

Daily Newsletter

74TH ANNUAL CONVENTION & MARKETPLACE



TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY EDITION



Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde poses with the 2015-2017 NCAI Executive Board and NCAI Executive Director Jacqueline Pata after the National Chief's remarks discussing NAFTA during the Second General Assembly.

TUESDAY

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.



U.N. Ambassador (ret.) Keith Harper



Jodi Gillette



Chairman Gil Vigil



President Cladoosby & Major General Jackson



San Manuel Band of Mission Indians gift giving to Oglala Sioux Tribe





Youth Luncheon

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.



Shakopee Mdewakanton
Sioux Community gift to NCAI



Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (NM)

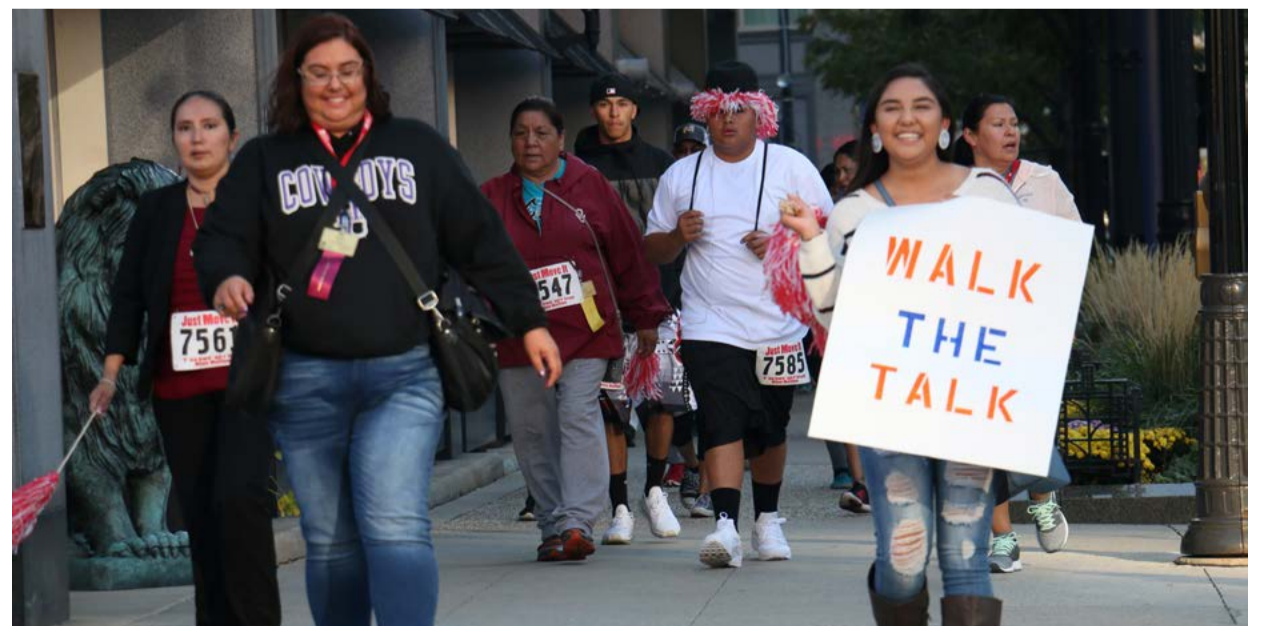
WEDNESDAY

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 credentialed with the Committee. The Rules & Credentials Report was accepted unanimously on the floor by NCAI membership.



Chairman Besaw



Deputy Asst. Secretary Bedell

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.



Richard Reed



Robert Burnette



Actor Adam Beach with Native Youth



NCAI Presidential Candidate Frazier



NCAI Presidential Candidate Keel



NCAI Presidential Candidate Sharp



NCAI 1st Vice-President Candidate Payment



NCAI 1st Vice-President Candidate Phelan



NCAI Recording Secretary Candidate Majel-Dixon



NCAI Recording Secretary Candidate Onnen

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!

