

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**JUDGE ABBY ABINANTI, FATIMA ABBAS, LAUREN VAN SCHILFGAARDE HONORED FOR
ACHIEVEMENTS IN INDIAN LAW**

DAVIS, CA - The California Indian Law Association (CILA) is proud to announce that the Honorable Abby Abinanti is the 2020 recipient of CILA's Outstanding Achievement in California Indian Law Award and Fatima Abbas and Lauren van Schilfgaarde are the co-recipients of the 2020 Outstanding Young Attorney awards.

CILA's Outstanding Achievement in California Indian Law Award honors one legal professional annually who has made significant contributions to California Indian law. Previous recipients of this award include Dorothy Alther, Executive Director of California Indian Legal Services and Carole Goldberg, Distinguished Research Professor and Jonathan D. Varat Distinguished Professor of Law Emerita at UCLA School of Law. CILA's Outstanding Young Attorney Award recognizes attorneys in practice for ten years or less who exemplify high achievement, innovation, leadership, and service.

For Outstanding Achievement, no one is more deserving than Hon. Judge Abby Abinanti who was the first California Native woman to be barred in the State. "Judge Abby is a pillar in the California Indian Law Community and CILA is honored to celebrate her. Beyond her service as Chief Judge of the Yurok Tribal Court and scholar, Judge Abby has positively and personally impacted countless California Indian attorneys, including myself, by her mentorship, innovation, friendship, and leadership," said Loretta Miranda, President of the CILA Board of Directors. CILA's Outstanding Achievement Award celebrates Judge Abinanti, a true legal warrior.

2020 has been a unique and challenging year, which is why CILA broke from its usual selection of one young attorney awardee and deemed it appropriate in its selection of two awardees this year. "CILA chose both Fatima and Lauren as the 2020 Outstanding Young Attorney Award honorees because of their unique contributions to the California Indian Law community. Fatima's tireless advocacy for Indian Country at the state and national levels, especially during the Coronavirus pandemic, has shown that she is a rising legal warrior and we are honored to recognize her work. Lauren's passion for empowering tribal communities through training and education have touched numerous tribal communities; her leadership in the California Indian Law community especially deserves our recognition and praise," said Cheyenne Sanders, Vice President of the CILA Board of Directors.

Judge Abinanti, Fatima, and Lauren will be celebrated during a virtual honoring event on **Friday, October 16, 2020 at 11:45 AM**, during the 20th Annual California Indian Law Conference, October 15-16, 2020. Conference registration is required to attend the virtual honoring and full conference scholarships are available. All are welcome. More information is available at calindianlaw.org.

Judge Abby Abinanti

Abby Abinanti (Yurok Tribe) Chief Judge of the Yurok Tribe on the North Coast of California, is the first Native American woman to pass the California bar exam. Known simply as “Judge Abby” by her colleagues, she is a graduate of Humboldt State College and the University of New Mexico School of Law. Judge Abby was admitted to the California State Bar in 1974; she was the first California Native admitted to the California State Bar. Judge Abby is one of a very limited number of attorneys who have been practicing tribal child welfare law prior to the 1978 enactment of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Judge Abby also established the first Tribal-run clean slate program in the country to help members expunge criminal records, which focuses on keeping young people out of jail, in school, and with their people.

Judge Abby has served as a California Superior Court Commissioner for the City and County of San Francisco assigned to the Unified Family Court for 18 years and retired in September 2011. Judge Abby has also served as Chief Judge for the Yurok Tribal Court since her appointment in March 2007. Her additional tribal court experience has included serving as Chief Magistrate, Court of Indian Offenses, for the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation from 1983-1986 and Judge by special appointment for many other tribal courts including Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Court (1985), Hopi Tribal Court (1986), and Colorado River Indian Tribe (1994). Judge Abby has served as the President of the Board of Directors of the Tribal Law and Policy Institute since its establishment in 1996. Additionally, Judge Abby served as the Tribal Courts Evaluator for the Indian Justice Center and the American Indian Justice Center.

Judge Abby currently serves as a board member of the Friendship House Association of American Indians, of San Francisco Inc., and previously served as a board member for the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association and its Tribal Court CASA Advisory Council. Judge Abby is also the author of various training resources including two Instructor Guides for TLPI’s Tribal Legal Studies textbook series.

Fatima Abbas

Fatima Abbas (Haliwa Saponi) currently serves as Policy Director and Legislative Counsel for the National Congress of American Indians where she supervises the NCAI policy team and works on legislative issues across a range of subject areas. Previously, Fatima served as General Counsel for the Karuk Tribe where she served as the Tribe’s first in-house general counsel. She also supervised a tribal student clinic at UC Berkeley School of Law that conducted research on natural resources and cultural resource issues. Ms. Abbas has also served as Deputy Attorney General for the Colorado River Indian Tribes and as a Litigation Associate for Fox Rothschild LLP. Fatima is originally from Philadelphia and is a graduate of the Community College of Philadelphia, Temple University, and the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.

Lauren van Schilfgaarde

Lauren van Schilfgaarde (Cochiti Pueblo) is the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians Tribal Legal Development Clinic Director at UCLA School of Law. van Schilfgaarde supervises live-client projects concerning tribal governance and justice systems, ethics, cultural resource protection, voting, child welfare, and more. She received her undergraduate degree at Colorado College and her law degree from UCLA School of Law.

Lauren previously served as the Tribal Law Specialist at the Tribal Law and Policy Institute (TLPI) in West Hollywood, CA. At TLPI, she coordinated training and technical assistance to tribal courts, focusing primarily on Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts, restorative justice, tribal court infrastructure, and federal Indian law. At TLPI, van Schilfgaarde worked with over eighty tribal nations on various legal infrastructure projects. Lauren also served as a law clerk for the Native American Rights Fund and Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. She was a Public Interest Fellow at American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado.

Lauren currently serves as a board member for the National Native American Bar Association, as Vice-Chair for the Native American Concerns Committee of the American Bar Association, as a Commissioner for the Lawyers Network Commission of the Center for Reproductive Rights, and as a Board Member of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Child Well-being Program. Lauren previously served as a CILA Board Member.

About CILA: The California Indian Law Association, Inc. (“CILA”) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization dedicated to serving as a strong representative of the Indian law profession in tribal communities across California. **The 20th Annual California Indian Law Conference will be hosted virtually October 15-16, 2020.** For the full agenda and details, visit the CILA website: www.calindianlaw.org

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