

Washington State Minority and Justice Commission
2025 Supreme Court Symposium
TÁCELŚW SIÁM: A Call to Justice for Indigenous Peoples

Symposium Faculty Biographies



Allison Nomee

Allison Nomee is Wenatchi, Methow, Moses/Columbia, Palus, Entiat, Okanogan bands of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation. She is also a descendant of the Coeur D'Alene Tribe. Allison is an Apprentice for the Nxaʔamxcčín Language Program. She has been working towards her certification as a teacher for the Nxaʔamxcčín Language. She has always had the goal of becoming a teacher of her native language, culture and traditions. She has engaged in her culture and traditions for all her life and is a young strong leader amongst her community. Her continued efforts towards her goals, Allison is looking forward to helping our future generations learn and keep our culture and traditions going.

(from left to right, Allison Nomee and Corina Nomee)

Corina Nomee

Corina Nomee is Wenatchi, Methow, Moses/Columbia, Palus, Entiat, Okanogan bands of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation. She is also a descendant of the Coeur D'Alene Tribe. Corina is currently working as the Administrative Assistant for the Colville Tribal Youth Development Programs. She has been engaging with our Public Schools on and near the Colville Indian Reservation, to help keep the partnership between the culture/traditions and education for our youth. Corina has held different job positions for the Colville Tribes and the Kalispel Tribes. These past employment careers have helped develop her job skills to move forward with assisting our youth in their future educational goals. She previously attended Eastern Washington University and is planning on achieving her Bachelor's Degree in Early Education.

Both Allison and Corina have been involved in their culture and traditions throughout their whole life. They have absorbed valuable knowledge from their grandparents and elders throughout the years that has helped them pass on these teaching to all who are willing to learn.



Brandon Pino

Brandon Pino is Wenatchi and San Poil of the Colville Confederated Tribes and Santa Ana Pueblo. A freshman at Northwest Indian College majoring in Business, Brandon is a Dean's List student, a college basketball point guard, and a passionate entrepreneur. He is a co-owner of *Think Outside the Box*, a Native apparel company, and the founder of *Showtime Family*, a Native basketball organization where he mentors and coaches emerging athletes. A former President of the Nespelem Youth Council, Brandon has dedicated hundreds of hours to community service. He is a proud Champion Grass Powwow Dancer, a lifelong

drug- and alcohol-free advocate, and a strong practitioner of his cultural traditions. Brandon has earned prestigious scholarships from organizations such as the Native American Basketball Invitational, 12 Tribes Gaming Association, and American Indian Services.

With a vision to become a successful entrepreneur and philanthropist, Brandon is committed to uplifting his community and inspiring the next generation through education, culture, and sport.



Brooke Pinkham, Director, Seattle University Northwest Center for Indigenous Law

Brooke was born and raised in a strong family heritage within the community of the Yakama Nation. She comes from Chief Joseph, leader of the Wallowa band of Nez Perce (Niimiipu), and European immigrants who settled in Eastern U.S and eventually the Pacific Northwest. While she might be the first in her family with a documented law degree, she's not the first to know and study the law extensively. There are so many before her who, to preserve the livelihoods of her people, studied and memorized treaties, contracts, common law, and policies. Laws that were not in her family's favor nor had them in mind. Brooke is grateful to the UW School of Law for seeing her potential many years ago. She is also grateful to the

Northwest Justice Project for allowing her to do good work and address the high needs in her community. Last, she is grateful to Seattle University School of Law for trusting her to lead the work for the betterment of tribal communities. Brooke stands on the shoulders of so many who have carved a path leading her to the work she does now. Brooke believes she has a responsibility to give back and provide for those seeking the same path. This is why Brooke serves on the board of the YWCA of Seattle, King and Snohomish Counties, and volunteers her time to mentor Native students all over the Nation interested in pursuing a law degree.



Autumn Liner-Sanders, enrolled Snoqualmie, Tribal Attorney

Autumn Liner-Sanders is an enrolled member of the Snoqualmie Tribe and an alumnus of Seattle University School of Law – 08'. She is the Commissioner Chair for the Snoqualmie Tribe -Tribal Gaming Commission where she has served since 2014. She has also been an attorney for the Puyallup Tribe since 2017, and is currently the Senior Prosecutor/Presenting Officer. Previously, she has worked as a prosecutor for the City of Seattle; an attorney with the law firm Legal Advocates for Indian County; a defense attorney for the law firm Stewart, Beall, MacNichols & Harmell; a personal injury, family and immigration attorney with the law firm Konteh & Tanijo; and was a selected fellow for the Washington State Judicial Institute in 2016.



Gabe Galanda, Attorney, Galanda Broadman, PLLC

Gabriel S. Galanda is an Indigenous human rights attorney and the managing lawyer at Galanda Broadman, PLLC, an Indigenous rights firm in Seattle, Washington. Gabe sues federal, state, local, and tribal government actors and others who violate Indigenous human rights.

Gabe has been named to Best Lawyers in America from 2007 to 2024, and dubbed a Super Lawyer by his peers from 2013 to 2024. The American Bar Association awarded him the Spirit of Excellence Award in 2022 and named him a Difference Maker in 2012. The Washington State Bar Association honored Gabe with the Excellence in Diversity Award for his "significant contribution to diversity in the legal profession" in 2014. For his staunch advocacy against tribal disenrollment practices, the University Arizona College of Law awarded him the Professional Achievement Award and Western Washington University named him a Distinguished Alumnus in 2018. The University of Arizona College of Law named Gabe its 2022-23 Alumnus of the Year. He has also received the Native Justice Award from the Northwest Indian Bar Association.

Among Gabe's many scholarly writings on Indigenous rights issues, he published "Curing the Disenrollment Epidemic: In Search of a Remedy" in Arizona Law Review in 2015, and "In the Spirit of Vine Deloria, Jr.: Indigenous Kinship Renewal and Relational Sovereignty" in the book, "Of Living Stone: Perspectives on Continuous Knowledge and the Work of Vine Deloria, Jr." in 2024. He has also lectured on those issues at Harvard University and Yale, Cornell, UC Berkeley and Irvine, and Arizona law schools, as well as testified before the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland.

Gabe belongs to the Round Valley Indian Tribes of California, descending from the Nomlaki and Concow Peoples.



Ben Brockie, Mary Gates Leadership Scholar, UW

Ben Brockie is an A'aninin Tribal member from Fort Belknap, Montana, and a student at the University of Washington, where he is pursuing a double major in American Indian Studies and Sociology. Born and raised in Spokane, Washington, Ben was sentenced to 67 years as a young adult for robbing two banks with a BB gun. He served over 22 and a half years before being granted clemency and released in September 2024. Just ten days later, he began his undergraduate journey—committed to transforming personal experience into purposeful advocacy.

While incarcerated, Ben earned a degree in Human and Social Services and developed several programs focused on supporting Native American people within the prison system. As a leader and advocate, he worked to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous individuals—providing guidance, organizing cultural and educational programs, and creating spaces for healing and community. Ben also became a passionate voice for expanding access to higher education in prison, believing it should be available to all incarcerated people—regardless of sentence length.

Today, Ben is a Mary Gates Leadership Scholar, BAVA recipient, and Public Health intern with the Urban Indian Health Institute, where he is designing a first-of-its-kind MMIWP (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People) awareness program for carceral settings in Washington State. He has made the Dean's List every quarter at UW and has delivered talks at universities both locally and nationally, using his story to raise awareness on incarceration, Indigenous justice, and policy reform.

Rooted in his cultural identity and lived experience, Ben plans to attend law school in 2026. His work centers on amplifying Indigenous voices, challenging punitive narratives, and advancing equity through education, storytelling, and legal advocacy.

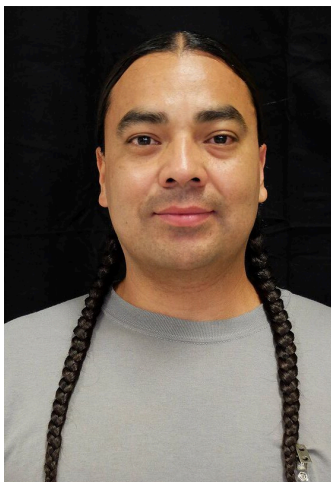


Charles Longshore

My name is Charles Longshore. My Indian name is Sla' Hee-Tub and I am a Skokomish Tribal Member born and raised on the Skokomish Indian Reservation. I am currently serving 35.8 years at the Washington Correction Center. Growing up in Indian country was not easy, especially in a traditional home like mine where my grandparents, aunties and uncles held on and passed down the history and harms of past transgressions of the

U.S. and WA State governments. My life was marred by abuse, neglect, alcoholism and drug addiction. This stemmed from the results of intergenerational trauma, forced assimilation, boarding schools, destruction of our culture and traditions, and genocide of my people who are all still actively recovering today. I stand as a testament of a person's capacity to change and heal from such atrocious harms. In a place where there is no hope I found hope and I represent a community that survived the era of "Kill the Indian, save the man".

Today, I am an advocate, a community organizer, a father, a brother, an uncle, a husband, and proud member of the Skokomish Indian Nation. I mentor other incarcerated Indian men and help them heal through our traditional ways and medicine by providing teachings through our Native Gardens, Sweat Lodge ceremonies, Long House traditions, Pow Wows and more. I am honored to be asked to come share my story and lived experience with the Washington State Supreme Court as an Indian person impacted by the legal system. In the way of my people, I lift my hands up in gratitude to you all. Heichka Siam (Thank you, all respected people).



Travis Comeslast

Travis ComesLast is an enrolled member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribes. In 1996, he was convicted of First Degree Murder and Robbery and received a 46-year prison sentence. While in prison, he has dedicated his life to rehabilitation and transformation, participating in more than 50 educational, self-help, work, religious, or volunteer programs. Unlike the struggling, broken adolescent who entered the carceral system so many years ago, ComesLast has become a leader for positive change, using his lived experience to counsel and assist other individuals, always encouraging them to better themselves. He has been instrumental in developing culturally relevant programming for Native Americans in prison and has worked to deepen the cultural awareness of

his community. He has worked with individuals both inside and out of prison, addressing issues of addiction and trauma. He has prepared himself so that when he is released, he will be able to work with at-risk youth and young adults, to help the next generation in breaking the cycle of incarceration and addiction. He believes such service is an obligation he carries constantly and humbly.

Mary Bent, Attorney, Northwest Justice Project Native American Unit



Mary is an enrolled member of the Colville Confederated Tribe. She currently lives in Omak with her wonderful family.

Mary graduated from Seattle University School of Law in 2023, where she was the managing editor for the American Indian Law Journal, served as co-president of SU's Native American Law Students Association, and participated in a domestic violence practicum in partnership with the Tulalip Office of Civil Legal Aid.

After graduating from law school, Mary was awarded an Equal Justice Fellowship sponsored by the US Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime. For

almost a year and a half, Mary has spent her Fellowship in Omak, Washington, with the Northwest Justice Project's Native American Unit as a Crime Victim Advocate, where she brings awareness to critical issues such as domestic violence, human trafficking, and other injustices that plague Native Americans. She provides representation to Native American crime victims in and out of the tribal court system by assisting crime victims with cases concerning their immediate safety, ongoing protection, and family law needs.

As a Native woman from a low-income background, Mary is honored and proud that her work addresses the injustices that impact her community, and she can give back to the very people who shaped her path and her future.



Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith, Suquamish Tribal Court

Judge Cindy K. Smith is the Chief Judge for the Suquamish Tribal Court. She has served as an Associate Judge for the Suquamish Tribe since 1998. In 2016 she was appointed by the Tribal Council as Chief Judge. Since 2009, Judge Smith has served as the Tribal Court Judge for the Hoh Indian Tribe. Beginning in 2017, Judge Smith was appointed as an Associate Judge for the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. Finally, Judge Smith is an Associate Justice for the Colville Tribal Court of Appeals and has served as an appellate judge for various tribes in Washington.

Judge Smith is the Vice-President of the Northwest Tribal Court Judges Association. She is a co-chair of the

Washington Tribal State Court Consortium. Judge Smith is also a member of the Gender and Justice Commission of the Washington State Supreme Court.



Commissioner Michelle L. Ressa, Spokane County Superior Court

Michelle Ressa was appointed to the Spokane County Superior Court bench in May 2007. Before that, she spent a year as the Superior Court Commissioner in Grant County. Commissioner Ressa was born and raised in Spokane and graduated from the University of Washington in 1992 with a degree in Political Science. She graduated, *cum laude*, in 1996 from Gonzaga University School of Law. Commissioner Ressa has spent her entire legal career working in the field of child welfare, or as she describes, in public health.

Appointed in 1996 by then Attorney General Christine Gregoire, Ms. Ressa represented the Department of Social and Health Services in dependency, termination and licensing actions in Thurston, Lewis, and Mason Counties. She also represented DSHS in King County for several years before taking a position representing Children's Administration Headquarters in 2002. Commissioner Ressa also represented DSHS in civil tort cases for two years before her appointment to the bench.

Currently Commissioner Ressa is the judicial officer assigned to the Indian Child Welfare Team in Spokane County Juvenile Court. Her dependency caseload consists only of Native American children and their families. Her other dockets include family law motions, civil protection orders, child support modifications, mental health hearings, at-risk-youth, truancy, guardianship and trusts, first-appearance hearings in adult criminal cases, and miscellaneous cases appearing in ex parte court.

Commissioner Ressa is a member and former co-chair of the statewide Superior Court Judges' Association Family and Juvenile Law Committee. She is also a member of an advisory committee for DCYF and several statewide workgroups and committees focused on improving family and juvenile courts. Commissioner Ressa has conducted numerous hours of training for the courts, the Department, the Attorney General's office and the child welfare community. She teaches Juvenile Law as an adjunct professor at Gonzaga University School of Law. She has consistently showed her dedication and passion for children and families navigating their way through a complicated, emotional, and financially challenging legal system.