

[Indigenous Legal Borderlands in North America](#)

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Chair: Patricia Limerick, Center of the American West

Commentators: Eric Meeks, Northern Arizona University; Michel Hogue, Carleton University

The Courtroom as Site of Colonial Contact: Encounters between Western and Indigenous Legal Tradition in Alaska's Territorial Courts

Andrea Geiger, Simon Fraser University

Bloodlines and Boundary Lines: Blackfoot Bands and Families along the U.S.-Canada Border, 1870-1915

Jeffrey Shepherd, University of Texas at El Paso

Coal and Capitalism: Law in Indian Territory

Brian Frehner, University of Missouri-Kansas City

The imposition of legal structures was central to the consolidation of U.S. government authority over Indigenous peoples, their lands and resources in the American West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This modified paper session examines the various kinds of legal borderlands that this produced and that Indigenous peoples in the North American West were forced to negotiate on a variety of scales. Organized around the three papers described below with two discussants, Erik Meeks and Michel Hogue, the session will function more like a roundtable, with all five participants taking just ten minutes to address the themes raised in the papers before opening the discussion to the audience. Jeff Shepherd's paper reflects on ways in which members of the Blackfoot Confederacy negotiated both the U.S.-Canada border and reservation boundaries, as well newly imposed racialized identities. Brian Frehner considers ways in which Choctaw people responded to the imposition of exploitative legal structures intended to facilitate the taking of natural resources from their reservation, in some cases turning them to their own purposes and empowering themselves. Andrea Geiger examines the courtroom itself as a legal borderland and site of both cultural contact and colonial encounter, drawing on a series of linked cases in which five indigenous men were charged with murder in Alaska in 1902 after a traditional legal sanction imposed on another member of their community went awry.

Recorded in April 2018 at the OAH Annual Meeting held in Sacramento, California as part of the Mellon-funded Amplified Initiative.

Full Session

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Eric Meeks

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Michel Hogue

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Andrea Geiger

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Brian Frehner

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