The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) 74th Annual Convention & Marketplace preparations started with an incredible energy as we were joined by a community of elders, youth, staff, volunteers, and board members for a marathon bag stuffing session on Saturday, October 14, 2017.

The NCAI Executive Board Meeting kicked off the activities on Sunday, October 15, 2017 the day was rounded out with seven task force meetings including the inaugural meeting of the Two Spirit Task Force.

Sunday evening was reserved for the Youth Meet & Greet. It was one of the most attended events of the day with over 70 Native youth and partners who have programs supporting our Native youth from across the United States, including our First Kids 1st partners.

On Monday, October 16, 2017, attendees joined NCAI Deputy Director Robert Holden bright and early for the Native Prayer Sunrise Gathering and Water Ceremony at the Wisconsin Center. The Ceremony allowed everyone to come together to give thanks for the life-giving properties and spirit of the water. Those in attendance took part first in a prayer, and then blessed water and strawberries were given to be consumed.

The morning sessions covered a range of issues from a voting rights field hearing, to consultations and listening sessions hosted by U.S. Census, Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Indian Health Service (IHS), National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), Native Farm Bill Coalition, and U.S. Department of the Interior.
At noon, the Grand Opening Celebration for the Tradeshow & Marketplace was highlighted with a scintillating performance by Oneida Nation Smoke Dancers. After sharing the meanings of the dances, the five dancers demonstrated the war dance, the pigeon dance, and smoke dance. As the performance got going, the dancers attracted a large crowd to the Marketplace stage. With standing room only for attendees, the dancers competed for the favor of the crowd. After a winner was chosen, he was gifted a silver knife by a Diné member of the audience. Be sure to look out for the group’s next performance at the Elder’s Honoring Luncheon in Room 202AE on Thursday at noon.

The First General Assembly began with a call to order by outgoing NCAI President Brian Cladoosby. President Cladoosby welcomed the Southeastern Oneida Tribal Services and Forest County Potawatomi Honor Guards, and Forest County Potawatomi Fire Nation drum group as they honored veterans’ past and present with a beautiful procession. The invocation was given by Dylan Jennings of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa before the audience was formally welcomed by Harold “Gus” Frank, Chairman of the Forest County Potawatomi.

Chairman Frank welcomed all to Potawatomi land and acknowledged the lively conversation in the morning’s U.S. Department of the Interior Consultation “Licensed Indian Traders” Regulations and Listening Session on Land into Trust.

Representative Gwen Moore (WI) gave a rousing welcome to the plenary audience as well, pointing out many familiar faces from around Indian Country and expressed her excitement to become acquainted with many more. Representative Moore mentioned several policy issues, including Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) as well as the reauthorization of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA), a piece of legislation she has introduced in cooperation with Representative Betty McCollum (MN).

“I am really impressed with how the Native communities have been able to galvanize non-partisan support,” said Representative Moore.

Moore went on to address the lack of understanding regarding tribal sovereignty in Washington and reaffirmed her stance as a supporter of tribes as sovereign peoples just as it states in the United States Constitution.

Representative Betty McCollum (MN) took the stage next and expressed her commitment to tribal leaders and stated that NCAI is a tremendous resource for every member of Congress. McCollum also said she is impressed with NCAI’s non-partisan approach to U.S. Department of the Interior Appropriations. She also emphasized her commitment to taking on health disparities in Indian Country, as she is working on 12 bi-partisan bills on an Indian Health Service (IHS) Taskforce, fighting against the replacement efforts for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid funding, and battling a growing opioid epidemic. Representative McCollum said there must be safety and justice for tribal nations, and greater self-determination on distributing resources.

“We need NCAI to keep pressure on Congress and especially on this White House,” said McCollum. “I am honored to work with each and every one of you. I look forward to working with you for our nation, the nation we share, the USA.”

NCAI Elections Committee Chair Juanita Ahtone and Sandy Eichelberg described the resolutions process and NCAI Rules and Credentials Chair Yvonne Oberly delivered the rules of the Convention.

President Cladoosby stepped to the lectern for his final President’s Address as his four-year tenure as NCAI President ends, with the Swinomish youth standing around him. He reflected on all the important work that NCAI is tasked with, and was honored to be able to serve all of Indian Country. In some of his parting words, President Cladoosby said that in Pacific Northwestern tradition, being at the top of the totem pole is not what the individual should hope to aspire. Instead, he told tribal leaders to “make it to the bottom.” He explained that leaders should be the foundations of their Nations and remember that they are there to hold up their elders, children, and communities. As President Cladoosby finished speaking, the audience gave him a standing ovation to honor his service to NCAI and tireless advocacy for tribal nations.

Following his speech, President Cladoosby gifted Executive Director Jacqueline Pata a “Clan of Raisins” framed photograph, and a Raven Clan carving. The Swinomish youth also gifted the NCAI Executive Board feather carvings and specialty hats for attendees marking President Cladoosby’s standing as the 21st President of NCAI.
NCAI Executive Director Jacqueline Pata took the stage next and gave her annual Executive Director’s Address, noting the growing divide in the United States and the resilience of Native peoples who have continued to pull together to tell their stories and become a unified voice. Pata went on to give a policy update on health care, taxation, land into trust, and public safety.

After a recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and healing song from the VAWA Task Force Co-Chair Juana Majel Dixon, Acting Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs John Tahsuda stepped on the stage. Tahsuda spoke about a bold agenda by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to accomplish goals aimed at providing greater prosperity, safer communities, and lifting up all tribes. In particular, he referred to creative approaches to economic development, building infrastructure, developing coal, gas and new energy, responding to natural disasters, and taking on the opioid epidemic. Tahsuda mentioned specific policies, such as the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, both of which he used as examples of needing more listening sessions and having more tribal input in policies.

In other notable mentions, Tahsuda spoke of the appointment of Cherokee Nation citizen Brian Rice as the new director of the BIA. Tahsuda credited Rice with being a strong leader who brings a wealth of experience to his new role. Tahsuda also mentioned the need for more Native young people to serve in the BIA citing the many professional opportunities available within the agency and the need for Native representation.

Conference attendees wrapped up the day at the Welcome Reception held at the Harley Davidson Museum sponsored by Ho-Chunk Nation & Husch Blackwell. Guests enjoyed live music, food, and time to network with fellow attendees. Thank you to our gracious sponsors for a wonderful event!
The Second General Assembly began promptly at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday morning with a call to order by NCAI First Vice President Fawn Sharp and an Invocation given by Wilford Cleveland of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin.

Titled “Indian Country in Action!” the Second General Assembly focused on some of the leading issue areas in Indian Country, including the North American Free Trade Agreement, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change, Native Vote, and the First Kids 1st Initiative.

The first speaker of the morning was Perry Bellegarde, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (Canada) who discussed the importance of the inclusion of an Indigenous Peoples’ chapter in the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

“In 1994, NAFTA came into effect – there was not much substance regarding First Nations,” said Bellegarde. “This round in 2017, we are trying to make sure we have our spot in that international trade agreement. The legal and political landscape has changed and we need an Indigenous Peoples’ chapter in NAFTA.”

Bellegarde called for establishing broad measures to protect inherent rights of Indigenous peoples while promoting inter-nation trade between Indigenous nations. Stating that any new international trade agreements should include a committee with Indigenous people as representatives, utilizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a mechanism to help solidify this need.

Ambassador (ret.) Keith M. Harper took the stage next and highlighted the 10th Anniversary of UNDRIP, reiterating the obligation of tribal nations to ensure that the UNDRIP is an instrument with power. Harper stated that tribes in the United States enjoy more authority over their lands and people than any other Indigenous nations around the world, and as such, need to protect and expand these rights and help recognize Indigenous cultures internationally.

“Progress is dependent on tribal engagement,” said Harper. “For too long, in the international sphere, the voices heard the loudest are not elected tribal leaders speaking for their communities, their constituents.”
Harper touched on expanding the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), reforming domestic courts, looking for solutions to address climate change, emergency response on tribal lands, and repatriation of cultural artifacts.

Jodi Gillette, Policy Advisor, Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Endreson & Perry, LLP, provided an update on climate change and spoke from the heart about its effects on Native communities.

“Protecting Mother Earth – she will continue,” said Gillette. “But whether humans can keep living on this planet, the urgency for us is immediate and it’s important for us to know how we will play a role.”

Gillette noted the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, which pledges to reduce emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2020. Many tribal nations are proactively supporting the Paris Climate Agreement, evidenced by the adopted “Continued Support for the Paris Climate Agreement and Action to Address Climate Change” (MOH-17-053) at the 2017 NCAI Mid Year Conference.

Near the end of her remarks, Gillette asked for anyone in the audience who has fought to protect water, to protect sacred sites, to prevent damage to tribal lands and forestry to stand up. By the time each question was asked, the entire room was on its feet.

“Everyone here is standing for protecting our futures,” said Gillette. “There just needs to be a mind shift for the rest of the world to catch up.”

National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) Chairman Gil Vigil and Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy David Simmons addressed the crowd next, representing the First Kids 1st – Every Child is Sacred Initiative, and they advocated for support in developing pathways to wellness for Native youth and children.

“Our vision is that all Native youth will have the high standard of well being that they deserve,” said Simmons.

The final speaker of the day, Major General Donald Jackson of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, spoke to the crowd about navigation, port maintenance, flood risk management, environmental compliance, stewardship, and emergency management. Jackson also elaborated on federal responses to the natural disasters in Puerto Rico and on tribal lands in Florida and Mississippi following Hurricane Irma.

“We are trying to provide consistency across 43 districts,” said Jackson. “We train them on understanding the federal trust responsibility.”

Prior to the closing of the Second General Assembly, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians presented a check for $1 million to the Oglala Sioux Tribe to assist in building a new fire station to serve their reservation.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community leadership presented a gift of $100,000 to NCAI, a donation the tribe has graciously given during the past several years.

The final presentation was a surprise – an honoring of retiring NCAI Deputy Director Robert Holden. After 33 years of service to NCAI, Holden was presented with a blanket for his more than three decades at NCAI and a lifetime of commitment to Indian Country. It was an emotional moment on-stage as NCAI staff embraced Holden for the last time as a staff member as the Second General Assembly of the 74th Annual Convention & Marketplace concluded.
The Youth Luncheon kicked off the afternoon and featured spoken word performer Nicholas Courtney along with an awards ceremony. See the Youth Commission Newsletter for more details.

In the afternoon, speakers continued the conversations started in Second General Assembly about UNDRIP, First Kids 1st, the Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda, and tax reform.

Evening events included the Special Recognition Pre-Gala Reception dedicated to NCAI Deputy Director Robert Holden followed by the Gala Banquet.

The Gala Banquet featured spoken word performer Nicholas Courtney and 2001 Native American Music Awards Female Artist of the Year Annie Humphrey.

Courtney shared a special message with the crowd highlighting Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the social media #MeToo movement.

Humphrey’s set had a tremendous impact on the crowd as she played an impromptu honor song for the veterans in the room. During her acoustic rendition of “Like A Rock”, the retired U.S. Marine asked her fellow veterans to stand and be recognized for their service.

At the end of the Gala Banquet, the visiting Australian Aboriginal delegation presented a gift to President Cladoosby from their homeland – a framed illustration of an Aboriginal medicine from the Australian outback.

**WEDNESDAY**

National Native American Just Move It! Healthy Lifestyles Walk, Run and Rally got attendees to “Walk the Talk” with this annual walk/run to show a commitment to wellness.

The Third General Assembly was called to order by Chairperson Aaron Payment, before the morning invocation was given by Joey Awonohopay of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. With NCAI elections taking place this year, the Rules & Credentials Report was scheduled first on the agenda. NCAI Credentials Committee Chair Yvonne Oberly announced that 153 tribes had credentialled with the Committee. The Rules & Credentials Report was accepted unanimously on the floor by NCAI membership.
Representative Ben Ray Lujan (NM) took the podium next and spoke of the federal government not meeting its trust responsibilities to tribal governments.

“There are great issues facing us all, including Medicaid, lands, and taxation,” said Lujan.

Lujan compared these issues to being like an ominous cloud, and explained if you are not at the table with the legislators, they will move on without you.

“We need to stand together and speak with a strong, profound voice,” said Lujan. “If you do not see a candidate that you want to vote for, who has earned your trust, then run for office – what are you waiting for? Run for office, stay involved, and help encourage more people in our communities to vote.”

The next topic of the day, led by Chairman Gary Besaw of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, was dedicated to Tribal Interest and Delegated Federal Permitting. Besaw shared the Menominee history as having been the first tribe terminated in the 1950s, but also being the first to be restored to federal recognition. However, according to Besaw, the federal government is looking to move permitting authority to states, thereby circumventing its trust responsibilities because states do not have any obligations to tribes.

“As leaders, we have no choice; we’re fighting this tooth and nail,” said Besaw. “We need to capitalize on the 2018 and 2020 elections.”

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Deputy Assistant Secretary Anthony Bedell addressed the Third General Assembly, listing USDOT’s three main objectives as outreach, internal coordination, and interagency collaboration. Bedell also outlined some of the agency’s priorities, most notably seeking tribal voices on rulemaking committees as well as regulatory reform so that innovation and automation can commence in the next two to three years. However, Bedell noted that USDOT is anticipating movement on health care and tax reform to come before infrastructure.

“The Administration recognizes that rural and tribal communities face unique challenges as compared with their urban counterparts,” said Bedell.

Brian Howard, NCAI Committee Member of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC), gave a quick FirstNet update to attendees and introduced FirstNet Chief Customer Officer Richard Reed. Reed stepped to the microphone and announced the first-ever FirstNet tribal consultation policy, reaffirming its commitment to Indian Country.

“We are taking action to support Indian Country’s public safety communications. We are not here to check a box, to give lip service,” said Reed. “[We] need to consult before [we] build a network—we need to ask our future customer base what they want, what their expectations are before you even have the product.”

Robert Burnette from Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church Native Ministries spoke next about the Native Graduate Health Fellowship program and SDA’s $25,000 donation. The students are given the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. for a week-long intensive seminar with health professionals and administrators from a variety of national organizations and federal agencies. The Native Graduate Health Fellowship is a vehicle to help grow Native pharmaceutical administrators, doctors, and public health professionals.

“We cannot look to the Seventh Generation anymore—they are here now,” said Burnette. “We need to help our young people now; we encourage all tribes to come and match this $25,000 and I promise to bring more money to match next year. This will allow many of our students to be our doctors; we can have our own people staffing our business of good health.”

The remainder of the Third General Assembly was devoted to the Nominations and Speeches for NCAI Board Administrative Offices. NCAI Presidential Candidates included Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Chairman Harold Frazier, Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor Jefferson Keel, and Quinault Indian Nation President Fawn Sharp.

NCAI 1st Vice President nominees included Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Chairperson Aaron Payment and Three Affiliated Tribes Vice-Chairman Randy Phelan.
For the position of NCAI Recording Secretary, the nominees were Pauma Band of Luiseño Indians Traditional Councilwoman Juana Majel-Dixon and Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Tribal Chairperson Liana Onnen.

The position of NCAI Treasurer had a single nominee, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe Chairman/CEO W. Ron Allen.

Each candidate gave a two-minute speech in accordance with the rules of the convention.

The afternoon’s breakout sessions spanned a variety of topics, including Tribal Lands Restoration and Management, Citizen-Owned Businesses: Key to Building Sustainable Tribal Economies, and Tribal Data Capacity & Research Futures. One of the well-attended sessions of the day was the Elders & Youth Roundtable, in which about 80 people participated. Attendees were given the opportunity to communicate and collaborate on ways to strengthen leadership skills within families, communities, and tribal governments.

Subcommittee meetings started in late afternoon, and one that drew particular interest was the Human, Religious, and Cultural Concerns Subcommittee meeting. Native actor Adam Beach spoke to garner support for a proposed NCAI resolution to support the hiring of more Native American actors to portray Native American characters in film and television.

“We need for representation for Native peoples to be able to tell their own stories,” said Beach. “But in order to have an impact, both influential individuals as well as prominent organizations such as NCAI must unite.”

After the resolution was passed in committee, Beach took time to meet with the NCAI Youth attendees for photos and words of encouragement.

The Cultural Night rounded out the day hosted at the Indian Community School. Filled with the spectacular sights, sounds, and experiences of the cultural night, the entire school was open to NCAI Convention guests. Attendees were welcomed with traditional foods such as Ojibwe wild rice soup and Oneida corn soup, before being invited to explore all the activities spread throughout the expansive building.

Guests could partake in a variety of games, tours, classes, and demonstrations, which included making corn husk dolls, Menominee language games, learning about Ho-Chunk clans, and birch tea as traditional medicine.

One of the biggest draws of the evening was the Dances from the Woodlands presentation in which Ho-Chunk, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Oneida dancers performed a range of dances within the circular auditorium. The Indian Community School was a stunning blend of traditional cultural teachings and innovative approaches to education. Thank you to the wonderful staff, students, and volunteers who made this Cultural Night an unforgettable one!
On Thursday, October 19, 2017, attendees gathered for the Fourth General Assembly, which included an update from Department of the Interior (DOI) Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, who reconfirmed in his remarks the commitment to tribal infrastructure and energy development.

Bernhardt explained DOI’s move to streamline administrative processes and procedures as a means towards development of meaningful policy change. Bernhardt went on to further express DOI’s commitment to the government-to-government relationship with tribes.

“I do believe that consultation is meaningful—that it is a dialogue,” said Bernhardt. “[DOI is making] a commitment to a vision for improving the lives of rural Americans—tribal and non-tribal.”

Bernhardt also remarked on key issues facing Indian Country, including those involving Native youth, education, health care, the opioid crisis, and tax. DOI is looking to address these specific areas in the coming weeks and months.

NCAI Youth Commission Co-Presidents Mikah Carlos and Brian Barlow, Co-Vice President Rory Wheeler, and Secretary Lance Sanchez preceded Bernhardt and spoke to the crowd about their work, and made asks of tribal leaders and youth alike to empower Native youth from every community.
“We work to uplift the Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda (TBHA) as one of our platforms—we know that culture is prevention,” said Carlos. “We hope to increase opportunities for youth to be heard. We also wish to be consulted when programs are implemented that affect us—we are the experts on the solutions that are working, and what is not working. To the youth: we challenge you to take back what you have learned this week and make positive change in your communities.”

National Indian Education Association (NIEA) President Dr. Jolene Bowman continued the momentum in the discussion about Native youth and spoke about how NIEA continues to advocate for Native control of Native education and works to ensure former Title VII will continue. As NIEA look towards its 50th anniversary in 2019, Dr. Bowman says, “we remain strong.”

National Indian Health Board (NIHB) Chair Vinton Hawley gave a comprehensive health care policy update, noting their continued tracking of the Affordable Care Act and Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) along with the Restoring Accountability in the Indian Health Service Act of 2017. Hawley also spoke about the First Kids 1st Initiative – Every Child is Sacred (FK1st) partnership and the ability to host the NIHB inaugural Youth Health Policy Fellowship as part of FK1st!

National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. spoke from the heart about his mother seated in the audience and her 30-year career in drug and alcohol abuse prevention. Addressing the opioid crisis in Indian Country through his story, Stevens also remarked on the NIGA training series on active shooters. The training takes a close look on the do's and don'ts during an active shooter crisis and prepares casino staff for worst-case scenarios.

Chairman Stevens then invited NIGA Executive Director Jason Giles to the stage to provide a gaming policy update to the General Assembly.

National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) Chairwoman Sami Jo Difuntorum talked about the links between mental illness and opioid addiction as part of an emerging trend she is finding with the Native housing crisis, which will only be further impacted by the expiration of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA).

“What we're seeing a trend in is people who have mental illness. It's a fact,” said Difuntorum. “We had a tribal elder incarcerated due to mental illness. The judicial system and jails are becoming mental health providers—that's not acceptable.”

NAHASDA 2017 has yet to be reauthorized in this Congress, however, NAIHC is working closely with both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate with eight co-sponsors and bi-partisan support to make this reauthorization a reality.

“I’d like to think that low-income housing of Native people would be an easy lift,” said Difuntorum. “But it’s not.”

Native American Financial Officers Association (NAFOA) Chairwoman Cristina Danforth focused her remarks on taxation and expressed the immediate need for tribal leaders in the audience to reach out to their members of Congress in coming months to ensure Indian Country is part of the conversation around tariffs and taxes effecting tribal communities.

“Unity in tax reform—we need to be included,” said Danforth. “In the coming months, we look forward to working on reform and infrastructure plans. The framework leaves many questions unanswered and there are most likely going to be deep cuts to federal programs. We anticipate most of October and November to be focused on revising the framework. Everyone needs to weigh in now—especially on the Ways & Means Committee. The earlier we get in the conversation, the better chance we have for success.”

The remainder of the Fourth General Assembly was dedicated to NCAI Executive Council elections. At 10:30 a.m., NCAI Elections Committee Chair Juanita Ahtone, with the assistance of NCAI Credentials Committee Chair Yvonne Oberly, announced the 2017-2019 Executive Council election results.

The race for NCAI presidential was very close, resulting in a runoff between outgoing NCAI 1st Vice President and Quinault Indian Nation President Fawn Sharp and Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor Jefferson Keel.
The run-off vote was calculated and resulted in a less than two percent margin, making Chickasaw Nation Lt. Governor Jefferson Keel the 22nd NCAI President.

The meeting adjourned with a special presentation for outgoing NCAI President Brian Cladoosby.

The Fifth General Assembly, themed “Updates from around Indian Country,” started the afternoon with an update from the Tribal Supreme Court Project by Native American Rights Fund (NARF) John Echohawk and NCAI General Counsel John Dossett, which included updates on Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) cases on fishing rights, gaming, and motor oil and fuel taxes on a tribal corporation. Dossett closed with the NCAI tax update featuring an outline on dual taxation reform and tribal authority to collect taxes.

Senator Tammy Baldwin (WI) could not join us in person, but sent her best wishes through a video message played during the afternoon. Baldwin also took the opportunity to address grave concerns for the tribal communities in her home state and what she is doing in Congress to support them. She spoke about her co-sponsorship of an Amber Alert bill for Indian Country to protect Native children and “fighting back” when the federal and state governments refuse to acknowledge tribal consultation requirements.

The second half of the afternoon continued the “Updates from around Indian Country” theme and included updates on tribal energy development, food sovereignty, and health and wellness.

Roger White Owl of MHA Nation gave the update on the Initiatives to Reduce Barriers to Tribal Energy Development.

“No one knows our homelands better than us,” said White Owl. White Owl further addressed the assembly on the need to end dual taxation and for a boost in economy to enliven tribal livelihood.

Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative Director Janie Simms Hipp gave an update on the 2018 Farm Bill. She also emphasized the importance of preserving the Office of Tribal Relations within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and encouraged attendance at the Consultation on U.S. Department of Agriculture Reorganization that evening.

St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin Chairman Lewis Taylor ended the Fifth General Assembly and spoke on health and wellness, stating that “sovereignty is the basis of our survival.”
FRIDAY

On October 20, 2017, the Sixth General Assembly wrapped up the 74th Annual Convention & Marketplace with the four NCAI Administrative Board Officers, 12 Regional Vice Presidents, and 12 Alternate Vice Presidents being sworn into office, as well as remarks by newly confirmed U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Steven Censky.

“[USDA] hosted a consultation yesterday evening and there was very good information that I received,” said Censky. “There are many areas where collaboration is strong and areas where improvements can be made, including the education of our personnel. There are many programs that USDA has that impact Indian Country including the proposed reorganization of the Office of Tribal Relations.”

Censky went on to talk about the identified six strategic goals for USDA including: 1) Ensure USDA programs are delivered effectively, and efficiently focus on customer service; 2) Maximize ability to prosper; 3) Promote agricultural exports from the U.S.; 4) Work towards rural prosperity; 5) Stewardship of private lands; 6) Productive and sustainable use of the U.S. Forest Service; and 6) Provide all Americans a safe, nutritious food supply.

The Resolutions Committee Report rounded out the morning with individual reports given by the Committee Chairs of the Economic, Finance & Community Development Committee, Human Resources Committee, Land & Natural Resources Committee, Litigation & Governance Committee, and Veterans Committee.

After review of resolutions on the floor, the NCAI Membership adopted 50 resolutions in total before closing out the final General Assembly with the retiring of colors and an honor song by a drum group from the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Veterans Committee Honors Deputy Director Robert Holden With Eagle Feather

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!
"We need to speak more proactively. What we talk about, we bring about." - NCAI Youth Commissioner when discussing the importance of refocusing on present successes.

On Sunday evening, over 90 Native youth came together to kick off a week at the NCAI Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin hosted by First Kids 1st. Other youth-serving organizations and First Kids 1st partners were also in attendance to network with the youth. Youth prepared for the week ahead with ice breakers and games to build camaraderie within the group. Throughout the week youth actively sought out opportunities to immerse themselves in the NCAI experience. Youth listened in on breakout sessions, subcommittee meetings, and full committee meetings to learn about the work being done in Indian Country, and the importance of the resolution process.

**Google Workshop**

Native youth also attended a workshop with Google called "Unconscious Bias at Work." During the session, youth learned about how to combat the potentially negative influences of unconscious bias. Unconscious bias can happen due to a lack of diversity within a network of people, which can place limitations on personal and career successes. Youth took away methods that can help reverse unconscious bias. Two of those methods included how to evaluate subtle messages of micro-aggression and how to create an environment that empowers people to call out unconscious bias.

"Be confident in what you believe, don't be afraid to share your ideas. Our ideas matter."

- NCAI Youth Commission Member
NCAI Youth Meet With Actor Adam Beach

Native actor, Adam Beach, spoke with the NCAI Youth Commission on a resolution about representation of Native identity in film and television. Adam discussed the importance of accurately portraying the Native American experience by casting Native actors for roles, how Native American stories are told, and how representation shapes the American society's understanding of tribal sovereignty.

NCAI Youth Commission "Walk the Talk" and show their commitment to health by joining the 14th Annual National Native American Just Move it! Healthy Lifestyles, Walk, and Rally.

Elders & Youth Roundtable

"Elders feel just as 'unheard' as youth do. We are stronger when we stick together." - Native Youth Commissioner

One of the most popular sessions with the youth was the Elders and Youth Roundtable Discussion. This was an opportunity for the youth to connect with elders and have an open dialogue on issues facing our tribal communities such as behavioral health, substance misuse, and sovereignty.

Thank you to everyone who supported the youth this week. A special thank you to San Manuel, WK Kellogg, SAMSHA, and Google for their support.

Check out the full youth agenda of the week’s event’s here. Follow NCAI Youth Commission on Social Media: