

NJC Courses

Essential Skills for Tribal Court Judges

Why should I take this course?

If you are new to the bench, this course will help you develop and apply the skills necessary to function successfully as a Tribal Court Judge. You will be faced with resolving challenges in the areas of civil procedure, civil jurisdiction, criminal procedure and criminal jurisdiction. Particularly, you will learn about the intersections and gaps in state, federal and tribal authority in Indian Country.

What will I learn?

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Outline appropriate jurisdictional boundaries for both criminal and civil cases in Indian country;
- Evaluate and rule on the admissibility of testimonial and documentary evidence in both criminal and civil cases;
- Evaluate the role of tradition and custom in tribal court proceedings, as well as apply the same;
- Write clear, concise, and well-reasoned orders and decisions;
- Establish and maintain rules of court that are appropriate for your own jurisdiction.

Who should attend?

Tribal Court Judges who are new to the bench or those who want a refresher course.

Who are the members of the faculty?

Members of the faculty include Judges and other professionals from Indian Country. Additional Faculty includes instructors who are fluent in Federal Indian Law Issues, case administration, and writing. Faculty members have included: Justice Barbara Smith, Chickasaw Nation Supreme Court; Ron Hofer, freelance writing consultant and adjunct professor of law at Marquette University Law School, Justice John Reif, Oklahoma Supreme Court, Vincent Knight, Executive Director for the National Tribal Justice Resource Center and former tribal court judge for the Ponca, Otoe, Pawnee, Tonkawa and Kaw tribal courts; and Vito de la Cruz, Federal Public Defender.

How is this course taught?

The course uses a “show, tell, do” format for skills development. Active class participation is encouraged.

Does this course qualify for credits in the Judicial Studies degree program?

This course does not qualify for the MJS or Ph.D. degree programs. However, it does qualify as a requirement under the Certificate in Judicial Development, Tribal Judicial Skills program.

What should I tell my presiding judge or funding agency so that my attendance will be approved?

At no point in the history of tribal nations has maintaining a strong and competent judiciary been more important. Jurisdictional lines in both criminal and civil cases must be clearly expressed and defended in your decisions. This course will develop those skills necessary to protect the rights of the people appearing before the court as well as the sovereign authority of your tribal nation.

Whom should I contact for more information?

For more information, please contact the registrar's office at (800) 255-8343 or registrar@judges.org.



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