REPORT

DATE: October 14, 2016

TO: James Burson, Indian Law Section Chair

FROM: Christopher Cantrell, Indian Law Section Nominating Committee Chair

RE: 2016 Indian Law Section Nominating Committee Report

This Report is submitted by the 2016 Nominating Committee for the State Bar of New Mexico Indian Law Section. The Nominating Committee consists of Christopher Cantrell, Delilah Tenorio, Lawrence Ruzow, Onawa Lacy and Natasha Cuylear. The Nominating Committee selects the following candidates to run in the 2016 Fall election for Indian Law Section board of director positions:

1. Veronica Hill 1/1/2017 – 12/31/2019
2. Aaron Sims 1/1/2017 – 12/31/2019
3. Justin Solimon 1/1/2017 – 12/31/2019

Below are statements from the above named candidates:

**Veronica Hill**

My name is Veronica Hill and I am San Carlos Apache, Jicarilla Apache and Laguna Pueblo. I was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. I graduated from Arizona State University in 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science. I participated and completed the Pre-Law Summer Institute for Native Americans (PLSI) in the Summer of 2012. I attended the University of New Mexico School of Law from 2012-2014. I was the 1L Representative for Native American Law Students Association (NALSA) from 2012-2013, and the NALSA President from 2013-2014. I was also a PLSI Teaching Assistant during the Summer of 2013. I completed a visiting semester at the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law in the Fall of 2014, where I was also a Student Worker with the Indian Legal Program. I received my Juris Doctorate from UNM-SOL in December 2014. I worked as an Assistant Public Defender for the San Carlos Apache Tribe from June 2015-April 2016. I am currently an Assistant District Attorney with the Second Judicial District, in Albuquerque. I am assigned to the Metro Court Division and work with the Urban Native American Healing to Wellness Court (Recovery Court). I am licensed to practice in the State of New Mexico and Provisionally Licensed with the San Carlos Apache Tribe.

I am interested in sitting as a Member of the Board for the State of New Mexico Indian Law Section because I believe it is important to participate in and give back to the legal community. I believe that my prior experience as both a NALSA member and President
provide me with experience and skills to be a positive contributing member of the board. During my tenure on the NALSA Board, I helped organize fundraisers, such as a golf tournament held during the Federal Indian Bar Conference, and smaller events such as food sales and silent auctions. I also helped organize outreach events, such as Law School Information Days at UNM’s Main Campus, basketball games with the Native American Community Academy (NACA), and events with other law school student organizations. I believe it is important for any Native American organization to continually participate in the community, and to help raise awareness and educate the larger population regarding Native American issues. If I am selected as a Board Member, I hope I can contribute positively to the legal community and help raise awareness regarding Native American issues.

Aaron Sims

I am an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Acoma and an associate attorney at the Chestnut Law Offices, P.A. in Albuquerque, NM. I joined the Chestnut Law Offices after graduating from the University of New Mexico - School of Law with an Indian Law Certificate in May 2014. While at UNM I was an active member and officer of the Native American Law Student Association and participated in both the Tribal Law Journal and the Southwest Indian Law Clinic. Prior to attending law school, I graduated from Dartmouth College in 2009 with a B.A. in Government and Native American Studies.

My work at the Chestnut Law Offices is centered primarily on general legal counsel representation for various Pueblo tribal governments, businesses, and organizations. I am particularly interested and have worked extensively on Pueblo cultural resource protection issues.

In 2014 I was a fortunate recipient of one of the Indian Law Section Bar Prep Scholarships. I am hoping to become more active in Indian Law Section activities, and hope that I can contribute back to the Section and assist with the furtherance of the Section's purpose and mission.

Justin Solimon

Thank you for allowing me to express my interest in a position on the Indian Law Section Board. Though I have never served on the Indian Law Section Board, I welcome the opportunity to be considered. I am particularly troubled by the extremely low bar passage rates for American Indians. Having served as a high school teacher, adjunct law professor, and having mentored many students and young attorneys during my legal career, I feel that my participation in the Board would allow me to better understand the issues underlying this problem and to assist the Section’s recent call to action.

Currently, I am a partner with Johnson Barnhouse & Keegan LLP in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque. My practice focuses largely on taxation, gaming, employment,
governance, liability defense, and the protection and development of tribal sovereignty. I have tried cases in magistrate, state, and federal courts, and served as appellate counsel in both state and federal courts of appeal. I hold an undergraduate degree in Diplomacy and World Affairs from Occidental College and obtained JD from the University of New Mexico School of Law.

Prior to attending law school, I taught at the Santa Fe Indian School in the community based education model program. As a lawyer, I have maintained my connection to Indian education by serving on the governance council for the Native American Community Academy, a public charter school dedicated to serving the educational needs of Native American students.