



ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS

Protecting Sovereignty • Preserving Culture

Educating Youth • Building Capacity

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Press Contact:
general.aaia@indian-affairs.org

THE ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS ANNOUNCES BENJAMIN M. CORNELIUS AS ITS NEWEST CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY FELLOW

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 9, 2019, 3:00 p.m. E.S.T. The Association on American Indian Affairs, the oldest non-profit serving Indian Country, has selected Benjamin M. Cornelius as a Cultural Sovereignty Fellow for its second fellowship class. The Cultural Sovereignty Fellowship is an intensive opportunity for new graduates to gain professional experience in Washington, D.C. advocating for Indian Country at a national and grassroots level.

Ben is a citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin and was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his law degree from the University of Michigan Law School in May of 2019 where he was treasurer of the Native American Law Students Association and performed *pro bono* work for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice. In 2018, Ben clerked for the Honorable Chief Judge Allie Greenleaf Maldonado of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa where he drafted the Tribe's Restatement of Tribal Law, among other accomplishments. In the summer of 2017, he interned with Michigan Indian Legal Services providing family law and criminal defense services to Native American clients.

Ben became familiar with the Association as a scholarship recipient. During his three years in law school, Ben received an annual \$1,500 Association scholarship that helped cover his living expenses so he could focus on his legal studies. "I am very thankful and excited to continue my efforts with the Association on American Indian Affairs as a Fellow, and I look forward to working to provide legal research and analysis that will support the Association's vision, mission and goals. I am most excited about working on Indian child welfare matters," Ben stated.

Shannon Keller O'Loughlin, Executive Director and Attorney for the Association said that "Ben has incredible experiences during his educational career and work with Tribal government and federal agencies. Ben will be putting that good work to use to support potential legislative changes needed to protect cultural heritage, and developing programs that will build stronger state compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act." Along with his law degree, Ben received his Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from George Fox University in Newberg Oregon and has significant work experience with the Indian Health Service and his Tribe's business ventures.

The Association on American Indian Affairs is a 501(c)(3) organization and the oldest non-profit serving Indian Country protecting sovereignty, preserving culture, educating youth and building capacity. The Association was formed in 1922 to change the destructive path of federal policy from assimilation, termination and allotment, towards sovereignty, self-determination and self-sufficiency.

Throughout its 97-year history, the Association has provided national advocacy on watershed issues that support sovereignty and culture, while working at a grassroots level with Tribes to support the implementation of programs that affect real lives on the ground.