



## MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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### **Tribal, State, and Federal Courts Will Meet to Expand Collaboration on Child Welfare Issues**

LANSING, MI, October 24, 2014 – The Michigan Tribal State Federal Judicial Forum will convene October 27-28 in Petoskey to review and adopt its charter and address the importance of judicial leadership in child welfare issues. The Forum was created by Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Order in June and is the first entity of its kind to meet since the previous Tribal State Court Forum was created in 1992.

“The measure of our success at this historic event will be reflected in strong relationships, linking our peoples, learning from the lessons of the past and leading our children to a better future,” said Michigan Supreme Court Justice Michael F. Cavanagh.

The Forum is expected to finalize its Naakonigewin, or Charter, which defines its mission, make-up, appointment process, and governance. In addition, the meeting will focus on Indian child welfare issues, and will include an examination of what forums in other states are doing to find examples of best practices and innovations, as well as looking at the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) as the “gold standard.” The Forum will also get updates on Michigan Indian child welfare data, and child welfare services and resources from the State Court Administrative Office.

Also during the meeting, Supreme Court Justice Michael F. Cavanagh, who will be retiring from the bench later this year after 32 years of service, will step down from his leadership role on the Forum, where he serves alongside Chief Judge Michael D. Petoskey, of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. Justice Cavanagh will be succeeded by Justice Bridget Mary McCormack, but he will continue to serve as a state judge on the Forum for a term ending July 1, 2017.

Michigan, which is home of 12 federally recognized Indian tribes and tribal court systems, has also enjoyed a long history of collaboration between state and tribal courts. The first Tribal State Court Forum resulted in the creation of the “Enforcement of Tribal Judgments” court rule (MCR 2.615) and, most recently, the passage of the Michigan Indian Family Preservation Act of 2013 (MIFPA).

The membership of the Forum consists of the chief tribal judge of each of Michigan’s 12 federally recognized tribes, or their designated alternate judges, with membership to be

expanded to accommodate any new federally recognized tribes; and 12 state court judges (or the same number as there are tribal judges), who are appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court from among a pool of currently serving or retired Michigan judges or justices.

For more information about state-tribal court relations, visit [www.courts.mi.gov/courts/tribalcourts/pages/default.aspx](http://www.courts.mi.gov/courts/tribalcourts/pages/default.aspx).

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Administrative Order & Charter links: <http://1.usa.gov/1tAn0FB>