

Indigenous Law Program (ILP) – A Summary

The University of Alberta Faculty of Law has a long history graduating Aboriginal students. Prior to the inception of the Indigenous Law Program in 1993, the Faculty had graduates who had distinguished careers in law, politics or other fields. Included in this list are three current Provincial Court Judges, a former Member of Parliament, a former Premier of the Northwest Territories and others who have contributed greatly in many ways including private practice, government or working with and advising their communities.

The ILP began in 1993, partially in response to the 1991 Commission Report on Aboriginal Justice. *Justice on Trial* by Court of Queen's Bench Justice Allan R. Cawsey, included recommendations that law faculties open their doors to address under-representation of Aboriginal lawyers in the legal profession. By 2007, 65 students have graduated from the faculty through ILP and they have contributed greatly to the U of A law school. The graduates include the Gold Medal winner in 2001 and two Co-Editors-in-Chief of the Alberta Law Review.

The Faculty recruits across Canada and locally through attendance at Career Days and other aboriginal student events including other post-secondary institutions, high schools and junior high schools. The ILP typically receives from 25 to 40 completed applications per year. In 2006, there were 35 completed applications with offers being made to 13 applicants. In 2007, there were 25 completed applications and offers were made to 7 applicants. As of April, 2007, there were 17 students registered in law school, with seven in first year, seven in second year and three in third year. While we will lose three students to graduation, offers have been made to seven new students who will begin studies in the Fall of 2007. Beginning in the Fall of 2007, there will be 21 Aboriginal students studying law in the Faculty of Law.

Support Services are offered by the Director of the ILP upon request of the student. As required, the Director works in association with Aboriginal Student Services and can provide information and referrals to numerous agencies and services available both on and off campus for Aboriginal students. A group tutorial program is available upon request of the students and all teaching staff is available for private sessions with students when required. All first year students are offered an orientation session to introduce them to the life and culture of the law school. In addition, the ILP host a welcoming reception providing an opportunity for all incoming aboriginal students to meet with returning students. Assistance in obtaining summer work and finding articling positions is available through the Career Services Officer who works closely with the Director, ILP.

There is an active Aboriginal Law Students Association (ALSA) at the Faculty. In addition to an active agenda of programs and events, ALSA provides a network of support to students. Every spring ALSA hosts an Aboriginal Speaker Series where leading experts in Aboriginal Law share their knowledge with the university community. Every year the Faculty of Law sends up to four students to participate

in the Kawaskimhon National Aboriginal Moot. The U of A Faculty of Law will host the Kawaskimhon Moot in the March 2008.

The Faculty of Law has been actively involved in developing and offering Aboriginal Law courses with the assistance of a Curriculum Committee represented by administration, teaching staff and student representatives. The following courses are offered: *Aboriginal Peoples and the Law; Special Topics in Aboriginal Law; Kawaskimhon National Aboriginal Moot; Law of Fiduciary Obligations; Constitutional Litigation; Aboriginal Women and the Law; Critical Issues in Restorative Justice.*

The Faculty currently has two professors with Aboriginal heritage on the teaching staff who contribute greatly through teaching and the various research and community activities they are involved in. Other Professors are involved in teaching and research in areas of aboriginal cultural and property rights.

Highlights

- **Goal of ILP is to address under-representation of Aboriginal lawyers in Canada/Alberta and to enhance diversity within the Faculty of Law.**
- **Primary activities include recruitment, student support, counseling, and community involvement.**
- **Every year the law school allots up to 10% (16-17 places) of its first places to Aboriginal students. Admission criteria and requirements for Aboriginal applicants have been designed to reflect cultural and linguistic differences.**
- **Every year, the Faculty of Law receives 25 to 40 applicants for admission through the ILP.**
- **Since its inception in 1993, ILP has been a vehicle for over 65 students to achieve their dream of graduating from law school and an additional 21 will be at the Faculty by Fall 2007.**
- **ILP graduates have included the 2001 Gold Medal winner and two Co-Editors of the Alberta Law Review.**