

## OUNALSA REMEMBERS PROFESSORS STRICKLAND AND HAGER

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The University of Oklahoma College of Law takes great pride in its American Indian Law studies. Several professors have been pivotal in ensuring the success of our students and our Native American Law Student Association (OUNALSA). As the President of OUNALSA, I have had the privilege to work closely with our current experts such as Professor Taiawagi Helton, Professor Lindsay Robertson, Dean Kathleen Guzman, and Oklahoma Indian Legal Services (OILS) Director Stephanie Hudson, to name a few amongst the many who share a strong passion for Federal Indian Law. I am now in my third and final year at the University of Oklahoma and would like to reflect on two faculty members who have contributed greatly to Federal Indian Law and our OUNALSA chapter. Like many across the nation, I was filled with a great sadness after learning of Dr. Rennard Strickland passing in January of 2021, and the Honorable Judge Steven Hager passing in February of 2021.<sup>1</sup> After much reflection, I felt it was appropriate to highlight some of their major impacts that have allowed our organization to consistently grow and develop as Indian Law specialists.

Both Dr. Strickland and Judge Hager were well-respected legal scholars. Dr. Strickland had served as a faculty member at several law schools, written numerous books and essays, and served as the revision editor for *Felix Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law*.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Strickland also has made numerous donations from his own personal collection to The University of Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup> Judge Hager was regarded as one of the nation's leading experts on the Indian Child Welfare Act and had authored twenty-four editions of *The Indian Child Welfare Act: Case, Regulation and Analysis*.<sup>4</sup> He also was an adjunct professor for The University of

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\* 2021-2022 OUNALSA President.

1. Mary Wood, *In Memoriam: Native American Law Pioneer Rennard Strickland '65 S.J.D. '71*, *News & Media*, UNIV. OF VA. SCH. OF L. (Jan. 12, 2021), <https://www.law.virginia.edu/news/202101/memoriam-native-american-law-pioneer-rennard-strickland-65-sjd-71>; Obituary, *Clay Steven Hager*, ENID NEWS & EAGLE (Feb. 11, 2021), <https://obituaries.enidnews.com/obituary/clay-hager-1081605746>.

2. Wood, *supra* note 1.

3. *Id.*

4. Obituary, *Clay Steven Hager*, *supra* note 1.

Oklahoma College of Law's L.L.M and Masters of Law programs.<sup>5</sup> Both of their works have been heavily relied upon by attorney and law student alike and will continue to see use for many more years to come.

On a more local level, both men have directly impacted our regional Federal Indian Law focus and allowed our OUNALSA students to succeed. Dr. Strickland was largely responsible for the creation of the American Indian Law program at The University of Oklahoma College of Law. This program has seen several successes over the years. First, our current Federal Indian Law Faculty are incredible and well-respected amongst the students. Professors Lindsay Robertson, Taiawagi Helton, and Alex Pearl all offer specifically tailored classes that focus on unique areas within Indian Country. Classes such as the introductory Federal Indian Law cover the history and broad evolution of Indian law; other more specialized courses such as Native American Natural Resources and Water Law allow our students to enter the work force and assist Native Communities across the nation solve complex issues with a firm understanding of the law and its application.

Second, outside of offered courses our Indian Law program has developed several extracurriculars that we at OUNALSA take great pride in. Several of our members over the years have served as Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, and members of the *American Indian Law Review* journal, including incoming and outgoing Editors-in-Chief, Ashley Murphy and Samantha Tamura. We have had great success in National NALSA Moot Court competitions, and we have our American Indian Law Certificate that more OUNALSA members are obtaining as each class graduates.

Judge Hager helped ensure that numerous law students from across the country were able to gain practical experience working with federal agencies, tribal courts, and individual Native American clients through his position with OILS. OILS has allowed many students to serve as interns in a program that provides critical opportunities for law students to engage with clients, observe court procedures, and continue to develop professional legal writing and oral advocacy skills. Judge Hager stated, "If you're going to practice west of the Mississippi it's absolutely necessary to understand at the very basics some level of Indian Law," and he along with OILS,

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5. *Id.*

ensured that law students were not simply in a cubicle writing documents for the length of their internships.<sup>6</sup>

These two men have done great things for the field of Federal Indian Law, but more so they have created great opportunities for the OUNALSA members at The University of Oklahoma College of Law. Without their personal dedication to the field and ensuring those who wish to learn have the opportunity, I firmly believe our OUNALSA chapter would not be where it is today. It is with great sadness I and many others come to terms with the loss of these two great Federal Indian scholars, but we can rest assured knowing that their impact on the field and the opportunities they created for our OUNALSA students continue to allow them both to live on with us all.

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6. *Oklahoma Legal Oral History: C. Steven Hager*, OKLA. CITY UNIV. SCH. OF L. (Mar. 5, 2009), <https://libguides.okcu.edu/oklegaloralhistory/hager>.