



INDIAN LAW RESOURCE CENTER
CENTRO DE RECURSOS JURÍDICOS PARA LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS

602 North Ewing Street • Helena, Montana 59601
Tel. (406) 449-2006 • Fax (406) 449-2031

601 E Street, S.E. • Washington, D.C. 20003
Tel. (202) 547-2800 • Fax (202) 547-2803

Position Description Executive Director July 8, 2024

Overview

The Indian Law Resource Center is an American Indian nonprofit organization providing legal help without charge to indigenous peoples in the United States and throughout the Americas. For over 45 years, the Center has championed the cause of American Indian and indigenous peoples, demanding justice, equality, and respect for indigenous peoples' human rights. Together with Indian and Alaska Native nations, we have not only defined but also created new human rights at the international level. We have many times confronted forces that threatened to undermine Indian sovereignty and emerged victorious in national and international legal and policy arenas. The Center's work has raised awareness of systemic inequities and has transformed attitudes rooted in ignorance and racism.

The Center is headquartered in Helena, Montana, with a Washington, D.C. office and eight programs currently operating in the United States and five countries in Central and South America. The Center has a staff of ten and an annual operating budget of approximately \$3.4M. More information on the Center can be found at: <https://indianlaw.org>

Key Circumstances

Founder Robert Coulter and the Center staff have created a rigorous, patient, legal strategy, that is used effectively in many national and international legal tribunals that adjudicate these rights. The Center also serves indigenous peoples and tribal governments as an advocate and advisor in their relations with national and local governments and other jurisdictions.

Our core values are to preserve indigenous peoples, tribes, and communities and their control and ownership of their lands, their cultures and their resources; to carry out our work under the direction of the indigenous governments and peoples we serve; and to protect the Earth and the environment as a necessary element of our advocacy. The results have been lasting and permanent outcomes.

Our work is recognized and supported by major philanthropies and funders. In addition to its numerous programs in North America, the Center has won an eight-year, \$20M grant to advocate for the land rights of indigenous communities in Mexico and Central and South America. There is also a growing, active interest from other funders, who recognize the Center's unique skills and impact. There is every potential to build on this strategy across the Americas.

As is the case in many founder-led organizations, Mr. Coulter's open-ended commitment and work ethic and a hands-on approach to virtually every aspect of leadership and management is not something that is readily transferred to the next Executive Director. Mr. Coulter and the board recognize the importance of a transition that unites us, that retains the strategy and values that have made us so effective, that expands our work and empowers our new leader.

We are searching for a leader with a bold and innovative spirit, because that is who we are.

We see the next Executive Director as focused on overall strategy, executive oversight, public advocacy, fund raising and communications. If this person is a legal advocate, a balance of executive and advocacy activities will be necessary. How to best organize and delegate key responsibilities and support growth is something we will explore with our top candidates. We aim to forge a vision shared by the Board and the Executive Director and informed by the learning and the frank dialogue that is the foundation of this process.

The Board has endorsed several proposals to position the new Executive Director and organization for growth and greater impact:

- The Board is led by several indigenous leaders with substantive leadership and advocacy experience, strategic acumen, and moral authority. They have appropriately granted considerable autonomy to Mr. Coulter, as the founder, which he has responsibly used.

The Board is ready to shift from a founder-led organization to an organization with a strategic and policy making board and an empowered executive director. Early in their tenure, the Executive Director will have the opportunity to review and update our strategic plan, our governance, and our operations - to establish a foundation for our work going forward.

- We welcome a review of our remote and hybrid work practices. We are open to our Executive Director working remotely, though regular presence in our Helena headquarters and D.C. office will be necessary at least until an effective, organization-wide policy and strategy has been implemented.

- Our organizational culture and unity are vitally important to our work. We need to retain the wisdom and expertise that has shaped this organization and pass it forward to staff and supporters from newer generations. We are committed to a culture of mutual respect and equity, with resources to support professional growth, upon which we can build an even stronger organization.

Qualifications and Responsibilities

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall leadership, strategic direction, and growth of the organization. This role requires a dynamic and visionary leader with exceptional interpersonal and organizational skills, a deep commitment to indigenous peoples' rights, and the ability to inspire and mobilize staff, collaborators, funders, and those we serve. We seek an Executive Director with these core skills and values and are open to organizing our team to best complement this person's leadership style.

For example, an Executive Director focused on legal and public activism may opt to elevate operations and fund-raising professionals to play a larger role in their respective areas of expertise. Conversely, an Executive Director with strong general management, executive leadership and fund-raising skills may want to encourage staff focused on legal work and public activism to play a more public role. These are ideas we are open to exploring in this process.

Responsibilities

- **Leadership:** Serves as a respected leader in advancing indigenous peoples' rights and cultures. Supports a culture of collaboration and mutual respect for the highly diverse, multi-cultural staff and clientele.
- **Advocacy:** Works to shape policies and programs that have the most significant impact on indigenous peoples' rights, security, and well-being.
- **Fundraising:** In collaboration with the development staff, leads the efforts to raise funds from both foundation partners, tribes, and individual donors.
- **Strategy and Board Relations:** Leads strategic planning with the Board, implements its strategy and policies, and is wholly responsible to the Board. Works to engage and build strong relationships with the Board, and to keep members fully informed regarding the status and activities of the organization.
- **Communication:** Serves as the primary spokesperson for the Center and effectively articulates the vision, mission, and outcomes of our work to diverse local, national and international audiences.
- **Collaboration:** Recognizes the importance of collaborating with other organizations and funders who share our vision and values and can help advance our mission.

- **Community Relations:** Interfaces and establishes strong relationships with constituencies at the national and international level including policymakers, funders, donors, and the public.
- **Operations:** Oversees administration of operations. Oversees implementation of programs that carry out the organization's mission. Responsible for the hiring, management and retention of competent, qualified staff.

Qualifications

- A master's or law degree is preferred. Experience equivalency will be considered.
- A passion for advancing indigenous peoples' rights and cultures.
- Experience, background, and understanding of Indian or Alaska Native cultures, governments, communities, and issues in the United States or Mexico or Central or South America.
- Experience, background, and knowledge of indigenous peoples' rights, indigenous women's rights, human rights, environmental protection, environmental justice, climate justice, and social justice. Knowledge and demonstrated skills in working effectively and receptively with indigenous communities.
- The ability to attract and inspire others in support of indigenous rights. Can envision and convey a vision for the organization's strategic future to the staff, board, volunteers, and donors.
- The ability to speak publicly and articulate to many different audiences the realities, needs, and key issues that confront Indian nations, tribes and other indigenous peoples.
- High-level fundraising experience or aptitude.
- 5-7 years of management experience in the nonprofit sector.
- Ability to build and lead a strong collaborative team and a strong organizational culture in an international environment.
- A history of forming partnerships/coalitions with external organizations to achieve strategic objectives.
- A humble and approachable demeanor with the ability to be assertive when needed.
- Willingness to travel.
- Ability to communicate in both English and Spanish is very desirable.
- Flexibility, being able to adapt to working with people of different cultures. Be inclusive of diverse people, cultures, perspectives, and viewpoints.
- Strong work ethic with a high degree of energy.

Compensation

Our salary range is \$140,000 to \$170,000 and is negotiable, commensurate with experience and location. The organization offers a strong benefits

package that includes generous health coverage and a retirement plan.

Application Process

This search is being conducted by Ford Webb Associates. Applications will be kept in strict confidence. To apply please submit your cover letter and resume electronically to Center@fordwebb.com