

**State Bar of Michigan
American Indian Law Section
Annual Report 2006-2007
Submitted by Melissa L. Pope, Chair**

It is my honor to once again serve as the chair of the American Indian Law Section. Since its inception, the members of our section have worked diligently to increase the understanding of the complex issues of American Indian law within the legal profession. One such effort has been in providing American Indian case summaries. Since the last publication of our newsletter in 2005, courts throughout the United States have considered numerous cases involving American Indians and American Indian nations. In this newsletter, you will find case summaries from the United States Supreme Court, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, and Michigan courts. I wish to take a moment to thank the University of Detroit Mercy American Indian Law Center for having submitted various case summaries before the 2006 newsletter deadline. They have and continue to be a tremendous source of support for American Indian law in the state of Michigan. I thank them for their tremendous efforts over the years. The case summaries they have provided are noted after the summary. I have provided the remaining summaries with the assistance of the Native American Rights Fund National Indian Law Library, an excellent resource for anyone practicing American Indian law. I encourage our membership to visit their website at www.narf.org.

In spite of our missing the 2006 newsletter, members were still informed of important court decisions and other events, thanks to the efforts of Angela Sherigan in keeping our listserv active.

Another important accomplishment of the section over the past two years has been in assisting spiritual leaders in working with American Indians held in Michigan prisons. Unlike mainstream religions where clergy are supported financially by a congregation, our spiritual leaders do not have a constant and consistent source of income to defray their efforts. Fundraisers held over the past year have assisted American Indian spiritual leaders in reaching out to prisoners in need of spiritual guidance. Their work strengthens American Indian communities by giving these individuals the tools necessary to become productive members of their communities when released.

In addition to the above, we are moving toward the time when planning gets underway for our Annual Meeting and Program. I encourage you to think of topics of interest to you and e-mail them to me at MLpope@wowway.com. We can never have too many suggestions!

Also at the Annual Meeting and Program will be the presentation of the Tecumseh Peacekeeping Award. This award is presented to an individual or organization that has made significant efforts in the advancement of American Indian rights. I encourage you to submit nominations to me via e-mail.

As we move closer to our Annual Meeting and Program, I encourage each and every one of you to consider running for the council. The previous councils, the core members of the American Indian Law Section, have succeeded in establishing this section—a tremendous task in the face of such a small number of American Indian attorneys and attorneys who practice American Indian law. But the numbers are few, and some have expressed readiness to pass on the growth of the section to new members. Adding new members to a council can often enhance an organization—new people often breathe new life. If you would like to submit your name for the council, please contact me via e-mail or at (313) 909-3634.

Thank you for allowing me to once again serve as your chair. I look forward to seeing you soon.