our philosophy is focused on tribal sovereignty and self-determination. We work on crafting language that reflects a tribal nation's unique needs, strengths, and culture.

If you are interested in partnering with the William Mitchell College of Law Code Writing Clinic, please contact Professor Sarah Deer.

Contact information:

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To learn more about the Indian Law Program at William Mitchell, please visit <http://web.wmitchell.edu/indian-law/>