



NCAI NEWS

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NATIVE AMERICAN RUNNERS SET OUT CROSS COUNTRY ON 'SOVEREIGNTY RUN' RELAY

Run will raise awareness for American Indian and Alaska Native Self-Government

(Washington, D.C., Sept. 4) Runners representing hundreds of American Indian tribes and Alaska Native nations will gather together in Taholah, Wash., located on the Quinault Reservation, to begin an historic 2800 mile cross-country coast-to-coast relay run in an effort to raise public awareness of American Indian tribal sovereignty – the right to self government.

The "Sovereignty Run" will begin on Wednesday, Sept. 11 at the Pacific Ocean and end Monday, Oct. 7 at the steps of the United States Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. – the site of a number of devastating court decisions that have been delivered against tribes over the past two decades. These decisions, made by the highest court in the land, are responsible for the continued erosion of tribal sovereignty. 1964 Olympic Gold Medalist Billy Mills will participate in the Run as it arrives in the District of Columbia. Oct. 7 also is the first day of the Court's 2003 term.

The "Sovereignty Run" is part of a larger program called the Tribal Governance and Economic Enhancement Initiative, also known as the Sovereignty Protection Initiative. The Initiative, which was launched in September 2001, is a coordinated all-tribal strategy designed to address the increasing diminishment of tribal self-government and jurisdiction as a result of recent Supreme Court rulings, such as Nevada vs. Hicks and Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley – decisions that have raised strong concerns among tribes that the Supreme Court is on an accelerating trend over the past 20 years toward removing tribal jurisdiction within tribal territories. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Navajo Nation and prominent American Indian tribal leaders are spearheading the Initiative.

"The National Congress of American Indians believes that the inherent right for tribes to govern themselves is under siege and must be brought to the attention of the American public, which has already stated that it supports greater self-government and self-determination for tribes," said NCAI President Tex G. Hall, who also is Chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation in North Dakota. "Ending this national run at the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. will increase awareness about the Court's decisions which are chipping away our right to govern ourselves."

The late and much esteemed Joseph B. DeLaCruz, former President of the Quinault Indian Nation and one of the recognized fathers of tribal self-governance, will be represented in the first mile by his wife, Dorothy DeLaCruz, and his family. All are welcome to walk or run the first mile.

A press conference will be held at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 10 at the Quinault Beach Resort and Casino in Ocean Shores, Wash. Tribal leaders and the Sovereignty Run Team will be on hand to answer questions related to the Initiative and the Run. A kick-off reception will be held that evening at 7 p.m. at the resort and casino. All supporters are welcome to attend.

The Sovereignty Run opening ceremonies will be held Wednesday, Sept. 11, at 8 a.m., near the mouth of the Quinault River in Taholah, Washington, on the Quinault Indian Reservation. The Sovereignty Run will begin at 8:30 a.m. Runners from tribes throughout the United States, and supporting runners, will participate in the Run, which will travel through the states of Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington, DC. Noted Quinault tribal cultural leader Guy Capoeman is preparing a staff for the runners to carry cross-country. Upon the runners' arrival at the steps of the Supreme Court on Oct. 7, tribal leaders will hold a rally to educate the audience and the media about the issues identified in the Initiative.

Run coordinators are seeking at least \$500 in sponsorships per mile. Sponsors are encouraged to send contributions to: Sovereignty Run, The National Congress of American Indians (TSPI), 1301 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Second Floor, Washington, D.C. 20036 or call (202) 466-7767.

See the attached documents for more information and visit www.sovrun.org . For Run information, contact Fawn Sharp, Sovereignty Run Team Leader, at (360) 276-8215, ext. 329. For information on the Initiative, contact Shelby Settles of NCAI at (202) 466-7767.