

**State Bar of Michigan
American Indian Law Section
Annual Report 2004-2005
Submitted by Angela K. Sherigan, Chair**

The 9th year of the American Indian Law Section is near a close and a lot of exciting things have happened. Thank you to John LeMire for his work on last year's annual meeting and the presentation of the Tecumseh Peace-Keeping award to Jim Keedy, Executive Director of Michigan Indian Legal Services.

This year's annual meeting and program will be held on Thursday, September 22, 2005 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing, Room 101. Our program will be *Tribal Employment Law*, featuring Donna Budnick, Larry Betz, and Richard Feeley. The program will be followed by the presentation of the 2005 Tecumseh Peace-Keeping Award to Donna Budnick. Donna has proven to be a tried and true advocate for Native peoples and has an exceptional record. I hope you will all be able to join us for this year's annual meeting and program and to celebrate Donna's achievements.

While the Program Committee was busy working on the program, Melissa Pope and Tom Myers were busy working on mascot legislation. Melissa was also busy working with Jeff Stone on an amicus brief in the Loonsfoot case appeal (which settled out of court).

In February and March I attended the Section Leaders Advisory Council meeting and the Section Leaders Summit at the State Bar. Both of these proved to be a great value to the sections. We were able to talk about section issues, form working relationships, and express our concerns to the State Bar. I also attended the Bar Leadership Forum in June. (Thank you to Wojnecka & Sherigan, P.C. for their financial support).

The final kinks in the list-serv were also worked out and I am happy to say, as many of you know, it is up, running, and serving as a great tool for providing information to our members, as well as serving as a referral system. If you are not currently on the list-serv, please visit our updated section page at the State Bar website, www.michbar.org, to join. For those of you who are on the list, please don't be shy - it is a completely open forum. I hope that the list-serv will continue to have success and be of benefit to the members.

The Council conducted its regular meetings and voted to co-sponsor a media symposium with the American Indian Policy Institute, along with several Tribes. The purpose behind the symposium is to have a "101," so-to-speak, on effective communication methods for attorneys and Tribes to utilize when

dealing with the media about issues important to Indian Country. The symposium is scheduled to be held late fall of this year. With panelists from both the media and those working in Indian Country, the lines of communication are bound to open up.

AILS will also be sponsoring a fundraiser for Native American Spiritual Leaders on Friday, November 18, 2005, at the Grand Rapids Art Museum. In the past few years, there has been a drastic decline in the number of Spiritual Leaders getting to prisons due to financial constraints and problems at facilities with Sacred Items. Donna Budnick, Art Stine, and myself have been working very hard on these issues and hope that you will be able to join us on November 18.

AILS continued its support of Access to Justice with a donation earmarked for Michigan Indian Legal Services. We appreciate the opportunity to support Michigan Indian Legal Services in the important work they do for Indian Country.

Throughout my years with AILS, everyone has been so helpful and really pulling together when projects need to be done, and this year was no exception. I want to thank the following people for the continued support, compassion and hard work: members Melissa Pope, Donna Budnick, Ron Douglas, Shelia Hackett-Gaskell, Jeff Wojnecka, Jeff Stone, Tom Myers, our Commissioner Liaison, Ed Harotunian, and Sue McMann and Janet Welch at the State Bar. As Chair, I was able to interact with many more members than usual and hope to meet all of you soon.

Thank you for a great year.