

# Indian Law Resource Center

## Indigenous Peoples' Rights

**<https://indianlaw.org/content/about-center>**

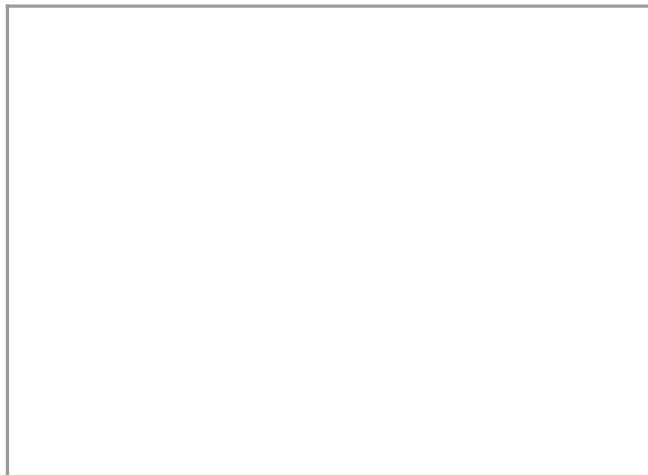
### Mission Statement

The Center provides legal assistance to indigenous peoples of the Americas to combat racism and oppression, to protect their lands and environment, to protect their cultures and ways of life, to achieve sustainable economic development and genuine self-government, and to realize their other human rights.

The Indian Law Resource Center seeks to overcome the grave problems that threaten Native peoples by advancing the rule of law, by establishing national and international legal standards that preserve their human rights and dignity, and by challenging the governments of the world to accord justice and equality before the law to all indigenous peoples of the Americas.

The Indian Law Resource Center is a non-profit law and advocacy organization established and directed by American Indians. We provide legal assistance to Indian and Alaska Native nations who are working to protect their lands, resources, human rights, environment and cultural heritage. Our principal goal is the preservation and well-being of Indian and other Native nations and tribes.

Founded in 1978, the Center provides assistance to Indian nations and indigenous peoples in the United States and throughout the Americas. The Center has an international Board of Directors, and is a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Indian Law Resource Center is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We are funded by grants and contributions from individuals, foundations, and Indian nations.



[Download the Center's brochure](#)

1978

Center completes major historical and legal study relating to the land rights and other legal rights of the Hopi people.

1979

Center brings first indigenous rights case to Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for demarcation of Yanomami land.

1980

Center submits first indigenous human rights complaint against the United States to the UN Commission on Human Rights.

1981

Center report "Resolving Indian Conflicts Out of Court"; addresses failure of federal courts to protect Indian rights.

1982

Center leads successful effort to establish UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

1983

Center analysis of "Ancient Indian Land Claims Settlement Act"; helps defeat unconstitutional attempt to take Indian land.

1984

Center wins case against Nicaragua in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which leads to the recognition of indigenous rights in the Nicaraguan Constitution and the creation of autonomous indigenous regions in Nicaragua.

1985

Center and others secure US Supreme Court decision upholding the right of Indian tribes to sue to recover lands in the Oneida case.

1986

Center collaborated with lawyers in Florida to stop the deportation of hundreds Guatemalan Indian refugees escaping from massacres and other gross human rights violations.

1987

Center assists Tuscarora Nation to control unlawful business activity on the reservation.

1988

Center helps negotiate a return of fifteen ancient wampum belts to the Onondaga Nation.

1989

Center and President Jimmy Carter help guarantee right of Indian leaders to return to Nicaragua.

1990

Center opens new headquarters in Helena, Montana.

1991

Center settles the Oglala Sioux Tribe's claim against the US for mismanagement of the Tribe's trust funds.

1992

Center and others win formal demarcation of Yanomami territory after 15 years of advocacy.

1993

Center helps the Miskito Indians in Honduras complete a map of their territory as a first step toward protection of their land and resource rights.

1994

Center leads successful effort for UN Sub-Commission approval of the Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

1995

Center secures agreement to protect the Seminoles from enforcement of county building codes against their traditional chickee dwellings.

1996

Center and UC/Berkeley geographers help the Maya Indians in Belize to complete the first indigenous-produced atlas in the world to document Maya rights to their traditional lands.

1997

Center, Assiniboine and Gros Ventre Tribes and others lead successful campaign to shut down two cyanide heap-leach gold mines adjacent to the Fort Belknap Indian reservation in Montana.

1998

Center and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe attorneys win a federal court decision upholding Indian religious freedom at Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming.

1999

Center leads successful effort to open up Organization of American States to indigenous peoples.

2000

Alaska Native and First Nations governments in the Yukon River watershed sign an historic agreement developed by the Center to cooperate in a program to clean up and manage the watershed.

2001

Center wins precedent-setting decision from the Inter-American Court that the Awas Tingni Indian community in Nicaragua has

collective rights to its traditional lands.

2002

Center wins case for Mary and Carrie Dann and other Western Shoshone when the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights says that the US used discriminatory procedures to gain control of Western Shoshone ancestral lands and calls on the US to review its laws in regard to Indian lands.

2003

Center, Lannan Foundation and Conservation Fund permanently protect 2,500 acres of wild, undeveloped land in Florida to be managed by and for the benefit of the Independent Traditional Seminole Nation.

2004

Center achieves a major advance for indigenous land rights when it wins case for Maya Indians in Belize in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which finds that Belize is violating the Maya Indians rights to property, equality, and a fair trial.

2005

Center files innovative Onondaga Nation Land Claim, demanding the clean-up of several Super-fund sites, including Onondaga Lake, rather than asking for possession of or compensation for the land.

2006

Center, Western Shoshone Defense Project and others bring first early warning procedures against the United States before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee urges the United States to "freeze", "desist" and "stop" actions being taken or threatened to be taken against the Western Shoshone Peoples of the Western Shoshone Nation.

2007

United Nations General Assembly adopts the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was originally drafted by the Center.

2008

Center drafts international legal principles requiring Multilateral Development Banks to comply with international human rights law.

Center collaboration with the Quechan Tribe and their legal team ends with positive decision from NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) Tribunal in Glamis Gold dispute against the U.S. The international tribunal recognized the state and local government obligations to respect indigenous cultural rights.

The United States at last gives its support to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Center's work with Agua Caliente, a Maya Q'eqchi' community in El Estor, Guatemala, yields a victory in Guatemala's highest court. The Constitutional Court of Guatemala orders the country's executive branch to take the corrective actions necessary to properly title Agua Caliente's lands.

Congress passes the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 reaffirming tribal sovereignty to exercise concurrent criminal jurisdiction over certain non-Natives in instances of domestic violence, dating violence, or violations of protection orders in Indian country.

United Nations convenes the first ever World Conference on Indigenous Peoples to share perspectives and best practices on the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, including to pursue the objectives of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We are a non-profit law and advocacy organization.

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