



## PAID LEGAL FELLOWSHIP – BISHOP OFFICE

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

California Indian Legal Services (CILS) is a statewide, Native American controlled, federal non-profit corporation that provides legal services to Indian tribes, Indian organizations and low income individual Indians on issues involving questions of federal Indian law. CILS provides a variety of legal services including brief counsel and advice and extended representation on core legal issues affecting Native Americans and Indian tribes. CILS is involved in litigation, policy analysis and advocacy and also provides transactional services to tribes involving economic development and tribal infrastructure. The Bishop office of CILS is also home to the Eastern Sierra Legal Assistance Program and the Inyo-Mono Senior Legal Program. CILS has four offices throughout California. Additional information about CILS may be found on our website, at [www.calindian.org](http://www.calindian.org).

### POSITION DESCRIPTION & PROJECT BACKGROUND:

With support from California ChangeLawyers, CILS is hiring a fulltime summer fellow (current law student), post-bar (fall) fellow, or recent law school graduate, for a 2023 summer or fall fellowship. Supervised by the Bishop field office Directing Attorney and at the direction of the Legal Director, who supervises all CILS advocate work, the fellow will work collaboratively with other staff to provide exceptional legal services in multiple areas of federal Indian law.

The fellow will have the opportunity to assume a varied case load that may include: brief counsel and services to low income Indian individuals; state and federal court litigation; contract negotiation; advising tribal clients; developing and implementing constitutions, codes, and policies for tribal clients; making presentations; and ICWA related dependency cases.

While the fellow will be exposed to a variety of federal Indian laws, the fellow's focus will be primarily on Native American Indian Allotments.

From 1887 -1934, the federal government dismantled Indian reservations creating 20- to 160-acre parcels that were allotted to (placed in trust for) individual tribal members. The federal policy was to vastly reduce the communal land of tribes and assimilate Indians in to mainstream society by making them farmers and ranchers. For much of the past ~130 years these Indian allotments were probated under state law resulting in multiple (sometimes 100s and even 1000s of) fractionated interest holders, leaving the land unusable since consent of a majority of interest holders is needed before the land can be developed or an interest holder can live on the land. The result is that many Indian allotments are unusable in any meaningful way the Indians who have an interest in them.

### **DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The fellow will focus on a project to help Indians with interests in allotments to create organizations and implement decision making structures for economic development. The fellow will research and prepare a self-help guide for allottee interest holders to organize themselves and develop the allotment by forming an organization or family trust (entity) to make decisions on behalf of a majority of the interest holders.

While the above will be the fellow's primary focus and deliverable, CILS' Bishop office is a fast-paced legal aid office that handles a large variety of case types. The fellow will additionally get experience with areas of law unrelated to federal Indian law, including but not limited to: housing law and eviction defense, senior law, including simple wills, durable powers of attorney, advanced healthcare directives, and small estate probate avoidance, public benefits, and much more.

The fellow may also travel to periodic ChangeLawyers Foundation events including annual Equity Summit, occasional Foundation Board meetings, and the annual Foundation Gala.

### **SAMPLE OF SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF PRACTICE:**

Land and jurisdictional issues, entity formation, wills and probate, tribal governance and code development, public benefits, Indian Child Welfare Act, taxation issues, healthcare and senior/elder law issues.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

- \* Completion of at least one year of law school (upper level students, law school graduates / post-bar fellowship applicants especially encouraged to apply)
- \* Excellent communication, writing and legal research skills
- \* Organized
- \* Strong work ethic and able to work nights and weekends when many tribal councils meet
- \* Ability to travel overnight and a valid driver's license
- \* A commitment to providing high quality legal services for Indian people
- \* Ability to work independently, as part of a team, and to take initiative

The following qualifications are desirable but not absolutely required:

- Familiarity or experience working with Native Americans, tribes or tribal communities
- Prior legal services experience

### **COMPENSATION:**

\$10,000.00 Stipend, paid over 10 weeks; Full-Time, in-person in Bishop, CA.

Fellow will be responsible for finding housing in Bishop area (CILS's Bishop office can assist).

### **TO APPLY:**

Please submit letter of interest, resume, writing sample, and law school transcripts via e-mail: [fellowships@calindian.org](mailto:fellowships@calindian.org). Application will remain open until filled. Please check the Employment Section of CILS' website (<https://www.calindian.org/about-us/#employment>) to see if the "Changelawyers Fellowship – Summer / Fall 2023" is still posted for the Bishop Office. It will remain posted until filled.

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#### **ABOUT CALIFORNIA CHANGELAWYERS LEGAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

California ChangeLawyers was founded in 1989 by the State Bar of California as California Bar Foundation. In 2015, California Bar Foundation became an independent organization and in 2018, it changed names to California ChangeLawyers. Through the organization's history, its mission has never changed: build a better justice system for all Californians.

Launched in 2015, the ChangeLawyers Public Interest Legal Fellowship Program supports diverse rising 3Ls and recent law graduates who are committed to representing low-income and underserved populations in California. We fund leading California legal aid agencies who are committed to building diverse, inclusive staff environments to receive a summer or yearlong legal fellow.

Through this fellowship program, along with our diversity scholarships and grants, California ChangeLawyers is fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession and, by extension, the justice system. For more information about the California ChangeLawyers fellowship program, please contact Jasjit Singh at [jsingh@calbarfoundation.org](mailto:jsingh@calbarfoundation.org).

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