EVERYTHING THE POWER OF THE WORLD DOES IS DONE IN A CIRCLE. In the old days all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation; and so long as the hoop was unbroken, People flourished.

JOIN OUR CIRCLE

If you are not already an NCAI member or contributor, please consider joining us.

Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal nations, governments, and communities. NCAI answers the call of its founders to serve as the unified voice of tribal nations, to protect and advance tribal sovereignty.

NCAI provides the governments and leaders of those nations a powerful platform for consensus-based policy development and advocacy. In so doing, it protects tribal self-governance and treaty rights; promotes the economic development, health, and welfare of tribal communities; and educates the public toward a better understanding of tribal nations.

NCAI’s effectiveness in strengthening tribal sovereignty and advancing Indian Country’s priorities is rooted in the wisdom and involvement of our diverse membership. This includes a growing number of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, tribal citizens, and Native organizations from across the country.

Working in partnership, NCAI and its members amplify the collective voice of tribal nations to achieve a brighter future for Indian Country and the generations to come.

See NCAI’s website at www.ncai.org to join or contribute.
TABLE of CONTENTS

2 Timeline of Progress
4 Letter from the President of NCAI
5 NCAI Executive Committee 2016-2017
6 NCAI Past Presidents and Executive Directors
7 Letter from the Executive Director of NCAI

STRENGTHENING SOVEREIGNTY
8 NCAI Takes Action to Strengthen Tribal Sovereignty
9 2017 State of Indian Nations Address
11 White House Tribal Initiatives
12 NCAI Youth Initiatives
  First Kids 1st and Native Youth Partners
  NCAI Youth Commission
  Wilma Mankiller Fellowship Program
  Native Graduate Health Fellowship Program
16 2016 Annual Convention and Marketplace
18 2017 Executive Council Winter Session
20 2017 Mid Year Conference and Marketplace
22 2017 Tribal Unity Impact Days

EFFECTIVE EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY
25 Trust Modernization
26 Tribal Lands and Natural Resources
  The Year of Standing With Standing Rock
  Climate Change
  Energy
28 Tribal Infrastructure
  Housing
  Transportation
  Telecommunications
  Homeland Security and Emergency Management

30 Public Safety
  Tribal Law & Order Act Reauthorization
  Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction
  Public Safety & Victim Services Funding
  Juvenile Justice
  Child Welfare
32 Health And Education
  Healthcare
  Education
  Cultural Protections
  Native Veterans
35 Economy
  Tax and Finance
  Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act
  Budget and Appropriations
37 International Advocacy

EMPOWERING NATIVE COMMUNITIES
38 NCAI Policy Research Center (PRC)
42 NCAI Partnership for Tribal Governance (PTG)

PUBLIC EDUCATION
46 Change the Mascot Campaign
47 Tribal Supreme Court Project
48 Native Vote and Voting Rights
49 NCAI Progressive Outreach
  Visits to the Embassy of Tribal Nations
  Strategic Communications
52 NCAI Publications
54 Membership
55 Fundraising
56 Partners and Supporters
57 Staff Directory
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

TIMELINE OF

OCTOBER 2016

NCAI holds 73rd Annual Convention in Phoenix, AZ.

NCAI Policy Research Center (PRC) releases new resource “Tips for Researchers: Strengthening Research that Benefits Native Youth.”

DOJ expands the Tribal Access Program (TAP) of the National Crime Information database.


NOVEMBER 2016

NCAI hosts post-election Native Vote webinar to analyze the impact of Indian Country on elections and set a course for a new Administration and Congress.

NCAI submits comments on Tribal Trust Compliance and Federal Infrastructure Decision-Making.

DECEMBER 2016

NCAI delivers 15th annual State of Indian Nations Address

Washington State authorizes Dental Health Aide Therapists (DHATs) to practice in tribal communities.

BIA releases Guidelines for Implementing ICWA to accompany newly updated 2016 ICWA regulations.

Tribal leaders attend a listening session with members of the Trump Native American Coalition and Trump Transition Team.

DECEMBER 2016

BIA Issues New Guidelines for Tribal and BIA Police on the Arrest and Detention of Non-Indian Criminal Suspects in Indian Country.

NCAI releases its 2018 Indian Country Budget Request report “Investing in Indian Country for a Stronger America.”

The Department of the Interior takes land owned by the Craig Tribal Association into federal Indian trust status in Alaska.

NCAI holds Tribal Leaders Strategy Meeting on Priorities for 2017 in Washington, D.C.

JANUARY 2017

FEBRUARY 2017

NCAI holds Executive Council Winter Session in Washington, D.C.

NCAI delivers 15th annual State of Indian Nations Address

Washington State authorizes Dental Health Aide Therapists (DHATs) to practice in tribal communities.

NCAI releases report detailing Indian Country’s unmet needs in “Tribal Infrastructure: Investing in Indian Country for a Stronger America.”
PROGRESS 2016-2017

MARCH 2017

NCAI provides testimony in the House on Improving and Expanding Infrastructure in Tribal and Insular Communities.

NCAI provides testimony in the House on the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act.4

NCAI joins tribal nations and Standing Rock supporters in the Native Nations Rise march in Washington, D.C.

NCAI and NARF support the nomination and appointment of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the U.S. Supreme Court.

APRIL 2017

NCAI testifies on the importance of indigenous government participation at the United Nations.

NCAI supports Harvard Business School in offering the training program Leading People and Investing to Build Sustainable Communities.

NCAI, USET and NATHPO submit joint comments on FCC action to streamline tribal Section 106 review.

NCAI Mid-Year Conference and Marketplace, Uncasville, CT featuring the Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum.

MAY 2017

NCAI provides testimony in the House on Improving and Expanding Infrastructure in Tribal and Insular Communities.

The NCAI PRC releases a Research Policy Update entitled “Responding to the Opioid Crisis: An Update for Tribal Leaders.”

The NCAI PRC releases a Research Policy Update entitled “Tribal Implications of the Revised Common Rule & NIH sIRB Policy.”

JUNE 2017

NCAI members pass Paris Agreement resolution at the NCAI Mid Year Conference and Marketplace

The NCAI PRC releases a Research Policy Update entitled “Responding to the Opioid Crisis: An Update for Tribal Leaders.”

The NCAI PRC releases a Research Policy Update entitled “Tribal Implications of the Revised Common Rule & NIH sIRB Policy.”

The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians hires Oregon’s first Dental Health Aide Therapist.5

AUGUST 2017

The NCAI PRC co-sponsors event with UNM and NIH “Tribal Data Sharing & Genetics: Policy Development Workshop.”

NCAI holds Tribal Unity Impact Days in Washington, D.C.

NCAI teams with Define American to host “First Americans + New Americans” event with Native nation and immigrant community leaders.

Seminole Tribe of Florida gets first ever tribal nation Presidential Emergency Declaration in the wake of Hurricane Irma.6

Photo Credits: 1. Will Micklin 2. CTA Website. 3. SDC.WASTATELEG.ORG. 4. Instagram.com/EdWorkforce. 5. NWPAiHB 6. FEMA
Dear Tribal Leaders, NCAI Members, Native Peoples, and Friends of Indian Country:

Please accept the thanks of NCAI and the Executive Committee for your continued support of the National Congress of American Indians. I am deeply humbled to have been your NCAI President these past four years. I am especially grateful to the dedicated tribal leaders of the Executive Committee for their service.

The National Congress of American Indians emerged from Indian Country nearly 75 years ago, in the face of termination and relocation. Our mission is no less critical today. We are facing a similar pivotal moment, with a new President, Administration and Congress and a new justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

But change represents opportunity. With every new Administration and Congress, there are new opportunities for tribes as sovereign government to be partners on the issues impacting the United States. NCAI positions tribal nations to readily observe emerging opportunities, and seize them.

The new Administration has been very clear that jobs, the economy and infrastructure are their top priorities. They are also the top priority issues for Indian Country.

NCAI acted swiftly and with firm resolve to ensure that Indian Country’s voice was clearly heard from the first days of the transition, to the beginnings of this new Administration and Congress. The development of NCAI’s initial report on Indian Country’s infrastructure needs and priorities documents our status as sovereign governments, and our track record of creative solutions to meet our challenges.

For decades, NCAI has worked with both Republican and Democratic Presidents and Congress to protect the fundamental principles of tribal self-government. We support those who support Indian Country. And Indian Country always does best when tribal leaders come together in a non-partisan, respectful, unified way to represent tribal priorities and parity at every step.

NCAI is proud to be the steady, unified voice of Indian Country. In these pages you will read about the tireless work of NCAI to protect and promote tribal sovereignty. We give thanks to our supporters and partners who make these efforts possible.

Our strength as Native peoples never fails us. Our persistence is historic. Our resilience is unsurpassed. As First Americans we look forward to working together with all Americans to keep tribal nations, and this nation, strong.

Sincerely,

Brian Cladoosby – President
National Congress of American Indians
# NCAI Executive Committee 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>President</strong></th>
<th><strong>First Vice President</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brian Cladoosby – Chairman</td>
<td>Fawn Sharp – President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinomish Indian Tribal Community</td>
<td>Quinault Nation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Secretary</strong></th>
<th><strong>Treasurer</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Payment – Chairperson</td>
<td>W. Ron Allen – Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sault St. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians</td>
<td>Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## NCAI Area Vice Presidents

### Alaska
- Jerry Isaac – CEO
- Native Village of Tanacross

### Eastern Oklahoma
- Joe Byrd – Speaker of the Nation
- Cherokee Nation

### Great Plains
- Larry Wright – Chairman
- Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

### Midwest
- Roger Rader – Council Member
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

### Northeast
- Lance Gumbs – Former Tribal Council Member
- Shinnecock Indian Nation

### Northwest
- Mel Sheldon, Jr. – Council Member
- Tulalip Tribe of Washington

### Pacific
- Jack Potter, Jr. – Chairman
- Redding Rancheria

### Rocky Mountain
- Darrin Old Coyote – Former Chairman
- Crow Nation

### Southeast
- Larry Townsend – Former Tribal Council Member
- Lumbee Tribe

### Southern Plains
- Liana Onnen – Chairwoman
- Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation

### Southwest
- Joe Garcia – Councilman
- Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo

### Western
- Bruce Ignacio – Councilman
- Uintah and Ouray Ute Tribe

## Alternates

### Alaska
- Rob Sanderson, Jr. – 1st V.P.
- Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA)

### Eastern Oklahoma
- Norman Hildebrand – Second Chief
- Wyandotte Nation

### Great Plains
- Leander McDonald – President
- United Tribes Technical College

### Midwest
- Carolyn Beaulieu – Secretary/Treasurer
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians

### Northeast
- Fatima Dames – Councilwoman
- Mashantucket Pequot Tribe

### Northwest
- Theresa Sheldon – Council Secretary
- Tulalip Tribe of Washington

### Pacific
- Charlie Wright – Tribal Chairman
- Cortina Rancheria-Kletsel Dehe Band of Wintun Indians

### Rocky Mountain
- Shawn Backbone – Vice Secretary
- Crow Nation

### Southeast
- Vinnie Bryant – Coharie People Board Chair
- Coharie Tribe

### Southern Plains
- Terry Pepper – Tribal Council Secretary
- Kaw Nation

### Southwest
- Joseph Naranjo – Tribal Council Member
- Pueblo of Santa Clara

### Western
- Tony Small – Member Ute Indian Business Committee
- Ute Indian Tribe
NCAI thanks the many dedicated tribal leaders who have served in the roles of President and Executive Director to the organization. Your commitment, sacrifice and service to tribal nations will always be remembered.

**PRESIDENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944-52</td>
<td>N.B. Johnson</td>
<td>Cherokee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-59</td>
<td>Joseph R. Garry</td>
<td>Coeur D’Alene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-64</td>
<td>Walter Wetzel</td>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>Clarence Wesley</td>
<td>San Carlos Apache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>Wendell Chino</td>
<td>Mescalero Apache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>Earl Old Person</td>
<td>Blackfeet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>Leon F. Cook</td>
<td>Red Lake Chippewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-76</td>
<td>Mel Tonasket</td>
<td>Colville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>Veronica L. Murdock</td>
<td>Mohave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>Edward Driving Hawk</td>
<td>Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-84</td>
<td>Joseph DeLaCruz</td>
<td>Quinault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-87</td>
<td>Reuben A. Snake, Jr.</td>
<td>Winnebago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>John Gonzales</td>
<td>San Ildefonso Pueblo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>Wayne L. Ducheneaux</td>
<td>Cheyenne River Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-95</td>
<td>gaiashkibos</td>
<td>Lac Courte Oreilles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-99</td>
<td>W. Ron Allen</td>
<td>Jamestown S’Klallam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>Susan Masten</td>
<td>Yurok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-05</td>
<td>Tex Hall</td>
<td>Mandaan/Hidatsa/Arikara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-09</td>
<td>Joe A. Garcia</td>
<td>Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-13</td>
<td>Jefferson Keel</td>
<td>Chickasaw Nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-17</td>
<td>Brian Cladoosby</td>
<td>Swinomish Indian Tribal Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944-48</td>
<td>Ruth Muskrat Bronson</td>
<td>Cherokee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Louis R. Bruce</td>
<td>Mohawk/Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Edward Rogers</td>
<td>Chippewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>John C. Rainer</td>
<td>Taos Pueblo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Ruth Muskrat Bronson</td>
<td>Cherokee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Frank George</td>
<td>Colville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-59</td>
<td>Helen Peterson</td>
<td>Oglala Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-63</td>
<td>Robert Burnett</td>
<td>Rosebud Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-67</td>
<td>Vine Deloria, Jr.</td>
<td>Standing Rock Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>John Belindo</td>
<td>Navajo/Kiowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Bruce Wilkie</td>
<td>Makah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Franklin Ducheneaux</td>
<td>Cheyenne River Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Leo W. Vocu</td>
<td>Oglala Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-77</td>
<td>Charles Trimble</td>
<td>Oglala Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Andrew E. Ebona</td>
<td>Tlingit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-82</td>
<td>Ronald Andrade</td>
<td>Luiseno-Diegueno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Silas Whitman</td>
<td>Nez Perce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-89</td>
<td>Susan Shown Harjo</td>
<td>Cheyenne/Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>A. Gay Kingman</td>
<td>Cheyenne River Sioux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Michael J. Anderson</td>
<td>Creek/Choctaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Rachel A. Joseph</td>
<td>Shoshone/Paiute/Mono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-2000</td>
<td>JoAnn K. Chase</td>
<td>Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-Present</td>
<td>Jacqueline Pata</td>
<td>Tlingit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In any time of transition, what never changes is how we navigate transitions as tribal leaders and tribal governments, making decisions based on our tribal values and cultures.

We faced a major shift in the wake of the 2016 election, and NCAI forged the path into our new environment. The NCAI post-election webinar was held two days after the November election, and took a clear look at the outcomes and opportunities for Indian Country.

NCAI’s preparedness was evident from the start of this new Administration and Congress. Tribal leaders met with the Trump Transition team as early as November 2016, and NCAI communicated regularly about tribal priorities throughout the agency appointment process. The NCAI Tribal Leaders Transition meeting in January gathered tribal nations with Congressional and agency representatives.

At the forefront of the Administration transition, NCAI submitted detailed comments about the permitting process and quickly released the comprehensive report *Tribal Infrastructure: Investing in Indian Country for a Stronger America*. NCAI has testified on infrastructure in tribal communities, the Build Act of 2017, and the Tribal HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program.

Tribal nations understand that we cannot develop infrastructure projects at the expense of harming our cultural, religious, and historical heritage. NCAI actively files comments with the FCC on Section 106 Review by Tribes, in support of sacred National Monuments, and trust land acquisitions under the Indian Reorganization Act.

Tribal nations cannot develop our economies at the expense of our own programs and services. This year NCAI released a multi-partner brief “Empowering Tribal Economic Development: Indian Country’s Policy Recommendations for the Federal Government.”

Most importantly, NCAI persists in reminding the federal government that funding for Indian Country is not discretionary, but is the measure by which they uphold the federal trust responsibility. NCAI released its 2018 Indian Country Budget Request Report, “Investing in Indian Country for a Strong America,” making it clear the time is now for public investment in Indian Country.

True investment in our peoples means understanding and tearing down the social and economic determinants of inequality. NCAI maintains a deep and impactful network of social justice and economic development partners. We succeed through the power of a collective voice.

With your support of NCAI, we stand strong for sovereignty and the bright future it brings.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Pata – Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians
NCAI TAKES ACTION TO STRENGTHEN TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

When NCAI was created in 1944, the founding members were responding to the threats posed by the termination and assimilation policies of the federal government. For nearly 75 years, NCAI has diligently protected and advanced the inherent sovereign rights of tribal nations.

The theme of this year’s Annual Report, and of the 2017 Annual Convention, is “We are Strong Nations.” This theme celebrates the progress and resilience of tribal nations who have persevered through policies intended to dismantle our governments and restrict our access to our natural resources and cultures. Today’s tribal nations remain rooted in rich histories and cultures while deploying innovative governing strategies designed to enable their nations and citizens to thrive.

NCAI advances the priorities identified by our tribal members in many ways. NCAI works closely with Congress and the Administration to ensure the government-to-government relationship that exists between tribal nations and the federal government is honored. NCAI actively works with tribal governments and our organization partners to strengthen and expand federal programs for Indian Country. NCAI also ensures that tribal priorities are considered when the Administration is implementing laws and revising programs that impact tribal communities. NCAI works closely with our partner the Native American Rights Fund to protect tribal rights in litigation through the Tribal Supreme Court Project.

Acknowledging that our future belongs to Native youth, NCAI has created opportunities for youth to engage at the local and national level in policies that most impact their daily lives. NCAI, in partnership with the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), and the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), created the First Kids 1st initiative, which creates a platform to connect Native youth and tribal governments across Indian Country. In addition, the NCAI Youth Commission, the Wilma Mankiller Fellowship Program, and Native Graduate Health Fellowship Program provide avenues for Native youth to engage in national issues.

NCAI’s conferences offer robust resources and invaluable experiences to its members by providing best practices, emerging models, national policy dialogues, local and regional discussions, and consensus-building resolutions that guide our advocacy work.

Please also see the sections in this report on Effective Advocacy, Empowering Native Communities, and Public Education to learn about other important NCAI work on governance and outreach in support of tribal sovereignty.

NCAI is honored to champion the interests of Indian Country as we work together to support and sustain lasting cultures of prosperity for our tribal nations and peoples.
2017 STATE OF INDIAN NATIONS ADDRESS

NCAI delivered its 15th annual State of Indian Nations Address (SOIN) on February 13 in Washington, D.C., highlighting the progress of tribal nations and underscoring how tribal governments work with U.S. governments, partners, and stakeholders for the betterment of all communities.

“We are innovating in our governments, revitalizing our communities, and growing our economies. And we continue to partner with other governments to meet common challenges,” declared NCAI President Brian Cladoosby to the standing-room only crowd at the Knight Studio of the Newseum. He addressed tribal leaders, Administration officials, members of Congress, educators, students, and thousands of others joining via the live C-SPAN broadcast and NCAI’s livestream.

He noted when it comes to the relationship between the United States and tribal governments, “trust” is a sacred obligation accepted by the federal government in exchange for the millions of acres of ceded tribal land that created the greatest nation in the world.

For these lands, the U.S. made three promises: to never take our remaining tribal lands without consent; to safeguard the right of tribal nations to govern on those lands; and to enact laws that protect our economies, treaties and ways of life. This is the foundation of the trust responsibility on which we have built our modern government-to-government relationship.

“This is what we ask of the new Congress and the new Administration: Make good on the promise of our trust relationship. Abide by the treaties. Affirm the wisdom of local decision making… by Indian Country, for Indian Country,” he declared.

President Cladoosby highlighted the benefits of collaboration to create flourishing communities. “Together, we must remove the obstacles that prevent tribes from fulfilling our potential as nations and neighbors. We must ensure that tribes can deploy all of the essential tools that all governments must have in order to build prosperous communities.”

This means including Indian Country in broader tax reform, and granting full tribal authority to generate revenue, access capital, and invest locally.

Congress was encouraged to reinforce their investment in tribal policy with a real investment of funds in Indian Country, through avenues like the Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program, the $338 million backlog of deferred maintenance of Bureau of Indian Education schools, and tribally initiated development of the 20 percent of oil and gas reserves held by tribal nations.

For tribal nations, investing in infrastructure goes beyond roads and bridges, or housing and internet connection. It means partnering in education, healthcare, workforce development, planning, and tribal data to support smart, informed decision-making.
These partnerships have proven to generate the highest return on investment, for they avoid the high costs of conflict between governments. Tribal nations stand ready to identify and implement win-win solutions.

“Indian Country stands ready to partner with anyone and everyone who will work with us to help build a stronger America,” declared President Cladoosby.

U.S. Senator John Hoeven (ND), Chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, delivered the Congressional Response to the 2017 State of Indian Nations Address. He emphasized the need for working in a bipartisan manner on the priorities of, and investments in, Indian Country.

“If we empower Indian tribes and other partners to invest, innovate, and create jobs, we will build a higher standard of living for our citizens across Indian Country,” stated Senator Hoeven.

The Senator highlighted legislative priorities of the Committee, which included review of the federal permitting process, economic enhancement tools for tribal businesses, reauthorization of the Indian Housing Block Grant program, self-determination in tribal energy development, improvements to the Indian Health Service and delivery of tribal healthcare; enhancing public and child safety and access to victim funds, and addressing issues faced by Native veterans.

Senator Hoeven concluded with a call for continued cooperation: “Both the Committee and Indian tribes will need to work hand-in-hand in advancing an Indian package that is tailored for local communities, and working together we can enhance the quality of life for Indian people.”
“The policies that have been successful – self-determination, acknowledgment of the treaty and trust responsibility, and recognition of tribes as governments – are not party-based ideals. They are the foundation of the relationship between tribal nations and the federal government. So as we begin our work with a new President and Congress – we start there.”

– Jacqueline Pata, NCAI Executive Director

WHITE HOUSE TRIBAL INITIATIVES

TRIBAL LEADERS STRATEGY MEETING

In January of 2017, the United States swore in the 45th President of the United States – Donald J. Trump. As nations who contributed to this country’s current democratic system, tribes have observed the transfer of power to every new President the United States has ever had.

As part of the Presidential Inauguration activities, NCAI held a transition meeting on January 19, 2017. The Tribal Leaders Strategy Meeting was highly attended by tribal leaders who came to Washington, D.C. to participate in Inauguration activities and to interact with their Congressional delegations. Tribal leaders had opportunities to hear from members of the Trump Transition Team working on the transition at the Department of the Interior. The NCAI event was the only event attended by Trump Transition Team members the day before the Inauguration.

Tribal leaders discussed the unique opportunities and challenges that exist with a new Administration. NCAI led a discussion of key partners on strategies in the areas of healthcare, infrastructure needs, tax opportunities, education, and economic development. This well-attended event served the purpose of bringing Indian Country together during the transition to forge and advance key strategies and relationships with the new Administration and Congress.
NCAI YOUTH INITIATIVES

The Native youth we see today are our tribal leaders of tomorrow. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates in 2016, Native youth age 24 or less make up 40 percent of the American Indian and Alaska Native population. One could connect any policy objective or strategy of NCAI to Native youth – whether it is housing, healthcare, education, or infrastructure – we fight this fight for our future. For our youth.

FIRST KIDS 1ST

At the heart of NCAI’s youth work is the First Kids 1st (FK1st) initiative. The overarching goal of FK1st is to mobilize communities to create the conditions for Native children, youth, and families to thrive. With generous multi-year funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the FK1st Initiative formally joins four Founding Partners: NCA, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), and National Indian Health Board (NIHB). The FK1st initiative and its founding partners seek to support the healthy development of Native children – both on and off tribal lands – by coordinating efforts to transform the governance, child welfare, education, and healthcare systems that have the greatest impact on Native children, youth, and families.

The executive directors of the FK1st Founding Partner organizations meet in-person on a quarterly basis to share policy updates, strategize, and collaborate on how to transform systems of support. An important product of these regular meetings is the annual update of the Native Children’s Policy Agenda, which includes policy objectives and tribal strategies. The Native Children’s Policy Agenda serves as a tool to assist tribal leaders and other policymakers in their work to create and implement a vision for vibrant, healthy communities. It is also designed to guide stakeholders as they prioritize legislation and policy issues that may affect Native children and youth.

The participation, mentorship, and input of our Native youth are integral parts of the policies and work developed by FK1st Partners. All FK1st Partners have a youth commission, youth position(s) on their organization’s board of directors, or stand-alone youth advisory board. A few Native youth even participate in more than one FK1st Partner organization – hence, furthering collaboration among partners.

A pinnacle of the FK1st initiative is the emphasis on seeding collaboration between existing partners and potential new partners in order to improve the lives and well-being of Native youth. To further its FK1st work, NCAI has been involved with a number of other Native youth-focused activities during the past year, including:

- Partners Supporting Native Youth
- NCAI Youth Commission
- Student Visits to the Embassy of Tribal Nations
- NCAI Fellowship and Internship Programs
- Gen-I (Generation Indigenous)
- My Brother’s Keeper

Engaging and strengthening the voice of Native youth is one of the ways NCAI works to protect sovereignty for our future generations. NCAI’s conferences are a mainstay to share innovative practices with, to receive input from, and engage the voices of our young people. They create a unique opportunity for tribal leaders, Native youth, and partners to work together on youth-based issues.

The Elders and Youth Roundtable was the inspirational highlight of the 73rd Annual Convention & Marketplace agenda in October 2016. As elders and youth shared dialogue, wisdom, and stories, the session ran nearly two-and-a-half...
hours past the scheduled time. Participants gained a better understanding of proactive strategies for action, shared positive youth narratives, and fostered the energy and vision of our future leaders. In a similar vein, elders strengthened the bridge between their generation and youth. The participants were able to provide bookending voices to developing policy and community change.

At the 2017 Mid Year Conference, the Youth Commission created a complementary agenda to NCAI’s main conference agenda. This included a special roundtable with former Solicitor for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Hilary Tompkins, an exclusive meet-and-greet with the new Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke, and time engaging with tribal leaders during General Assembly. On the main conference agenda, Youth Commission officers participated on panels for the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force meeting and a breakout session on the Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda.

NCAI YOUTH COMMISSION
The NCAI Youth Commission was established in 1997 by the NCAI Board of Directors to foster the voices of Native youth. The Youth Commission – which includes all interested youth as well as elected officers – provides a unique perspective on issues relevant to Native youth. It is an opportunity to acquire knowledge from, and be a resource to, NCAI and tribal leaders about the organizational processes of NCAI and structures of tribal politics. Through their participation, the Youth Commissioners connect with peers, engage with tribal leaders, share ideas, and become better advocates for tribal nations and Indian Country as a whole.

Outside of NCAI’s conferences, the Youth Commission officers began a “Sovereignty Matters” challenge where each officer challenged themselves to interview a tribal leader from their community about what sovereignty means to that leader. They then shared their experience during monthly video meetings.

Every two years at NCAI’s Annual Convention, elections are held to select Native youth to serve as Youth Commission Officers. During the 2016-2018 Youth Commission term, officers are focused on growing NCAI’s youth network and encouraging youth to reach their full potential. The Commission’s officers are listed on the right:

YOUTH COMMISSION OFFICERS 2016-2018

MIKHA CARLOS
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
Co-President

BRIAN BARLOW
Cherokee Nation
Co-President

RORY WHEELER
Seneca Nation
Vice President

LANCE SANCHEZ
Tohono O’odham Nation
Secretary

IAN OLSON
Makah Tribe
Member-At-Large

VICTORIA HALL
Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
Member-At-Large

THOMAS HALL
Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
Member-At-Large
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

WILMA MANKILLER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

NCAI’s Wilma Mankiller Fellowship Program gives young Native professionals the chance to expand their skills and work experience, while contributing to various policy and research initiatives that advance NCAI’s mission. The Fellows serve 11-month terms of employment at NCAI gaining experience in policy development, advocacy, communications, applied research, and other programs advancing tribal sovereignty.

The program is named for the first female principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. Wilma Mankiller forged a path that simultaneously empowered and restored cultural balance to indigenous communities. She acknowledged the struggles that Native people face and worked toward changing victim-based narratives through grassroots community development, the expression of inherent sovereignty in practice, and the creation of many youth education initiatives.

In the summer of 2017, NCAI welcomed Yawna Allen (Quapaw/Cherokee/Yuchi), Lorraine Basch (Puyallup), and Tyesha Ignacio (Diné). These three new Fellows join the ranks of the 67 young Natives who have been a part of this program over the past decade. The 2017-2018 Fellows cohort is immersed in the work of NCAI with an emphasis on tribal policy, communications, research, infrastructure, economic development, health, and education.

Through this commitment, NCAI invests in the next generation of tribal leadership and has graduated professionals from the program who have advanced to influential careers in Indian Country. The Fellows work directly with tribal leaders, national and regional partners, educators, policy makers and Native youth as they expand their networks and capabilities.

Fellows are selected through a competitive application and interview process. Applications are due by March 15 of each year and can be accessed through NCAI’s website at www.ncai.org.

“The Wilma Mankiller Fellowship is providing me with valuable experience navigating the delicate complexities of tribal-federal-state relationships, reiteration of the importance of the protection and advancement of sovereign rights, and a daily opportunity to do meaningful work for Indian Country.”

– Yawna Allen, 2017-2018 Wilma Mankiller Fellow


67
WILMA MANKILLER FELLOWS ALUMNI
NATIVE GRADUATE HEALTH FELLOWSHIP

Launched in 2012, the Native Graduate Health Fellowship Program is emblematic of NCAI’s commitment to equip the next generation of Native health leaders with the skills, knowledge, and tools they need to succeed. The program builds a cohort of Native health professionals who are prepared to lead in formulating and promoting beneficial health policies and practices for Indian Country.

The 2017 cohort included Felina Cordova (Hopi), Tabatha Harris (Choctaw), Sarah Katongan (Inupiaq), Justine Kay (Diné), and Jennifer Richards (Diné, Lakota, and Taos). While the students claim different hometowns, tribal backgrounds, and specializations in their studies, what they share is an acute awareness of the gravity and complexity of the healthcare needs of their own communities, and a passionate commitment to address them.

The Fellows took part in a four-day professional development seminar in Washington, D.C. designed to deepen their understanding of tribal sovereignty, federal public policy, Native health policy, and recent innovations in Native healthcare. This included discussions with agency and NCAI partner organizations and a hosted tour of the National Institutes of Health. Fellows also receive a monetary stipend to apply toward the cost of their graduate studies.

Applicants are chosen based on a comprehensive set of criteria, including a demonstrated commitment to Native communities and/or health policy, and a desire to use their degree and knowledge gained from the Fellowship to support specific tribal communities and/or Indian Country as a whole.

NCAI owes its thanks to Robert Burnette and the Seventh Day Adventist Church for their generous support in establishing and sustaining the endowment that makes this program possible.

“Growing up in a tribal community, I observed preventable mortality and it motivated me to pursue a career in public health.”

– Jennifer Richards, 2017 Native Graduate Health Fellow
NCAI’s conferences are a powerful venue of support for tribal sovereignty. At these gatherings, the members of NCAI convene as Indian Country’s national congress to discuss tribal nation successes and challenges, and adopt resolutions that express Indian Country’s consensus positions on its priority issues.

PROSPERITY THROUGH SOVEREIGNTY

“Sovereignty, like freedom, does not come freely. We must fight for it. As sovereigns, we need not ask state governments and authorities to establish laws and regulations - these powers are inherently with tribes,” said Thomas Beauty, President and CEO, Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA) in his welcoming remarks on behalf of the Western Region in the First General Assembly of the 73rd Annual Convention and Marketplace in Phoenix, Arizona. The focus of the conference was on the power of sovereignty to be a driver for development and prosperity among tribal nations.

Nearly 2,000 participants attended the Annual Convention held October 9-14, 2016 at the Phoenix Convention Center. A highlight of the conference was an all-day National Tribal Water Summit, co-sponsored by NCAI, ITCA, and the Native American Rights Fund. The summit highlighted the importance of water, tribal access and rights, and the effects of development and climate change on this sacred resource.

The impact of infrastructure projects and importance of meaningful tribal consultation were the topics of several sessions. An infrastructure project permitting listening session at the Convention kicked off a series of six consultations with the Department of the Interior and tribal nations. Among the 59 resolutions adopted at Annual was Resolution #PHX-16-023, Support for the Standing Rock Sioux to Protect its Lands, Waters, and Sacred Places.

Throughout the seven General Assemblies, tribal leaders were addressed by many notable speakers, such as Deputy Secretary Mike Connor of the Department of the Interior; White House Senior Associate Director of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs, Tracy Goodluck; Congressman Raul Grijalva (AZ); the new Department of Housing and Urban Development Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of Native American Programs, Heidi Frechette; and Mike Andrews, Chief Counsel and Majority Staff Director for the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. Senator John McCain (AZ) spoke to the Fourth General Assembly addressing water rights and tribal self-governance, and the importance of passing the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act.
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Larry Roberts took the stage accompanied by Indian Health Service Director Mary Smith as they announced the long-anticipated Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide space at Bureau of Indian Education schools and Office of Justice Services facilities for mental health providers. Mr. Roberts highlighted the many ways the outgoing Administration had worked closely with tribal nations, and where DOI has room for improvement.

The NCAI Youth Commission held elections for its officers who serve two-year terms. Along with hand-picked sessions suggested for attendance, there was a packed agenda during the week of activities and sessions geared just for the Youth Commission. These youth learn valuable skills that inform and prepare them to become difference-making tribal leaders.

Other highlights during the week included the Welcome Reception hosted by the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, and the Cultural Reception hosted by the Gila River Indian Community at the Rawhide Western Town and Center. Attendees took to the streets for the National Native American Just Move It! Healthy Lifestyles Walk, Run and Rally, enjoyed the Gala Banquet which featured Crystal Shawanda, and joined the Youth and Elder’s Honoring Luncheons. A Native Vote Pep Rally worked up the crowd with fun ways to turn out the vote in their communities. Juanita Ahtone was the popular winner of the pep rally cheerleading contest.

Resolution Committee Chair Juanita Ahtone opens NCAI’s 73rd Annual Convention and Marketplace.

Thomas Beauty, Chairman of the Yavapai-Apache Nation and ITCA President and CEO.

“Without strong and vibrant sovereignty, we run the risk of becoming Indian Country in name only.”

— Thomas Beauty, ITCA President and CEO
Several hundred tribal leaders, NCAI tribal delegates, Congressional leaders, and members of President Trump’s Administration came together in Washington, D.C. from February 13-16, 2017 to engage in a substantive dialogue about the key Administration and Congressional policy issues impacting tribal nations. Given the new Congressional session and a new Administration in 2017, it was especially important for NCAI to provide an opportunity for tribal leaders to have early engagement with both Congress and the Administration.

This year’s Executive Council Winter Session stressed the importance of educating new members of Congress and the Administration, finding areas of opportunity for tribal nations, and identifying potential challenges to tribal priorities. NCAI garnered its highest number of Congressional representatives yet, with 25 speakers focused on the need for the tribal voice to be heard in key priority areas such as healthcare, taxation, and infrastructure. A variety of Congressional members also commended NCAI for the organization’s non-partisan approach to its policy work and reinforced the need for tribal issues to stay non-partisan in the upcoming Congressional session.

Administration officials spoke of the political status of tribes and reaffirmed the need for an ongoing discussion that takes into account the nation-to-nation relationship that exists between the federal government and tribal governments. White House representatives also articulated the goal of streamlining federal regulations to encourage economic development for tribes, especially in the areas of energy development.

Three key themes dominated the conversation during the convening: (1) advocacy and education around the unique political status of tribes and the need for policies and programs that enhance tribal self-determination; (2) ensuring tribal leaders are leading the discussions around key tribal programs and priorities so existing programs are protected and new initiatives are tribally driven and solution-based; and (3) that tribal priorities in key areas are considered when national conversations occur around healthcare, energy development, taxation, infrastructure, and federal agency reorganizations.

The robust event agenda featured a telecommunications roundtable that included tribal leaders, industry leaders, and government officials from the Federal Communications Commission. In addition, NCAI brought tribal leaders together to begin developing priorities for the Farm Bill reauthorization which will expire in 2018, ensuring that Indian Country will put tribal priorities forward to Congress.

Several NCAI taskforce meetings were held on issues such as violence against Native women, housing, tax reform, cultural protection, and emergency management. A strategy session was held regarding participation of Indigenous governments at the United Nations. New tribal leaders were offered an opportunity to attend an advocacy session offering useful tools on engaging members of Congress and the Administration.
On February 14, NCAI held an evening banquet ceremony to commemorate its 19th Annual Leadership Awards, which honor individuals who have made a transformative impact in and for Indian Country. The 2017 Awardees were U.S. Representative Tom Cole (Congressional Leadership Award); Larry Roberts, former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior (Government Leadership Award); Chairman Dave Archambault II, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Native American Leadership Award); Norm DeWeaver, Former National Representative, Indian and Native American Employment and Training Coalition (Public Sector Leadership Award); Keith Harper, the first Native American to receive the rank of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Council (Special Recognition Award); and former Indian Health Service Director Mary Smith (Special Recognition Award).

Reflecting on the distinguished group of awardees, NCAI President Cladoosby remarked, “This year’s leadership awards recipients have taken brave stances and have opened doors for other Natives to walk through in ways that bring greater awareness to the issues impacting Indian Country.”

“Even though some of the issues we face are difficult and complicated, there is an energy and earnestness of purpose that I feel when so many of you are gathered from so many different parts across our country.”

– Senator Lisa Murkowski (AK)
“Sovereignty has to mean something, it has to be more than a name, it has to be that tribes decide for themselves what is right,” said Secretary Ryan Zinke, Department of the Interior, as he addressed the First General Assembly of the Mid Year Conference and Marketplace, held in Uncasville, Connecticut on June 12-15. It was his first address to a national gathering of tribal nations since taking office in 2017.

The Mohegan Sun Convention Center hosted more than 900 NCAI participants attending throughout the week. The theme of the conference featured many sessions on development in Indian Country. A panel to discuss the tribal policy agenda with the Administration strategized how tribes can further economic development and self-determination, and sparked meaningful discussions that closed out the First General Assembly.

Conference highlights included an address by the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Ajit Pai. Mr. Pai emphasized the need for digital development in rural and tribal communities, to digitally empower tribal nations while at the same time protecting cultural heritage sites.

The 12th Annual Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum (TLSF) was held on Wednesday, June 14. An expert panel was assembled to discuss the “Federal Policy Agenda: Navigating Infrastructure, Tax, and Health Care Reforms”, moderated by NCAI Policy Research Center Director, Dr. Yvette Roubideaux.
The week was packed with a schedule featuring topical breakout sessions with expert panels and informative discussion with the attendees. Understanding the issues of missing and murdered Native women; strengthening tribal citizen services; building tribal research capacity; setting priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill; advancing economic development; and addressing mental health, education, natural resources sustainability, taxation, homeland security and emergency management were just some of the important matters addressed in these sessions.

Listening sessions and consultations have become an integral part of NCAI conferences. These provide opportunities for all tribal leaders to meet with federal agencies on such topics as the protection of cultural and genetic resources, the reorganization of the Executive Branch, and the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Review of National Monuments. Sessions were offered by DOI, the Department of Justice, and the United Nations. Public safety, USDA programs that impact tribes, FEMA’s policy revision, and the FCC’s impacts on Native communities also were part of the week.

The NCAI Youth Commission was a strong presence throughout the week contributing hope and vibrancy for the future of Indian Country. The NCAI Youth Commission also had an opportunity to speak directly with Secretary Zinke, NCAI President Brian Cladoosby, and Chairman Kevin Brown of the Mohegan Tribe.

At the end of each day, the youth reflected on the sessions they attended, and thought about how the information they learned applied to their lives. NCAI Youth Commission Co-President Mikah Carlos participated as a panelist for the “Where Healing Really Begins” breakout session on mental health, and strongly encouraged tribal leaders in the room to listen to the Native youth in their communities, and ensure youth are at the table when discussing policy decisions that impact them.

As part of the regular business of those tribal nations gathered at the 2017 Mid Year Conference, 36 resolutions were adopted by the membership. Other highlights from the week included the Sunrise Ceremony in observance of Native sacred places, a tradeshow with a wonderful variety of Native arts and crafts vendors, a Welcome Reception, and Meet & Greet hosted by the Mohegan Tribe.

“We are looking to eliminate barriers to deploying wireless in Indian Country.”
– Ajit Pai, Chairman of the FCC

“I am proud to be your champion. It is my pledge to be your advocate.”
– DOI Secretary Ryan Zinke speaking with NCAI Youth Commission at the 2017 NCAI Mid Year Conference

Mohegan Sun dancers perform at the 2017 NCAI Mid Year Conference Welcome Reception.
2017 TRIBAL UNITY IMPACT DAYS

On September 12, NCAI hosted Tribal Unity Impact Days in coordination with eight regional tribal organizations. In keeping with NCAI’s core mission of tribal advocacy, this day was dedicated to tribal leaders hearing from Members of Congress on legislation that impacts Indian Country. This signature event provided a platform for tribal leaders to express their nations’ sovereign rights and advocate on those issues currently being considered in Congress.

This year’s event focused on six key topics selected for targeted advocacy including appropriations, taxation, health care, infrastructure, public safety, and Indian lands. Tribal leaders stressed their priorities of tribal sovereignty and the federal government’s trust responsibility during the question-and-answer sessions. Members of Congress used this time to have meaningful conversations with tribal leaders about current legislation and the present political climate in Washington, D.C.

This non-partisan event was attended by twenty Congressional speakers from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The event included several new Congressional members and provided them their first opportunity to interact with Indian Country.

Following the Congressional briefing, tribal leaders met with their delegations and members of key committees of jurisdiction for further advocacy.
FIRST AMERICANS + NEW AMERICANS

In a landmark convening, Native nation and Immigrant leaders forged new alliances to counter ignorance about their respective communities by society at large. NCAI and its partner organization Define American (DA) hosted the event, titled “FIRST AMERICANS and NEW AMERICANS: Forging Shared Narratives around Culture, Identity, and Citizenship”, on September 14–15, 2017 at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

The two-day, forward-looking convening of nationally recognized leaders gave participants the opportunity to come together and engage in a historic national conversation about what it means to be an “American” and how First Americans and New Americans can reshape the “American” identity to include and uplift the vibrant histories and present contributions of these communities.

“FIRST AMERICANS and NEW AMERICANS was about a beginning - a collective beginning. A beginning focused on finding common ground and using it as a springboard to develop shared solutions to our shared challenges,” said NCAI President Brian Cladoosby. “We seek to jointly forge and advance new narratives that replace the false narratives that drive the destructive laws and policies that harm our communities and hold us back.”

Emerging from the inspired conversation were commitments by NCAI and DA to: develop curricula to convey the rich and accurate histories and contemporary life of our communities; protect, advance and raise up the foundation of their cultural identities; ensure that the Farm Bill before Congress adequately addresses their shared concerns; and ensure that tribal and immigrant voices are heard in the federal decision-making around whether and how to build a physical wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

“This convening marked the start of an historic conversation - one meant not only to build alliances between communities, but to fundamentally change the way we talk about immigration in the United States. When we talk about immigration, the two communities often left out of the conversation are Native Americans and Immigrants themselves. This convening set out to change that,” stated Define American Founder and CEO José Antonio Vargas.

NCAI and DA encourage Native nation leaders, Immigrant leaders, allied organizations, and the media to join this emerging conversation between Indian Country and the Immigrant community as they work to develop and implement shared solutions that create more vibrant futures for First Americans and New Americans.
NCAI is honored to be a strong and consistent voice in Washington, D.C. for tribal nations. As the representative voice for tribal nations throughout Indian Country, NCAI works to ensure the treaty and trust obligations of the federal government are considered at every stage of the advocacy process.

In Congress, NCAI focuses our advocacy work on issues brought forward by our tribal members, such as protecting healthcare, restoring tribal homelands, trust modernization, climate change, tribal infrastructure, public safety, preserving Native languages and culture, education, and economic development, among others. NCAI promotes passage of legislation that will have a sustained and significant impact on tribal communities and tribal citizens.

Once legislation is enacted, NCAI’s advocacy efforts turn to ensuring that laws are implemented as intended by Congress. NCAI has worked with tribes and the Administration to ensure that tribes are active participants in creating and implementing federal initiatives.

In other areas, where tribal nations are leading with innovation and forward looking solutions, NCAI shares those best practices with other tribes and federal officials. Examples include climate change detection and prevention; alternative judicial practices rooted in tribal culture; healthcare focused on prevention and traditional practices; and natural resource protection.

All of NCAI’s advocacy work is grounded in self-governance and advancement of tribal sovereignty for all tribes. Tribal nations have shown throughout the relationship with the federal government that when tribes are able to make decisions at the local level, all parties benefit. NCAI will continue to advocate for programs and legislative efforts that strength tribal self-determination.

In the following pages, you can learn more about NCAI’s effective education and advocacy to achieve prosperity through sovereignty for tribal members and nations.
TRUST MODERNIZATION

Tribal leaders and the Department of the Interior have been making progress on trust reform and want to keep that momentum going. We have seen significant settlements of trust litigation, the development of the Buy–Back program for fractionated lands, passage of the HEARTH Act to promote tribal control over surface leasing of tribal lands, and new leasing and right-of-way regulations that assist greatly on taxation of permanent improvements among other matters. But there is much more work to be done.

In part, trust land development involves a process that needs to work better. Indian lands and resources are subject to leases and contracts which produce trust funds to be returned to the tribal and individual Indian owners. We also have a more fundamental obligation to protect and restore tribal lands, to work on the trust relationship in the federal budget, to ensure that tribal nations get the full economic and tax value of our lands, and to protect our lands as our homelands. NCAI is working with our partners to make progress on all of these goals.

Public Law 114-178, the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA), became law in June 2016. One primary feature of ITARA is a demonstration project empowering tribes to develop trust asset management plans that include activities like surface leasing and forest land management. A tribe with a trust asset management plan would not need the Secretary of the Interior’s approval for activities covered by the plan, thereby greatly reducing regulatory burdens that hinder tribal trust resource development. Implementing ITARA would be particularly helpful for wind, solar, and biofuels development. NCAI engages with Administration officials to implement the demonstration project and has requested the establishment of a working group. This approach would ensure the plan approval process is straightforward and accounts for issues that may arise in the field.
TRIBAL LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

THE YEAR OF STANDING WITH STANDING ROCK

The unprecedented showing of support for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline dominated headlines throughout the year, in part due to the long history of infrastructure projects approved by the federal government over the objections of tribal nations. These projects have brought great harms to tribal lands, waters, treaty rights, and sacred places. Every single tribal nation has a story of federally approved destruction. The litigation has brought some measure of vindication to Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, and all of the Missouri River tribes who raised great concerns about the impacts on water and cultural resources, although the ultimate fate of the pipeline remains unknown.

The movement at Standing Rock has, however, brought Indian Country an important opportunity to address the nation-to-nation relationship in the context of infrastructure decision making. NCAI worked with many tribal nations throughout this year’s consultation process on infrastructure permitting, and developed a set of principles and best practices. For any project affecting tribal lands, waters, treaty rights, or sacred spaces, at the outset the United States must expressly consider the following five principles: (1) recognition of tribal sovereignty; (2) respect for treaty rights; (3) compliance with the federal trust responsibility, including seeking tribal informed consent; (4) upholding all statutory obligations; and (5) ensuring environmental justice.

Improving federal infrastructure permitting process is a priority at NCAI and throughout Indian Country. Tribes do not oppose infrastructure projects. However, it is essential that tribes are consulted and included in the earliest planning and development stages to ensure protection of tribal resources. In November 2016, NCAI submitted comprehensive comments on improving federal infrastructure permitting. NCAI has continued to share these comments and principles and best practices with Administration officials representing various agencies throughout the federal government.

At the 2017 Mid Year Conference, NCAI membership passed Resolution #MOH-17-044, encouraging all federal agencies to implement the report, “Improving Tribal Consultation

White Mountain Apache Chairman Ronnie Lupe and former Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Chairman Dave Archambault II.

NCAI staff support Standing Rock.
and Tribal Involvement in Federal Infrastructure Decisions.” The resolution further encourages all federal agencies to adopt policies similar to the Department of the Interior’s 512 DM 2, which requires the establishment of policies and procedures for government-to-government consultation to identify, conserve, and protect trust resources and uphold the trust responsibility.

Ultimately, inclusion of tribes throughout the permitting process will ensure that energy and other infrastructure projects are deployed more efficiently and without incident.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

Addressing climate change remains a top priority for Indian Country, as rising sea levels, increased drought and forest fires, and melting permafrost have already begun impacting tribal communities. That is why NCAI continues to actively work with tribal nations and other tribal and non-tribal organizations to combat climate change and mitigate its impacts.

Although the United States made the decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, NCAI has chosen to continue to fight alongside the international community in the battle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In June, NCAI issued a joint press release with the Native American Rights Fund expressing their continued commitment to representing the interests of indigenous peoples during implementation of the Paris Agreement.

At the 2017 Mid Year Conference in NCAI’s membership also reaffirmed their commitment to fighting climate change by passing Resolution #MOH-17-053, “Continued Support for the Paris Climate Agreement and Action to Address Climate Change.”

NCAI works diligently to address climate change by advocating for reduced emissions and promoting renewable energy development, and by assisting tribes with documenting the impacts of climate change to their environments.

**ENERGY**

Tribal lands and natural resources are the primary sources of economic activity for tribal communities, and tribal energy resources are vast, and largely untapped. The Department of the Interior estimates that undeveloped traditional energy reserves on tribal lands could generate up to $1 trillion for tribes and surrounding communities. Additionally, the Department of Energy estimates that tribal wind resources could provide 32 percent of the total U.S. electricity demand, and tribal solar resources could generate twice the total amount of energy needed to power the entire country.

The new Administration has made energy development a high priority and included tribes in key meetings with the President because of strong interest in finding ways to help tribes deploy their energy resources. NCAI is pursuing this opportunity for Indian Country by working with tribal nations and the Administration to identify and eliminate barriers to tribal traditional and renewable energy development. In July 2017, NCAI submitted recommendations to the Administration on how to eliminate the barriers tribes face when developing their energy resources.

Utilizing tribal energy resources could be the best opportunity tribal communities have to create sustainable, long-term economic growth, as it would generate jobs and grow tribal economies.
TRIBAL INFRASTRUCTURE

There is growing support across the political spectrum at the tribal, federal, state and local government levels for a bold national plan to repair and revitalize this country’s rapidly decaying infrastructure. A historic investment in our nation’s infrastructure is not just about fixing or replacing what is broken. It is about unleashing America’s full economic potential and enhancing its competitiveness in today’s global economy.

While there is debate about how to undertake and fund this monumental task, there is one incontrovertible fact for a national infrastructure investment plan to be truly comprehensive and transformative, it must consciously include Indian Country.

HOUSING

Housing is a fundamental requirement for tribal communities, and is the mechanism for prosperity in tribal communities. The Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA) has enabled tribes to make great gains in improving housing conditions in their communities. However, as tribal populations continue to grow, the need for adequate, affordable housing for Indian communities persists. According to the American Community Survey 2006-2010 data, Indian homes frequently lack utilities and infrastructure, with approximately 8.6 percent lacking complete plumbing facilities; 7.5 percent lacking kitchen facilities; and 18.9 percent lacking telephone service.

NCAI’s efforts around housing have focused on reauthorization of NAHASDA and addressing homelessness in Indian Country. NCAI continues to advocate for reauthorization of NAHASDA, which expired in September of 2013 and has lagged in Congress. NAHASDA authorizes and administers Indian housing programs within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for American Indian and Alaskan Natives to provide safe and decent housing. NCAI has been working jointly with the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) to bring together tribal leaders and tribal housing entities to advocate for passage of this critical legislation and to participate in these programs.

NCAI has been advocating on housing issues through meetings on Capitol Hill, testimony for adequate funding, sessions at NCAI conferences, supporting consultations on homelessness, and encouraging Congressional and Administrative action.

There are few resources allocated in addressing the need for housing for tribal governments, and homelessness continues to plague tribes as well as Native American veterans on tribal lands. Tribes need funding and empowerment to address this issue, include housing rental options and homeless shelters for veterans and low income people who do not qualify for NAHASDA programs.

In addition, many tribal communities are faced with challenges of recruiting and retaining highly qualified personnel such as teachers, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement officers to work on tribal lands because of the lack of housing.

and homeownership opportunities afforded to them.

NCAI is working on addressing housing issues with HUD, tribal leaders and members of NCAI, and other national organizations.

TRANSPORTATION
Transportation infrastructure is essential for the economic development for tribes, and it includes many modes such as roads, bridges, ferries, trails, air and transit. It is what tribal communities rely on to get their children to school; all tribal members and surrounding non-tribal communities need to get to their final destinations; law enforcement and emergency personnel rely on to respond to emergencies; and businesses on tribal lands use to bring and sell goods.

After the Presidential election, infrastructure was highlighted as a priority for the new Administration and the Congress. In order to prepare and show the infrastructure needs in Indian Country, NCAI developed and produced a report titled, “Tribal Infrastructure: Investing in Indian Country for a Stronger America”. This report provided information on the current state and lack of infrastructure in Indian Country for physical infrastructure related to transportation, housing, water, telecommunication, education, health, safety, and tribal capacity.

NCAI advocates for increased funding and for the federal government to uphold their responsibility in maintaining transportation infrastructure. Even though they are the primary means of access to American Indian and Alaska Native communities, thousands of miles of roadways in Indian Country are still among the most underdeveloped and unsafe roads in the nation.

Congress and the Administration have made infrastructure a priority and NCAI leads the effort in collecting and identifying the information on infrastructure needs in Indian Country. NCAI is working with Congress to ensure tribes are included in any national infrastructure legislation or initiatives.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS
The U.S. continues to be a global leader in the technology and wireless industries. However, access to telecommunications infrastructure and services in rural and tribal lands continues to lag behind the nation overall. While various federal efforts have focused on increasing connectivity to underserved areas, tribal lands remain the least connected areas of the country and experience significant barriers in policy and investment to deploy affordable and robust telecommunications services.

Advocacy efforts in the Congress have centered on finding solutions to allow for more tribal schools and libraries to access high speed internet and educating Members on the disparities that have persisted on tribal lands. Through written testimony and meetings with Congress, NCAI has encouraged Members to ensure that tribal communities are part of the progress of advanced telecommunication services. NCAI has emphasized the need to remove the regulatory, legal, and financial barriers to broadband deployment on tribal lands. NCAI continuously advocated for tribes to be included in the efforts in Congress to expand telehealth solutions across rural America. NCAI will continue to work with Congress to advance policies that increase access and funding for telecommunications deployment on tribal lands.

NCAI participated in a number of proposed rulemakings advanced by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) this year. NCAI submitted four separate filings to defend tribal review in the FCC’s Tower Construction Notification System in order to protect tribal sacred sites. NCAI’s June 15th comment to support tribal sacred sites from tower construction was signed by 13 regional tribal organizations, representing over 429 Tribes in 22 states. NCAI also filed comments on the impacts of corporate mergers on tribal broadband and the operating expense limitation rule that impacts tribally owned telecommunications companies.

NCAI welcomed Federal Communications Chairman Ajit Pai to the Mid Year Conference at Mohegan Sun in June. The FCC Chairman, the Office of Native Affairs and Policy, and the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau hosted government-to-government meetings with tribal Leaders at NCAI Mid-Year to find solutions to the broadband issues in Indian Country. NCAI also convened a meeting between leaders in the Wireless Telecommunications Industry and tribal Leaders at the
Executive Council Winter Session in February to find way to protect tribal sacred sites while facilitating wireless infrastructure deployment.

NCAI will continue its work to ensure tribes included in all next-generation telecommunications services while protecting ancient sacred sites.

**HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Tribal leaders and NCAI continue to advocate for parity in protecting the homeland. Since 2003, 98.75 percent of total Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funding has gone to state and local governments ($40 billion vs. $50 million), without proportional funding to tribal nations.

There is needed positive change to address tribal homeland security and emergency management matters regarding border crossing and tribal IDs, disaster declaration authority, emergency management capacity building, and equitable yet realistic levels of grant access and funding.

NCAI convenes and collaborates with communities impacted by these matters. Tribal governments on and near the border have long opposed construction of border wall and call for consultation and transparency on this matter. NCAI has a Resolution #ECWS-17-002, calling for tribal consultation, collaboration and direct tribal participation for all tribes impacted by border security policies or actions.

Joining First Americans with New Americans, NCAI partnered with Define American to share common perspectives and strengths of the Native and Immigrant experiences. Tribal leaders met with immigrant leaders in September 2017 in Washington, D.C. to reinforce the commitment that tribal and immigrant voices are heard in federal decisions around building a physical wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

In a major triumph of sovereignty, the Seminole Tribe of Florida received the first ever Presidential Emergency Declaration for a tribe in the wake of devastation from Hurricane Irma in September 2017. The declaration made federal emergency aid available to supplement the tribe’s response efforts to emergency conditions.

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

Many Indian reservations face a crisis of violence due to a lack of resources and the jurisdictional morass imposed by federal laws and court decisions. The police presence in Indian Country continues to lag far behind the rest of the nation, with an approximate 40 percent unmet need in staffing for police officers on Indian lands. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, tribal courts are funded at a dismal 6 percent of estimated need.

As a result, the American Indian and Alaska Native population experiences the highest crime victimization rates in the country. A recent study by the National Institute for Justice concluded that more than 80 percent of Native men and women will experience intimate partner violence, stalking, or sexual violence in their lifetime. Native youth experience the highest rates of exposure to violence in the country.
Addressing these challenges is a priority for NCAI, and over the past year our advocacy has focused on five key areas:

**TRIBAL LAW & ORDER ACT REAUTHORIZATION**

NCAI has worked with Congress to develop a reauthorization bill for the Tribal Law & Order Act of 2009 (TLOA). TLOA took a much-needed, comprehensive approach to improving public safety on Indian reservations and reforming the entire justice system in Indian Country – from prevention, to law enforcement, to courts, to detention, and rehabilitation. Many of the key components of the TLOA expired in 2014, and NCAI has worked with Congress to craft legislation that would build upon the original act and further enhance public safety in tribal communities. We continue to work on moving this important legislation forward.

**PUBLIC SAFETY & VICTIM SERVICES FUNDING**

The promise of the TLOA and VAWA 2013 will not be fully realized until sufficient funds are appropriated for tribal justice and victim services systems. NCAI has been advocating for increased funding across the board, and has placed special emphasis on securing tribal access to the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), which is the federal government’s primary mechanism for funding crime victim compensation and services across the country.

Over the past few years, Congress has more than tripled the disbursements from the CVF to $3 billion. None of this funding has been directed to tribal governments, whose citizens are the most victimized population in the country. NCAI has been aggressively fighting in the House and Senate to address this omission. As a result, authorizing and appropriations bills have both been introduced that would create a 5 percent allocation for tribal governments from the CVF, amounting to around $150 million for tribal crime victims services. Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committee have also approved a 7 percent tribal allocation from across most DOJ grant programs, which would significantly increase funding available for tribal justice systems.

**TRIBAL CRIMINAL JURISDICTION**

The Violence Against Women Act of 2013 (VAWA 2013) included a provision that created a framework for tribes to exercise criminal jurisdiction over certain non-Indians who commit domestic or dating violence, for the first time since the Supreme Court’s decision in Oliphant v. Suquamish in 1978. NCAI has been working with Congress to craft legislation that would build upon the original act and further enhance public safety in tribal communities. We continue to work on moving this important legislation forward.

**CHILD WELFARE**

NCAI remains strongly committed to collaboratively working with tribal, national, and state organizations to uphold the essential and effective policies and practices of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

NCAI works in partnership with tribal governments and through the ICWA Defense Project with the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), and the ICWA Appellate Clinic at Michigan State University College of Law to provide communication strategies, legal responses, and updates to interested parties on ICWA issues.

At the 2017 Mid Year Conference, NCAI hosted the session Strengthening the Leadership Role and Operation of Tribal Child Welfare Services. This session focused on how tribal leaders can ensure that child welfare services achieve the goals and outcomes
for children and families in their tribal communities. NICWA and NCAI provided information and governance strategies on how to de-colonize their tribal child welfare program and establish an effective governance strategy to address funding, service delivery, community engagement, and partnership development activities.

NCAI and the Tribal Supreme Court Project also assisted in coordinating the efforts of parties in opposing Supreme Court review of a petition for certiorari filed by the non-Indian foster parents of Alexandria P. (“Lexi”), seeking review of a decision by the Court of Appeal of the State of California which held that the foster parents failed to prove by clear and convincing evidence that there was good cause to depart from the adoptive placement preferences set forth in the Indian Child Welfare Act. This was another important effort in the ICWA Defense Project during the year.

Through our continued collaboration, NCAI remains dedicated to our ongoing work of protecting our Native children and promoting healthy families in our tribal communities.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The survival and prosperity of tribal communities depends on the education, health, and welfare of our youth and elders. The Administration and Congress must work with tribes to meet the educational needs of Indian youth; provide adequate healthcare via the Indian Health Service, for both direct and self-governance tribes; provide safe and secure tribal communities; and supply the social services required to ensure every American Indian and Alaska Native enjoys a decent quality of life and has an opportunity to succeed.

Education drives personal advancement and wellness, which in turn improves social welfare and empowers communities – elements that are essential to protecting and advancing tribal sovereignty and maintaining the cultural vitality of tribal nations. The federal promise to provide healthcare for Indian people is a sacred agreement that was provided to the tribes in exchange for land and peace.

HEALTHCARE

This past year, NCAI’s advocacy efforts on health care were particularly important given both the Administration and Congress’ efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which includes the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). In order to ensure that Indian Country would not be impacted by this effort, NCAI worked with its partners to educate Members of Congress on the importance of preserving IHCIA, as well as the benefits of Medicaid expansion for Indian Country. To date, Indian Country has been successful in ensuring that the IHCIA would have been exempt.

NCAI also highlighted other key Indian health care issues through a variety of forums. At a roundtable on Indian health care hosted by members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, NCAI spoke about the challenges in delivering high quality health care to tribal communities. In addition, NCAI urged Congress to reauthorize the highly effective Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI),
expand the Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) program outside of Alaska and provide adequate funding for the Indian Health Service.

The National Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda (TBHA) is a collaborative effort between SAMHSA, IHS, tribal nations and urban Indian Health programs and aims to find culturally relevant solutions to ensure the well-being of tribal citizens. Recognizing the potential of this resource, NCAI underwent a year-long project to engage Indian Country on the TBHA and discuss its application. NCAI also focused on the need to educate Native youth on behavioral health tools and provided opportunities for youth to participate in SAMSHA events and NCAI meetings. This youth work culminated in a day-long SAMSHA Tribal Youth Leadership Academy convened at NCAI’s 2016 Annual Convention.

Finally, NCAI revived its Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force in order to create a forum to discuss vital topics such as the opioid crisis, which has had a disproportionate impact on Indian Country.

EDUCATION
Investing in education prepares the next generation of leaders for tribal governments. There is no better central resource for the continued existence of tribal nations than Native children.

NCAI and its Native education partners, including the National Indian Education Association, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, and the National Johnson-O’Malley Association, work together to develop and advocate on an array of educational topics. These include Native language revitalization, increased use of culture in the classroom, a heightened role for Tribal Education Associations, adequate funding for Native students in public schools and in tribal colleges, and improved graduation rates for all Native students attending high schools to higher education institutions.

NCAI has partnered to establish an Education Working Group to examine and consider “Tribal School Choice” as the national discussion on charter school has taken center stage. Sessions in support of education at NCAI’s conferences over the past year include meetings of the Native Languages Working Group; a policy update by the Department of Education and Bureau of Indian Education; and sessions on ‘Envisioning the Future of Indian Education’ at the 2017 Mid Year.

NCAI worked with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), in organizing and scheduling professional development leadership training for BIE principals and assistant principals. There were three trainings held in Phoenix, AZ; Seattle, WA; and Minneapolis, MN. These trainings will provide BIE the foundations and resources for future professional developments for BIE school leaderships.

NCAI continues to work with tribes and other tribal education organizations to advocate on Indian Country’s priorities with the new Administration and Congress. It is important for tribes to be able to have a say in determining what education systems and policies are best for the Native students.

CULTURAL PROTECTIONS
Native cultures are intricately intertwined in many facets of identity, language, and religious practice. The protection of the diverse heritage of Native cultures involves complex administrative and legal structures. However, the primary responsibility to protect cultural and sacred places often falls to tribes who have the most at stake in preserving our ways of life for future generations. NCAI continues to prioritize its advocacy and education objectives to support the efforts of tribes to protect the religious freedoms and cultural practices of Native peoples.
NCAI was a leading voice advocating for the protection of tribal cultural and sacred places during the Administration’s recent review of National Monuments. A number of National Monuments under review contained extremely significant cultural and historical resources including: The Bears Ears National Monument, Canyon of the Ancients, Hanford Reach, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Cascade Siskiyou. NCAI filed two public comments with the Department of the Interior asking the Department to protect the tribal cultural and historical resources located within these monuments.

NCAI has also worked with the Pueblo of Acoma and other tribes who seek the return and repatriation of Native objects that have been illegally removed from tribal lands and are up for auction overseas. NCAI continues to seek enforcement measures under the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act to ensure that sacred items, objects, and remains are returned to tribes for proper burial rites and other religious practices.

NCAI will continue to work for the advancement of policies that respect and preserve Native cultures, while continuing to educate the public of our cultural rights.

NATIVE VETERANS

American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) have bravely fought to protect the legacy of Native peoples through serving as members of the armed forces. They have shown exceptional valor and heroism on battlefields from the American Revolution to Iraq and Afghanistan. Native American service members are younger as a cohort than all other service members, serve at a higher rate than other ethnic groups, and have a higher concentration of female service members.

Despite their distinguished service, AI/AN veterans have lower incomes, lower educational attainment, and higher unemployment than veterans of other races. They also are more likely to lack health insurance, and to have a disability, service-connected or otherwise, than veterans of other races.

NCAI endeavors to protect the rights of all veterans while emphasizing the circumstances of AI/AN veterans that create disparate treatment through access to resources and programs for healthcare, housing, and employment. At NCAI’s 2017 Mid Year Conference, the membership adopted Resolution #MOH-17-030 to support the Senior Community Service Employment Program which includes funding for veteran workforce development.

As Native peoples, we exemplify a high standard of support and recognition for our Native veterans. We give thanks to our veteran brothers and sisters for ensuring that we as Native peoples continue to survive and thrive. Through this pursuit of honor and recognition, NCAI has supported the National Museum of the American Indians in the efforts to create a National Native American Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.
ECONOMY

Across Indian Country, a growing number of tribal nations are writing self-authored stories of economic progress. From creating successful nation-owned enterprises to cultivating tribal citizen-owned businesses to preparing their people to take full advantage of expanding economic and job opportunities, they are slowly but surely building the sustainable tribal economies they require in order to revitalize their communities and achieve the futures they seek for themselves.

Driving this remarkable yet uneven economic renaissance is tribal self-determination, specifically the responsibility and wherewithal of each tribal nation to create a robust economy based on its own enduring cultural values, distinct challenges, particular circumstances, and short-and long-term community development priorities.

TAX AND FINANCE

One of the priorities under the current Administration is reform of the federal Tax Code. Under the current Tax Code, tribal governments do not have many of the same benefits, incentives, and protections provided to state and local governments. Tribal governments also face difficulties in developing economic growth on tribal lands. NCAI is committed to working with tribal leaders and federal agencies to increase governmental revenue and pursue economic and community development projects.

NCAI passed an important resolution during our 2017 Mid-Year Conference calling for the Equitable Treatment for Tribal Nations in Congressional Tax Reform, Resolution #MOH-17-011. NCAI’s resolution can be read at NCAI’s website. This resolution has served a key role in bring together tribal governments and our partner tribal organizations such as the Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA) and the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) in a coordinated effort on tax reform.

NCAI is working with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, Dr. Gavin Clarkson, to update the Indian Trader Regulations. NCAI recommended new regulations to meet the economic development and tax revenue needs of tribal governments. The new regulations should pre-empt state taxation of Indian commerce and preserve tribal taxation authority over Indian commerce.

TRIBAL LABOR SOVEREIGNTY ACT

Indian tribes are sovereign governments, recognized in the U.S. Constitution. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) regulates labor relations between employees and private employers. Congress has recognized that it is most appropriate for each government to determine their own governmental labor policies by providing governmental exemptions for federal, state, county and city governments from the Act. Tribal governments must also be granted parity under this Law.

The Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act builds upon a principle that has been long established by Indian
tribes across the country: when tribal sovereignty is respected and acknowledged, successful, accountable and responsible governments follow. This is not merely a legal issue but a moral imperative of protecting and defending the sovereignty of America’s tribal nations, and guarding against any discrimination against those tribes.

BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

NCAI continued coordinating advocacy on federal budget and appropriations in the last year on multiple fronts to address the urgent governmental revenue shortfalls throughout Indian Country. The often partisan debates over the role and size of the federal government presents an outsized effect on the daily lives of American Indian and Alaska Native people who face underfunding of health care, education, and backlogs in physical infrastructure – all of which fall under the federal trust responsibility. NCAI worked over the last year to remind lawmakers that the federal treaty and trust obligations are nonpartisan obligations.

NCAI again published a national Indian Country budget request document, which laid the foundation for testimony and letters throughout the fiscal year (FY) 2018 appropriations cycle. The FY 2018 Indian Country Budget Request, “Investing in Indian Country for a Stronger America,” offered recommendations for ways the federal government, partnering with tribes, should meet the federal treaty and trust obligations as well as supply the long-term investments needed in tribal public infrastructure.

In addition to honoring the treaty obligations in the federal budget, a decentralized budget provides public goods that can be tailored to the preferences of communities, leading to improved efficiency of the allocation function for some public goods. Self-determination contracts and self-governance compacts comprise an important component to the decentralized provision of public goods and leads to innovation as well as better sensitivity to varying needs in Indian Country. Tribal leaders are most aware of and responsive to public service needs at the local level.

However, as tribes have assumed greater levels of government responsibility, the associated federal funding has lagged behind documented need for roads, schools, police and various government services that were promised in treaties and under the federal trust responsibility.

NCAI has worked over the last year to address this historic underinvestment in Indian Country. Tribal leaders have guided the work via resolutions at national conventions, input at federal budget consultations, and through NCAI’s Budget Taskforce. To assist such efforts, NCAI provides up-to-date analyses of trends in federal spending on programs fulfilling the trust obligation to Indian tribes. Most recently at NCAI’s 2017 Mid Year Conference, members adopted Resolution #MOH-17-51, Support for Federal Treaty and Trust Obligations Funded in the Federal FY 2018 Budget.

NCAI will continue to seek an honorable budget that meets the obligations to Indian Country promised through treaties and the federal trust responsibility.
INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

NCAI has engaged on international indigenous issues for many years through international forums, including the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS), to advance tribal interests when important policy decisions are under discussion at the international level. NCAI holds consultative status with the UN, which allows us to participate in many UN meetings. Tribal communities are often on the front line of issues with global impact, such as climate change, and contribute indigenous knowledge to finding solutions at the international level. This year, NCAI’s international advocacy efforts have focused on:

- **Climate Change**: NCAI has been participating in discussions through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change about how to operationalize the portion of the Paris Agreement that recognized the value of indigenous traditional knowledge about the environment to climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, and called for the establishment of a platform for sharing that knowledge.

- **Participation of Indigenous Governments at the UN**: NCAI has participated in UN negotiations aimed at creating an appropriate status and mechanism to enable the participation of indigenous governments at the United Nations. This effort recently resulted in a UN General Assembly resolution that will continue the process of consultation and negotiation.

- **Traditional Knowledge**: The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is currently negotiating an international agreement that will create new binding international law relating to intellectual property that could provide effective protection of traditional knowledge, genetic resources, and traditional cultural expressions, including those of Indigenous Peoples. NCAI participated in a drafting session to develop a proposed text for the negotiations hosted by the Native American Rights Fund and the University of Colorado Law School. NCAI has also hosted several consultation sessions with the U.S. government to share our proposals, conducted a webinar for tribal leaders, and has participated in the indigenous caucus during negotiations at WIPO.

NCAI Treasurer W. Ron Allen speaks at the United Nations in New York City.

NCAI members gather to commemorate the passage of the Paris Climate Agreement Resolution #MOH-17-053.
A wise tribal leader once said of tribal sovereignty, “The best defense of sovereignty is to exercise it effectively.” In other words, tribal leaders and citizens should not treat sovereignty as a thing, but rather as an action. The best way to protect and advance tribal sovereignty, then, is for tribal governments to fully express their sovereignty in the various ways they see fit in order to strengthen their communities and build brighter futures for their citizens.

The challenge facing tribal leaders, key decision-makers, employees, and citizens is to work together to strengthen the ability of their tribal governments to govern well, to build a track record of governance success that demonstrates that tribal sovereignty and self-determination – when enacted – forge the best solutions to meeting the challenges that tribal communities face.

Core to NCAI’s mission is its commitment to support tribal nations’ efforts to strengthen their governance systems so that they can empower their communities. NCAI fulfills this commitment in several ways. Chief among them is NCAI’s broadening effort to inform and support the work of tribal nations in building their research and data capacity so they can better understand the state, needs, and priorities of their communities.

Also notable is NCAI’s expanding work aimed at equipping tribal leaders and key decision-makers with the knowledge, tools, and tribally designed best practices they need to develop informed, thoughtful solutions to address their governance challenges and advance their strategic priorities.

In the following pages, you will learn how NCAI has carried out this commitment to tribal nations over the past year.

**NCAI POLICY RESEARCH CENTER**

**RESEARCH AND DATA TO INFORM POLICY**

The NCAI Policy Research Center (PRC) was established in 2003 to support Indian Country in shaping its own future through its mission to provide tribal leaders with the best available knowledge to make strategically proactive policy decisions in a framework of Native wisdom that positively impact the future of Native peoples. The PRC works to serve the data and policy research needs of NCAI and its stakeholders.

Over the past year, the PRC advanced several projects to help tribes build their capacity to conduct research, provided technical assistance to researchers working with tribes, gathered and analyzed data to inform policy, disseminated policy briefs and reports, and collaborated with partner organizations such as federal agencies and other entities. The common thread of all this work is to ensure that research and data inform policy in the context of NCAI’s overall advocacy for tribes.
2017 was a year of transition for the PRC. The previous PRC Director, Malia Villegas, EdD, left NCAI at the end of 2016 with the gratitude of NCAI for her years of service in this position. NCAI conducted a national search and announced that Yvette Roubideaux, MD, MPH, was selected as the new PRC Director. With the continued service of Sarah Pytalski, MPP; Amber Ebarb, MPP; Natasha Anderson, JD; and the transition of Deana Around Him, DrPH, ScM, from CRCAIH Fellow to NCAI staff, the PRC team moved forward with a wealth of expertise to further its mission.

CONFERENCES/EVENTS/TRAININGS

The 12th Annual Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum: The PRC hosted the Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum at NCAI’s Mid Year Conference at the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, Connecticut. This session provided a space for tribal leaders and citizens, researchers, and policy organizations to discuss how to strengthen public policy and community-based initiatives through meaningful data and research. This year’s theme was “Sovereign Infrastructure: Building Our Communities through Our Values”, and the Forum featured a morning plenary session, afternoon breakout sessions, and a poster session. Presentations focused on research and federal policies, tribal infrastructure needs, natural resource mapping, tribal taxation priorities, an economic analysis of health care reform, and tribal sovereignty in education.

NCAI Mid Year Pre-Conference Data Partners Gathering: The PRC hosted a half day pre-conference session, which created a space to share information, data tools, and case studies to advance policy research in Indian Country. The session theme was “Building Capacity for Tribal Research and Evaluation.” Presentations focused on insights from the PRC and other partners’ work to build tribal data capacity, information from partners working on indigenous data sovereignty on the national and international levels, and an update on the NCAI Survey of Tribal Data Practices.

Diabetes Translation Research Sessions: The PRC partnered with the Center for Diabetes Translation Research at Washington University in St. Louis to host two sessions on diabetes translation research at the Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) Annual Meeting & Health Conference in Shawnee, Oklahoma. The first session was a pre-conference workshop titled “The Nuts & Bolts of Diabetes Translation Research”, which was designed to share resources and examples of translating diabetes research in respectful partnerships with tribal communities. The second session, titled “A Call for Diabetes Comorbidities Research to Practice Connections,” facilitated a discussion on priorities for data on diabetes comorbidities (i.e. cancer, cardiovascular disease, hypertension) to inform both medical and research practice. Participants identified common conditions that occur in patients with diabetes and discussed areas where additional research might improve outcomes.
**PRC Webinars and Podcasts:** The PRC hosted several webinars during the year that shared the latest research findings and topics related to American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) research and policy priorities. The PRC Quarterly Research Webinars focused on the efforts of the Chickasaw Nation Institutional Review Board to advance tribally-driven research and oversight, the community-based work of the Collaborative Research Center for American Indian Health across the Northern Plains, and economic data and tribal industry analyses by a panel of researchers from across the country. Other webinars highlighted data from PRC reports on post-secondary education trends of AI/AN boys and young men and on the implementation of the National Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda.

**REPORTS, ISSUE BRIEFS, AND PUBLICATIONS**

**PRC Research Updates:** The purpose of the PRC Research Update is to share announcements, best practices, the latest research, and research-related resources to support and advance the policy work of NCAI members and other stakeholders. In the past year, the PRC has released three Research Updates, which focused on the opioid epidemic and tribal responses, tribal housing data and concerns, and general updates on PRC work. The PRC disseminated these updates during NCAI events and on its listserv to over 3,000 members, including leaders and key decision-makers representing Native nations in the U.S., New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, as well as a wide range of federal partners and non-profit organizations.

**PRC Issue Briefs/Reports:** The PRC released several briefs and reports, including a report titled “Tips for Researchers: Strengthening Research that Benefits Native Youth”, an issue brief titled “Responding to the Opioid Crisis: An Update for Tribal Leaders,” and a research policy update titled “Tribal Implications of the Revised Common Rule & National Institutes of Health (NIH) single Institutional Review Board (sIRB) Policy.” Several other reports and briefs are in progress and will be released by the end of 2017.

**COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The PRC is engaged in several collaborations and partnerships that aim to build tribal research capacity, provide education to researchers on how to engage in respectful research partnerships, and advance policy initiatives and priorities of NCAI. Current work includes the following collaborations and partnerships:

**Center for Diabetes Translation Research, Washington University in St. Louis:** The PRC leads the Research Translation with AI/AN Communities Core in this five-year National Institutes of Health (NIH)/National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)-funded grant in partnership with Washington University in St. Louis and the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health. The goal of the core is to increase the capacity of researchers and tribes to engage in diabetes translational research to reduce diabetes disparities in AI/AN communities.

**National Science Foundation:** The PRC project, entitled Using Science to Build Tribal Capacity for Data-Intensive Research, was funded by the National Science Foundation to build a community committed to the collection and dissemination of quality data on AI/AN populations and to promote ongoing data collection and capacity of tribes. A state-of-the-art report summarizing the resources and analyses from this project will be released in late 2017, and dissemination of the findings will continue into 2018.
Indian Health Service (IHS)/National Institutes of Health (NIH) Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) VII Project: The PRC NARCH Project, entitled Dissemination & Implementation to Reduce AI/AN Health Disparities, is a partnership between the PRC and the University of Nevada-Reno. The project is focused on developing two major resources for tribal communities: a toolkit on tribal research partnerships with academic institutions that focuses on the themes of governance, culture, and trust; and an interactive game entitled Tribal Research Futures Game, which illustrates the tensions that can arise in partnerships dealing with research and data resources, design, dissemination, and implementation.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): The PRC is partnering with SAMHSA to engage tribal leaders on implementation of the National Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda (TBHA) to help make meaningful progress to address mental and substance abuse disorders and advance the behavioral health of AI/AN individuals and communities. The PRC is completing a report on diabetes and behavioral health comorbidities, and hosting webinars and podcasts to disseminate the content of the TBHA.

Collaborative Research Center for American Indian Health (CRCAIH): The PRC leads the Culture, Science, and Bioethics Core as part of its partnership with the CRCAIH in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The core aims to advance dialogue on research oversight and infrastructure needs and is delivering the PRC’s Research that Benefits Native People curriculum upon request of CRCAIH’s tribal partners in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM&R): The PRC is partnering with PRIM&R, in collaboration with the IHS, to increase access to PRIM&R resources on research oversight. Through this partnership, the PRC was able to provide scholarships for tribal research oversight members and staff to attend the PRIM&R 2017 Advancing Ethical Research Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Census 2020: The PRC is working with partners to plan for efforts to encourage AI/AN participation in the 2020 Census, which is an important source of data for tribal leaders and policymakers.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) & PolicyLink: The PRC participated in the RWJF project Making the Case for Data Disaggregation to Advance a Culture of Health that convened leading experts focused on data on racially and ethnically diverse populations to review recommendations on the status and priorities for data disaggregation. The PRC participated in the national steering committee for this project, contributed a report on data disaggregation within the AI/AN population, and attended three convenings that focused on the measurement of small populations, immigration and internal migration, and racial/ethnic misclassification. A comprehensive report is being compiled by RWJF.

All PRC resources and publications are available on the NCAI Policy Research Center website at www.ncai.org/prc.
PARTNERSHIP FOR TRIBAL GOVERNANCE

PTG OVERVIEW

At the behest of tribal leaders from across the country, in 2009 NCAI established the Partnership for Tribal Governance (PTG) to create, coordinate, and make accessible the knowledge, tools, and resources that tribal nations need in order to strengthen their governance systems and more effectively exercise their sovereignty. The PTG serves as NCAI’s organizational hub to support the efforts of tribal nations to address four key, common governance challenges: strengthening governance, leadership development, citizen engagement, and public and media education.

Through its growing web of partnerships with tribal nations, tribal intergovernmental and national Native organizations, academic institutions and policy centers, practitioners, policymakers, and other groups, the PTG:

- develops and shares new knowledge and resources on tribal governance;
- facilitates increased governance education, training, and technical assistance opportunities for tribal leaders and key decision-makers;
- enhances communication, coordination, and collaboration among groups working to support the governance-strengthening efforts of tribal nations;
- informs and promotes a policy research agenda to strengthen tribal governance;
- advocates for policies that enhance tribal self-determination and self-governance; and
- educates the mainstream media and general public about tribal governments and their stories of success.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING THE HUMAN CAPACITY TO REBUILD TRIBAL NATIONS

A growing number of tribal nations are designing innovative approaches to cultivate the abilities of their citizens to successfully pursue careers that will empower those nations to create the futures they seek. The PTG has been engaged in a multi-faceted, multi-year project that (1) works collaboratively with selected tribal nations to document their innovative approaches and share them with Indian Country, and (2) distills the common threads of tribal innovation in workforce development and what they mean for federal policies and how they can and should be strengthened to support said innovation. With ongoing support from the Northwest Area Foundation, the project also seeks to identify common challenges, emerging trends, and effective strategies across tribal workforce development efforts.
In October 2016, the PTG released “Empowering Tribal Workforce Development: Indian Country’s Policy Recommendations for the Federal Government (Version 1.0).” The comprehensive brief lays out key recommendations for the federal government to consider as it supports tribal nations, Native organizations, and tribal colleges and universities as they design, refine, and strengthen their workforce development efforts. The PTG compiled these recommendations through interviews and surveys it conducted with tribal leaders and workforce development practitioners; a series of tribal workforce development sessions it convened at NCAI conferences; its ongoing consultation with NCAI’s Tribal TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Task Force and Economic Development, Finance, and Employment Subcommittee; and its participation in a December 2015 Workforce Development Roundtable convened by the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

During the past year, the PTG also released in-depth case studies of three tribal nations: the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and Gila River Indian Community (it released its case study of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in early 2016). PTG’s fifth and final case study, which documents the Quinault Indian Nation’s approach, will be released in late 2017. Accompanying each case study are video recorded interviews with key tribal representatives and a set of related resources that provide deeper insights into how the tribal nation in question designed and implemented its workforce development approach.

Also in 2017, the PTG launched the “Workforce Development” video playlist on NCAI’s YouTube channel. The playlist, which features two dozen videos and counting, includes recordings of recent NCAI conference breakout sessions focused on tribal innovations in workforce development.

Last but not least, the PTG is synthesizing its learnings from the project and integrating them into a decision-making toolkit for tribal leaders and workforce development practitioners to use as they assess their workforce development approaches and determine how best to strengthen them. The toolkit will feature lessons learned, policy recommendations, and questions for tribal policy makers to consider regarding key aspects of workforce development.

For more on this project, see: www.ncai.org/ptg/work-force-development.
SUPPORTING THE BUILDING OF SUSTAINABLE TRIBAL ECONOMIES

Over the past year, the PTG has expanded its work supporting tribal nations in their building of sustainable tribal economies. At NCAI’s 2016 Annual Convention in Phoenix, it held the session “Seeding Prosperity: Strategic Considerations for Building Sustainable Tribal Economies,” which addressed the foundational questions that tribal decision makers must ask of themselves, their governments, tribal citizens, and their current tribal economies as they design economy building approaches capable of seeding prosperous futures for their nations and communities.

The PTG built on this important session at NCAI’s 2017 Mid Year Conference, where it partnered with the PRC to convene a conversation of conference participants focused on the data that tribal nations need for economic development. The dialogue provided a springboard for NCAI’s current development of comprehensive sets of policy recommendations for tribal and federal policymakers to create and strengthen the data that tribal nations need to design and implement strategic approaches for building sustainable economies.

Meanwhile, in February the PTG spearheaded NCAI’s release of “Empowering Tribal Economic Development: Indian Country’s Policy Recommendations for the Federal Government”. The product of an emerging collaboration between NCAI, the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, National Indian Gaming Association, Native American Contractors Association, NAFOA, and the Native CDFI Network, the policy brief presents top-line policy recommendations to enhance the ability of tribal nations to achieve economic prosperity capable of providing their citizens with job opportunities and a good quality of life. Working with these partners, NCAI then revised and updated the brief, releasing version 2.0 of the document at its 2017 Mid Year Conference in June.

Finally, this summer the PTG launched its “Economic Development” video playlist on NCAI’s YouTube channel. The playlist features 10 videos from the last two NCAI conference breakout sessions that the PTG has held on building sustainable tribal economies (including the Phoenix session).
EMPOWERING NATIVE COMMUNITIES

STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL CAPABILITY IN INDIAN COUNTRY

In addition to its ongoing stewardship of the Native Financial Education Coalition, over the past year the PTG deepened its relationship with the Native CDFI Network (NCN, www.nativecdfi.net), working with the national organization serving Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs) to strengthen its ability to assess, measure, document, and share the immense impacts that Native CDFIs are making in tribal communities with tribal, federal, and state policy makers.

In February, the PTG partnered with NCN to raise awareness among U.S. Congressional members and staff about the pivotal role that Native CDFIs play in Indian Country economic and community development in a Capitol Hill briefing before a packed house. That same month, the PTG participated in a CDFI Fund roundtable exploring the findings contained in the Fund’s 2016 Access to Capital and Credit in Native Communities report and their implications for Indian Country and federal policy.

Meanwhile, the PTG also has developed a strong partnership with the Center for Indian Country Development (CICD) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Among their growing avenues of joint work, the PTG recently joined forces with CICD as well as Native American Community Development Corporation Financial Services and the Blackfeet Nation of Montana to raise awareness about the Piikani Money Campaign (www.piikanimoney.org) that Blackfeet conducted in conjunction with the Cobell Land Buy-Back Program.

The groundbreaking financial awareness campaign worked to teach Blackfeet citizens how to make informed financial decisions regarding whether to accept purchase offers for their land interests and how to manage their money wisely if they did. Through a webinar and then a targeted outreach effort, the coalition of partners shared the Piikani Money Campaign as a model for financial education with those other tribes that are or will be going through the Cobell Land Buy-Back Program.

Finally, the PTG supported NCAI’s role as a marketing partner for the Harvard Business School’s (HBS) “Leading People and Investing to Build Sustainable Communities” fiduciary investment training program for tribal leaders and financial managers. The advanced, highly specialized curriculum – previously developed by HBS and adapted for a Native audience through a collaboration between HBS and the Aboriginal Finance Officers Association (AFOA Canada) – was incredibly well received by the first cohort of program participants, which included 20 individuals from tribal nations in the United States (and 40 from Canada).

To learn more about the PTG’s work, please visit: www.ncai.org/ptg
NCAI was established in 1944 in response to the termination and assimilation policies the U.S. government forced upon tribal governments in contradiction of their treaty rights and status as sovereign nations. Our mission to protect and advance this sovereignty includes promoting the rightful place of tribal nations among the American family of governments.

NCAI advances this critical educational initiative through timely, insightful and proactive communications.

CHANGE THE MASCOT

In 1968, NCAI initiated a campaign to end negative and harmful stereotypes of Native peoples in the media and popular culture. A primary focus of this campaign has centered on the use of “Indian” themed mascots, names, and logos, which dehumanize and devalue the diverse heritages of Native peoples. This effort coincides with one of NCAI’s core missions -- to educate the general public about the true diversity of Native peoples and cultures.

NCAI and the Oneida Indian Nation of New York have partnered on the Change the Mascot initiative to increase awareness and educate the general public about harmful, stereotypical “Native themed” mascots, names, and logos and the impact these stereotypes have on issues such as education of Native youth, child welfare, public safety, and healthcare.

NCAI’s Change the Mascot Initiative has continuously been a multi-pronged effort that seeks progress through multiple avenues. This year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Lee v. Tam that disparaging trademarks are protected by the First Amendment’s Free Speech Clause. NCAI filed an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on the case. The Supreme Court’s decision protecting derogatory trademarks was a disappointing blow to NCAI’s effort to Change the Mascot of the Washington Football Team, but NCAI’s multi-faceted effort has persisted and we continue to advocate in the court of public opinion.

This year the campaign has participated in a number of interviews and panels highlighting the need for removing the harmful images and names in addition to providing information for academic journals and books.

These efforts are making an impact which we can see by the additional support we have received including:

► Comments by the Commissioner of Major League Baseball supporting the removal of the “Chief Wahoo” logo affiliated with the Cleveland baseball team.

► California calling for the removal of all damaging Native mascots in public schools.

► Numerous schools across the country removing their damaging mascots.

► And, additional statements and letters of support from the religious community to Change the Mascot.
Alongside our partners, NCAI advocates for the retirement of these derogatory names and mascots, while pursuing education efforts about the true cultural heritage of Native peoples.

**TRIBAL SUPREME COURT PROJECT**

NCAI and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) created the Tribal Supreme Court Project in 2001 to increase coordination and strategy on litigation that affects the rights of tribes. The Project encourages tribes and their attorneys to contact the Tribal Supreme Court Project to coordinate resources, develop strategy, and prepare briefs with a unified voice.

On April 10, 2017, Neil M. Gorsuch filled the vacancy of the late Justice Antonin Scalia in the Supreme Court of the United States. NCAI reviewed Justice Gorsuch’s background and judicial tenure when he served on the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. Justice Gorsuch hails from the West and the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals encompasses the territory of 76 federally recognized tribes. His judicial opinions addressed tribal sovereign immunity, religious freedoms, trust fund accounting, exhaustion of tribal remedies, and Indian Country criminal jurisdiction. Justice Gorsuch’s judicial opinions are attentive to the details of tribal sovereignty and the federal trust responsibility. In addition, Gorsuch attended the NCAI Annual Convention in Denver in 2007, and met with tribal leaders as a part of our continuing efforts on judicial outreach and education. NCAI and NARF drafted a letter of support for the confirmation of Judge Neil M. Gorsuch.

On April 25, 2017, the Supreme Court of the United States issued a decision in Lewis v. Clarke, a case involving an off-reservation car accident caused by a limousine driver for the Mohegan Sun in Connecticut. The Court held the tribe’s sovereign immunity cannot be invoked when a tribal employee is sued in his individual capacity, although other defenses such as official immunity may be available. NCAI filed a joint *amicus curiae* brief.

On June 19, 2017, the Supreme Court also issued their ruling in *Matel v. Tam*. The Court held the disparagement clause of federal trademark law, 15 U.S.C. § 1052(a) violated the First Amendment’s Free Speech clause. *Tam* impacted the pending *Blackhorse* case, which challenged the trademark registration of the Washington football team. Certiorari was denied for the *Blackhorse* case, leading to the result that the Federal Patent and Trademark office can be forced to protect derogatory and racist trademarks. NCAI issued a response to the disappointing Supreme Court ruling in *Tam*.

NCAI and the Tribal Supreme Court Project are currently submitting an amicus brief in *Patchak v. Zinke*, was granted review on May 1, 2017. This case is round two of earlier litigation in *Patchak v. Jewell* in 2012, which held that the Quiet Title Act does not protect tribal lands from an attack on their status as protected trust lands. Following that decision, Congress placed the land in trust with the Gun Lake Land Restoration Act. The Supreme Court will review whether a provision in that Act which bars further review violates the Constitution’s separation of powers. *Patchak v. Zinke* oral arguments will be heard on November 7, 2017.


If you have any questions or need any assistance please contact John Dossett, NCAI General Counsel at jdossett@ncai.org or Joel West Williams, NARF Staff Attorney at williams@narf.org.
NCAI works with a vast, committed partnership in a non-partisan initiative to revitalize civic engagement among Native peoples. Native Vote aims to build and sustain an infrastructure across Native communities to mobilize Native turnout and ensure that every tribal vote counts. NCAI conferences feature Native Vote sessions, pep rallies, panel discussions, and expand our network of allies in this effort. Throughout Native Vote Action Week in September 2016 and 2017, NCAI sent out action alert broadcasts to vote coordinators, shared online registration tools, and ideas for hosting voter registration events.

NCAI, along with Native journalist Mark Trahant, recapped the results of the 2016 election in a Post Election Analysis Webinar on November 10, 2016. Discussion included how the outcome of the election would affect Indian Country, what opportunities existed to increase participation in the civic process, and the importance of Native candidates running for office.

It is never too soon to refine and launch the GOTV effort for Native Vote nationally, but in some key states, it needs to start immediately given the special elections that are taking place. For example, Montana held a special election on May 25, 2017 to fill the state’s lone Congressional seat which became vacant when Ryan Zinke was confirmed as Secretary of the Interior. Montana is home to seven federally recognized tribes and one state-recognized tribe.

NCAI hosted a Native Vote roundtable luncheon at the June 2017 Mid Year Conference to shape up the Native Vote plan for 2018, and featured a Native Vote update at the Third General Assembly. With support from NCAI’s Policy Research Center, the Native Vote team launched a Native Vote survey in 2016 to get feedback on successes and needed improvements. The survey was promoted during NCAI’s Mid Year Conference in June 2017 and that input will inform Native Vote efforts going in to the 2018 mid-term elections.

NCAI is planning for the redistricting that will occur after the 2020 census and is also developing an action plan to engage in that effort.

VOTING RIGHTS

NCAI has a long history of protecting Native voting rights, including litigation in Arizona and New Mexico in the 1940s that first ensured Native voting rights. Over the past year, NCAI has worked with stakeholders from across Indian Country as part of the Native American Voting Rights Coalition, which was launched in 2015 with the goal of ensuring that our work to protect and advance the voting rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives is coordinated and as effective as possible.

Much of our work this year has focused on analyzing lessons learned from the 2016 election cycle and planning a series of regional field hearings to gather information about the challenges Native voters face, the first of which took place in September 2017.
NCAI PROGRESSIVE OUTREACH

“Tell your story. Tell your story. Tell your story.” This widely known quote from Native rights champion Billy Frank, Jr. is at the heart of NCAI’s outreach efforts. Central to NCAI’s mission is to promote a better understanding among the general public regarding American Indian and Alaska Native governments, people and rights. We tell the stories of tribal nations.

Unifying the voice of NCAI’s membership means coordinating messages on priority topics. NCAI sends up-to-the-minute Broadcasts and Alerts that keep tribal nations informed of the latest policy, legal, and regulatory developments. We work in partnerships with tribal, and national, and regional organizations to amplify tribal sovereignty. We tirelessly educate and inform to promote and protect the self-determination of tribal nations.

These are the many ways NCAI serves as an invaluable resource to tribes, partners, stakeholders and the general public as we work together to create prosperity and strengthen the entire nation.

VISITS TO THE EMBASSY OF TRIBAL NATIONS

The Embassy of Tribal Nations in Washington, D.C. stands as a proud symbol of the strength of our nations. It is a visible representation and a potent reminder of the nation-to-nation relationship with the United States engendered by tribal sovereignty. Through general education on tribal nations, policy and legal briefings, issue area updates, and international affairs, NCAI draws an increasing stream of guests eager to learn more about Indian Country.

NCAI continues to experience a marked upswing in visits to the Embassy. In the past year NCAI hosted more than 80 groups and will surpass 800 visitors. This is an increase of 167 percent since 2015. Nearly half of NCAI’s visitors were student groups from high schools, universities and continuing education programs from across the United States and around the world.

In March 2017, NCAI hosted the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples to the United States, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, for stark and stirring dialogue on the impact of energy development on indigenous peoples. Testimony was offered from NCAI and from partners including the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, the Native American Rights Fund, Indian Law Resource Center, and International Indian Treaty Council.

The doors of the Embassy remain open for this important exchange of ideas thanks to the generous support of so many. Please consider a donation to NCAI to sustain this emblem of sovereign strength. Visit our website at www.ncai.org to learn more.

Santa Fe Indian School Visits NCAI Embassy of Tribal Nations.

167%

TRIBAL EMBASSY GUESTS INCREASED FROM 2015 TO 2017

NCAI and national organization partners meet with U.N. Special Rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz.
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

NCAI is a trusted resource for information on Native American affairs in the United States and around the globe. Through integrated strategic communications, NCAI works to support its mission and promote tribal sovereignty by proactively engaging in and driving key conversations impacting American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

A core pillar of NCAI’s advocacy and public education activities, the NCAI Communications Department works to connect media relations, public affairs, digital strategy, and social media to complex policy, legal, and legislative subject matter in a responsible and timely manner.

The NCAI Communications Department utilizes a number of media tools including press releases, press conferences, statements, briefings, photography, digital storytelling, and podcasting to effectively communicate key issues facing Native American and Alaska Native communities.

Media And Press


This year, we have been included in 264 media publications, and published 26 media advisories and press releases, reaching more than 10,000 people.

The State of Indian Nations (SOIN) address is NCAI’s largest media event of the year. The 2017 live Address was initially viewed online by 3,190 people. Nearly 50,000 people were engaged through social media and the SOIN hashtag – #SOIN2017 – was the number twenty-eight trending hashtag in the U.S. during the time of the event.

See the PUBLICATIONS page in this report for a list of materials produced by NCAI to support our advocacy.
**Social Media**

NCAI engages its membership and the public with a multi-faceted and robust social media presence to encourage conversations all around the world on tribal issues. In today’s digital age, it is important to have a strong online and social media presence to drive engagement, information, and awareness of our difference-making work.

NCAI maintains several social media accounts to distribute information, communicate with members, engage with the public, and support the work of tribes and other partners. In this, NCAI is committed to steadily increasing its presence and engagement on all social media platforms it utilizes.

Our main website at www.ncai.org hosts an expansive array of resources on NCAI conferences, legal and legislative efforts, testimony, resolutions, speeches, tribal directory, publications and important regional and national events impacting our members. NCAI website pages include detail on critical work for Indian Country done by NCAI’s Policy Research Center, Native Vote, Partnership for Tribal Government, Tribal Supreme Court Project, and projects like tribal support of the benefits of the Violence Against Women Act.

In 2017, NCAI Facebook followers are nearing 60,000 and we increased engagement from NCAI’s newsworthy material. A September 2017 news article with NCAI’s response to statements denying Indigenous Americans’ being the original Americans was shared on Facebook and reached more than 44,000 people and garnered nearly 2,000 reactions, comments, and shares.

NCAI has expanded our reach on Twitter, as we currently have 33,200 followers – a 30 percent increase from 2016. In addition, NCAI is steadily increasing our visual presence through photos shared on Instagram and Flickr, videos on our YouTube channel online, and also maintains expanding listservs for targeted email broadcasts and action alerts.

Our social media outreach extends to 45 countries and our messages are translated into 40 languages. Visit any of NCAI’s social media venues for important information regarding Indian Country and supporting our mission.
NCAI is a rich and expanding resource of information on Indian Country. As the leader in tribal consensus around a vision for strong and thriving tribal nations, NCAI communicates abundantly on tribal priorities. These resources create exceptional value and leverage for our members.

In the past 12 months, NCAI has crafted the following materials to give voice to the priority issues driven by the unified voice of our membership.

**ANNUAL PUBLICATIONS:**
- NCAI 2015-2016 Annual Report
- 2016 White House Tribal Nations Conference Tribal Leaders Briefing Book
- FY 2018 Indian Country Budget Request

**FEATURED PUBLICATIONS:**
- “Indian Nations and the Presidential Transition,” Indian Country’s priority recommendations to the new Administration
- “Tribal Infrastructure: Investing in Indian Country for a Stronger America” report on tribal infrastructure needs
- American Indian Living Magazine September 2017 issue with special articles on Healthcare in Indian Country coauthored by NCAI and NIHB

**LEGAL:**
- Tribal Supreme Court Project Update Memorandum
- Proposal for Tribal Integrated Public Safety and Justice Funding
- Memorandum of Amici Curiae National Congress of American Indians, Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians, Alaska Intertribal Council, Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association, Inter Tribal Association of Arizona, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, National Indian Education Association, National Indian Gaming Association, United South and Eastern Tribes, American Civil Liberties Union, Korematsu Center for Law and Equality, and 34 Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in Support of Plaintiff Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s Motion for Summary Judgement
- Protection of Traditional Cultural Expressions: Draft Articles for the World Intellectual Property Organization, NARF/University of Colorado Law/Tulalip Tribes/ATNI/NCAI, Draft for Discussion with Tribal Leaders
- Matal v. Tam (regarding derogatory trademarks) Brief of Amici Curiae Native American Organizations
- Lewis v. Clarke (regarding tribal sovereign immunity) Brief Amici Curiae of NCAI et al. in Support of Respondent

**POLICY RESEARCH CENTER:**
- Research Update in Spring, Summer and Fall
- 2017 Annual Tribal Leaders / Scholar Forum Proceedings
- Research Policy Update: Responding to the Opioid Crisis: An Update for Tribal Leaders
- Research Policy Update: Tribal Implications of the Revised Common Rule & NIH sIRB Policy
- Partnering with Tribes to Address Housing Needs, Rural Voices, Housing Assistance Council
- Tips for Researchers: Strengthening Research that Benefits Native Youth

**PARTNERSHIP FOR TRIBAL GOVERNANCE:**
- Workforce Development “Innovation Spotlight”: Case study of Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Workforce Development “Innovation Spotlight”: Case study of Coeur d’Alene Tribe
- Workforce Development “Innovation Spotlight”: Case study of Gila River Indian Community
- Workforce Development “Innovation Spotlight”: Case study of Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Workforce Development “Innovation Spotlight”: Case study of Gila River Indian Community
- Workforce Development “Innovation Spotlight”: Case study of Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Workforce Development “Innovation Spotlight”: Case study of Gila River Indian Community

WEBINARS:
- October 4 – Tribal Research - Dr. Joan O’Connell on Indian Country Health Data
- October 24 – NCAI Infrastructure Permitting Consultation Workgroup
- November 4 – Remaining Tribal Consultations on Infrastructure Permitting
- November 10 – NCAI Post Election Native Vote Analysis
- November 30 – Cobell Land Buy Back & Blackfeet’s Piikani Money Campaign – A Model for Tribally Led Financial Education
- December 14 – White House Council on Native American Affairs discusses the MOU to Protect Natural Resources Treaty Rights
- December 14 – Tribal Research – Chickasaw Nation Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- February 22 – Tribal Research - Dissemination & Implementation Research, with Dr. Ross Brownson
- March 15 – Tribal Research - Collaborative Research Center for American Indian Health (CRCAIH)
- March 29 – PRC joins Gen-I Facebook LIVE event on the subject of sex trafficking
- April 10 – Tribal Research - Economic Research from the NCAI 2017 Mid Year Conference
- September 25 – Tribal Supreme Court Project review of cases

TESTIMONY AND COMMENTS:
- November 30 – Comments on Tribal Trust Compliance and Federal Infrastructure Decision-Making, a Response to the Federal Consultations over the Dakota Access Pipeline
- January 13 – Comments on Reorganization of Indian Health Service
- February 9 – Comments on Termination of the Intent to do an Environmental Impact Statement on the Army Corps Easement for the Dakota Access Pipeline
- March 9 – Improving and Expanding Infrastructure in Tribal and Insular Communities
- March 29 – Testimony for Hearing on H.R. 986 – The Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act
- April 28 – Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee
- May 10 - NCAI, USET and NATHPO submit comments on FCC action to Streamline Tribal Section 106 review
- May 24 – NCAI and NIHB submit joint comments to the FCC regarding the potential for telecommunications in the Indian Health Care System
- July 10 – Comments to DOI supporting more than 20 National Monument designations currently under review
- July 13 – Testimony on Comparing 21st Century Trust Land Acquisition with the Intent of the 73rd Congress in Section 5 of the Indian Reorganization Act
- July 14 – Comments on the Department of the Interior’s Implementation of Executive Order 13871 Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch
- July 17 - Reply Comments to FCC on CTIA and WIA joint comments on Section 106 process
- July 17 – Comments to the Senate Finance Committee with Proposals to Improve the American Tax System for Indian Country
- July 27 – NCAI and NIHB joint testimony to the House on 21st Century Medicine: How Telehealth Can Help Rural Communities
- August 28 – Comments to Collect Data on Indian Children for the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System
- September 20 – Comments for the Recognition of Tribal Organizations for Representation of VA Claimants
BENEFITS FOR MEMBERSHIP TYPES

1. Tribal Membership
   - Ability to submit and sponsor a resolution
   - Have a weighed vote based on tribal enrollment numbers

Any tribe, band or identifiable group of American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts shall be eligible for tribal membership provided it shall fulfill all of the requirements. Please visit the NCAI website page on Membership for the full terms of eligibility.

2. Indian Individual Membership
   - Receive NCAI Broadcasts, Alerts, and Publications to one (1) email
   - Reduced conference rates for the Membership Year
   - One (1) Vote during elections

Any person of Indian and/or Alaska Native ancestry in the United States or a Native of Alaska is eligible for individual membership. For the purpose of membership an Indian is a person recognized as a member by an Indian tribe, or combination of tribes and bands recognized by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Indian Claims Commission, Court of Claims, or a State.

3. Individual Associate Membership
   - Receive NCAI Broadcasts, Alerts, and Publications to one (1) email
   - Reduced conference rates for the Membership Year

Non-Indian applicants may be admitted to non-voting associate membership upon the payment of annual dues as fixed by the Bylaws.

4. Organization Associate Membership
   - Receive NCAI Broadcasts, Alerts, and Publications to two (2) emails
   - Reduced conference rates for two (2) people for the Membership Year

Organizations may be admitted to non-voting associate membership upon the payment of annual dues as fixed by the By-Laws.

For further membership information, visit www.ncai.org/get-involved/membership, or contact Tyler Owens, NCAI Membership Coordinator, at towens@ncai.org or (202) 466-7767.
With your assistance, NCAI works to bring better understanding between tribes, between tribal nations and all governments, and to the general public. We also provide guidance for Native organizations seeking to advance tribal sovereignty or wanting to partner in Indian Country.

NCAI can commit your contributions to programs and initiatives of your choice. From youth initiatives, the Tribal Supreme Court Project, our Policy Research Center, and Partnership for Tribal Governance – our many focused objectives need your support.

Here are the many ways to contribute to the mission of NCAI. Visit our website at www.ncai.org to learn more about these opportunities to make a difference.

**Membership** – Become a member of NCAI, or renew your membership today! Join the network that is shaping the future of Indian Country.

**Sponsorship** – NCAI is sovereignty in action. We conduct conferences throughout the year to support the activities of our tribal Congress membership, including the largest annual convention of tribal leaders in the nation. Be a sponsor of NCAI’s innovative events that promote nation-building and empowerment.

**Contributions** – We use several tools to make contribution easy. Consider a direct donation through our website. Giving Programs like AmazonSmile contribute to NCAI when you buy online, and federal employees can give easily through the Consolidated Federal Campaign – our CFC number is 10110.

**Focused Campaigns** – NCAI has a capital campaign to retire the debt on the Embassy of Tribal Nations, and we are also raising funds to honor our milestone 75th anniversary in 2018.

**Estate Planning** – Leave a meaningful legacy by building charitable giving to NCAI into your estate planning. We owe a debt of gratitude to the special generosity of those encouraging donations to NCAI in memory.
PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

The work of NCAI impacts lives in Indian Country every day, and is simply not possible without the generosity and vision of tribal leaders, tribal nations, foundations, businesses, Native citizens, and non-Native allies. Investing in NCAI returns immeasurable benefits. Shaped by the consensus of its members, NCAI remains on the forefront of national policy and legal strategy.

We are profoundly grateful for the investment in NCAI of the following partners:

Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Alaska Federation of Natives
Alliance of Colonial Era Tribes
AMERIND Risk
Arizona State University - American Indian Students United for Nursing
Arizona State University - Office of American Indian Initiatives
Bank of America
Bluestone Strategy Group, LLC
Bureau of Indian Affairs
California Association of Tribal Governments
Cherokee Nation
Chickasaw Nation
Coeur d’Alene Casino Resort Hotel
Coeur d’Alene Tribe
Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation
Department of Defense
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Interior
Department of Justice
Desert Diamond Casinos & Entertainment
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Ford Foundation
Forest Carbon Partners, LP
Forest County Potawatomi Community
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation
Gila River Gaming Enterprises, Inc.
Gila River Indian Community
Google Inc.
Grand Canyon Resort Corporation
Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association
Hualapai Nation
Intertribal Association of Arizona
Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
Kalispel Tribe
Kauffman & Associates, Inc.
Kenaite Indian Tribe
Key Bank
KOTA, A Mohegan LDI Enterprise
Legends Casino & Resort
Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
 Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
 Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
 Mohegan Tribe
 Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
 Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribe
 Narragansett Indian Tribe
 National Science Foundation
 Native American Contractors Association
 Navajo Nation Washington DC Office
 Northwest Area Foundation
 Nuvodia
 Office of Hawaiian Affairs
 Oneida Indian Nation
 Pew Charitable Trust
 Poarch Band of Creek Indians
 Port Gamble Indian Tribe
 Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
 Puyallup Tribe of Indians
 Roche Diabetes Care
 Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
 San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
 Sanford Research Foundation
 Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
 Seneca Nation of Indians
 Seventh Day Adventist Church - Native Ministries
 Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
 Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Miller & Munson, LLP
 Spokane Tribe of Indians
 Squaxin Island Tribe
 Suquamish Indian Tribe
 Swinomish Indian Tribe
 Tohono O’odham Nation
 United Tribes of Michigan
 United South & Eastern Tribes
 W.K. Kellogg Foundation
 Walmart
 Walton Family Foundation
 Washington Indian Gaming Association
 Washington University, St. Louis
 Wells Fargo
 Wild Salmon Center

Partners listed have contributed $5,000 or more to NCAI.
It is impossible to capture in mere words the immeasurable spirit and incomparable contributions of Robert Holden to NCAI, and to the whole of Indian Country. Robert started at NCAI in 1984 and for 33 years has graciously shared his tenacity, resilience, intelligence, and compassion to make lasting change for tribal nations. He retires this year, with the deep love, gratitude, friendship, and respect of his colleagues at NCAI and around the world.

TRIBUTE TO
NCAI’S DEPUTY DIRECTOR
ROBERT HOLDEN