

LAW 398 – The Anishinaabe Law Field School

Course Description

Historically, Indigenous peoples own legal traditions were not taught in law school classrooms – they were taught in community settings, and on the Land. Therefore, to learn certain elements of Indigenous peoples’ own laws, we must thoughtfully go to unfamiliar places to learn from voices rarely heard within the legal academy. In this Field School course, students will first participate in an Anishinaabe Law Camp at the Chippewas of Rama First Nation from Thursday September 11 to Sunday September 14. The rest of the semester students will work together as a team on an Anishinaabe law project identified by the First Nation, namely, to create an online database of Anishinaabe legal resources for use by decision-makers in a First Nation led tribunal, a first of its kind for any Indigenous legal order in Canada. To conduct this work, we will collaborate with community leaders at Chippewas of Rama, other Anishinaabe law knowledge-keepers, and legal database design experts. This course is generously funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario for the purpose of supporting First Nations in their legal revitalization work, and training emergent professionals in how to engage in an Indigenous law-informed legal practice.

The training in this course through the Law Camp and the seminar classes is designed to help students reflect on the nature of law, including Anishinaabe law. Anishinaabe law is embedded in a community’s lifeways. It flows from many sources, such as deliberation, environmental experience, community customs, origin stories, and contemporary written declarations. Anishinaabe law’s function is to provide standards, principles, processes, criteria, measures, indicia, benchmarks, guides, traditions, and precedents for living together in healthy ways (*mino-bimaadiziwin*). Legal resources are found in stories, mnemonic devices like wampum belts, language, art, games, recreational activities, ceremonies like sweat lodges, relationships to land (as a source of human sustainability), dodem/clan teachings, songs and drums, deliberation, custom and contemporary innovation. This course will expose students to these and other resources for regulating affairs and resolving disputes in an Anishinaabe context. An introduction to Anishinaabe law will also help students better understand law’s nature in Canada to promote a braided approach to future legal practice, with Indigenous law as one important strand.

Course timeline

- Week of September 2: 3-hour seminar class
- September 11-14: Law Camp at Chippewas of Rama First Nation (leave from campus Thursday morning, return to campus on Sunday by early evening)
- Week of September 22: 3-hour seminar class
- Week of September 29: 3-hour seminar class
- Week of October 6: 3-hour seminar class
- *Week of October 13: Reading Week*, no class
- Week of October 20: 3-hour seminar class
- Week of October 27: 3-hour seminar class
- November: Teams continue to work on their projects.

- December 2: Last day of Fall Term classes, student projects due to instructor for review and grading.
- First two-weeks of December: Present our work as a group virtually to Chippewas of Rama leadership (90 minutes)

Student **evaluation** will consist of:

- A Reflective Paper (10 pages double-spaced) based on experiences at the Anishinaabe Law Camp. Due September 30. 20%
- Anishinaabe Narrative Case-Brief. Due October 31. 10%
- Chippewas of Rama Anishinaabe Legal Database Project. Due December 2. 70%

This three-credit course is for second- and third-year law students only. There are no pre-requisites beyond completion of first year law. Enrollment will be capped at 14 people.



Photos from the Anishinaabe Law Camp at Neyaashiinigmiing

The Anishinaabe Law Field School Student Application Package

Interested students should send the attached short application package via email to Haya Hassounah at lawfacultyassistant@queensu.ca for consideration no later than **5 p.m. on Tuesday July 29**. Decisions will be communicated to applicants shortly thereafter and successful applicants will be registered by the Faculty before enrolment opens for other course selection.

Please ensure you read the following before completing or submitting this application:

This course involves an on-the-land camp that will take place over four days in the Chippewas of Rama First Nation territory near Orillia, Ontario. You must be able to attend the following course dates:

Travel: Thursday September 11 (coach bus leaves from law school at 9am) and Sunday September 14, 2025 (coach bus arrives back at law school by 7pm).

Land-based Camp: September 11-14

This course is largely experiential, so participation and active involvement is necessary.
Of note:

- This course requires spending three nights/four days camping or staying in cabins 3.5 hours northwest of Kingston at the Chippewas of Rama First Nation [Black River Wilderness Park](#). Cabins or camping equipment will be provided to each student (tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats, tarps etc.). You are welcome to use your own camping gear, please let Prof. Borrows know if this is your preference. You will receive a list of other packing recommendations in advance of the course (clothing, water bottle, towel etc.).
- All meals and drinks (water) will be provided throughout the course.
- There are no extra fees for this course as financial support is generously provided by the Law Foundation of Ontario.
- Most Law Camp activities will be outdoors. Students should be prepared for mild physical exertion, some walking on uneven ground, as well as all sorts of weather (especially rain and cool nighttime temperatures).
- If you have mobility challenges, severe allergies or other needs and are unsure of your ability to participate in the camp setting as a result, you are encouraged to email Professor Borrows. I will strive to make necessary accommodations and may be able to adapt activities on a personalized level to ensure this experience is as inclusive as possible for all.
- To participate in this course, students must each sign an “Informed Consent and Risk Assumption” form as required by Queen’s University for off-campus learning. This form will be provided to students immediately upon acceptance into the course.
- Please note bus travel time is ~3.5 hours each way. The charter bus will take one short rest stop and will have a bathroom on board.

Priority will be given to students with a demonstrated interest and commitment to the revitalization of Indigenous legal orders, including Indigenous students.

Section A: Applicant Information

Please answer the following questions

Name:

Year of Study:

Email:

Telephone:

Please select if you are ☐ Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) ☐ non-Indigenous

Section B: Background and Statement of Intent

Please answer the following questions in up to **150** words each:

Although there are no pre-requisites and no prior experience in Indigenous communities or land-based learning to take this course, the following information will help with course planning:

- What life experiences do you have that you think would be valuable to this course?
Please explain (i.e., community involvement, career, education, volunteer etc.)

- What interests you most in this course? What do you hope to learn?