

Third Anishinaabe Law Conference

Reclaiming and Celebrating Indigenous Legal Knowledge

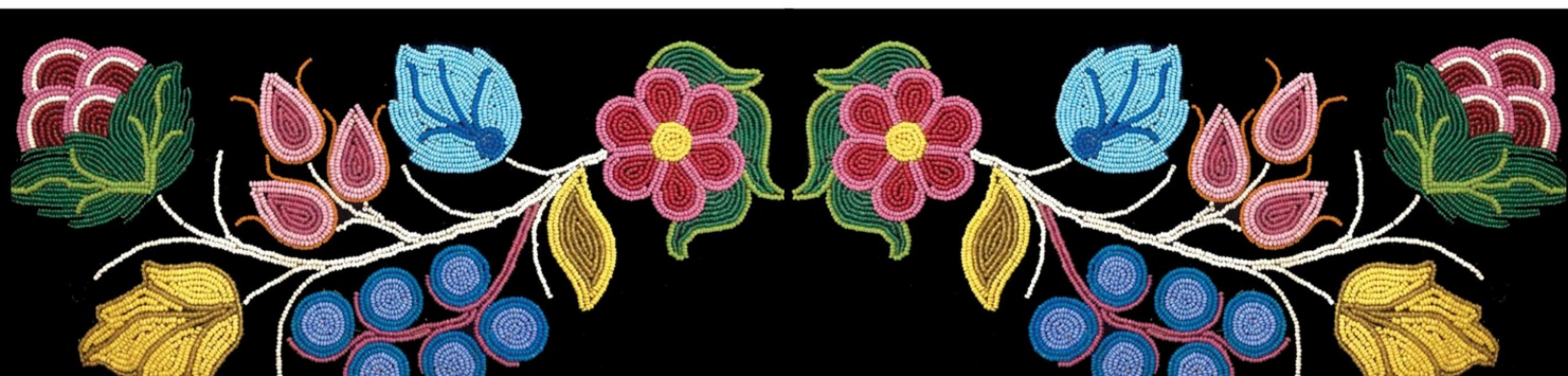
This Year's Theme:

Protecting the Rights of Nibi (Water)

October 25-27, 2026

Shooting Star Casino, Mahnomen, MN

Hosted by the Niibi Center



niibi center

protecting water and tradition

Agenda

Sunday October 25, 2026

10:30 am Water Ceremony and Water Teachings facilitated by **Renee Gurneau** (Red Lake Band of Ojibwe), Educator and former Tribal College President

12:00 pm Lunch

1:00 pm Welcome from the Niibi Center

-Opening Prayer – **Kimberly Biidaabanikwe Anderson** (White Earth Ojibwe)

-Drum Group - **Mahnomen Singers**

-**Sherald Hanks** (White Earth Ojibwe)**,** Niibi Center President of the BOD

2:00 pm Land-Based Teachings with **Kim Biidaabanikwe Anderson** and **Dr. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark** (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe)

3:00 pm BREAK

3:15 pm Indigenous Judges Panel – A Conversation Featuring

The Honorable Judge Megan Treuer – Chief Judge of the Bois Forte Band Tribal Court

The Honorable Judge Mary Ringhand – Red Lake Ojibwe Tribal Court Judge

4:45 pm Q & A with the Audience

5:00 pm Dinner

6:00 pm Keynote Address: **Dr. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson** (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg)

Author of 9 books, most recently *Theory of Water* (2025) and including the novel, *Noopiming (*2020), Simpson holds a Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba and serves on the faculty of the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning. Simpson is also an acclaimed musician who lives in Ontario.

Monday October 26

7:00 am Breakfast

8:00 am Opening Remarks - White Earth Tribal Representative

8:30 am Keynote Speaker: **Casey Camp-Horinek** (Ponca) speaking on some of her work, both locally and Internationally, towards the Rights of Water

Casey Camp is an elder of the Ponca Nation of Oklahoma, and has been on the forefront of the global Indigenous Rights of Nature Movement for over a decade.

10:00 am Break

10:15 am Elder's Panel Featuring -

> **Sherry Copenace** (Treaty 3) Midewewin from Onigaming, located within Grand Council, Faculty in Social Work at the University of Manitoba
>
> **Florence Paynter** *Ozhoshko Binesi Kwe* (Treaty 1) Fourth-degree Mide Anishinabekwe to Minweyweywigaan Midewiwin Lodge in Roseau River, Manitoba. She is from Sandy Bay First Nation and a member of Norway House Cree Nation.
>
> **Darlene Courchene** (Treaty 3) Midewin from Treaty 3, Sturgeon Clan from Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba
>
> **Renee Gurneau** (Red Lake Ojibwe) Elder, Knowledge Keeper, and former Tribal College President

11:15 am Table Conversations facilitated by **Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark**

12:00 pm Lunch Break

1:00 pm Featured Speaker: **Judge Megan Treuer** – Bois Forte Ojibwe Chief Tribal Court Judge and Anishinaabe justice revitalizer on Bush Fellowship Doctoral work

1:55 pm Short Break

2:00 pm Keynote Speaker: **Aimée Craft** (Anishinaabe-Metis from Treaty 1), Full Professor at the Faculty of Common Law, University of Ottawa

Craft's talk will focus on the Lake Winnipeg Watershed Treaty and the waters that bring us together.

3:15 pm Break

3:30 pm Special Guest Speaker **Ernest Joseph "Joey" Oppegaard-Peltier** on the intersection of Two-Spirit Identity and Anishinaabe Law

4:00 pm Featured Speaker: **Renee Gurneau** UN paper on Water

5:00 pm Summation and Discussion facilitated by **Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark**

5:15 pm Dinner

6:00 pm Keynote Speaker (Zoom) **Matthew Fletcher (**Grand Traverse Band)**,** Harry Burns Hutchins Collegiate Professor of Law, University of Michigan

Fletcher teaches and writes in the areas of federal Indian law, American Indian tribal law, Anishinaabe legal and political philosophy, constitutional law, federal courts, and legal ethics and is the Chief Justice of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

Tuesday October 27

7:30 am Breakfast

8:00 am Working Group Breakout Session - **Amy Moser** and **Karl Lorenz**, Co-Facilitators

11:00 am Sharing and Synthesis Discussion

11:45 am Closing Ceremony- **Kimberly Biidaabanikwe Anderson**

12:00 pm Lunch (Bagged options)

Honored Speakers



Kimberly Biidaabanikwe Anderson

Aaniin, Biidaabanikwe nindizhinikaaz, Kim Anderson zhaganaashiimong. Makwa nindoodem, gaawaabaabiganikaag nindoonjibaa, besho gaa-niizhoogamaag nindaa. Ninitaawigi'aag niizh nindaanisag.

Hello, my name is Biidaabanikwe (early morning spirit), Kim Anderson in English. I am bear clan and come from White Earth and live near Twin Lakes. I am raising two daughters.

I am second language learner of the Ojibwe language and work to revitalize it through teaching and making resources. I also work to help keep our ceremonies and cultural practices alive. I hold a B.S. degree in Horticulture, a B.A. degree in Elementary Education, and an M.Ed in Educational leadership and I'm currently taking courses towards a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. I am an active volunteer firefighter, track coach, and consultant for various organizations and newly hired to teach Ojibwe language at Bemidji State University.

Casey Camp-Horinek



Ponca Tribe Environmental Ambassador

Traditionalist, Wisdom Keeper, Speaker, Author, Actor, and Drumkeeper of the Ponca PaThaTa Women's Scalp Dance Society, Casey Camp-Horinek is an elder of the Ponca Nation of Oklahoma and has been at the forefront of the global Indigenous Rights of Nature Movement for over a decade. Instrumental in the drafting of the International Indigenous Women's Treaty protecting the Rights of Mother Earth, and the adoption of the first Rights of Nature and Rights of Rivers Statutes by a Tribal Nation of Turtle Island, Casey is firm in the knowledge that indigenous Solutions ARE the answer to Climate Chaos. Casey is a board member of Movement Rights, Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, Earthworks, and Chairwoman of the Indigenous Council of the Global Alliance of the Rights of Nature and was recently named to The Independent's Climate 100 List.

"We have to honor the natural laws. We have to realize that we are not protecting nature. We ARE Nature protecting itself." Casey Camp-Horinek, Ponca Nation

Social Media: Instagram: @caseycamphorinek Facebook: Casey Camp-Horinek



Sherry Copenace

Niizhoosake, Saagimaakwe, Atik n'dodem (Elk Clan), Midewewin. Born and raised on the community of Ojibways of Onigaming, which is located in Northwestern Ontario and on the east side of Lake of the Woods. Sherry is firm in her ways of knowing and being Anishinaabe. Sherry speaks her original language - Ojibway and has a great love for the Land and Waters. Since 2011, Sherry has led a renewal of Makoosekawin-Anishinaabe young women coming of age teachings and ceremonies. She is a member of Knowledge Keepers Council at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. Sherry has her MSW degree and is associated with several institutions and organizations who continually engage her for her knowledge and lived experience.

Aimée Craft, JD



Aimée Craft is an award-winning teacher and researcher, recognized internationally as a leader in the area of Indigenous laws, treaties and water. She holds a University Research Chair Nibi miinawaa akii naakonigewin: Indigenous governance in relationship with land and water. She is a lawyer, Full Professor at the Faculty of Common law, University of Ottawa and Chair of the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission.

Craft is of Indigenous (Anishinaabe-Métis) and settler (French and Irish) descent, from Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Red River Métis. She is the former Director of Research at the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the founding Director of Research at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. She practiced at the Public Interest Law Centre for over a decade and in 2016 she was voted one of the top 25 most influential lawyers in Canada. In 2021 she was awarded the prestigious Canadian Bar Association President's Award and was named the Early Career Researcher of the Year Award at the University of Ottawa. In 2022, she was named to the Order of Ontario.

Prof. Craft prioritizes Indigenous-lead and interdisciplinary research, including through visual arts and film, co-leads a series of major research grants on Decolonizing Water Governance and works with many Indigenous nations and communities on Indigenous relationships with and responsibilities to nibi (water).

Breathing Life Into the Stone Fort Treaty, Craft's award-winning book, focuses on understanding and interpreting treaties from an Anishinaabe inaakonigewin (legal) perspective. *Treaty Words*, her critically acclaimed children's book, explains treaty philosophy and relationships.



Darlene Starr Courchene

Ginew Iqwe, Darlene Starr Courchene, I am a mother, a Kookum and a Gitchi Kookum. I am Sturgeon Clan from Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba. I carry and share knowledge from my late parents, grandparents and Elders from the Treaty 3 area.

I am Midewin. I believe in the importance of protecting Mother Earth, honouring the sacredness of water, and recognizing our responsibility to care for the land and all living beings.

Matthew L.M. Fletcher, JD



Matthew Fletcher (Grand Traverse Band of Ojibwe) is a Harry Burns Hutchins Collegiate Professor of Law at the University of Michigan. Fletcher teaches and writes in the areas of Federal Indian law, American Indian tribal law, Anishinaabe legal and political philosophy, constitutional law, federal courts, and legal ethics. He sits as the chief justice of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

Fletcher also sits as an appellate judge for the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians, and the Tulalip Tribes. Fletcher's scholarship and advocacy has been cited by several times by the United States Supreme Court. Finally, he is the primary editor and author of the leading law blog on American Indian law and policy, Turtle Talk.



Renee Gurneau

Renee Gurneau is an enrolled member of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians. As an educator and former Tribal College President, she is a firm believer that Native people have the right and responsibility to direct their own empowered educational experience. She has expertise in developing programs and agencies, and in conducting evaluations and analysis from an Anishinaabe cultural perspective. She has designed, directed, implemented and evaluated many community-based programs both on reservations and in urban areas, including chemical dependency programs, youth programs, environmental programs, culture-based wellness initiatives, restorative justice, Indigenous Conflict Resolution, and Native family therapy programs. She is coauthor, with Lea Foushee, of *Sacred Water: Water for Life*, a seminal work on Anishinaabe relationship to water. She is a former Kellogg Fellow in the Kellogg National Leadership Program. https://ias.umn.edu/programs/public-scholarship/mespac/duluth

Florence Paynter



Florence Paynter (*Ozhoshko Binesi Kwe*) is a fourth-degree Mide Anishinabekwe to Minweyweywigaan Midewiwin Lodge in Roseau River, Manitoba. She is from Sandy Bay First Nation and a member of Norway House Cree Nation in Treaty 1 Territory. She is fluent in Anishinaabeg and is a strong advocate for language and cultural initiatives, generously sharing the spiritual knowledge and traditions of the Anishinabe people. As a residential school Survivor, Elder Paynter passionately educates about its history and lasting impact, emphasizing the importance of knowing one's heritage and language for self-pride.



E. Joseph Oppegaard-Peltier

Ernest Joseph Oppegaard-Peltier III (also known as "Joey") is an Indigenous Water Protector, community organizer, caregiver, and political figure based in Bemidji, Minnesota. Joey is a Co-Executive Director of Mukwa, a Bemidji-based Native American women-led organization that complements local organizing around the protection of wild rice, community protections and regulations on hyperscaled data centers, among other issues. As a public speaker Joey covers difficult topics ranging from foster care and adoption to social and environmental issues, as well as his cultural and identity journey.

Mary Ringhand, JD



Mary Ringhand currently serves as a Judge at Red Lake Nation Tribal Court since 2015. She obtained her juris doctorate degree from University of Minnesota Law School ’93. Currently serves a co-chair of the Tribal Court State Court Forum.
Has worked in various positions in Law, Higher Education and Tribal Administration and is actively involved in community. Previous legal work includes interning at the Legal Aid Society in South Minneapolis on public housing and Indian Child Welfare Act issues. Research on tribal matters, Anishinabe Legal Services advocating in social security disability and civil cases. At the State of Minnesota Higher Education Services Office created statewide programming to provide information and access to higher education. She believes strongly in life-long learning and likes being involved in Ojibwemowin language preservation. Becoming a more fluent speaker is a personal goal. Encouraging higher education, community customs and traditions and indigenous values awareness for our people is healing and will increase the strength of our nations into the future.

Dr. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson



Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is a renowned Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg musician, writer and academic, who has been widely recognized as one of the most compelling Indigenous voices of her generation. Her work breaks open the boundaries between story and song—bringing audiences into a rich and layered world of sound, light, and sovereign creativity.

Working for two decades as an independent scholar using Nishnaabeg intellectual practices, Leanne has lectured and taught extensively at universities across Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Europe and has over twenty years experience with Indigenous land based education. She holds a PhD from the University of Manitoba and is a member of Alderville First Nation.

Leanne is the author of eight books, including A Short History of the Blockade and the novel *Noopiming: The Cure for White Ladies* which was short listed for the Governor General's Literary Award for fiction and the Dublin Literary Prize. Leanne is also a musician. Her latest release Theory of Ice was named to the Polaris Prize short list, and she is the 2021 winner of the Prism Prize's Willie Dunn Award. Leanne's new work, *Theory of Water* was short-listed for the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for non-fiction.



Dr. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark

Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) is a Professor in the School of Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria and a Canada Research Chair in the Embodied Politics of Indigenous Law. Her work centers Indigenous law, governance, and treaty relations, with a strong foundation in Anishinaabe political thought and legal traditions. A 2024 inductee into the Royal Society of Canada's College of New Scholars, Dr. Stark's teaching and writing support Indigenous resurgence by reconnecting law and governance to land, relationships, and enduring Indigenous political traditions. In addition to working directly with Indigenous nations to revitalize Indigenous law and governance, she has

served as an expert in Anishinaabe law at the district court level in the US and the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Canada for Anishinaabe nations litigating their treaty rights. She is the co-editor of Indigenous Resurgence in an Age of Reconciliation with Aimée Craft and Hōkūlani K. Aikau (University of Toronto Press, 2023) and Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories with Jill Doerfler and Niigaanwewidam Sinclair (University of Manitoba Press, 2013) and the co-author of the 3rd and 4th editions of American Indian Politics and the American Political System with David E. Wilkins (Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, 2017). Stark is also the co-editor (with Gina Starblanket) of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Journal.



Megan Treuer, JD

Megan Treuer is working to return justice in Indian Country to its roots, where healing, collective accountability and cultural restoration lead the way. A Tribal court judge for more than a decade and currently the Chief Judge of the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe, Megan has built and led transformative justice initiatives that reflect traditional Anishinaabe values, from joint jurisdiction wellness courts to a family dependency court that helps keep children with their parents through culturally grounded recovery. Her work has helped both state and Tribal courts embrace Indigenous knowledge and language as pathways to healing.

As the daughter of one of Minnesota's first Native attorneys and the country's first (known) female Native American judge, Megan inherited a sacred responsibility to carry forward the work of justice for her people. She is now called on nationally to present on Tribal law, Anishinabe justice, intergenerational healing and cultural revitalization within Tribal, state and federal legal systems. She is known for her exceptional ability to listen deeply and engage people from all walks of life, earning broad trust and respect.

As a 2025 Bush Fellow, she has been able to reduce her judicial caseload to focus on self-renewal, deepen her Ojibwe language fluency by taking classes at Bemidji State University, participate in seasonal ceremonies, visit Indigenous justice leaders and document the history of Anishinaabe justice as a foundation for the next generation.

Proud Sponsors

The Earl and Kathy Hoagland Sacred Manoomin Fund

The Earl and Kathy Hoagland Sacred Manoomin Scholarship Fund through Catholic Rural Life is committed to supporting ongoing efforts of Native Americans in Minnesota to gain academic expertise in their effort to preserve manoomin (wild rice) in its natural state as found in lakes, rivers, and streams.

The manoomin (wild rice) has been hand harvested from Minnesota's lakes and rivers by traditional methods that go back many generations. It holds a unique and sacred place in Native American traditions.

"We consider it to be sacred, because it's a gift from the creator," said the late White Earth Elder Earl Hoagland. "It was foretold in our prophecies that as the ice melted we were to move westward and food would be provided for us on the water. And that's what happened. Manoomin is the food that grows upon the water. Manoomin is a living entity that has its own unique spirit. As Anishinaabe people, we have a responsibility to respect that spirit and to care for it. As we protect the manoomin, the manoomin protects us and gives us health."

Earl and his wife Kathy devoted their lives to working together with many communities in revitalizing the sacred relationship between people and manoomin. They both support education as an important way to strengthen these spiritual and cultural traditions.

Apply for a scholarship:

https://www.catholicrurallife.org/our-priorities/earl-and-kathy-hoaglund-sacred-manoomin-fund-native-american-scholarship-application

The White Earth Tribe

Carleton Indigenous Engagement Grant through Carleton College

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Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
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Canada

Additionally, the Niibi Center would like to recognize the many people who helped to create and run this conference. They include (but are not limited to) the Conference Planning Committee – Renee Gurneau, Michael McNally, Megan Treuer, Kim Anderson, SJ Hanks, and Heidi Stark. Joe Lagarde -- Founder of the Niibi Center and the Visionary behind the Anishinaabe Law Conferences. The Shooting Star Casino, especially the Banquets Department staff, most especially Jodi Kvien. The Mahnomen Singers drum group. Angel Stevens, our MC. Devon Cupery for support with tech and video. Amy Myszko, Project Coordinator and Amy Moser, our grant writer and financial consultant. Karl Lorenz and Maggie Adamek for all their help and expertise. We could not have done this without each and every one of you, Chi Miigwech.

