National Congress of American Indians

2015 Newsletter: Thriving Communities, Driving Opportunities

72nd Annual Convention & Marketplace
San Diego, CA | October 18-23, 2015
Town and Country Resort & Convention Center

The NCAI 72nd Annual Convention & Marketplace was a huge success!

Beginning on Sunday, October 18, 2015 and continuing through Friday, October 23, 2015 at the Town & Country Resort in San Diego, California, the six-day convention was packed with speakers, sponsors, and attendees from around the country.

The energy around daily activities was palpable as attendees participated in seven General Assemblies, and over 60 sessions, committee meetings, caucuses, and receptions.

Emerging themes from the discussions during the convention focused around the "real work" necessary to create tangible outcomes and solutions to issues hindering Indian Country in the areas of climate change, sacred sites, health sovereignty, child welfare, water rights, food sovereignty, education, and more.

The convention showcased several voices from Washington, DC to speak on the hard issues impacting Native communities and their work on Capitol Hill and Federal agencies.

U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn

NCAI General Counsel John Dossett and Native American Rights Fund Executive Director John Echohawk provided an update from the Tribal Supreme Court Project. Dossett and Echohawk emphasized the pending case of *Dollar General v. Mississippi Choctaw*, regarding tribal jurisdiction over consensual relationships with non-Indian businesses on reservation. This is an extremely important case for tribal sovereignty, and tribal leaders took action to communicate with their respective states Attorneys General.

They also spoke about the Supreme Court decision to grant review *Nebraska v. Parker*, involving a question of reservation diminishment where the State is challenging whether establishments in the Village of Pender are subject to the Omaha Tribe's liquor licensing and tax regulations. This is also a very important case for reservation lands and jurisdiction, and the Project will be very busy this session of the Supreme Court.

For more information about the Supreme Court Update, contact NCAI General Counsel John Dossett via email at jdossett@ncai.org.

The First General Assembly on Monday was highlighted by U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn when he announced on the NCAI stage his approval of the Yakima Nation's petition for retrocession of civil and criminal jurisdiction from the State of Washington.

In Administrator Gina McCarthy's Environmental Protection Agency Update she stated clearly that, "[The EPA is] striving to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into programs and engaging tribal youth leaders of tomorrow."

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN), delivered a passionate message and spoke about the role of Congress: "The bottom line folks, [this] Congress needs to get its act together. The issues facing Native youth must be a priority for our Congress. We know that we are failing Native students. We need to make these investments… we need to see a new list of priorities…we need to band together."

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy during her EPA Update

McCollum also spoke about her support for the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act of 2015 (H.R. 511) stated, "I am proud to stand with Indian Country on hunting and fishing rights."

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro said, "[HUD] will keep fighting to ensure every tribal family lives in dignity and in comfort."

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN)

Mary Smith, the new Indian Health Service Deputy Director, took the podium and spoke about her goals for the future of Indian Country through the remainder of the Obama Administration.

"I am ready to hit the ground running, but I need

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro

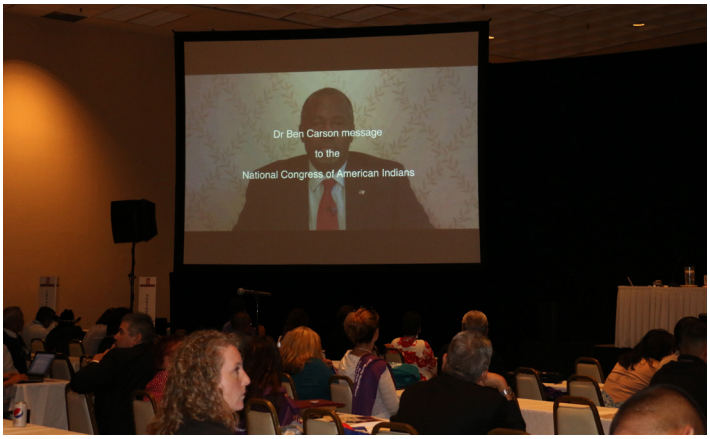
your help," said Smith. "I think many times Native Americans are invisible to people in this country. We can only do this together; we are not invisible we are resilient."

NCAI also gave the 2016 Presidential Candidates the opportunity to speak to the NCAI assembly. Three candidates submitted videos including: Hillary Clinton (Democrat), Ben Carson (Republican), and Bernie Sanders (Democrat).

"NCAI's mission is to advocate on behalf of Indian Country. We will do this no matter who is in the White House," said Jackie Pata, Executive Director, NCAI.

Monday also marked the kick off of the NCAI

Indian Health Service
Deputy Director Mary Smith



2016 Presidential Candidate Videos

Youth Commission agenda. An operational body of NCAI, the NCAI Youth Commission participated in their own sessions as well as the NCAI assembly at large.

Bringing the first official day to close, NCAI attendees gathered to celebrate and share at the Welcome Reception & Cultural Night on Monday evening with traditional foods and dancing.

To prompt a conversation about trauma and its effects on the mind, body, and spirit, Dr. Vincent Felitti shared insights from his work leading the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. The

Welcome Reception & Cultural Night

ACE Study is one of the largest investigations into how early childhood maltreatment-- through abuse, neglect, substance use, etc. --can contribute to poor health in later life. He emphasized the need for healthy role models and support for parents and caregivers as well as commitment to address the role of trauma in our health.

Juxtaposing Dr. Felitti's dialogue, NCAI President Brian Cladoosby rhetorically asked, "How do we change that mindset from being victims to being survivors?"

Dr. Vincent Felitti, Co-Principal Investigator, Adverse Childhood Experience Study

For more information and to request chapters from the study, contact Dr. Vincent Felitti via email at vjfmdsdca@mac.com.

NCAI supporter and partner, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community also presented

their Seeds of Native Health: A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition. Looking at the disparaging rates of diabetes and obesity, Seeds of Native Health looks to combat these health issues through access to healthy food. The effort includes grant-making, sharing of best practices, capacity-building, sponsored research, and educational initiatives. To learn more about the program, visit http://seedsofnativehealth.org.

Seeds of Native Health

A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition

World Café was one of the most widely attended sessions of the week. The discussion sparked fantastic ideas and dialogue from tribal leaders, youth, and other attendees. The importance of cultural integrity played a large role in response to questions on how to make actionable change in today's communities. Other key themes included what it means to be loved, opening the lines of communication, and developing listening skills across generations.

NCAI Staff facilitates World Café discussion

On Tuesday, October 20, attendees joined the NCAI Youth Commission at the NCAI Youth Honoring Luncheon and NCAI Youth Leadership Awards. The luncheon, sponsored by San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, featured National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. who presented awards to Native Education Raising Dedicated Students (NERDS) Founder Dahkota Franklin Kicking Bear Brown (Wilton Band of Miwok Indians) and Miss Indian Arizona Shasta Dazen (White Mountain Apache).

Stevens also presented an honorary award to 2015 SPORTS 'N SPOKES Junior Athlete of the Year and NCAI Youth presenter Noah Blue Elk Hotchkiss (Southern Ute/Southern Cheyenne/Caddo Tribe).

Award winners Dahkota Franklin Kicking Bear Brown and Noah Blue Elk Hotchkiss

Another consistent theme throughout the convention was the importance of Native Vote! Native Vote holds a special place in the heart of the NCAI staff, who were brave enough to provide the opening performance with their "Voting Shuffle" song and dance. The night was emceed by two Native Celebrities, Actor Alex Meraz, known for his portrayal of Paul in the Twilight Saga, and Actor Gil Birmingham, known for his portrayal as Billy Black in the Twilight Saga. However, the NCAI Youth stole the show with their rendition of Pitch

Native Vote

Every Vote Counts

Perfect. The night was filled with trivia and prizes, a photobooth, and a message from Indian Country friend, former Senator Mark Begich (AK).

NCAI is always looking to connect with new Native Vote Coordinators. Please contact NCAI Policy Research Fellow Jalene Herron (jherron@ncai.org) to become a coordinator for your community! Coordinators are needed!

If you missed the performances, visit the NCAI YouTube channel for the recap at https://www.youtube.com/user/NCAI1944.

NCAI Youth Commission Perform at Native Vote Lip Sync Battle

Announced initially in September, the "First Kids 1st Initiative" formally came together during the Fourth General Assembly with a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), and the National Indian Health Board (NIHB).

The MOU states that the First Kids 1st Initiative, "will convey that Indian Country is choosing to put its children first as our number one priority."

The four Executive Directors, NCAI Executive Director Jackie Pata, NICWA Executive Director Sarah Kastelic, NIEA Executive Director Ahniwake Rose, and NIHB Executive Director Stacy Bohlen stood in solidarity and signed the MOU into action.

A highlight every year during the convention

Executive Directors of NCAI, NICWA, NIEA, and NIHB sign historic MOU

is the National Native American Just Move It! Healthy Lifestyles Walk, Run, and Rally, and this year was no different. Tribal leaders, elders, youth, and attendees ran, jogged, and walked to inspire healthy choices for Indian Country. Participants received incentives from partners Nike N7, Indian Health Service, and NCAI.

Attendees and NCAI Staff participate in Health Walk

Continuing the theme of inspiration, the NCAI Youth Co-Presidents Tyler Owens and Jared Massey spoke to the assembly and stressed the importance of including youth in the discussions and decisions that affect their communities.

National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) Executive Director Sarah Kastelic and NICWA President Gil Vigil also addressed the assembly to advocate for Native youth.

"[ICWA] is under attack, more importantly are the children that this act protects. Those are the kids we want to protect," said Vigil. "We are placing our kids in danger. Please take more responsibility on the seriousness of this issue. We can't let that happen.

NICWA President Gil Vigil and Executive Director Sarah Kastelic

Executive Director Bill Mendoza of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education spoke on the somber subject of suicide amongst Native youth and announced the new School Environment Listening Sessions Final Report focusing on Native youth.

To develop the report, the White House conducted a national listening tour which made stops in nine states and throughout Indian Country.

"We will be championing this report over and over until it is heard," said Mendoza. "Our time for decision making on these issues is now."

William (Bill) Mendoza, Executive Director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education

The report can be found on the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education U.S. Department of Education website http://sites.ed.gov/whianiane/files/2015/10/school-environment-listening-sessions-final-report.pdf.

Mike Andrews, Staff Director and Chief Counsel of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, provided an update on the work of the Committee. Giving a "shout out" to Tony Walters for the bi-partisan effort in the Committee, and reaffirmed Senator Barrasso and Senator Tester's commitment to advocating for Indian Country.

Andrews went on to speak about a number of pieces of legislation the Committee is currently focusing on including: The Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Amendments Act, the reauthorization of the Native American Housing

Mike Andrews, Staff Director & Chief Council, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA), the IRRIGATION Act, the Survive Act, and the Interior Improvement Act.

"We can't do it alone, your continued advocacy is vitally important and [a] unified approach is the best strategy," said Andrews. "Please support those bills, and let us know of the bills you cannot get behind. We are here to do the work."

Lester Secatero, Chairman, National Indian Health Board (NIHB)

Continuing policy discussion, National Indian Health Board (NIHB) Chairman Lester Secatero noted a number of challenges in Indian health care during his presentation, including the lack of access to the proper technology for doctors and the Employer Mandate putting a financial strain on Native communities.

Mary Bucci, Chief of 2020 Partnerships and Outreach at the U.S. Census Bureau, discussed the Census' upcoming tribal consultation to review an operations plan, listen to the thoughts of tribal leaders about issues affecting their communities, and to increase collaboration between the Census Office and Indian Country.

Marcia Hurd, Senior Counsel to the Director, Office of Tribal Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, spoke about Tribal Access to Criminal Databases. Hurd reported that tribes often face a number of barriers within state networks and that DOJ is working to fix the issue. Currently, DOJ has enacted

Mary Bucci, Chief of the 2020 Partnerships and Outreach, U.S. Census Bureau

a companion program, the Tribal Access Program (TAP), which any tribal social service agency can access by applying online at no cost. Visit http://www.justice.gov/tribal/tribal-access-program-tap for more information.

Jeff Grubbe, Chairman of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, spoke about the Band's Water Rights and current 9th Circuit litigation regarding their rights to ground water. Chairman Grubbe stressed the importance of tribal water rights advocacy and the need for support in the appeal of the Band's 9th Circuit case to reclaim their ground water. He called for the body to join the Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association Amicus Brief.

Marcia Hurd, Senior Counsel to the Director, Office of Tribal Justice, U.S. Department of Justice

Jeff Grubbe, Chairman,
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians

Luis Alejo, Assemblymember, California State Assembly, and NCAI National Native Youth Cabinet Member, Dahkota Brown, gave the Mascot Update in the wake of the passing of the California Racial Mascots Act, signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown the week prior to the NCAI convention. The law bans all public schools in the state from using the name "R*dskins" as an athletic team name, mascot, or nickname by no later than January 1, 2017.

The end of the week was highlighted by a special guest presentation by Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye. The historical event was met by applause and warm smiles from both President Begaye and President Cladoosby.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye addressed the body regarding the Gold King Mine Disaster and lack of response by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the White House. President Begaye explained that the spill greatly impacted Navajo farmers and their citizens' drinking water, forcing the Nation to haul water to those affected for two months. The Nation continues to see a lack of response from the federal government on these issues.

Luis Alejo and Dahkota Brown give Mascot Update

Navajo Nation Russell Begaye and
NCAI President Brian Cladoosby

"Let's continue standing together and fight for our land, water rights, culture and keep fighting," said President Begaye. "We have yet to be given authority [over our] minerals and [are] asking NCAI to get behind the bills to the surface and minerals beneath the land and ability to control those resources."

Thursday also marked a special luncheon and the annual Gala Banquet. In conjunction with NCAI, the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians sponsored

NCAI Annual Gala Banquet

the Elders' Honoring Lunch to celebrate our tribal elders and show them the great appreciation they deserve.

The annual Gala Banquet wrapped up Thursday's events, featuring a musical performance by Keith Secola, Award Winning Native American Musician. The Gala Banquet attendees enjoyed dinner and an ad hoc round dance which ended in a sing along on the Gala stage. A special thank you for Keith Secola for participating in the event, and a very big thank you to Bank of America for their sponsorship of the event.

NCAI elections played a large role during the convention and included the election of the NCAI Executive Board Officers for President, 1st Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and NCAI Area Vice-Presidents. All officers were sworn in on Friday, October 23, 2015 during the Seventh General Assembly. Below are the newly elected and sworn in officers of NCAI.

NCAI Executive Director, NCAI Board Officers ,and NCAI Youth Cabinet member Dahkota Brown

NCAI Board Administrative Officers:

NCAI President:
Brian Cladoosby, Chairman, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

NCAI 1st Vice President:
Randy Noka, Councilman, Narragansett Tribe

NCAI Secretary:
Aaron Payment, Chairperson, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

NCAI Treasurer:
W. Ron Allen, Chairman, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Area Vice Presidents:

ALASKA:
Jerry Isaac, CEO, Native Village of Tanacross

MIDWEST:
Roger Rader, Tribal Council, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

PACIFIC:
Jack Potter, Jr., Chairman, Redding Rancheria

SOUTHERN PLAINS:
Liana Onnen, Chairwoman, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation

EASTERN OKLAHOMA:
Joe Byrd, Speaker of the Nation, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

NORTHEAST:
Lance Gumbs, Shinnecock Indian Nation

ROCKY MOUNTAIN:
Darrin Old Coyote, Chairman, Crow Nation

SOUTHWEST:
Joe Garcia, Councilman, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo

GREAT PLAINS:
Leander McDonald, President, United Tribes Technical College

NORTHWEST:
Fawn Sharp, President, Quinault Nation

SOUTHEAST:
Larry Townsend, Lumbee Tribe

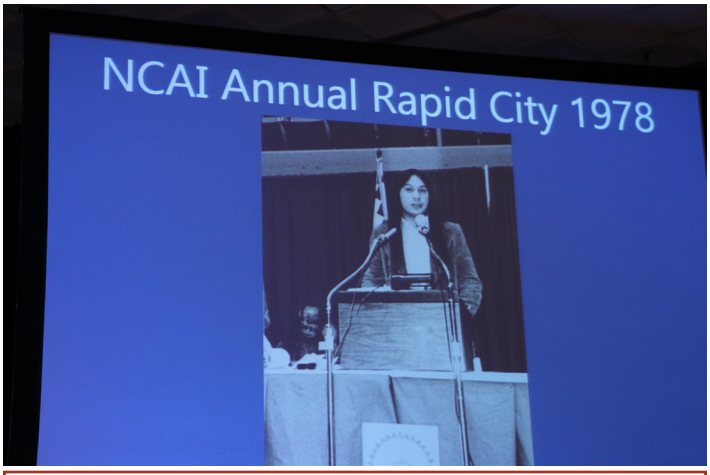
WESTERN:
Bruce Ignacio, Representative, Ute Indian Tribe

Alongside the swearing in of officers during the final General Assembly, the body passed 60 resolutions. To review all resolutions, please visit http://www.ncai.org/resolutions/2015-annual-resolutions.

NCAI extends a very special thank you to all of those who made the 72nd Annual Convention & Marketplace the successful event it was including

sponsors, volunteers, local planning committee, and NCAI staff for all of their hard work, and continued commitment to Indian Country.

Congratulations to Native American Rights Fund (NARF) Executive Director John Echohawk celebrating his 45th anniversary this November with the organization. Echohawk has been with NARF for its entire 45-year history, and has served as the executive director since 1977.



Congratulations John Echohawk on your 45th Anniversary!

Thank you to the Local Planning Committee Chair Rosemary Morillo, Chairwoman of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians, Committee participants, and California tribes for assisting with sponsorships and encouraging tribal leadership and members to register for the conference.

A big thank you to the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation for hosting such an amazing Welcome and Cultural Celebration at the beginning of the week. And warm gratitude to Volunteer Coordinator Hedi Bogda (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe), who came to NCAI for the week from Pauma Band of Luiseño Indians, for coordinating all of the hardworking volunteers this week, including Tribal TANF and North Fork Rancheria.

Thank you to NCAI staff alumnus Jason McCarty for taking pictures all week and Cherokee Nation for letting NCAI borrow him for the event and to Ricki McCarroll, Nuna Consulting Group Founder & Principal Consultant, who put together the communications pieces during the conference.

Congratulations to the NCAI staff for all of your hard work and anniversary milestones achieved with the organization!

Deputy Director Robert Holden receives a gift of appreciation

Deputy Director
Robert Holden
(30 years)

General Counsel
John Dossett
(20 years)

Office Manager
Nketia Agyeman
(20 years)

Director of External Affairs
Jamie Gomez
(16 years)

Director of Outreach
Bernida Humetawa
(13 years)

Budget/Policy Analyst and
PRC Program Manager
Amber Ebarb
(12 years)

Legislative Associate
Gwen Salt
(10 years)

Director of Conferences & Events
Annarae Steele
(7 years)

Chief Financial Officer
Sam Owl
(6 years)

Advisor to Partnership for Tribal Governance
Sherry Salway Black (6 years)

Senior Systems Administrator
Chris Pata
(5 years)

Meetings & Events Coordinator
Kellcee Baker
(5 years)

Thank you again to all of our sponsors, for without you none of this is possible.

Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation –
Diamond & Tote Bag Sponsor

Bank of America –
Gala Banquet Sponsor

San Manuel Band of Mission Indians –
Youth Honoring Luncheon Sponsor

WK Kellogg Foundation –
General Supporter

Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians –
Elders' Honoring Luncheon Sponsor

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Turquoise Sponsor

Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians –
Bronze & Health Walk Sponsor

Key Bank –
Name Badge Sponsor

Walton Family Foundation –
Charging Station Sponsor

Redding Rancheria –
Health Walk Sponsor

Roche Diabetes Care –
Health Walk Sponsor

Cherokee Nation –
Elder's Lounge Sponsor

Prairie Band Potawatomi Indians –
Coffee Break Sponsor

PALA Band of Mission Indians –
Coffee Break Sponsor

Office of Hawaiian Affairs –
Coffee Break Sponsor

Bishop Paiute Tribe –
Coffee Break Co-Sponsor

Travois –
Coffee Break Co-Sponsor

Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Endreson & Perry, LLP – Coffee Break Co-Sponsor

Dentons –
Coffee Break Co-Sponsor

Make sure to check out the coverage from the week on the NCAI Facebook, Twitter (@NCAI1944), YouTube, and Flickr accounts!

National Congress of American Indians

WHY NCAI?

Are you an NCAI Member?

NCAI is a membership-driven organization. Our membership is a strong representation of the many nations, villages, communities, and individuals that constitute the whole of Indian Country.

The organization engages in both legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of its membership. Moreover, the NCAI strives to ensure that all member tribes and individuals are informed and educated about all such issues affecting the well-being of Indian nations.

NCAI's membership consists of six categories:

1. Tribal Membership
2. Individual Indian Membership
3. Individual Associate Membership
4. Individual Indian Lifetime Membership
5. Individual Associate Lifetime Membership
6. Associate Organization Membership

Want to learn more? Visit http://www.ncai.org/get-involved/membership.

Already a NCAI Member and need to renew?

For Tribal Membership visit http://www.ncai.org/membership/2015-2016_Tribal_Membership_Forms.pdf.

For Individual Membership visit http://www.ncai.org/membership/2015-2016_Individual_Membership_Form.pdf.

Membership lasts from Annual Convention to Annual Convention.