



NCAI Youth Commission Newsletter

Thriving Communities, Driving Opportunities

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



National
Congress of
American
Indians

About NCAI Youth Commission

Established in 1997, the NCAI Youth Commission has been a space for tribal youth to come together and discuss solutions to the unique challenges they face within their communities. The youth commission has served as a space for Indian Country's young people to stand together, empowered, to inform Indian Country's greater decisions regarding the future. Youth Commission members have often informed NCAI's general membership on various issues, informing key advocacy decisions. The youth commissioners also provide leadership development opportunities and provides a forum for national Native youth networking.

Mission

We, the National Congress of American Indian Youth, unite to serve our peoples concerns and interests by enhancing the spiritual, mental, physical and emotional well-being of tribal youth for a better Native America.

Purpose

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Youth Commission is designed specifically for college and high school students ages 16-23 with an interest in political science, tribal government and Native American legislative and governmental affairs.

The Youth Commission provides a unique perspective on issues relevant to tribal youth. It is to be a resource to NCAI and Tribal Leaders. It is an opportunity to acquire knowledge from NCAI and Tribal Leaders about the organizational processes of NCAI and structure of Tribal Politics. The Commission also serves to enhance leadership skills and cultivate those we may have obtained prior. Most importantly the NCAI Youth Commission is a mechanism for achieving a unified voice for ALL Native American and Alaskan Native youth.



This year the NCAI Youth Commission aimed for a cooperative agenda with the main 72nd Annual Convention & Marketplace agenda. The Youth Commission, when not participating in the main sessions with tribal leaders, attended youth-specific sessions on topics such as harmful mascots, financial education, and social media.

Each Native youth session began with cultural awareness through a prayer and short discussion about what it means to be connected to your community as a Native youth.

Beginning an open discussion, the Youth Commission started every day with goals and challenges that engaged tribal leaders.

NCAI Youth Commission participate in World Café Discussion



Through gained exposure to tribal leaders and experts presenting at NCAI, the Youth Commission was able to learn and hone their own leadership skills.

Tactical training, facilitated by Jeri Brunoe, allowed youth to ask questions and participate in sessions such as World Café, General Assemblies, committee meetings, sub-committee meetings and area caucus meetings. Tribal leaders praised the youth during the week for their involvement and courage to bring their ideas to the table.

During the Youth agenda panel "I Do What I Love. I Love What I Do." youth heard from successful Native Americans with careers across industries including Basketball Player and Super Dunk Champion Kenny Dobbs; Actor Alex Meraz, Professional Roller Blader, Snowboarder, and traditional artist James Johnson; and Youth Commission facilitator Jeri Brunoe about what they love about their careers and what they went through to create their success.

Spending the day with the youth, Actor Alex Meraz, known for his portrayal of Paul in the Twilight Saga, Meraz wants to continue to assist youth and be a part of the Native Vote effort.

to lend their wisdom, and also learn from the Youth Commissioners themselves.

Youth Commission learn from tribal leaders



NCAI Executive Director Jackie Pata engaged the youth in a question and answer session to help the Youth Commission develop critical thinking skills.

National Indian Gaming Association Chairman Ernie Stevens Jr. also stopped by and shared his story with the youth, gave some history of the Youth Commission, and shared what they can do as young leaders.

On Tuesday, October 20, Chairman Stevens also attended NCAI Youth Honoring Luncheon to present the NCAI Youth Leadership Awards. The luncheon, sponsored by San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, presented two 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).

NCAI Executive Director Jackie Pata facilitates a Q&A Session with the Youth Commission



A number of tribal leaders including Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians Chairwoman Rosemary Murillo, Santa Clara Pueblo Councilman Joseph G. Naranjo, and Makah Tribal Council Council Member Patsy Bain also attended Youth Commission sessions

The Youth Commission also witnessed the historic signing of the "First Kids 1st Initiative" 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).

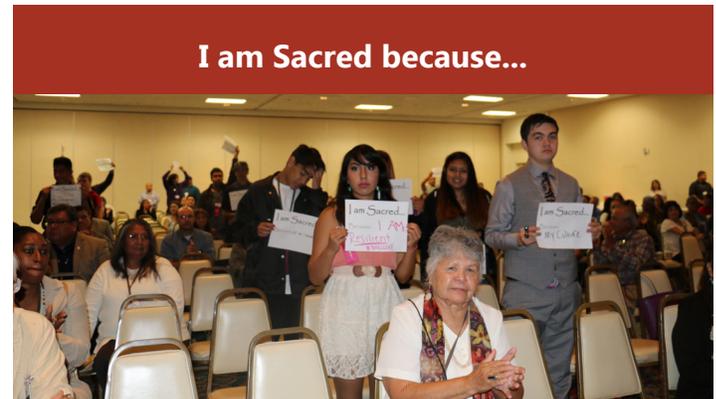
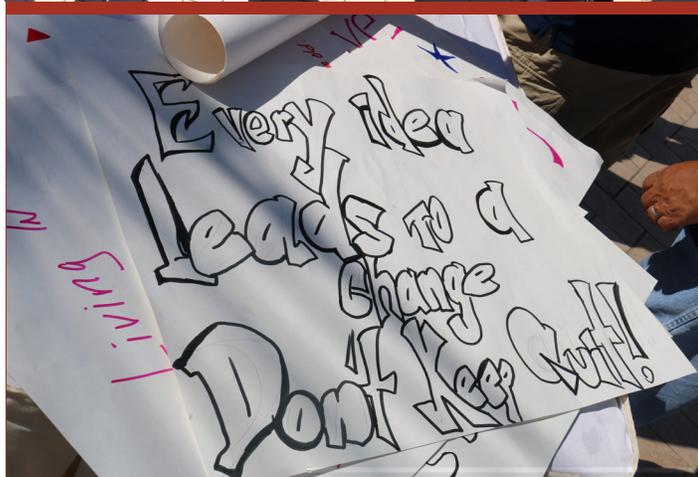
The four Executive Directors, NCAI Executive Director Jackie Pata, NICWA Executive Director Sarah Kastelic, NIEA Executive Director Ahniwake Rose, and NIHB Executive Director Stacy Bohlen stood in solidarity and signed the MOU into action.

NICWA Executive Director Sarah Kastelic also announced the election of two Native Youth to the NICWA Board, Teresa Baldwin (Inupiaq) and Cassandra Church (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi). Both Teresa and Cassandra will serve three year terms on the NICWA Board.

Taking a leadership role during the National Native American Just Move It! Healthy Lifestyles Walk, Run, and Rally, the Youth Commission created signs, participated in the half mile course, and cheered on others in support of healthier lifestyles for Native communities.

Another highlight of the week was the participation of the youth in the "I am Sacred campaign." The campaign encompassed all the youth's strengths and what they are already doing in their communities.

Youth Commissioners cheer on Health Walk participants!



In a powerful image, the youth stood with signs during the Sixth General Assembly inscribed with "I am Sacred because..." The sentence was finished by each youth with a personal reason to why they are sacred.

The afternoon session on Thursday, October 22, gave way to an engaged discussion with two young tribal leaders: Lummi Nation Business Council Council Member Celina Phair and Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Council Member Reid D. Milanovich. The youth asked hard questions about getting engaged with tribal council as a youth and the challenges that Phair and Milanovich have faced in their current positions.

Both Milanovich and Phair spoke about the importance education played in their lives and how it continues to give them the knowledge and strength to serve their communities.

Executive Director Bill Mendoza of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education gave a report of the new School

Lummi Nation Business Council Council Member Celina Phair and Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Council Member Reid D. Milanovich.



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. Mendoza highlighted that the Youth Commission can continue to engage these schools in a productive way.

The Youth Commission took it upon themselves to set next steps in planning for their campaigns including the agenda development for next year's conference. Youth are looking at sessions that will teach them how to write resolutions, understand policy and get updates on legislation. They want to learn how to give their voice in a positive way while learning from tribal leaders. The highest item on their priority list is mentoring from tribal leaders.

However, the highlight for the entire conference was the Native Vote Reception/Lip Sync Battle in which the Youth Commission, and Center for Native American Youth Staff Teddy McCullough stole the show with their rendition of the Pitch Perfect movie finale. Utilizing team building skills, Youth Commissioners put on a performance of a lifetime. If you missed it, please visit the NCAI YouTube channel to catch the highlights at <https://www.youtube.com/user/NCAI1944>.

Youth Commission Perform at Native Vote Reception



Thank you for your Youth participation!

- Ho-Chunk Nation
- Lummi Nation
- Gila River Indian Community
- Salt River Pima-Maricopa Community
- The Makah Tribe
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi
- Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
- Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Mashpee Wampanoag Indian Tribal Council
- NookSack Indian Tribe
- California Valley Miwok Tribe
- Ak-Chin Indian Community
- Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma
- Tanana Chiefs Conference

If you are interested in supporting the NCAI Youth Commission, please email Youth Programs Assistant Tyler Owens at towens@ncai.org.