

**From:** <webmaster@mail.michbar.org>  
**To:** <asmith@mail.michbar.org>, <webmaster@mail.michbar.org>, <ram429@cornell...>  
**Date:** 3/13/2015 11:44 PM  
**Subject:** Nomination for Unsung Hero Award

A copy of this e-mail has been sent to the State Bar of Michigan and to the nominator of the award.

Name of nominee: Allie Greenleaf Maldonado  
Title: Chief Judge  
Firm or Organization: Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Tribal Court  
Address: Physical address: 911 Spring Street, Petoskey, MI 49770 (Mailing address: 7500 Odawa Circle, Harbor Springs, MI 49740)  
Phone: 231-242-1463  
Fax: 231-242-1470  
E-mail: amaldonado@ltbbodawa-nsn.gov

Name of nominator: Raymond Mensah  
Title: Law Clerk/Contractor  
Firm or Organization: Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Tribal Court  
Address: 823 Dean Street, Brooklyn, NY 11238  
Phone: 718-249-7685  
Fax:  
E-mail: ram429@cornell.edu

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Explain the merits of your nomination, submit any supporting materials for your nominee by email, fax, or mail. Give specific examples.

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I am writing to enthusiastically nominate Judge Allie Greenleaf Maldonado, Chief Judge of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians ("LTBB"), for the State Bar of Michigan Unsung Hero Award. I have known Judge Maldonado for several years now, having come to the LTBB as a judicial law clerk, where I remain employed while awaiting a class opening for Navy Officer Candidate School. During this time, Judge Maldonado has shown that she more than exceeds the highest standards of practice and commitment for the benefit of others, both on and off the bench, making her an ideal candidate for consideration of the Unsung Hero Award.

Some examples of Judge Maldonado's work that shows her high standards of practice and commitment for the benefit of others is seen most profoundly in the way she implements the LTBB's Waabshki Miigwan Drug Court ("Drug Court"). As a member of a reservation community where substance abuse is far too common and responsible for the destruction of many families, Judge Maldonado immediately went to work on improving the Drug Court. Prior to Judge Maldonado's tenure, the Drug Court was successful in seeing male participants graduate from the program, while female participants regularly failed to graduate from the program and were, instead, discharged from the program after failing to complete its terms, being released only to return to a destructive lifestyle. Additionally, among other issues, the Drug Court lacked the legal authority to return participants' driver's licenses, which threatened participants' sobriety as it made maintaining employment functionally impossible at times.

Keen to understand and fix the problem with female graduation rates, Judge Maldonado commissioned a study of former female Drug Court clients to better understand this conundrum. The study uncovered that parental responsibilities—most, if not all, of the Drug Court's female participants were single mothers—in addition to the requirements of the program, were insurmountable for the female participants. As a result of the study's findings, Judge Maldonado implemented two major changes to the

program. Specifically, the Drug Court program was changed to add a layer of flexibility to account for special barriers that individual participants might have to allow the court to address problems on an individual basis. For instance, in the past all Drug Court participants were required to perform 30 hours of either work, school or community service, addition to fulfilling other program requirements. As a result of the report's findings, however, the Drug Court now allows single parents credit for caring for their children. The court also assists parents in obtaining child care should they wish to work or attend school. While the changes were implemented to address problems associated with the lack of female participants graduating from the Drug Court program, the changes apply to all participants, regardless of gender.

To address the driver's license issue, Judge Maldonado authorized discussions between the Tribal Court and State officials. Negotiations between the Tribal Court and Michigan Secretary of State's office ("SOS") commenced. Initially, these efforts were met with resistance regarding whether Michigan's drug court statute allowed tribal drug courts to apply for the authority to return driver's licenses. Undeterred by the initial challenges, and committed to improving the lives of LTBB Drug Court participants, Judge Maldonado invited the SOS to visit the Drug Court, where SOS officials observed proceedings, examined Court manuals, and questioned court staff. As a result of these efforts, the SOS legal department cleared the way for the Drug Court to apply to become the first tribal drug court in Michigan to return driver's license to participants. After this development, Judge Maldonado began negotiations with Tribal Council to convince it to provide a waiver of sovereign immunity so that the contract could be implemented. Thanks to Judge Maldonado's advocacy and efforts, Tribal Council approved the waiver. While the Drug Court has a few additional obstacles to overcome before implementing the program, Judge Maldonado's efforts will surely make a significant difference in returning, where allowed by law, driver's licenses to Drug Court participants who require a vehicle to travel to and from work, thereby increasing the chances of successful program completion for a higher number of participants.

Outside of her efforts to implement the driver's license program and make changes to the Drug Court program to better suit the needs of single parents, Judge Maldonado has shown that she is willing to be hands-on to ensure the success of LTBB community members via other means. Specifically, returning to the Waabshki Miigwan Drug Court, Judge Maldonado requires that Court staff have driver's licenses in the event that program participants require assistance in getting to and from court hearings, and will herself drive clients in need. Additionally, Judge Maldonado has, when dealing with youth participants in the Drug Court program, gone out of her way to ensuring that they have the tools required to succeed both in the Drug Court program and beyond. Such efforts have included personally meeting with school officials to ensure that student participants' needs were being met to providing authorized court funds to pay for activities for youth participants designed to maintain their sobriety. In short, Judge Maldonado understands that addressing substance abuse on the LTBB reservation, which has a negative impact on surrounding communities, requires a group effort. To this end, she goes well beyond the call of duty to ensure that participants have what is required of them to succeed. As I have heard her say on more than one occasion, "their success is [her] success and the community's success."

Judge Maldonado's work that shows the highest standards of practice and commitment for the benefit of others is not limited to her time on the bench. Prior to her appointment as LTBB Chief Judge, for instance, Judge Maldonado spent over ten years in service to improving the LTBB and greater American Indian communities; less than a year of this period was spent in private practice, while the remainder was in government service, both as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the DOJ Natural Resources Division, Indian Resources Section, and as an Assistant General Counsel for the LTBB. While her work toward improving American Indian communities during this period is impressive throughout, I will focus on a particularly remarkable and important achievement that Judge Maldonado realized while serving as Assistant General Counsel for the LTBB.

In her role as Assistant General Counsel, Judge Maldonado was tasked with, among other duties, ensuring State compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act ("ICWA"), a Federal statute designed to keep Indian children with Indian families after decades of unjustified removal practices throughout the nation, as matters related to LTBB children in the State court system. As the daughter of an Odawa woman unjustly removed from her family and placed into a State-sanctioned boarding school, Judge Maldonado has experienced first-hand the impact of removal policies of the past, something which makes her

understanding of the need for and commitment to the ICWA more personal; her commitment to the ICWA, the LTBB and American Indian communities, and to ensuring that Indian children remain connected to their tribal heritage has even led Judge Maldonado and her husband Jay to adopt a beautiful Odawa boy in need of a loving home (she does not just talk the talk, but walks the walk where it matters most).

Through her work in ensuring State compliance with the ICWA, Judge Maldonado encountered a systematic failure by Michigan courts to accurately apply the ICWA, which was largely due to a general ignorance of the law and how it applied. Taking it upon herself to do her part to increase ICWA compliance and, thus, secure the future of the LTBB and other American Indian tribes, Judge Maldonado led trainings—which she does to this date—of State court judges on ICWA compliance, and served on various State workgroups comprised of tribal, State, and local officials to ensure compliance with the ICWA and to change Michigan Court Rules to be in compliance with the ICWA.

These efforts culminated in Judge Maldonado's advocacy for and leadership on introducing a State law intended to strengthen the ICWA, which she provided the initial draft for. Due to efforts at building strong relationships with her State, local, and tribal counterparts, Judge Maldonado was able to secure support for her draft, which was accepted and ultimately introduced into the Michigan Legislature. On January 2, 2013, after additional lobbying on behalf of the proposed legislation, Governor Snyder signed the Michigan Indian Family Preservation Act ("MIFPA") into law. After conversations with other legal professionals in Michigan familiar with Judge Maldonado's work, there is no doubt in my mind that her professionalism, leadership, and commitment to serving the LTBB and other American Indian communities was key to the change in culture regarding compliance with the ICWA and the ultimate passage of the MIFPA. Because of her work, American Indian children and families are often better off than they would have been otherwise, as they continue to have an understanding of their culture and identities, which will serve them well as the future leaders of their tribes.

It is my honor to nominate Judge Maldonado for the State Bar of Michigan's Unsung Hero Award. If you have any questions of me, please do not hesitate to contact me via one of the methods listed below.

Very respectfully,

Raymond Mensah  
ram429@cornell.edu  
718.249.7685

P.s.: this letter is being emailed to Ms. Smith as a PDF file as well.

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Please provide a complete resume that includes dates of:

- Service to and on behalf of the State Bar of Michigan
- Other service to the legal profession
- Service to the public
- Any awards the nominee may have received

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Please see resume for Judge Maldonado that is being emailed to Ms. Smith.

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Optional: List news, magazine, radio, and TV features about the nominee's accomplishments (do not submit actual articles or DVDs).

State date/page and media e.g. 12/12/07, p. 12, Lansing State Journal, "Lawyer Begins TLC Program in Schools"

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Please provide a letter written by the nominator explaining why the nominee should be considered for the award. The letter should be signed by the nominator and any additional supporters. One dated and signed letter is required, it can be e-mailed to Anne Smith at [asmith@mail.michbar.org](mailto:asmith@mail.michbar.org), faxed to her attention at (517) 372-2410, or sent by mail. Please note in your communication the name of the award and the nominee's name.

Ms. Anne Smith  
Representative Assembly Awards  
State Bar of Michigan  
306 Townsend St.  
Lansing, MI 48933-2012  
Phone: (517) 346-6374

Email secured by Check Point

March 13, 2015

Ms. Anne Smith  
Representative Assembly Awards  
State Bar of Michigan  
306 Townsend St.  
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Ms. Smith:

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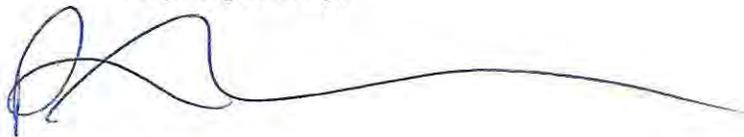
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Mensah letter on behalf of Judge Allie Greenleaf Maldonado  
Unsung Hero Award nomination  
Page 4

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It is my honor to nominate Judge Maldonado for the State Bar of Michigan’s Unsung Hero Award. If you have any questions of me, please do not hesitate to contact me via one of the methods listed below.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'R' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that tapers to the right.

Raymond Mensah  
[ram429@cornell.edu](mailto:ram429@cornell.edu)  
718.249.7685

## **EDUCATION:**

### **University of Michigan Law School, Ann Arbor, MI**

#### ***Juris Doctorate, May 2000***

- Contributing Editor of the University of Michigan Law Review
- Native American Law Students' Association, Chair
- Kellogg Foundation Fellow
- Voelker Foundation Fellow
- A.T. Anderson Memorial Scholar
- Joseph Seiger Scholar
- American Indian Graduate Center Scholar
- Native American Scholarship Fund Recipient

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

### **Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB), Harbor Springs, MI-Jan. 2012-present**

#### ***Chief Judge***

- Serves as highest ranking judge for the LTBB judiciary.
- Manages the judiciary for the LTBB Tribal Court.
- Operates a court of general jurisdiction handling a variety of cases from child welfare matters to worker's compensation cases.
- Manages an adult and a juvenile Drug Court.
- Developed a domestic violence docket.
- Provides child welfare expert training to other judges across on the Indian Child Welfare Act ("ICWA") and the Michigan Family Preservation Act ("MIFPA").
- Manages a million dollar-plus budget.
- Manages the administration of the LTBB Tribal Court.
- Initiated and oversaw the implementation of a Tribal-member friendly system for allowing persons with Tribal Court cases to use the State of Michigan Friend of the Court to collect child support payments.
- Improved relations with the local State court, which resulted in the LTBB Court gaining access to the State's court school for at-risk juveniles.
- Developed a Summer Law Clerk program for the Tribal Court.
- Assists in the development of Court applications for new grants.

### **LTBB, Harbor Springs, MI - September, 2002-January 2012**

#### ***Assistant General Council***

- Practiced law, primarily in the field of federal Indian law, with an emphasis on business, economic development, gaming and intergovernmental relations.
- Helped move Michigan from being one of the worst states in the country in terms of ICWA compliance into a model state.

- Wrote the Amicus brief in the *In re Morris* case concerning ICWA's notice requirements, which the Supreme Court of Michigan ultimately adopted as the law.
- Wrote the first draft of the MIFPA. Participated in all subsequent redrafts, testified and lobbied until the bill became law in 2012.
- Executed complicated multi-million dollar real estate transactions.
- Assisted in the papering of a \$120,000,000 bond issuance.
- Assisted in the renegotiation of \$120,000,000 in debt.
- Prepared documents, including position papers, testimony, comments, briefs, memoranda and other legal instruments on behalf of the Tribe.
- Represented the Tribe before Federal, Tribal, and State courts and Federal agencies on a wide variety of issues and matters.
- Prepared trial documents including complaints, case briefs, and motions.
- Tackled complex legal issues involving real estate transactions, intellectual property work, HIPPA, easement issues, and securities offerings.
- Worked with commissions, boards and committees to create by-laws and procedures.
- Provided the Tribe with assistance and support, including legal and legislative analysis; legislative and regulatory drafting and monitoring services; as well as legal representation.
- Developed seminars and training programs focusing on Federal Indian policy, tribal economic development, and other related topics.
- Researched and drafted legal memoranda regarding employment, family, commercial, regulatory, constitutional law, Indigenous treaty rights, property, environmental and land use concerns, ICWA matters, gaming and other areas of civil law.
- Negotiated memorandums of understanding with other sovereigns.
- Coordinated amicus briefs on behalf of the Tribe and others in various courts, including the United States Supreme Court.

**Monteau & Peebles, L.L.P.**, January, 2002-September, 2002

*Staff Attorney*

- Lobbied on a variety of issues and positions for Monteau & Peebles, L.L.P. clients and tracked pending legislation affecting tribal clients.
- Worked on various Indian gaming-related projects.
- Worked on other issues of federal Indian law including issues under the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act, Per Capita Allocation Plans, tribal economic development plans and corporate structures, tribal land claims, tribal sovereign immunity and jurisdiction, nondisclosures, and confidentiality agreements.

**United States Department of Justice**, June, 2000-December, 2001

**Environment and Natural Resources Division, Indian Resources Section**

*Staff Attorney*

- Represented tribes on issues involving the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and NEPA.

- Worked on various Indian law-related matters including zoning issues, Indian Arts and Crafts Act, administrative review, protection of tribal lands and other related questions.
- Defended the Bureau of Indian Affairs Environmental Assessments in several cases.
- Prepared and represented clients in depositions.
- Participated in all stages of litigation, including pursuit of dismissal, summary judgment, and interlocutory appellate work.
- Effectuated negotiations and case settlement.
- Worked with clients to analyze, assess, and define their strategic objectives to achieve desired results.
- Drafted trial briefs and participated in pre-trial negotiations.

### **Presentations, Testimony and Trainings Where I was the Trainer**

Qualified Expert Witness Training for the State Court Administrative Office

Walking on Common Ground Judicial Training – The Evolution on ICWA & MIFPA - Against the Odds

Presenter at the MSU Indigenous Law Conference - ICWA at 30: Facing the Future

Presenter at the MSU Indigenous Law Conference – Drug Courts in Indian Country

Presenter for the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan - Understanding ICWA

Panelist for the State Court Administration Office (SCAO) - Foster Youth in Transition to Adulthood

Presenter at North Central Community College - Know Your Rights

Presenter for the U of M Law School Indian Day - ICWA: Placement Preferences

Presenter for the U of M Law School Indian Day - ICWA: Active Efforts

Trainer for SCAO for State Court actors - ICWA

Presenter - Tribal Summit Conference in Mount Pleasant - ICWA's Placement Preferences

Presenter on behalf of the Casey Foundation for Michigan's Legislator's Orientation on the MIFPA

Trainer for SCAO to State Court actors on the role of the Qualified Expert Witness in ICWA cases

Presenter for SCAO - The Evolution of ICWA

Presenter for the Michigan Probate Judge Conference: The New MIFPA & Federal ICWA

Presenter for SCAO - ICWA Webcast: Good Cause Not To Transfer or Not to Follow the Placement

Preference of ICWA and the Serious Damage Standards

Presenter for SCAO - Making the ICWA of 1978 Work

Presenter for the 10th Annual Indigenous Law Conference - Tribal Drug Courts

Participant in the formation of the Tribal-State-Federal Judicial Forum

Presenter for SCAO - ICWA: Neglect, Guardianship, Juvenile Proceedings

Presenter for the Michigan Referee Association: Baby Veronica & MIFPA

Careers in Indian Law Presenter for the University of Michigan Law School

Careers in Indian Law Presenter for Michigan State University Law School

Testified before the Michigan Legislature Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee regarding the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver

Testified before a subcommittee of the House and the State Michigan Legislature regarding the Michigan Family Preservation Act

### **Leadership Roles and Accomplishments**

Chair of the Tribal-State-Federal Judicial Forum, October 2014-present

Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals Board of Directors, December 2014-present

State Tribal Partnership Committee Member 2008-present

MIFPA Committee Member 2010-2012  
Court Improvement Project (CIP) Committee member 2008-2012  
CIP / ICWA Court Rules & Forms Committee member 2008-2012  
Northern Community Mediation, Board Member, 2012- present  
Grain Train Food Cooperative, Board Member, 2008- present  
Ogichidaa Award Foundation, Inc. - Founder and President Emeritus  
Federal Bar Association, Indian Law Section Chair  
Federal Bar Association, Indian Law Section Vice Chair  
Federal Bar Association, Indian Law Section Treasurer  
Chair of the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual 2006 Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference  
Co-Chair of the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual 2005 Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference  
Adjunct Chair of the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual 2004 Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference  
Chair of the 3rd Annual 2003 Federal Bar Association Mid-Year Indian Law Conference  
Co-Chair of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual 2002 Federal Bar Association Mid-Year Indian Law Conference  
Co-Chair of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual 2001 Federal Bar Association Mid-Year Indian Law Conference  
Appointed by the Governor to serve on the Board of Directors for Michigan Indian Legal Services, 2007-2010  
INDNSLIST Volunteer, 2008  
Michigan Coordinator of the 2004 Native Vote Election Protection Project

**INTERESTS:** Sea kayaking at night, deep sea fishing, traveling, and musical theatre.