



# AILP NEWSLETTER

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## Osiyo, Da'anzho,

The American Indian Law Program at the University of Colorado is delighted to welcome a terrific community to campus this year, with students from the Blackfeet, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Coquille, Jemez Pueblo, Lakota, Potawatomi, and Tunica Biloxi nations, and many others committed to the field of Indigenous Peoples' Law.

Together with tribal leaders, linguists, and lawyers, the AILP has been busy with the recent publication of Visions for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2023, in a recent special issue of the Colorado Environmental Law Journal, as well as visits to tribal communities in Oklahoma to support advocacy around language as a human right. The American Indian Law Clinic is deeply involved in voting rights work on several reservations, while The Implementation Project recently supported the National Congress of American Indians, Coalition of Large Tribes, and United Indian Nations of Oklahoma at the United Nations in New York and Geneva.

On a somber note, we remember our dear friend, mentor, and colleague Professor Charles Wilkinson who walked on this summer. He left us an incredible legacy in Indian law, the knowledge that we can make a difference if we set our hearts, minds, and spirits to the

With our very best from Boulder,

**Kristen A. Carpenter**

*Council Tree Professor of Law*

*Director, American Indian Law Program*



# AMERICAN INDIAN LAW CLINIC HIGHLIGHTS



A critical component of the American Indian Law Clinic is to get out of the classroom and into communities. Under the leadership of the director, Christina Stanton, students have been able to directly observe on-the-ground impacts of the laws they have been researching and analyzing on behalf of their clients. “It is important to me that students consider what it looks like to engage in place-based lawyering; what is the relationality of the homelands, territories, and reservations to our Indigenous clients? How does the law incorporate, or not, consideration of these geographies? What is missing from how we are taught to understand historical treatment of tribes in the United States and the modern era of self-determination?” Stanton asks. “The connection between law and people is so critical and our work in the clinic seeks to bridge this gap for students.” Client work and reflections on the current political climate and important issues facing Native Nations has grounded students in the modern state of affairs and to consider the important role of Indigenous attorneys and their allies in the efforts to uphold Native sovereignty.

## Protecting the Native Vote

*Article originally posted on the Colorado Law website on Nov 30, 2022. Thanks to Siena Kalina, Michele Manceaux, and Kate Newman for their contributions to this article.*

Three students, Siena Kalina '23, Michele Manceaux '24, and Kate Newman '24, worked to provide important legal research for the NativesVote 2022 website, a partnership between IllumiNative, Native Organizers Alliance, and First Peoples Worldwide. These students have parsed state and local voting laws; looked at county maps and redistricting efforts; identified many state offices to provide clarity on obscure language; and tracked all active litigation.



The students identified the ways in which Native voters face a unique set of issues when both registering to vote and casting their ballots. For example, in Montana, Native voters on one reservation must drive 120 miles to reach a voter registration site. Without online registration, this is the only option to then be eligible to cast a ballot in November. Although mail-in voting is appealing to many voters, and something that is accessible in the state of Colorado, Native Americans are not always able to take advantage of this due to lack of traditional addressing and postal delivery on reservations.

After conducting this research, the students developed language for the Natives Vote website so that Native voters had a resource tailored to the information they need to vote. This included whether states provide materials in Native languages, state laws on mail-in and absentee ballots, how to get an address if one does not

(cont.)

have a “traditional” address as described the state, and what types of identification are needed to register and vote.

For the mid-term November elections, the entire Clinic travelled to North Dakota to provide poll observation to support the Native American Rights Fund’s voter protection efforts. Four groups of clinic students were sent out to polling locations near the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians and Spirit Lake Tribes’ reservations.

North Dakota is the only state that does not have voter registration. The students imagined this would make voting easier as it removed one large obstacle for Native voters, but the reality was much different. The students noted that many people showed up to the wrong polling place, because the state had not notified them of the correct polling location. Others faced challenges squaring their address on their ID with the address the election officials had on file in their electronic system. While they observed confusion about specific election laws, the students also observed a sense of community familiarity and a willingness to help people cast ballots if they chose. They met individuals who were voting for the first time or voting with a tribal ID they had obtained just the previous day.

## Building Capacity within our Colorado Community

Students have also had the opportunity to work on building outreach programs in addition to clinical practice. These moments not only help to grow awareness of contemporary Indigenous issues and ways to build allyship, but they also hone the students' presentation skills. It is also a reminder that students need not look far to be engaged in these issues and show solidarity.

Ms. Manceaux has contributed to these capacity-building efforts. She said, “Learning American Indian law really changed my legal perspective and what I want to do with my career. It also inspired me to be involved in outreach programs where I and other students can teach the community about the importance of understanding Native American history and how current events impact all of society.”

Ms. Manceaux and Joshua Bertalotto '24 presented to local company, Rowdy Mermaid, on Indigenous Peoples’ Day in October 2022. They discussed the ramifications of critical moments in history, such as allotment and removal, and offered employees ways to engage with Native American tribes and support tribal sovereignty in their professional and personal lives. “It was rewarding to meet people where they were and give them solutions on how to make positive, individual changes,” Manceaux said.

Following her participation in the Byron R. White Center for the Study of American Constitutional Law Constitution Day Project in September, Ms. Manceaux organized a day to discuss tribal sovereignty with high school students at Northglenn High School in Broomfield, CO. To anchor the conversation in modern issues, she taught students about what tribal sovereignty looks like in practice by addressing the case *Brackeen v. Haaland*. Ms. Manceaux watched how students grappled with the concept of tribal sovereignty within the complex case of *Brackeen*, highlighting multi-party interests, and the duty that the United States has to tribes.

As the clinic students gain the practical experience of lawyering on behalf of Indigenous Peoples, they are also encouraged to consider how to best live the values of client-centered lawyering.

“We approach this work with a constant reminder of our north stars: tribal sovereignty and self-determination. I ask that each student interrogate how they show up as lawyers, as students, and as humans and how we can do better to incorporate these north stars in our practice,” Stanton said.





# SPOTLIGHT ON RECENT GRADUATES

## Class of 2021



### Ryan Lolar

Ryan Lolar graduated in 2021 and is a member of the Penobscot Nation. During his time at Colorado Law, Ryan was the Treasurer of the Native American Law Student Association (NALSA) and competed in the National NALSA Moot Court twice, making it to the quarterfinals in 2021. Since graduation, he has worked as the Indigenous Peoples Unit Staff Attorney at Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc. in the Bangor office in Maine. “I provide free legal services to low-income Tribal members in the Wabanaki Tribal communities and in Maine. It’s primarily litigation focused, and I’ve also worked on projects involving Tribal code drafting and repatriation under NAGPRA.”

### Logan Big Eagle

Logan Big Eagle is a citizen of the Osage Nation and was the Secretary of NALSA in his 3L year. Logan is now an Associate Attorney at Patterson Earnhart Real Bird & Wilson LLP. During his time at Colorado Law, Logan found the American Indian Law Clinic to be instrumental to his success. Big Eagle said, “Law school classes teach you the law but Clinic teaches you how to be a lawyer, and I don’t know that I’d be where I am today if it wasn’t for my experience in the American Indian Law Clinic.”



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## Class of 2022

### William Raley

William Raley is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and was the Vice President of NALSA his 3L year. William was also the Moot Court Administrator for the 2022 National NALSA Moot Court Competition held at Colorado Law. He is now an Associate Attorney at Dufford Waldeck Law in Grand Junction, Colorado. Thinking back on his time at Colorado Law, Will said, “It can be hard, within law school, to know which classes out of the multitude will actually be useful. My advice would be to generally follow your passion but take risks on classes which might not pique your interest. I took an estate planning class on a whim and that’s ended up being a large part of my practice. As cliché as it is, the most important thing you learn is how to learn, because as a lawyer you will encounter completely novel problems every day. That’s the essence of the profession.”



# SPOTLIGHT ON RECENT GRADUATES



**Ellie Thurston**

Ellie Thurston was the 2022-2023 American Indian Law Program Fellow and recently accepted a position as an Attorney-Advisor in the Cross-Cutting Issues Law Office within the Office of General Counsel at the US Environmental Protection Agency. On what helped her most during her time at Colorado Law, “Professor Carpenter’s Advanced AIL seminar and the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Clinic were the most beneficial. The clinic helped me develop skills for working with clients on environmental policy issues, and the seminar taught me how to appropriately consider tribal needs in all areas of my work.”

**Jennifer Goodman**

Jennifer Goodman is a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. In law school, Jennifer helped found the Women of Color Collective (WOCC), a student organization focused on helping women of color navigate and feel safe in the legal community. She is a licensed attorney in the state of Oklahoma. She recently completed a fellowship with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, in partnership with the Grand Canyon Trust, where she worked on issues of Just Transition in the Black Mesa region.



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## Class of 2023

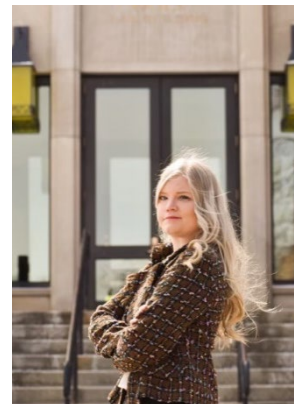


**Siena Kalina**

Siena Kalina is a citizen of the Osage Nation and was the President of the CU Chapter of NALSA her 2L year and National NALSA her 3L year. She was also the Production Editor of the Colorado Environmental Law Review in 2022-2023 and worked with Charles Wilkinson as a research assistant, helping him finish his final book on the Boldt Decision. Siena is currently working as the Indian Law Fellow at the Sacramento based firm Berkey Williams.

**Kelby Welsh**

Kelby Welsh is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and was the President of the CU Chapter of NALSA her 3L year and the Area 2 Representative for National NALSA. Kelby was also the Notes and Comments Editor for the Colorado Environmental Law Review and worked with Siena Kalina as a research assistant for Charles Wilkinson. She is continuing her career as an Incoming Honors Program Attorney within the U.S. Department of Justice, Environment and Natural Resources Division. Thinking back on her favorite class at Colorado Law, “The Colorado Plateau field seminar with Professor MacGregor was my favorite class I took at Colorado Law! We spent spring break camping, meeting with tribes, and immersing ourselves in what we had been learning on the Colorado Plateau.”



# The Implementation Project at EMRIP

## Supporting Indigenous Peoples’ Calls for the U.S. and World Community to Protect Tribal Treaty Rights, Support Language Revitalization, and Enhance Indigenous Peoples’ Participation at the United Nations

By Emiliano Salazar

The 16th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Expert Mechanism or EMRIP) opened on July 17, 2023, and concluded July 21, 2023. Indigenous Peoples, State representatives, and a number of organizations gathered to engage in dialogue regarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples. EMRIP is mandated to advise the United Nations Human Rights Council and to advance the aims of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration). The session culminates with an annual report and submission of studies to the Human Rights Council, comprised of 37 Member States including the United States (past EMRIP reports and studies are available here).

The Implementation Project (TIP) was represented by Co-Directors Kristen Carpenter, Council Tree Professor of Law and Director of the American Indian Law Program at the University of Colorado Law School, and Sue Noe, Senior Staff Attorney at the Native American Rights Fund, along with Emiliano Salazar, University of Colorado American Indian Law Program Fellow.

A highlight for TIP was supporting the Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT) at the session. COLT represents the interests of the more than 50 tribes with reservations of 100,000 acres or more, and approximately one million American Indian people in the U.S. Led by COLT Treasurer and Rosebud Sioux Councilwoman Lisa White Pipe, the COLT delegation included Bo Bearshield, Michaela Red Cherries, and Jennifer Weddle. The delegation made official interventions from the floor, met with U.S. State Department representatives, and participated in a side event on sacred sites and human rights with Indigenous leaders from Norway, Australia, and the U.S. (See [Speaking at the United Nations, COLT Treasurer White Pipe Calls on the U.S. to Provide Greater Support to Indigenous Languages as part of Indian Boarding Schools Healing Work | Coalition of Large Tribes.](#))



White Pipe stated, “COLT is committed to holding the U.S. accountable for violating tribal treaty rights and the harms perpetuated by the federal Indian boarding schools. We will go wherever we need to protect our people and lands. Our presence at the United Nations is part of an advocacy strategy at the tribal, federal, and international levels to advance our sovereignty and human rights.”

Councilwoman White Pipe made an intervention on “Item 5: Interactive Dialogue with the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development.” White Pipe’s statement emphasized that only healthy communities can pursue the right to development. She called for an EMRIP country engagement in the U.S. to advance remedies for the harms to Indigenous Peoples’ languages, health, and wellbeing caused by federal

Indian boarding schools. Watch Councilwoman White Pipe’s intervention on UN Web TV [here](#).

Language rights was a strong theme of the session, and Carpenter made an intervention on behalf of Colorado Law’s American Indian Law Program during “Item 7: International Decade of Indigenous Languages.” She highlighted *Visions for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032*, a publication in which Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr. called on the U.S. to announce a national action plan for the decade and tribal leaders, linguists, and teachers identified good practices and challenges in language revitalization. Carpenter noted the opportunity for the U.S. to



# The Implementation Project at EMRIP

prioritize Indigenous Peoples’ language rights, sacred sites protection, and international repatriation as it rejoins the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization this year. Watch Co-Director Carpenter’s intervention on UN Web TV here.



Noe made an intervention on behalf of the Native American Rights Fund and the National Congress of American Indians during “Item 9: Interactive dialogue with UNPFII, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.” Noe highlighted the need for Indigenous Peoples to have full and effective participation in an upcoming diplomatic conference at the World Intellectual Property Organization to negotiate a legal instrument on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources, and Traditional Knowledge Associated with Genetic Resources. Watch Co-Director Noe’s intervention on UN Web TV here.

The Implementation Project held a side event on July 19, 2023, entitled “Sacred Sites and Human Rights: Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’ Articles on Religious Freedoms, Free Prior and Informed Consent, and Rights to Land & Water.” Panelists were S. James Anaya, Distinguished Professor at the University of Colorado Law School and Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Hannah McGlade, Member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; Eirik Larsen, Political Advisor to the Sami Parliament in Norway, and Councilwoman White Pipe. Commenters were newly appointed Chair of EMRIP Sheryl Lightfoot and Vice-Chair Antonina Gorbunova. The presentations converged around the sacred relationship between Indigenous Peoples and their lands, values that are inadequately protected by current laws. Panelists discussed the Black Hills, Oak Flat, and Thacker Pass (all in the United States); Juukan Gorge (Australia); and Fosen (Norway)—places where Indigenous Peoples are advancing a human rights framework to address the inadequacy of local and national laws.

Kristen Carpenter, who served on EMRIP from 2017-2021, was recognized during “Item 6: Country Engagement” for work completed during her time as Chair of the Mechanism. During this time, EMRIP assisted the Yaqui People, a cross-border Indigenous nation from the U.S. and Mexico, in their claim to repatriate a ceremonial deer head known as the Maaso Kova from Sweden. As EMRIP’s chair, Carpenter facilitated dialogue among Sweden and the Yaqui, leading to a 2020 agreement and the ultimate repatriation in 2023. The Yaqui-Sweden matter was hailed as a standard for EMRIP country engagements, which aim to give practical effect to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This session also commemorated the 100-year anniversary of Deskaheh Levi General traveling to the League of Nations to seek redress for Canada’s violation of treaties the Haudenosaunee made with the British Crown in Canada. The current Deskaheh Steve Jacobs attended the session and gave a short version of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving address during the opening. Deskaheh Steve Jacobs refused to speak thereafter. His silence highlighted the fact that even 100 years after Levi General first arrived in Geneva, the Haudenosaunee are still not recognized as a sovereign nation within the UN system, underscoring the need for enhanced participation at the United Nations.

The Expert Mechanism concluded the session with a list of proposals discussed throughout the session. Of note were proposals on protecting Indigenous leaders against reprisals for speaking out on human rights violations in their home countries. The Expert Mechanism stated that Indigenous Peoples should be able to participate without fear of intimidation, harassment, or reprisals of any sort and called upon States to behave with integrity and respect for Indigenous Peoples. Once published, the recommendations and thematic studies should be found on the Expert Mechanism’s website.

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## The American Indian Law Program Welcomes New Fellow Emiliano Salazar

The American Indian Law Program at the University of Colorado Law School welcomes Emiliano Salazar as the program fellow for 2023-2024. Emiliano is Indigenous Mexican and of Jicarilla and Carlanas Apache descent. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science in Computational Mathematics and a Bachelor of Arts in Legal Studies with a Certificate in Native American Indigenous Studies. He returned to school after an eight-year career as a Natural Language Processing software engineer to study Federal Indian Law and International Human Rights at Colorado Law.

At UMass, Emiliano was deeply involved with the Native community in the Northeast. He was Vice-President and later President of the Native American Student Association as well as serving on the UMass Powwow Committee.

Emiliano was also student leader for the Josephine White Eagle Cultural Center in which he helped facilitate events and mentor students. He wrote his undergraduate honors thesis in 2009 on UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the possibilities it presented for Indigenous Peoples across the world.

At Colorado Law, Emiliano continued his involvement with the Colorado Native community. He served as the Secretary of the Native American Law Student Association (NALSA) for two years, Vice President of National NALSA, Vice President of the Latinx Law Student Association, and was a member of the Council for Racial Justice and Equity. He finished his J.D. with the American Indian Law Certificate, the International Law Certificate, and the Civil Rights and Racial Justice Certificate. His scholarly writing and interests focus on using the Declaration as a vehicle for cultural rights protections in the United States, exploring the relationship between international law and colonization, and exploring new ways to define Indigenous identity.

Emiliano looks forward to working on The Implementation Project, a joint initiative between the Native American Rights Fund and Colorado Law to advance education and advocacy regarding the Declaration in Indigenous, national, and international venues. He will also act as an intermediary between the program and NALSA, mentoring students, planning events, and helping with fundraising, development, and communications.







# AMERICAN INDIAN LAW PROGRAM

University of Colorado Law School



## AILP Course Offerings

Fall 2023 – Spring 2024

### Fall '22

**American Indian Law Clinic**

*Professor Christina Stanton*

**American Indian Law I**

*Professor Kristen Carpenter*

**Indigenous Peoples in International Law**

*Professor Kristen Carpenter*

### Spring '23

**American Indian Law Clinic**

*Professor Christina Stanton*

**American Indian Law II**

*TBD*

**International Human Rights Law**

*Professor James Anaya*

**Seminar: Advanced Topics in American Indian Law**

*Professor Kristen Carpenter*

**Seminar: International Human Rights**

*Professor James Anaya*

# NALSA Updates

## Hannah Ahders (Coquille) - President



Hannah interned at Colorado Supreme Court this summer. She enjoyed learning about the judicial system from the perspective of Supreme Court justices and clerks. She is looking

forward to taking American Indian law classes and serving the NALSA student body.

## Jenny Jones (Amskapi Piikani/Blackfeet Nation) – Vice President



Jenny interned with an environmental nonprofit, focusing on clean energy policy as well as improving equity in the legislative and policy-making processes. The highlight of her summer was traveling with her kids back to their reservation for the

annual powwow, for the first time since before the pandemic.

## Josh Bertalotto (Tunica-Biloxi) -Treasurer



Josh spent the summer as a summer associate with Peebles Kidder, a mid-sized law firm with offices throughout the U.S. which focused solely on serving Tribal Nations. His favorite part of the summer was visiting the Federal District

Court for the Eastern District of California and witnessing his first hearing in-person and seeing how the interests of Tribal Nations are argued in the federal court system.

## Taylor Courchaine – Secretary



Taylor interned with Judge Harris at the Colorado Court of Appeals this summer. His favorite part was watching trials, he enjoyed seeing how Judges handle the unexpected arguments from

attorneys and inadmissible answers from lay witnesses.

## Upcoming NALSA Events:

### Sept. 12 – NALSA General Body Meeting

Join us for our first general body meeting of the semester. Meet NALSA members and learn about our upcoming events for the year. Lunch Provided.

### October 9 – Fall Harvest

Celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day with NALSA at our annual fall harvest! Join us for food and fun in the Schaden Commons 5:30 pm – 8:30 pm

### October 20 – NALSA Judicial Walking Tour

Join Carla Fredicks and local Judges on a walking tour of the Colorado and Federal Courts in Denver.

### November – TBD – NNALSA Moot Court Info Session

Learn about the National NALSA moot court competition and discuss the prompt. Lunch Provided

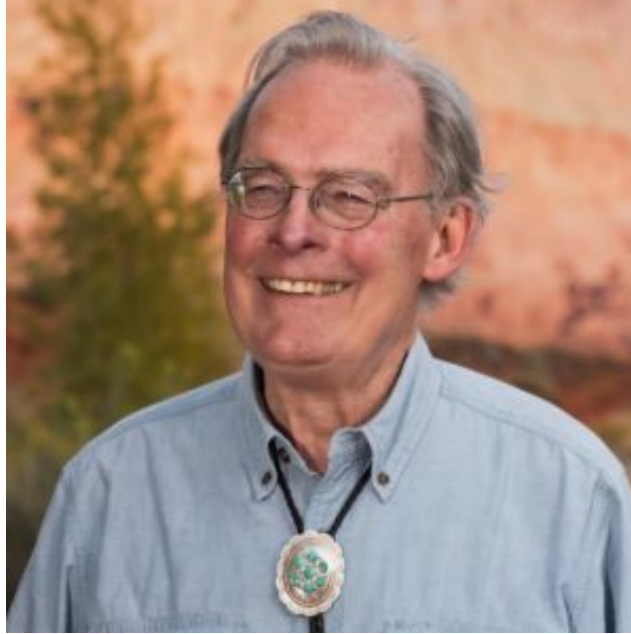
### November 9 – Indian Law Career Day

Take a tour of Native American Rights Fund (NARF) headquarters here in Boulder and meet attorneys practicing Indian Law in the area.

### November 13 – Indigenous Peoples and Water Law Lunch and Learn

Join us for a talk with Environmental Law Society. We will have attorneys practicing in the area talk about their work at the intersection of American Indian Law and Natural Resources Law. Lunch provided.

# In Memoriam: Remembering Professor Charles Wilkinson



*Adapted from article originally posted on the Getches-Wilkinson Center website on July 19, 2023.*

The University of Colorado Law School, the American Indian Law Program, and the Getches-Wilkinson Center mourn the profound loss of Charles Wilkinson, the Moses Lasky Professor of Law Emeritus and Distinguished Professor. Wilkinson passed away surrounded by family on Tuesday, June 6, 2023.

After graduating from Stanford Law School and practicing with firms in Phoenix and San Francisco, Wilkinson embarked on a remarkable career that encompassed teaching, writing, and advocating for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the environment. In 1971, he joined the newly formed Native American Rights Fund in Boulder, Colorado as a staff attorney, helping to shape the organization’s pathbreaking advocacy for Tribes. Together with the late Dean David Getches, Professor Richard Collins, and NARF Executive Director John Echohawk, Wilkinson helped to secure landmark victories in tribal treaty rights litigation and establish a relationship between Colorado Law and NARF that endures to this day.

Wilkinson was a passionate and inventive teacher and mentor, educating and inspiring thousands of students and scores of colleagues at law schools throughout the country. As his colleagues and students would attest, Wilkinson left an indelible mark, not just on legal education and scholarship, but on those attributes that are the very essence of the American West.

“Charles’s enormous legacy touches every aspect of public lands, natural resources, and American Indian law,” reflected Professor Sarah Krakoff. “He blended fierce advocacy with deep scholarship. He wrote in ways that were accessible to the general public while also influencing policy makers at the highest levels of government. And he was a ceaselessly generous, optimistic, kind, and huge-hearted friend and mentor to generations of students and colleagues. To put it in a way Charles himself might have—Dammit we will miss him, but how very lucky we were to know him.”

Most of Wilkinson’s teaching career was spent at the Oregon and Colorado law schools, where his influence and impact were deeply felt. In 1997, the Regents of the University of Colorado recognized Wilkinson as a Distinguished Professor, one of only twenty-five at the University. His gift for teaching and deep commitment to research were repeatedly acknowledged through numerous teaching and research awards throughout his illustrious career. Wilkinson was famous for hiring law students as research assistants and sending them out in the world to learn about legal problems. These opportunities were often life-changing, with dozens of his students going on to practice Indian Law and Public Land Law over the decades.



# In Memoriam: Remembering Professor Charles Wilkinson

As a prolific writer, Wilkinson authored fourteen books, which stand as seminal works that shaped the fields of Indian Law and Federal Public Land Law. These include highly regarded casebooks and general audience books, including *Crossing the Next Meridian*, that tackled pressing issues related to land, water, the West, Indigenous rights, and the complex histories that shape our nation. His writings, marked by their clarity and profound insights, resonated with scholars, practitioners, and the general public, making him an influential voice in legal and environmental discourse. He was an early thought leader in the field of environmental justice, seeing early on that the rights of Native Americans had to be considered at the heart of public lands and conservation policy.

“Charles was a beloved person in Indian country,” said Professor Kristen Carpenter who directs the American Indian Law Program. “From the Navajo and Hopi people in the southwest deserts and canyons to the Yurok, Nisqually, and Siletz people along the rivers and coasts of the northwest, Charles spent much of his life working with tribes and they came to trust him. Charles Wilkinson’s deep, respectful engagement with Indigenous Peoples is a model that the AILP will always share with our students.”

Beyond the classroom, the written word, his work with tribes, and support for students, Wilkinson devoted himself to numerous special assignments for the U.S. Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Justice. His expertise was sought after, and he played instrumental roles in critical negotiations and policy development. From facilitating agreements between the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe and the National Park Service to serving as a special advisor for the creation of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Bears Ears National Monument, Wilkinson’s successes extended far beyond the confines of academia.

Charles Wilkinson’s exceptional achievements were recognized through a multitude of prestigious awards and honors. These accolades include the National Wildlife Federation’s National Conservation Award, which acknowledged his unwavering commitment to the preservation of our natural heritage. The Earle A. Chiles Award from the Oregon High Desert Museum celebrated his career-long dedication to the High Desert region, while the Twanat Award from the Warm Springs Museum recognized his tireless work in support of Indian people.

Wilkinson’s visionary leadership and dedication to the Colorado Plateau were honored with the John Wesley Powell Award from the Grand Canyon Trust. Additionally, the Federal Bar Association bestowed upon him the Lawrence R. Baca Award for Lifetime Achievement in Indian Law, recognizing his profound contributions to the field. In 2021, the Colorado Center for the Book and Colorado Humanities honored Charles Wilkinson with the Colorado Book Awards Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to the Colorado and national literary, history, and legal communities.

“Charles Wilkinson’s passing brings into sharp focus his extraordinary legacy—a legacy that embodies the very best of what our law school stands for. He was a brilliant advocate, and his life’s work will continue to guide and inspire us,” remarked Dean Lolita Buckner Inniss. “His memory will remain a source of comfort and strength for so many as they carry forward his remarkable dedication and honor the profound difference he made.”

Charles Wilkinson’s legacy will indeed continue to inspire generations to come, as those who knew him directly and those who were touched through his work strive to emulate his vision, passion, and commitment to creating a more just and sustainable world.

To Charles Wilkinson’s family and loved ones, the University of Colorado Law School and the American Indian Law Program offer our deepest condolences during this difficult time.