

Vanessa A. Racehorse
Associate Professor of Law
University of Colorado Law School
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CURRICULUM VITAE

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

University of Colorado Law School, Boulder, CO

Associate Professor of Law

June 2024-Present

Dean's Faculty Fellow

August 2024-Present

- Affiliations: American Indian Law Program, Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies
- Courses: Tribal Law, American Indian Law II
- Service: Board member of the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment; Colloquium Committee (2024-2025); Moot Court Coach, National Native American Law Students Association Moot Court (2024-2025)
- Awards: Outstanding New Faculty Member (2025)

University of New Mexico School of Law, Albuquerque, NM

Assistant Professor of Law

May 2022-May 2024

- Affiliations: Law and Indigenous Peoples Program
- Courses: Indian Law; Indigenous Peoples & International Law; Tribal Law Journal Writing Seminar; American Indian Children, Youth & Families Law; Law of Indigenous Peoples; Indian Law Appellate Advocacy; Southwest Indian Law Clinic
- Faculty Advisor for the Tribal Law Journal (2023-2024; 2022-2023)
- Service: Academic Success Committee (2023-2024; 2022-2023); Student Retention, Suspension and Readmission Committee (2022-2023); Honors and Awards Committee (2023-2024); Moot Court Judge, National Native American Law Students Association Moot Court (2023-2024; 2022-2023)

University of San Diego School of Law, San Diego, CA

Adjunct Law Professor

January 2022-May 2022

- Course: Native American Law

EDUCATION

Columbia Law School, New York, NY

Juris Doctor, received May 2017

Activities: *Columbia Law Review*, Bluebook Editor
Native American Law Students Association (NALSA) Executive Board, President
National NALSA Moot Court Participant
National NALSA Board, Area 2 Representative
Human Rights Clinic
Research Assistant to Professor Amal Clooney

Awards: Parker School Recognition of Achievement in International and Comparative Law

University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

LL.M in International Criminal Law, received May 2017

University of Denver, Denver, CO

Bachelor of Arts, received June 2013

Major: Psychology

Minors: Leadership and Art

Honors: Psychology Department Awards for Research & Citizenship, Dean's List

Activities: Native Student Alliance, Leadership Program, Psychology Club

Study Abroad: University of Western Australia, July 2011-June 2012

PUBLICATIONS

Chaco Roads: Connecting Cultural Resources Protection with Environmental Justice, 97 COLO. L. REV. ____ (forthcoming 2026).

Tribal Health Self-Determination: The Role of Tribal Health Systems in Actualizing the Highest Attainable Standard of Health for American Indians and Alaska Natives, 56 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 183 (2025).

- Reviewed by Ezra Rosser, *Improving Health Services for Tribal Communities*, JOTWELL (July 1, 2024).
- Highly recommended by Matthew L.M. Fletcher, *Vanessa Racehorse on Tribal Health Self-Determination*, TURTLE TALK (Apr. 10, 2024).

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Policies and Partnerships to Improve Urban Healthcare for American Indians and Alaska Natives (Article)

The Indigenous Rights of Nature Movement (Article)

Advancing Water Equity in Indian Country (Article)

BOOK CHAPTERS

Rematriation and Restoration of Ancestral Homelands, in LAND BACK: RESTORING NATIVE CONTROL OF LAND IN THE UNITED STATES (forthcoming 2026).

SYMPOSIA, INVITED ESSAYS, AND BAR PUBLICATIONS

Cultivating Hope: A Future with Ethics Towards People and Places, 96(3) COLO. L. REV. 594 (2025) (invited contribution).

Teaching at the Intersection of Federal Indian Law and Environmental Law Courses, 49 VERMONT L. REV. 202 (2025) (with Mia Montoya Hammersley, Heather Tanana, Nadine Padilla, and Gerald Torres) (conference transcript).

Achieving Climate Justice Through Land Back: An Overview of Tribal Dispossession, Land Return Efforts, and Practical Mechanisms for #LandBack, 34 COLO. ENV'T L.J. 175 (2023) (co-authored with Anna Hohag) (invited contribution).

Indigenous Influence on the Rights of Nature Movement, 38:3 NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT (ABA SECTION OF ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY, AND RESOURCES) (Fall 2023).

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

What is the Land Back Movement?, BBC NEWS, WHAT IN THE WORLD PODCAST (June 30, 2025), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct73p2>.

Ute Mountain Ute Tribe joins lawsuit against Colorado over sports betting, COLORADO PUBLIC RADIO NEWS (Sept. 27, 2024), <https://www.cpr.org/2024/09/27/colorado-sports-betting-lawsuit-ute-mountain-ute-tribe/>.

SCOTUS Ruling on ICWA a victory for welfare of Native American children, SOURCE NM (June 15, 2023), <https://sourcenm.com/2023/06/15/scotus-ruling-on-icwa-a-victory-for-welfare-of-native-american-children/>.

PRESENTATIONS

Land Back and the Environmental Justice Movement in Indian Country, Guest lecture, Advanced Federal Indian Law: Contemporary Issues course (Prof. Stephen Pevar), Yale Law School (August 27, 2025).

Reparations from Below, panelist, University of Oxford Department of International Development, Oxford, England (June 16, 2025).

Chaco Roads: Connecting Cultural Resources Protection with Environmental Justice, presented at

Rocky Mountain Junior Environmental Law Scholars Summer Workshop, Zoom (July 7, 2025).

Conference of Asian Pacific American Law Faculty and Western Law Teachers of Color Joint Conference, William S. Richardson School of Law, Honolulu, Hawai'i (June 26, 2025).

Gathering of Indigenous Legal Scholars, UCLA School of Law, Los Angeles, CA (August 8, 2024).

Natural Resources and Energy Law Works-in-Progress session, Association of American Law Schools 2024 Annual Meeting (January 5, 2024).

The Constitutional Status of Tribal Nations, Guest lecture,

Constitutional Law course (Prof. Deep Gulasekaram and Prof. Doug Spencer), University of Colorado Law School (April 3, 2025).

Constitutional Law course (Prof. George Bach and Prof. Vinay Harpalani), University of New Mexico School of Law (February 2023).

Becerra v. San Carlos Apache Tribe, panelist, Byron White Center for the Study of American Constitutional Law, University of Colorado Law School, 2024 Supreme Court Review, Boulder, Colorado (September 18, 2024).

Teaching at the Intersection of Federal Indian Law and Environmental Law Courses, panelist, Vermont Law & Graduate School Environmental Law Center, Emerging Environmental Law Curriculum Conference, South Royalton, VT (June 21, 2024).

The Trust Relationship, panelist, Cornell Law School, Indigenous Law Summit, Ithaca, NY (April 13, 2024).

A Year After Dobbs: Women's Health in Indian Country, Federal Bar Association, CLE Event, 49th Annual Indian Law Conference, Albuquerque, NM (April 5, 2024).

Reflections on the History and Future of Tribal Self-Governance, American Indian Law Review's 50th Anniversary Symposium, University of Oklahoma College of Law, Norman, Oklahoma (March 8, 2024).

Healthcare in Indian Country, Guest lecture, Health Law course (Prof. Thomas Williams), American University Washington College of Law (February 2024).

Tribal Health Self-Determination: The Role of Tribal Health Systems in Actualizing the Highest Attainable Standard of Health for American Indians and Alaska Natives, presented at

New Voices in International Human Rights panel, Association of American Law Schools 2024 Annual Meeting (January 3, 2024).

Gathering of Indigenous Legal Scholars, Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law (September 14, 2023).
Faculty Colloquium, UNM School of Law, CLE event (September 6, 2023).

Indian Law 101, State Bar of New Mexico, CLE Event, 2023 Annual Meeting, Santa Ana Pueblo, NM (July 27, 2023).

Human Rights in the Supreme Court: Haaland v. Brackeen, panelist, University of Iowa Center for Human Rights, Zoom event (July 12, 2023).

Constitutional and Administrative Legal Matters in Indian Country, co-panelist, Hot Topics in Indian Law Symposium, University of Idaho College of Law, Zoom event (February 17, 2023).

Ethical Lawyering when Confronted with Legal Quandaries, UNM Law Recent Graduate Chapter, Ethics CLE, Zoom event (December 9, 2022).

Two Years Under the Haaland Administration: Tribal Co-Stewardship of Public Lands and Waters, panelist, California Indian Law Association, 2022 California Indian Law Conference, Cabazon, CA (October 3, 2022).

Advancing Water Equity in Indian Country, California Indian Law Association, CLE Event, 2022 Spring Indian Law Speaker Series, Zoom event (April 28, 2022).

The Contemporary Fight for Tribal Sovereignty, University of San Diego School of Law speaker series, Perspectives on Justice, Equity, and the Law, San Diego, CA (November 30, 2021).

A.B. 658 and its Ramifications for Tribes, Law Seminars International, Seventh Annual Advanced Conference on Tribal Water in California, Zoom event (October 19, 2020).

OTHER LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Native American Heritage Commission, Sacramento, CA

CalNAGPRA Attorney

April 2021-March 2022

Managed implementation of the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (CalNAGPRA). Drafted regulations for CalNAGPRA and provided legal research for issues impacting the Native American Heritage Commission.

Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Endreson & Perry, LLP, San Diego, CA

Associate Attorney

August 2019-November 2020

Summer Associate

May 2016-August 2016

Worked in all areas of the firm's practice. Conducted research and wrote memoranda on a wide array of legal issues, including property law, environmental law, gaming, tax law, employment law, child welfare, treaty interpretation, cultural resources protection, the fee-to-trust process, and water rights. Drafted and revised pleadings for litigation matters.

Colorado River Indian Tribes, Parker, AZ

Deputy Attorney General

May 2018-July 2019

Provided legal representation to the Colorado River Indian Tribes, its Tribal Council, Departments and enterprises. Drafted and reviewed contracts, leases, tribal policies, legislation and court pleadings. Represented the Tribes in Indian Child Welfare Act proceedings. Provided legal opinions on various matters, including environmental law, property law, criminal law, law enforcement, human resources, and business law.

Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Harare, Zimbabwe

Legal Intern, Human Rights Internship Program Fellow

June 2015-July 2015

Anishinabe Legal Services, Cass Lake, MN

Pro Bono Caravan Leader, Participant

March 2016 and March 2015

Native Vote and Four Directions, Pine Ridge, SD

Volunteer Non-partisan Election Monitor

November 2014 and November 2024

BAR ADMISSIONS

California (Bar No. 317737)
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
U.S. District Court, Central District of California

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Member, Association for American Law Schools (AALS)
Board Member, AALS Indian Nations and Indigenous Peoples Section
Member, American Bar Association
Member, Native American Bar Association
Member and Mentor, California Indian Law Association