

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Aaron Payment, 906-635-6050

Sault Tribe hires new law firm

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians has contracted with the law firm Patterson Earnhart Real Bird & Wilson LLP as the tribe's general counsel. The law firm is a majority Native-owned firm that provides a broad range of legal services to Indian tribes, tribal entities and individual Indians across the United States.

As the tribe's general counsel, Patterson Earnhart Real Bird & Wilson LLP will work under the Sault Tribe Board of Directors to provide legal services to the board and executive director; appearing as needed in court on the tribe's behalf; conducting research and drafting legal opinions; creating and implementing tribal policies, procedures and agreements; attending the tribe's board meetings or other public meetings; and monitoring federal, state, and tribal legislation that may affect the tribe and its operations.

Tribal Chairperson Aaron Payment said, "The tribal board conducted an exhaustive search including an RFP, which invited any number of possible arrangements including an individual as general legal counsel or a law firm to perform these functions."

Payment added, "The decision in selecting a firm was made by our tribal board. I strongly support this decision. The tribal board, including the chair, serves as representative with the tribal citizens as client. What impressed me most was the firm's understanding and intent to provide unbiased legal advice with fidelity to the tribal Constitution and body of codified Sault Tribe laws. This level of professional legal integrity is refreshing."

Patterson Earnhart Real Bird & Wilson LLP is established in Louisville, Colo., and Washington, D.C. The firm recently reorganized following a round of retirements. Senior partners Jeremy Patterson, Alvina Earnhart, Thomasina Real Bird and Rollie Wilson are highly experienced, dedicated professionals who also are aggressive and effective advocates for Indian Country. They have extensive experience serving as general counsel for Indian tribes, working on tribal energy and economic development projects that generated more than \$1 billion in value for tribes and successfully defending clients against legal and political attacks by state and county governments.

"We've had opportunities to support and work on a number of groundbreaking tribal initiatives to protect and advance treaty rights," Patterson said. "We've worked with tribal clients to establish, protect and assert the unique interests of tribes and indigenous nations throughout the United States and beyond, including tribal water rights."

As a majority Native-owned law firm with ties to the Mnicoujou/Itazipco Lakota, Sicangu Lakota Ihanktonwan Nakota, and Navajo nations, Patterson Earnhart Real Bird & Wilson LLP attorneys hold a deep respect for the traditional values of Indian tribes. Patterson said this is essential in all areas of Indian law.

“We listen closely to our clients’ concerns so we can fully understand and represent each client effectively,” Patterson said. “We know that each tribal community and entity has a unique history and needs. We build meaningful relationships so we can develop responsive, appropriate and culturally relevant solutions.”

The law firm’s goal is to bring all legal work being performed on behalf of Sault Tribe into one cohesive, strategic legal plan where all parties involved are moving in one direction to better serve the board of director's objectives in fulfilling the needs and protecting the interest of tribal members.

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