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## University of Kansas Tribal Law and Government Center

### The Tribal Lawyer Certificate Program

Effectively representing Indian nations and tribes requires an understanding of the laws, history, and policies that affect them. For over 200 years, the United States has pursued conflicting policies for dealing with the Indigenous peoples located within its borders. As a result, there exists an extremely complicated body of federal, state, and tribal law that affects every aspect of Indigenous life.

The complexity of “Indian law,” and the lack of specific programs designed to educate graduates as to the unique legal and cultural needs of Indian people, has created a situation in which lawyers representing Indian tribes place too great an emphasis on state law and federal law when dealing with Indian nations. As a result, these lawyers may unconsciously be contributing to the weakening of unique tribal legal and governance traditions by recommending the adoption of tribal laws and policies founded upon the Anglo-American legal and political traditions rather than the unique traditions of their tribal clients.

The Certificate Program is designed to ensure that law students aspiring to a career representing Indian nations have the skills necessary to appreciate and strengthen the unique nature of Indigenous tribal legal systems. Students may satisfy the certificate requirements by taking courses such as Sovereignty and Self-Determination, Federal Indian Law, Native American Natural Resources, and the Tribal Judicial Support Clinic, combined with several law courses in the area of economic development, taxation, federal courts, and natural resources.

### **The Joint Degree Program in Law and Indigenous Nations Studies (J.D./M.A.)**

Since 2004 the University of Kansas has offered a MA/JD joint degree program in Law and Indigenous Nations studies. As part of this unique program, students graduate with both the J.D. of Law and an M.A. in Indigenous Nations Studies in seven semesters, including summer school.

The MA/JD joint degree program “aspires to facilitate the protection and strengthening of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and self-sufficiency” in Indigenous nations throughout the Americas. The University of Kansas is one of the three institutions in the United States offering a joint degree program relating to Indigenous peoples. The MA/JD Program Director is Professor Stacy Leeds, Director, KU Tribal Law and Government Center. Call (785) 864-9271 or [sleeds@ku.edu](mailto:sleeds@ku.edu) for more information.

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