



Lisa Shellenberger

Lisa Shellenberger is a managing partner at Setter Roche Smith & Shellenberger, LLP, where she leads the firm’s juvenile law and family law team. She also practices tribal law and serves on numerous committees related to ICWA compliance.

PROFILE

Hometown:

Skiatook, Oklahoma

Law School:

University of Colorado–Boulder

Lives in:

Boulder

Works at:

Setter Roche Smith & Shellenberger, LLP

Practice Areas:

Family Law, Juvenile Law, Tribal Law

CBA Member Since:

2011

Why did you become a lawyer?

My older sister and her husband struggled to conceive a child as a young couple. Their struggle included multiple stillbirths, miscarriages, and failed rounds of in vitro fertilization. As service providers—she a teacher and he a firefighter—they could not afford the high costs of a private adoption, including attorney fees. Their heartbreaking journey to become parents prompted my decision to go to law school—I hoped to one day be able to offer pro bono adoption services to people like them. With a lot of conviction (and a little bit of luck), that’s exactly what I did. I’m now a managing partner at a firm that provides pro bono adoption services through Metro Volunteer Lawyers. Ten years after I decided to become an attorney, I stood in a courtroom next my sister and her husband, as their attorney of record, with family members lining the gallery, and I obtained a decree of adoption for them. On that day, we welcomed a newborn baby boy, Elijah, into our family.

What are the greatest challenges you face in your practice?

Maintaining the proper boundary between the role of legal advisor and empathetic listener. It can be difficult to strike the right balance between making your client feel seen, heard, and understood, while also providing them objective legal advice that might not exactly be what they want to hear. But ultimately, finding the right balance is essential to making a client feel comfortable with you and having reasonable expectations about their case.

Outside of the law, what are your hobbies?

I’m a big outdoor enthusiast. I spend a lot of time mountain biking, dirt biking, snowmobiling, eques-

trian horse jumping, and camping in our built-out van. I also enjoy traveling, competing in CrossFit, and healthy cooking.

What’s your favorite place to escape to in Colorado?

Crested Butte.

What’s your favorite place you’ve traveled to?

Bali, Indonesia.

What’s your favorite month and why?

July—I just love the long, warm days of summer.


What’s your favorite board game?

Carcassonne—it’s the new Catan!

What sport do you love to play or watch or both?

I love to play basketball—I’ve been involved in a competitive women’s league for the last 10 years. I also love to watch NFL football.

What advice would you give a new lawyer?

Make time to observe other attorneys, judges, and magistrates in the courtroom. By observing a different contested hearing just one hour each week, you can easily start to identify who the good lawyers are and why, and what works well in a courtroom and what doesn’t. Likewise, you can start to learn certain judicial officers’ procedural preferences and propensities on specific legal issues. In the world of Webex, this is easier and more available than ever, so take advantage of it! 

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