## 2010 Frank Harrison and Harry Austin Citizenship Award Recipient



## Patty Ferguson-Bohnee

Patty Ferguson-Bohnee was nominated by Ms. Kate Rosier, Director of the Indian Legal Program at the Arizona State University (ASU) Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. Patty's commitment to eliminate disparities in the voting system has resulted in significant achievements that make her deserving of this award. Patty drafted and submitted an amicus brief to the US Supreme Court regarding tribal voting issues. In March 2009, she also testified before the House Subcommittee on Elections, Committee on House Administration during a hearing titled, "The 2008 Election: A Look Back on What Went Right and Wrong".

Most notably, Patty worked with the National Congress of American Indians, Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Arizona Indian Gaming Association, and the Native American Bar Association of Arizona on a "Native Vote Election Protection" initiative on Election Day in 2008. Patty organized American Indian lawyers and law students to serve as poll observers at key voting precincts on or near tribal lands, and established an election protection toll-free number to provide voting assistance. This initiative ensured that American Indian voters were able to vote under the provisions of Proposition 200, which requires electors to provide proof of citizenship when registering to vote, and proof of identity when voting at the polls. The Native Vote Election Protection initiative was able to intervene in many instances where American Indians were turned away from the polls and to clarify issues with regard to the new voting procedures.

The Native Vote Election Protection initiative revealed that American Indian voters were denied any type of ballot for not having proper ID. This is contrary to the American Indian provision under Proposition 200 which states that if an elector identifies himself as American Indian and presents one form of tribal ID, the elector may vote with a provisional ballot and does not need to return to the County Recorder's Office with ID. Additional issues were addressed due to inadequately trained poll workers.

The Native Vote Election Protection initiative was successfully implemented and would not have occurred without the leadership of Patty to mobilize lawyers and law students, organize activities with key stakeholders, and apply her knowledge and skills in voting law which resulted in American Indians exercising their right to vote.

Patty Ferguson-Bohnee received an A.B. Degree with Honors in Native American Studies with an Emphasis in Policy and Law at Stanford University in 1997, and her Juris Doctorate at the Columbia University School of Law in 2001. She has served as the Director of the Indian Legal Clinic at the ASU Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law since June 2008.