

Navajo Nation Law Hybrid CLE Conference Friday, October 15, 2021

Indian Legal Program / Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law / Arizona State University
Beus Center for Law and Society, Room 240
111 E. Taylor Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004

Speaker Biographies



Shawn Attakai ('00)

Staff Attorney, Navajo Nation Judicial Branch

Shawn Attakai is Bit'ahnii and Tabaaha, married with children to Tó Aheedliinii. He graduated from Dartmouth College (BA '95) and ASU College of Law (JD '00). Mr. Attakai holds Navajo and Arizona bar licenses, is a peacetime Marine veteran, a former Diné College instructor, and an attorney for 19 years in various capacities including court attorney, associate, and criminal defense. Recently, Mr. Attakai was a Yavapai-Apache Nation associate judge. He currently serves as a Co-President for the Native American Alumni Association of Dartmouth, and participates in the NNBA's Training Committee helping develop the Four Directions approach. Shawn believes in excelling at both worlds, thus has studied Dine Bibeehaz'aanii under several mentors over a couple decades, and has been practicing over a decade and half as a traditional practitioner (Hozhooji and other minor ways). Shawn carries the ceremonies of some of the most prominent Diné leaders six generations back from the Navajo Wars Era.



Raven Attwood ('15)

Staff Attorney, Dilkon Judicial District, Navajo Nation

Raven Attwood was born in Idaho and grew up in the Texas panhandle, where his family settled when he was nine. He joined the Navy at age 17 to get as far from small-town West Texas as he could. After his enlistment ended, Raven pursued an undergraduate degree in Anthropology, a field he settled on because while traveling and working as a technician in the Navy, he decided humans were far more interesting than machines. He graduated

from Arizona State University in 2006, then returned to ASU for law school after five years working in retail. He decided to pursue a public service law career out of a desire to “do good and do well.” Raven earned his Juris Doctor with a Certificate in Indian Law from Arizona State University Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law in 2015.

Raven began his law career working for the Navajo people as an attorney for the Office of the Navajo Public Defender in Tuba City, Arizona, where he built bridges with the Federal Public Defender’s office in the District of Arizona, successfully won two writs for habeas corpus before the Navajo Nation Supreme Court, and was recognized by the Arizona Public Defender Association for his dedication and effort to help indigent defendants in Navajo Nation criminal and juvenile courts. He has been Staff Attorney for the Dilkon Judicial District of the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch since April 2020, and is bringing the same dedication to the Court’s efforts to maintain institutional access during the COVID-19 pandemic, develop trauma-informed court practices, and implement culturally-attuned best practices in child neglect cases in the Dilkon Family Court.



Katherine Belzowski

Acting Assistant Attorney General, Economic Community Development Unit, Navajo Nation Department of Justice

Katherine Belzowski is the Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Economic Community Development (ECDU) Unit at the Navajo Nation Department of Justice (NDOJ). Part of her work includes overseeing gaming for the Navajo Nation government and advising the Navajo Nation Gaming Regulatory Office. Prior to working with ECDU Ms. Belzowski worked for 5 years with the Litigation Unit at NDOJ, and 2 years with Nevada Legal Services. Ms. Belzowski received her J.D. from the University of Minnesota School of Law and an L.L.M. in Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy from the University of Arizona College of Law.



Chris Channell ('18)

Associate Attorney, Kewenvoyouma Law, PLLC

Christopher W. Channell is a licensed attorney in the State of Arizona and recently sat for the Navajo Bar Exam (results pending). Mr. Channell is an associate attorney at Kewenvoyouma Law, PLLC. Mr. Channell received his Juris Doctorate and Certificate of Indian Law in 2018 from the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University. While in school, Mr. Channell served as a Legal Intern with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Office of the Prosecutor, a Student Attorney at the ASU Indian Legal Clinic, and as the Community Service Chairperson for the Native American Law Students Association.

Mr. Channell's areas of focus include criminal law, business law, construction law, and sports and entertainment law with a focus on NCAA eligibility requirements for Native American athletes. Mr. Channell has also previously focused on the Indian Child Welfare Act and assisted in amending the Navajo Nation Bar Association Rules of Professional Conduct.

Mr. Channell is an enrolled citizen of the Oglala Sioux Tribe of Pine Ridge, South Dakota. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. During his time at UNO, Mr. Channell served as a mentor to a number of Omaha Public School Native American students who were part of the Sacred Hoop Program—a program he was instrumental in creating.

Prior to law school, Mr. Channell worked in construction in Omaha, Nebraska. He worked his way from an apprentice carpenter to a project superintendent for both union and non-union companies, gaining vast knowledge of both. In his free time, Mr. Channell enjoys spending time with his family and attending sporting events.



Eric Dahlstrom

Partner, Rothstein Donatelli LLP

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin School of Law in 1976 where he served as an Editor of the Wisconsin Law Review, Eric Dahlstrom moved to Chinle on the Navajo Nation where he practiced law with Chinle DNA-Peoples Legal Services and was admitted to the Navajo Nation Bar Association. While at DNA, he helped bring the first in-patient hospital to Chinle and the first Basha's store on the Navajo Nation to the Tséyi' Shopping Center while representing the Diné Cooperatives, Inc. He and his wife then moved to the Gila River Indian Community where he founded Four Rivers Indian Legal Services representing tribal members and several tribes in central Arizona and served for 8 years as its director. While at Four Rivers, Mr. Dahlstrom assisted the Cocopah Tribe pass federal land acquisition legislation nearly doubling the size of its reservation, and represented the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation in its successful effort to stop Orme Dam which would have inundated most of the reservation. He also represented Fort McDowell in establishing its first successful pre-IGRA high stakes bingo operation. Mr. Dahlstrom then returned to the Navajo Nation where he was confirmed by the Navajo Nation Council as Deputy Attorney General. As a result of extensive experience with the Navajo Nation, Eric Dahlstrom is frequently called upon to advise clients regarding the Navajo Nation government. In 1991, he joined Rothstein Donatelli as a partner and established the Firm's Phoenix office (which later moved to its present location in Tempe).

Eric Dahlstrom was retained by the Forest County Potawatomi Community of Wisconsin in the early 1990s to handle litigation against the City of Milwaukee and the State of

Wisconsin aimed at enabling the tribe to open a class III gaming facility on land it had acquired near downtown Milwaukee, and that had been placed into trust status. The litigation, through an appeal to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, was completely successful, and led to Forest County Potawatomi having one of the most successful casinos in the nation.

In addition to the success in Wisconsin, the Firm was counsel in the litigation and court ordered mediation that led to the 1993 landmark gaming compacts for Arizona tribes that have allowed massive increases in governmental revenue for all tribes in Arizona.

Mr. Dahlstrom was also lead counsel for the Navajo Nation in *Peabody Coal Co. v. Navajo Nation*, 860 F.Supp. 683 (D. Ariz. 1994), *rev'd in part*, 75 F.3d 457 (9th Cir. 1996)(challenge to Navajo Nation tax on coal mine); and *Arizona Public Service Co. v. Aspaas*, No.90-1808, 211.L.R. 3003 (D. Ariz., 1993), 77 F.3d 1128 (9th Cir. 1995) (challenge to exercise of Navajo Nation governmental power over Four Corners Power Plant).

Mr. Dahlstrom practices almost exclusively in the field of Indian law. Mr. Dahlstrom is admitted to practice in Arizona, Wisconsin, and the Navajo Nation and has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native American Bar Association of Arizona.

Over the past 30 years, Mr. Dahlstrom has developed an extensive Indian gaming practice in Arizona and Wisconsin where he has led the legal effort to establish and expand the sovereign authority of tribal governments to operate and regulate gaming enterprises.

Mr. Dahlstrom was appointed as Special Prosecutor by the Special Division of the Window Rock District Court in 2011. Thereafter, the Rothstein Donatelli team successfully pursued criminal and ethics violations against 27 members of the Navajo Nation Council and two staff of the Office of Legislative Services.

Over the past decade, Mr. Dahlstrom has also developed a substantial tribal health law practice. He advises clients and leads the Firm's health law practice group providing a full range of legal services tailored to the needs of tribal healthcare entities, including advice on compliance with federal and state Medicaid and Indian Health Service contract and regulatory requirements, employment issues unique to healthcare employers, including drafting health professional contracts, board governance, healthcare records, technology and required privacy protocols, and drafting healthcare provider protocols and manuals. Finally, the Firm's healthcare practice group regularly represents healthcare providers in state and tribal proceedings regarding the custody of mental health patients.



Michelle De Blasi

Owner/Attorney, Law Office of Michelle De Blasi

Michelle De Blasi is a prominent environmental and energy attorney who has decades of experience and relationships assisting clients obtain successful results with their environmental, natural resource and energy projects. She brings her many years of government and “Big Law” experience to her own firm to provide more effective client service at a lower cost. Ms. De Blasi has the horsepower to handle significant cases while providing excellent client service.

Ms. De Blasi focuses on business strategy by helping clients in a broad array of industries complete their projects from start to finish, overseeing all aspects of permitting, while assessing business risks and hitting milestones on time and on budget. She advises clients how to avoid disputes, and how to resolve them efficiently and effectively when they cannot be avoided. On the state and federal environmental regulatory levels, clients consistently rely on her knowledge of hazardous waste, air quality, water quality, environmental health and safety, real property due diligence, utility regulation, natural resource damage issues, land conservation, asbestos, and underground storage tank regulation. Throughout her many years of experience on the energy side of her practice, she has advised clients on due diligence, permitting, siting and contractual agreements for energy generation projects, both traditional and alternative energy, as well as carbon emissions tracking and reporting.



Torey Dolan ('19)

Native Vote Fellow, Indian Legal Program

Torey Dolan (Choctaw Nation) is the current Native Vote Fellow at the Arizona State Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law Indian Legal Clinic working on the Arizona Native Vote Election Protection Project, working on election litigation, redistricting, election research, community organizing, public education, and government level advocacy aimed at protecting and promoting the Native American franchise in Arizona. She is a current Instituto Monzón Fellow, a fellowship for Arizona community leaders working to build political power and infrastructure in communities of color and low-income communities in Arizona. Her areas of expertise include Federal Indian Law, Federal Election Law, Arizona Election Law, Constitutional Law, and the intersections thereof. She is a graduate of the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law where she received her Juris Doctor degree and certificate in Federal Indian law. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science – Public Service and History from the University of California Davis, with a minor in Religious Studies.



Judith Dworkin

Equity Shareholder, Sacks Tierney

Ms. Dworkin's practice is devoted primarily to Indian law and water resources law issues. Ms. Dworkin has been selected for inclusion in Best Lawyers of America in the fields of Water Law and Native American Law. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in geography from Clark University and her J.D. degree, cum laude, from Arizona State University. She clerked for the Honorable William C. Canby, Jr. of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. She is admitted to the Arizona and Navajo Nation bars and is admitted to practice in the Courts of the Tohono O'odham Nation, Gila River Indian Community, Hopi Tribe and Hualapai Tribe. Ms. Dworkin lectures regularly and publishes on topics relating to economic development on Indian Reservations. Ms. Dworkin is an adjunct professor in the College of Law and the School of Urban Planning where she teaches graduate courses in water and natural resources law and planning. Ms. Dworkin has represented the Navajo Nation in federal and state court proceedings and has represented several chapters of the Navajo Nation in economic development and construction related projects.



Candace French ('17)

Attorney, Sacks Tierney

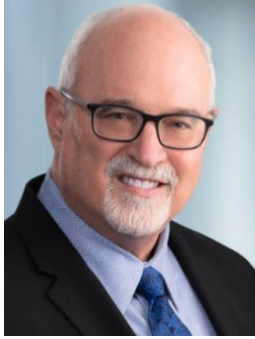
Candace French has more than ten years of experience working in Native American communities and has dedicated herself and her legal career to serving Indian Country.

Originally from Anadarko, Oklahoma, Candace is an enrolled member of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes and is of Navajo, Comanche, and Blackfeet descent.

Prior to joining Sacks Tierney, Candace was an attorney in the Navajo Nation Office of Legislative Counsel. In that capacity, she provided legal representation and legislative services to the 24-member Navajo Nation Council, standing committees and other programs within the legislative branch.

Admitted to practice in Arizona and the Navajo Nation, Candace is a member of the State Bar of Arizona Indian Law Section.

Candace received bachelor's degrees in Political Science and American Indian Studies, a master's degree in Criminal Justice, and her J.D. with a certificate in Indian Law, all from Arizona State University.



Stephen Hart
Partner, Lewis Roca

Steve Hart is a nationally recognized Indian and gaming law lawyer representing tribes and tribal gaming commissions throughout the western United States. He provides insight and strategic advice on issues related to tribal-state compact negotiations, land into trust, and Indian lands determinations. Steve also practices in the area of corporate and government relations, overseeing policy, economic development, and state and federal legislative and administrative practices. He has also assisted with licensing matters, real estate and project development, intellectual property issues, financial transactions, litigation, and general business law matters. In addition, he represents corporations and other business entities in their efforts to shape and comply with government regulations, and in their business interactions with tribes and tribal entities.

Steve is actively involved with a number of tribal business associations, a published author, and frequent presenter at conferences and events. He received his J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, School of law and is licensed to practice in Arizona and with Navajo Nation, Yurok Tribe, and Intertribal Court of Southern California.



Jennifer Henry
Former Chief Prosecutor, Navajo Office of the Prosecutor

Jennifer Henry has been a recovering attorney since January 2021. Jenn has now turned her focus to legal transcription, and enjoys being a small cog in the machine that produces legal records for courts and other attorneys. In prior lives, she was the Acting Chief Prosecutor, Acting Deputy Chief Prosecutor, and prosecuting attorney for the Navajo Nation. Her journeys prior to that include private law practice in Colorado, staff attorney for the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch, staff attorney for the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, starting and folding a private civil and family law practice in the Navajo Nation, and partnership in what is now Rosebrough, Fowles, & Foutz, in Gallup, focusing on civil transactional law in AZ and NM.



Thomas Lynn Isaacson

Partner, Mason & Isaacson PA

Lynn Isaacson is a graduate of the University of New Mexico (B.A., 1978) and the University of New Mexico Law School (J.D., 1981). He has practiced in Gallup, New Mexico since 1981. He was admitted to the Navajo Nation Bar Association in 1995, and is also admitted to practice in the Zuni, Laguna, and Acoma tribal courts. Mr. Isaacson's practice primarily involves the defense of civil litigation, with an emphasis on governmental entity defense and employment law, in State and Federal courts. He was inducted as a Fellow into the American College of Trial Lawyers in 2016. When not watching their grandkids play soccer, Mr. Isaacson and his wife Rebecca spend every available moment hiking in the Zuni Mountains with their Rez dog, Frysta.



Brian Lewis ('09)

Partner, Drummond Woodsum

Brian Lewis is a member of the Navajo Nation Bar Association whose practice is focused on economic development, including the development and operation of various projects and commercial operations within the Navajo Nation. He has advised and represented the Navajo Nation government and currently represents tribally owned commercial instrumentalities, utilities, and private commercial entities.



Jordan Oglesby

Attorney, Navajo Nation Department of Justice

Jordan Oglesby is a citizen of the Navajo Nation from Shiprock, New Mexico. She is a graduate of the University of New Mexico and earned her law degree in 2020 from UNM School of Law as a Navajo Law Fellow, where she also received her Indian Law Certificate. During law school Jordan gained significant experience as a PLSI Teaching Assistant (2018), Legislative Intern for Congresswoman Deb Haaland, and as a Clinical Law Student in the Southwest Indian Law Clinic. She currently works as an Attorney in the Economic & Community Development Unit within the Navajo Nation Department of Justice. She is licensed to practice law in the Navajo Nation and New Mexico.



Joseph Sarcinella

Partner, Drummond Woodsum and General Counsel for Navajo Power, PBC

Joe Sarcinella is a partner at the law firm Drummond Woodsum in their Tribal Nations Practice. He has worked in Indian Country his entire life starting in tribal youth programming before becoming an attorney. Joe has provided services to tribal governments, enterprises, non-profits, trade associations, and as a federal appointee oversaw tribal affairs for the Secretary of Defense. His practice focuses on government affairs, legal management, corporate governance and economic development, but his true passion is cultural preservation. Joe's is of mixed heritage, his paternal grandparents were first generation Italian and French, while his mother's family is Lakota/Nakota from a small reserve in Canada. Joe's wife, renowned CEO and political strategist Clara Pratte, and children are members of the Navajo Nation. He and his family split time between Flagstaff AZ, the Navajo Nation, and Washington, D.C.



Pilar Thomas

Partner, Quarles & Brady, LLP

Pilar Thomas is a partner in the firm's Energy, Environment & Natural Resources Practice Group. She focuses her practice on tribal renewable energy project development and finance, tribal economic development, federal Indian Law, and natural resource development.

Pilar assists clients with strategic legal advice on tribal energy policy and planning; clean energy and infrastructure project development and finance; federal and state energy regulatory, programs, and policy efforts; and federal requirements for tribal lands development. She has negotiated or assisted with agreements related to transmission lines, landfill gas, solar projects, a natural gas power plant, and mineral development on tribal lands. She serves as general counsel for several tribes, Section 17 and tribal business entities.



Robert Yazzie

Chief Justice Emeritus of the Navajo Nation

The Honorable Robert Yazzie is a retired chief Justice of the Navajo Nation. He was the Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation from 1992 through 2003. He practiced law in the Navajo Nation for 16 years, and he was a district judge for eight years. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oberlin College of Ohio and a juris doctor degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law. He is now teaching Navajo Law at the Navajo Technical University.

He was the Director of Diné Policy Institute of Diné College (Navajo Nation), developing policy using authentic Navajo thinking.

He is a member of the Navajo Nation Bar Association. He is the author of articles and book chapters on many subjects, including Navajo peacemaking, traditional Indian law, and international human rights law. He is a visiting professor at the University of New Mexico School of Law, an adjunct professor of the Department of Criminal Justice of Northern Arizona University and a visiting member of the faculty of the National Judicial College. He recently taught Navajo law at the Crownpoint Institute of Technology. Chief Justice Yazzie continues a career devoted to education in formal participation in faculties, lectures and discussions of traditional indigenous law at various venues throughout the world. He has a global audience and he has frequently visited foreign lands to share his wisdom about traditional indigenous justice and governance.