

Daily Newsletter

74TH ANNUAL CONVENTION & MARKETPLACE



SATURDAY | SUNDAY | MONDAY EDITION



Say (Wisconsin) CHEESE (Curds)! Elders, youth, staff, volunteers, and NCAI board members pack materials into conference bags for the 74th Annual Convention & Marketplace at the Wisconsin Center.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY

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.

MONDAY

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.



Oneida Nation Smoke Dancers Oneida Nation Smoke Dancers enter the Tradeshow & Marketplace during the Grand Opening Celebration to perform a war dance, pigeon dance, and smoke dance.

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 Dinè 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 President Brian Cladoosby



Southeastern Oneida Tribal Services and Forest County Potawatomi Honor Guards



Forest County Potawatomi Chairman Gus Frank



Representative Gwen Moore (WI)



Representative Betty McCollum (MN)



Brian Cladoosby & Jacqueline Pata



NCAI Board Supports VAWA Task Force



Acting Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs John Tahsuda

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!

WELCOME RECEPTION | YOUTH MEET & GREET

