

Where Do I Go?

Location of Court Room: Meskwaki Justice Center, Meskwaki Indian Settlement
307 Meskwaki Road (next to the Tribal Center)
Phone: (641) 484-9300 Fax: (641) 484-2221

Mailing Address for Tribal Court: Clerk of Court
307 Meskwaki Rd., Tama, IA 52339

Meskwaki Tribal Court



Please use the area below to keep track of vital information

Case Number: _____

Filing date: _____ I am the Petitioner / Respondent

Other Party, Attorney(s), and/or GAL associated with Case:

Name	Mailing Address
_____	_____
	Phone _____

Name	Mailing Address
_____	_____
	Phone _____

Name	Mailing Address
_____	_____
	Phone _____

Important Deadlines & Hearings	Time	Day of Week
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Other people important to me or my case:

Name	Phone #
_____	_____
_____	_____

***“Should I
Represent Myself?”***



***Important Things to Consider
Before Proceeding
As a “Pro Se Litigant”***



Self-Representation in Court

*Most people come to court because something is affecting their lives, maybe in stressful and emotional ways. Learning the law and court processes can also be difficult and stressful. Sometimes when people act as their own lawyer, they later need to hire a lawyer to "fix" mistakes. Hiring a lawyer after-the-fact could cost more than using a lawyer from the start. The following are some **questions you should consider before you begin your case without using a lawyer.***

Are you on time for meetings and deadlines? The court expects you to be on-time (a little early is better) for hearings and paperwork. Use a daily calendar with reminders of your court "to do's." Calling the Clerk to say you are running late, can't make it, or forwarding a message through someone else will not necessarily get you excused by the Judge.

Can you make it to the courthouse during the day (during business hours)? You will need to arrange your work schedule and transportation to get to court a few times, both to file paperwork and be at hearings. Using a lawyer means you would need to be at the courthouse less.

Do you fill out and file your own income tax returns? Court forms can be complicated, much like income tax returns. Reading instructions, following steps, and paying attention to detail are necessary to complete court forms. You must be organized and prepared to correctly file proper court forms.

Are you comfortable doing research, in a library or on a computer? Most people do not know the law and rules that control their cases. Many people are also unsure what forms and documents need to be filed with the court to start and continue their cases. Learning the law and rules for your case is required to be successful. While the court may provide forms for you to fill out and file, you will likely have questions. Court staff can only give you limited answers to your questions because of their duty to be fair to all parties. If you do not take the time to learn the law and rules of your case, you are unlikely to be successful. You may also feel frustrated and unfairly treated because you do not understand what is happening. Using a lawyer will save you lots of research time, because a lawyer is already trained to know the law and the rules that control your case. A lawyer may do some research on specific concerns to make the best argument. Without using a lawyer, you may miss some of the arguments you could make.

Are you likely to be clear and calm when you stand up and speak in court? Representing yourself means you must attend all scheduled appearances with the judge. At these appearances, you will be required to speak clearly and logically while presenting your case. If the other party has a lawyer and you do not, you cannot count on the other lawyer to help you or speak for you. You must speak to the court yourself.

Do you easily get angry under stress? Coming to court can be difficult and stressful. Because you have something to gain or lose in your case, or you are angry or upset at the other party, you may find it more difficult to control your emotions in the courtroom and while speaking. You may also find that your good judgment is clouded by your stress or anger. You must be courteous at all times to court staff, the judge, and the other party to your case. You cannot interrupt the other party, or the judge, while they are speaking. A lawyer may be a good buffer between you and the other party. Using a lawyer may lower the stress and upset you may feel because you will not need to act directly with the other party.

Are you often frustrated by rules you think are unfair or should not apply to you? All types of cases are controlled by rules and procedures. These rules are procedures are in place to give everyone a level playing field. Though a rule may seem silly or wrong, the rule must be followed to make sure your case is fair. Using a lawyer may help you understand what rules your case must follow, and why those rules are in place.

Can you make decisions and stick to them? Most court processes are formal and lasting. Once you make a claim, a statement, or a filing, it is difficult to make changes. Any doubts or questions should be considered and answered before you start. Using a lawyer can help you get answers, as well as "do it right the first time."

Can you live with some mistakes? If you represent yourself, you are likely to make some mistakes. If you regret decisions, or often dwell in actions you have taken, you may cause yourself stress and anxiety. You may also hurt your ability to be successful in your case.

What is at stake in your case? Do you and the other party get along? Every case is important, but some cases may have a bigger effect on you because of the large amount of money (or property) involved, or other people involved (like children). Cases with more money or people to consider are more complicated. Using a lawyer will make these cases less confusing and upsetting, and prevent mistakes that could be difficult or impossible to correct after the case is over. If you and the other party had a relationship that included physical or emotional abuse, you may have trouble keeping a steady emotional state. Being calm and logical is necessary to make good decisions in your case. Using a lawyer may help you keep a safe and comfortable distance from the other party. If you feel the other party is good at "hiding" money or property (like on tax forms), or if you have no idea about the other party's financial status, using a lawyer may be helpful in locating the other party's finances and collecting on a judgment or settlement.

REMEMBER: Court staff is prohibited from providing legal advice; they cannot give directions regarding how a litigant should proceed, respond or behave in any aspect of the legal process. IMPORTANT: You cannot communicate with any judge about your case unless the other party and their attorney is present.