

**MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT GENERAL RULES OF PRACTICE
RULE 10. TRIBAL COURT ORDERS AND JUDGMENTS**

Rule 10. Tribal Court Orders and Judgments

Rule 10.01 When Tribal Court Orders and Judgments Must Be Given Effect

(a) **Recognition Mandated by Law.** Where mandated by state or federal statute, orders, judgments, and other judicial acts of the tribal courts of any federally recognized Indian tribe shall be recognized and enforced.

(b) **Procedure.**

(1) **Generally.** Where an applicable state or federal statute establishes a procedure for enforcement of any tribal court order or judgment, that procedure must be followed.

(2) **Violence Against Women Act; Presumption.** An order that is subject to the Violence Against Women Act of 2000, 18 U.S.C. § 2265 (2003), that appears to be issued by a court with subject matter jurisdiction and jurisdiction over the parties, and that appears not to have expired by its own terms is presumptively enforceable, and shall be honored by Minnesota courts and law enforcement and other officials so long as it remains the judgment of the issuing court and the respondent has been given notice and an opportunity to be heard or, in the case of matters properly considered *ex parte*, the respondent will be given notice and an opportunity to be heard within a reasonable time. The presumptive enforceability of such a tribal court order shall continue until terminated by state court order but shall not affect the burdens of proof and persuasion in any proceeding.

(Added effective January 1, 2004.)

Rule 10.02 When Recognition of Tribal Court Orders and Judgments is Discretionary

(a) **Factors.** In cases other than those governed by Rule 10.01(a), enforcement of a tribal court order or judgment is discretionary with the court. In exercising this discretion, the court may consider the following factors:

(1) whether the party against whom the order or judgment will be used has been given notice and an opportunity to be heard or, in the case of matters properly considered *ex parte*, whether the respondent will be given notice and an opportunity to be heard within a reasonable time;

(2) whether the order or judgment appears valid on its face and, if possible to determine, whether it remains in effect;

(3) whether the tribal court possessed subject-matter jurisdiction and jurisdiction over the person of the parties;

(4) whether the issuing tribal court was a court of record;

(5) whether the order or judgment was obtained by fraud, duress, or coercion;

(6) whether the order or judgment was obtained through a process that afforded fair notice, the right to appear and compel attendance of witnesses, and a fair hearing before an independent magistrate;

(7) whether the order or judgment contravenes the public policy of this state;

(8) whether the order or judgment is final under the laws and procedures of the rendering court, unless the order is a non-criminal order for the protection or apprehension of an adult, juvenile or child, or another type of temporary, emergency order;

whether the tribal court reciprocally provides for recognition and implementation of orders, judgments and decrees of the courts of this state; and any other factors the court deems appropriate in the interests of justice.

(b) Procedure. The court shall hold such hearing, if any, as it deems necessary under the circumstances.

(Added effective January 1, 2004.)

Advisory Committee Comment – 2003 Adoption

Introduction. *Rule 10 is a new rule intended to provide a starting point for enforcing tribal court orders and judgments where recognition is mandated by state or federal law (Rule 10.01), and to establish factors for determining the effect of these adjudications where federal or state statutory law does not do so (Rule 10.02).*

The rule applies to all tribal court orders and judgments and does not distinguish between tribal courts located in Minnesota and those sitting in other states. The only limitation on the universe of determinations is that they be from tribal courts of a federally-recognized Indian tribe. These courts are defined in 25 U.S.C. § 450b(e), and a list is published by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. See, e.g., 67 FED. REG. 46328 (July 12, 2002).

Tribal court adjudications are not entitled to full faith and credit under the United States Constitution, which provides only for full faith and credit for “public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other state.” U. S. CONST. Art IV, § 1. But state and federal statutes have conferred the equivalent of full faith and credit status on some tribal adjudications by mandating that they be enforced in state court. Where such full faith and credit is mandatory, a state does not exercise discretion in giving effect to

the proper judgments of a sister state. Baker v. Gen. Motors Corp., 522 U.S. 222, 233 (1998) (“A final judgment in one State, if rendered by a court with adjudicatory authority over the subject matter and persons governed by the judgment, qualifies for recognition throughout the land.”) Through full faith and credit, a sister state’s judgment is given res judicata effect in all other states. See, e.g., id.; Hansberry v. Lee, 311 U.S. 32, 42 (1940).

The enforcement in state court of tribal court adjudications that are not entitled to the equivalent of full faith and credit under a specific state or federal statute, is governed by the doctrine of comity. Comity is fundamentally a discretionary doctrine. It is rooted in the court’s inherent powers, as was early recognized in United States jurisprudence in Hilton v. Guyot, 159 U.S. 113, 163-164 (1895), where the court said: “No law has any effect, of its own force, beyond the limits of the sovereignty from which its authority is derived. The extent to which the law of one nation, as put in force within its territory, whether by executive order, by legislative act, or by judicial decree, shall be allowed to operate within the dominion of another nation, depends upon what our greatest jurists have been content to call ‘the comity of nations.’”

This inherent power was recognized in Minnesota in Traders’ Trust Co. v. Davidson, 146 Minn. 224, 227, 178 N.W. 735, 736 (1920) (citing Hilton, 159 U.S. at 227) where the court said: “Effect is given to foreign judgments as a matter of comity and reciprocity, and it has become the rule to give no other or greater effect to the judgment of a foreign court than the country or state whose court rendered it gives to a like judgment of our courts.” In Nicol v. Tanner, 310 Minn. 68, 75-79, 256 N.W.2d 796, 800-02 (1976) (citing the Restatement (Second) of Conflicts of Laws § 98 (1971)), the court further developed the doctrine of comity when it held that the statement in Traders’ Trust Co. that enforcement required a showing of reciprocity was dictum; that “reciprocity is not a prerequisite to enforcement of a foreign judgment in Minnesota;” and that the default status of a foreign judgment “should not affect the force of the judgment.”

Statutory Mandates. *Rule 10.01 reflects the normal presumption that courts will adhere to statutory mandates for enforcement of specific tribal court orders or judgments where such a statutory mandate applies. Federal statutes that do provide such mandates include:*

1. Violence Against Women Act of 2000, 18 U.S.C. § 2265 (2003) (full faith and credit for certain protection orders).

2. Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. § 1911(d) (2003) (“full faith and credit” for certain custody determinations).

3. Full Faith and Credit for Child Support Orders Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1738B(a) (2003) (“shall enforce” certain child support orders and “shall not seek or make modifications . . . except in accordance with [certain limitations]”).

In addition to federal law, the Minnesota Legislature has addressed custody, support, child placement, and orders for protection. The Minnesota Legislature adopted the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act, MINN. STAT. §§ 518D.101-518D.317 (2002) which: (1) requires recognition and enforcement of certain child custody determinations made by a tribe “under factual circumstances in substantial conformity with the jurisdictional standards of” the Act; and (2) establishes a voluntary registration process for custody determinations with a 20-day period for contesting validity. MINN. STAT. §§ 518D.103; 104 (2002) (not applicable to adoption or emergency medical care of child; not applicable to extent ICWA controls). In addition, the Minnesota Legislature has adopted the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act, MINN. STAT. §§ 518C.101-518C.902 (2002), which provides the procedures for enforcement of support orders from another state [“state” is defined to include an Indian tribe, MINN. STAT. § 518C.101(s)(1) (2002)] with or without registration, and enforcement and modification after registration. The Minnesota Legislature has also adopted the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act, MINN. STAT. §§ 260.751 – 260.835 (2002), which provides, among other things, that tribal court orders concerning child placement (adoptive and pre-adoptive placement, involuntary foster care placement, termination of parental rights, and status offense placements) shall have the same force and effect as orders of a court of this state. MINN. STAT. § 260.771, subd. 4 (2002).

The facial validity provision in Rule 10.01(b)(2) fills in a gap in state law. MINN. STAT. § 518B.01, subd. 14(e) (2002), authorizes an arrest based on probable cause of violation of tribal court order for protection; although this law includes immunity from civil suit for a peace officer acting in good faith and exercising due care, it does not address facial validity of the order. Similar laws in other jurisdictions address this issue. See, e.g., 720 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/12-30(a)(2) (Supp. 2003); OKLA. STAT. tit. 22 § 60.9B(1) (2003); WISC. STAT. § 813.128(1) (2001-02).

*The Minnesota Legislature has also addressed enforcement of foreign money judgments. The Minnesota Uniform Foreign Country Money-Judgments Recognition Act, MINN. STAT. § 548.35 (2002), creates a procedure for filing and enforcing judgments rendered by courts other than those of sister states. Tribal court money judgments fall within the literal scope of this statute and the statutory procedures therefore may guide Minnesota courts considering money judgments. Cf. *Anderson v. Engelke*, 954 P.2d 1106, 1110-11 (Mont. 1998) (dictum) (statute assumed to allow enforcement by state courts outside of tribal lands, but question not decided). In general, money judgments of tribal courts are not entitled to full faith and credit under the Constitution, and the court is allowed a more*

expansive and discretionary role in deciding what effect they have. Rule 10.02(a) is intended to facilitate that process.

Discretionary Enforcement: Comity. *Where no statutory mandate expressly applies, tribal court orders and judgments are subject to the doctrine of comity. Rule 10.02(a) does not create any new or additional powers but only begins to describe in one convenient place the principles that apply to recognition of orders and judgments by comity.*

Comity is also an inherently flexible doctrine. A court asked to decide whether to recognize a foreign order can consider whatever aspects of the foreign court proceedings it deems relevant. Thus Rule 10.02(a) does not dictate a single standard for determining the effect of these adjudications in state court. Instead, it identifies some of the factors a Minnesota judge may consider in determining what effect such a determination will be given. Rule 10.02(a) does not attempt to define all of the factors that may be appropriate for consideration by a court charged with determining whether a tribal court determination should be enforced. It does enumerate many of the appropriate factors. It is possible in any given case that one or more of these factors will not apply. For example, reciprocity is not a pre-condition to enforceability generally, Nicol, 310 Minn. at 75-79, 256 N.W.2d at 800-02, but may be relevant in some circumstances. Notice of the proceedings and an opportunity to be heard (or the prospect of notice and right to hearing in the case of ex parte matters) are fundamental parts of procedural fairness in state and federal courts and are considered basic elements of due process; it is appropriate at least to consider whether the tribal court proceedings extended these rights to the litigants. The issue of whether the tribal court is “of record” may be important to the determination of what the proceedings were in that court. A useful definition of “of record” is contained in the Wisconsin statutes. WIS. STAT. § 806.245(1)(c) (2001-02); see also WIS. STAT. § 806.245(3) (2001-02) (setting forth requirements for determining whether a court is “of record”). The rule permits the court to inquire into whether the tribal court proceedings offered similar protections to the parties, recognizing that tribal courts may not be required to adhere to the requirements of due process under the federal and state constitutions. Some of the considerations of the rule are drawn from the requirements of the Minnesota Uniform Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act, MINN. STAT. §§ 548.26-.33 (2002). For example, contravention of the state’s public policy is a specific factor for non-recognition of a foreign state’s judgment under MINN. STAT. § 548.35, subd. 4(b)(3)(2002); it is carried forward into Rule 10.02(a)(7). Inconsistency with state public policy is a factor for non-recognition of tribal court orders under other states’ rules. See MICH. R. CIV. P. 2.615(C)(2)(c); N.D. R. CT. 7.2(b)(4).

Hearing. Rule 10.02(b) does not require that a hearing be held on the issues relating to consideration of the effect to be given to a tribal court order or judgment. In some instances, a hearing would serve no useful purpose or would be unnecessary; in others, an evidentiary hearing might be required to resolve contested questions of fact where affidavit or documentary evidence is insufficient. The committee believes the discretion to decide when an evidentiary hearing is held should rest with the trial judge.