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American-Indian Legal Resources on the Web

Starting your Research—Mega-Sites

When conducting legal research on an unfamiliar legal topic, it may be useful for a legal researcher to initially utilize wide-scoped research tools. Some electronic resources that may be particularly useful when researching American-Indian legal issues are the myriad of mega-sites that are available free of charge and offer a wide range of American-Indian legal topics. Some of the electronic resources that cover a broad variety of legal issues including American-Indian law are FindLaw, which is located at http://www.findlaw.com/01topics/21indian/index.html, and MegaLaw.com's Native American Law, which is located at http://www.megalaw.com/top/native.php.

The FindLaw site contains information about several topics related to American-Indian legal issues. The topics listed include links for finding Native Peoples Attorneys and firms, expert witnesses and consultants, American-Indian electronic resources, and a web guide for American-Indian legal information.

Another electronic resource that may be useful is MegaLaw.com's Native American Law, at http://www.megalaw.com/top/native.php. This broad site contains a variety of links to information about various American-Indian legal topics including Supreme Court decisions, American-Indian law regulations and statutes, American-Indian organizations and resources, American-Indian Tribal websites, and also links to related message boards.

Academic Info at http://www.academicinfo.net/nativeamlaw.html, is another broad electronic resource that may be useful to researchers. The Academic Info American-Indian Law website contains an expansive listing of links to a variety of American-Indian topics including American-Indian law and related subjects. There are links to American-Indian Studies—Digital Law Library, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Native American Rights Fund, and several others.

The WWW Virtual Library's Index of Native American Legal Resources on the Internet at http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/indices/NAlegal.html is another extensive listing of links to American-Indian legal topics. The links have been grouped into subtopics under the broad heading Legal Sources related to Indigenous Issues. Some of the subtopic titles are United States Native American resources, College Programs Devoted to Indigenous Legal Issues, Legal Practices with Indian Law Specialties, General International, and Canada Native American legal resources.

Native Web's site at http://www.nativeweb.org/resources/law_legal_issues/ contains a brief list of websites that focus on American-Indian legal issues such as cases and controversies; government documents and resources; and speeches, articles, and essays. It should be noted that the Native Web website's content is not limited strictly to legal information and there are links to a variety of other information relating to American Indians.

Although the mega sites are a great resource for commencing the research process, there are other electronic resources that are also helpful. Government informational sources are the next broad category of electronic resources that may help when conducting legal research on American-Indian topics.

Government Websites and Organizations

American-Indian legal issues are dominated by federal law, and fortunately many federal-law-related sources are now available online for free. One of the best websites for researching American-Indian federal laws and regulations is Cornell's Legal Information Institute. The Cornell Legal Information Institute has created a special web page devoted to American-Indian law, which includes an overview of American-Indian law and links to American-Indian statutes, regulations, case law, and secondary sources. The website is located at: http://www.law.cornell.edu/topics/indian.html.

Another excellent website for researching American-Indian federal law is the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs: http://indian.senate.gov/index.html. This website is particularly useful for researching new and pending American-Indian legislation, and it includes a surprising amount of information such as hearing transcripts, legislative updates, and an extensive set of links to various government agencies.

The Native American Rights Fund (NARF) is a non-profit organization that provides legal representation and guidance to American-Indian Tribes, organizations, and individuals. NARF's website, http://www.narf.org, is a valuable resources for monitoring new and pending legal action affecting American-Indian laws, rights, and lands.

The National Indian Law Library (NILL) is an affiliate of NARF and, according to NILL's mission statement NILL is "a public law library devoted to federal Indian and tribal law." This comprehensive website focuses on federal and state primary materials and provides access to many free American-Indian secondary sources. NILL's home page is located at: http://www.narf.org/nill/Nillindex.html, and the legal research materials may be found at http://www.narf.org/nill/rlinks.htm.

Some other American-Indian legal organizations that might be of interest are The National Native American Bar Association, http://www.nativeamericanbar.org/; The Tribal Court Clearinghouse, http://www.

tribal-institute.org/; and The National American Indian Court Judges Association, http://www.naicja.org/.

Tribal Law

Many organizations are using the Internet to make tribal laws available to the public for free. One of the most comprehensive websites for tribal constitutions, codes, and laws is the Native American Constitution and Law Digitization Project. This website is a joint effort between NILL and the University of Oklahoma Law Center. The librarians at NILL and the University of Oklahoma Law Library have painstakingly collected and digitized the constitutions and codes of various American-Indian Tribes and they are currently in the process of digitizing many more tribal documents. The website for the digitization project is http://thorpe.ou.edu. Another source for tribal codes and constitutions is the Wisconsin Judicare's Indian Law Office. This website includes links to tribal constitutions, codes and laws from across the nation http://www.judicare.org/triballaw.html.

Michigan

There are also electronic resources that are specifically tailored to American-Indian Tribes in Michigan. Contact information for American-Indian Tribes in Michigan can be accessed through the 500 Nations Native American Super Site at http://www.500 nations.com/Michigan_Tribes.asp. Another site that may be useful is the Native American Indian Resources at http://www.kstrom.net/isk/mainmenu.html. This site contains links to various Michigan American-Indian Tribes and also a map of the locations of federally recognized American-Indian Tribes in Michigan, available at http://www.kstrom.net/isk/maps/mi/michigan.html. Some other sites that may be of use when conducting research are the Michigan Indian Legal Services at http://www.mils.org/, the Michigan Victim Assistance for Native American Nations site at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/help/nat/mi.htm, and also the Tribal Court Clearing House site at http://www.tribal-institute.org/lists/justice.htm. The websites that have been listed are only a few of the resources that are available. There are numerous electronic resources that can be found

and are available on the web. These resources can be located through the use of search engines such as Google at www.google.com and Dogpile at http://www.dogpile.com/.

News and Treatises

News websites are an excellent source for monitoring new and evolving legal issues and one of the best news sites for American-Indian law is Indianz.com at http://www.indianz.com. This website provides daily news coverage of American-Indian issues primarily focused on political and legal topics.

A more scholarly news website is the *Tribal Law Journal,* published by the University of New Mexico Law School, located at http://tlj.unm.edu. This is a relatively new journal and its mission is to "provide a reliable forum for the discussion of internal indigenous law." Full text access to most articles is available and the website also includes a multimedia section with video clips and transcripts.

Treatises are an important part of any legal research project and the best-known treatise on American-Indian law is the Handbook of Federal Indian Law, by Felix S. Cohen. The handbook is available online at the Native American Constitution and Law Digitization Project, http://thorpe.ou.edu.

The Internet continues to be an important component of legal research, and this is especially true with regard to American-Indian law. Many American-Indian legal materials that were once considered obscure are now readily available through the web, and new resources are constantly being added. Clearly, the Internet will continue to be a powerful tool for conducting American-Indian legal research. ✦