



## MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Justice McCormack and Judges from Tribal, State & Federal Courts Convene to Address Issues Concerning Native American Youth**

LANSING, MI, May 18, 2018 – Members of Michigan’s tribal, state, and federal court systems, including Michigan Supreme Court Justice Bridget M. McCormack, will assemble in Petoskey starting Monday to begin the two-day Michigan Tribal State Federal Judicial Forum. Hosted by the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, the Forum will primarily focus on issues shared among all three jurisdictions, such as tribal custody orders and the child welfare system. Other topics on the agenda include the Tribal Law and Policy Institute’s “Forum Think Tank” and the Hall of Justice’s newly-installed Learning Center exhibit regarding the Michigan tribal judiciary system.

“This Forum serves as a crucial means to enhance the relationship among Michigan’s tribal, state, and federal jurisdictions, and allows courts to approach areas of mutual concern in a collaborative and more effective fashion,” said Justice McCormack, who is the MSC liaison on tribal issues. “By working together, our courts will ensure that the needs of Native American communities are met appropriately and in a culturally sensitive manner.”

The Forum is composed of judges representing each of Michigan’s 12 federally recognized tribes, 12 state court judges, and federal judges and officials. This year, the Forum’s new co-chairs are Chief Judge Jocelyn K. Fabry of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and Chief Judge Susan L. Dobrich of the 43rd Circuit Court, Cass County Probate Court, and 4th District Court.

Although the Forum was formally established in 2014 by the Michigan Supreme Court, the spirit of cooperation between Michigan’s differing court systems dates back to 1992, when then-Chief Justice Michael F. Cavanagh worked with state tribes to create the one-year Michigan Indian Tribal Court—State Tribal Court Forum. In the years that followed, further collaborative measures were enacted, including the formation of the Michigan Indian Judicial Association and an increase in tribal court enforcement of state court rulings.

After its first meeting in October 2014, the Forum took on many specific goals, such as educating stakeholders on the federal Indian Child Welfare Act and implementing bench-sharing between tribal and state judges. The current Forum’s youth-centered agenda is committed to fostering awareness of legal and cultural distinctions among the tribal, state, and federal court systems, recognizing opportunities for cooperation on areas of overlapping interest, and promoting consistency in how cases are handled among different jurisdictions.

Read more about the collaboration between these courts in [Michigan’s Judiciary Success Stories](#).

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