

The National Congress of American Indians

2003 CRITICAL INITIATIVES

◆ SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION INITIATIVE

Sovereignty lies at the heart of Tribal government. However, a disturbing trend in recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions threatens to gut tribal jurisdiction and shift federal Indian law away from the long held principles of tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Recognizing that tribes must act with unity now to secure their sovereignty for the future, NCAI has spearheaded an ambitious, multifaceted initiative to address both short and long-term protection of tribal sovereignty. ***NCAI is seeking \$500,000 in operating expenses for the Sovereignty Protection Initiative.***

◆ FOSTERING MEANINGFUL TRUST REFORM

The Department of Interior's mismanagement of Indian trust lands and funds has reached a crisis point. In response to the Secretary of Interior's problematic BITAM proposal, NCAI helped to establish and manage a Tribal Leaders Trust Reform Task Force to seek alternative reforms. The Department of Interior ultimately walked away from those efforts, and unveiled a troubling new BIA reorganization plan absent any consultation with tribes. In the wake of these disturbing developments, NCAI is working hard to ensure that Indian tribes have a voice in the trust reform process, providing communications, meeting logistics, and overall coordination of tribal engagement in the trust reform effort. NCAI anticipates that this issue will require a high degree of attention from the organization for at least the next five years. ***NCAI is seeking \$250,000 in operating expenses for the trust reform efforts this year.***

◆ LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

One of the core functions of NCAI is its constant monitoring and advocacy on issues of concern to tribes on Capitol Hill and within the Administration. This is a tremendous daily effort, and requires us to track issues from health care to transportation, federal appropriations to trust reform. It involves not only keeping tabs on tribal-specific measures and championing proposals for tribally-driven legislative language, but also keeping an eye on the constant stream of broader measures in which tribal concerns should be addressed, and watching out for harmful riders that seek to circumvent the legislative process to attack tribal interests. We share this information with tribes through regular e-mail and fax alerts and updates, an undertaking that is both time-consuming and costly, but key to maintaining tribes' voice in Washington. ***NCAI is seeking \$350,000 in operating expenses to support the organization's core legislative advocacy and policy development functions.***

◆ PUBLIC EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS

Over the past year Indian Country has been reminded of the importance of an organized and ongoing public education and public relations effort. Negative articles and commentary in the Wall Street Journal came at an alarming rate and by year's end, even publications, traditionally less hostile to tribes such as, Time Magazine and the New York Times began to echo similar perspectives, critical of Indian Country. To address this growing gap in information and education within the press and the public at large, NCAI has sought to implement a more aggressive strategy for improving public education and public relations through partnerships with other major Indian organizations and tribal public relations entities, a set of simple and direct messages, educational materials and training that will assist the organization and tribal leaders, an updated and comprehensive set of media lists, an aggressive effort to cultivate relationships with national media outlets, regular national and regional press conferences, and the placement of advertisements and educational spots in print, and on radio and television. ***NCAI is seeking \$170,000 in Public Outreach & Communications operating expenses.***

❖ ***NCAI Web site*** - Tribal leaders have asked NCAI to improve its Internet presence, and we have heard the message loud and clear. We have worked with Nativere, an Indian-owned and operated web development firm, to help us turn www.ncai.org into the preeminent Internet tool for Tribal governments and policymakers that want timely information about the critical issues affecting Indian Country. The redesigned web site is easier to navigate, contains a more complete and better organized issues section, and has several new functions, including: online meeting registration; search engines; a members-only section; and direct electronic access to Members of Congress. ***NCAI is seeking \$50,000 for ongoing web site maintenance and content development.***

❖ ***Publications*** - Every year NCAI produces valuable educational pieces such as "The Sentinel" and the "Introduction to Indian Nations Handbook." These publications have proven to be instrumental educational pieces for members of Congress and the Administration, schools and universities, and the public at large. ***NCAI is seeking \$15,000 to cover the costs of producing regular educational publications***

❖ ***Broadcast e-mail and fax service*** - In order to be more efficient and cost-effective, we have turned to email and the Internet as our primary communications tool to distribute time sensitive alerts and information and additional supplementary materials on a regular basis. We have also maintained a fax broadcast system to ensure that tribes without email access can continue to be involved on issues of concern. ***NCAI is seeking \$50,000 to provide these services.***



◆ RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Information is powerful—the collection and analysis of objective information on the trends and issues facing tribes today is essential to guiding the development of sound federal Indian policy. With limited resources to bring to bear, tribal leaders and federal policymakers alike need solid information on which to base their efforts. To this end, NCAI is working to develop a tribal research and policy development entity, independent of the organization's current advocacy functions, to gather and assess data on conditions and trends in Indian Country, as well as to develop ideas and options for new approaches to federal Indian policy, tribal governance, and a range of related areas. The development of such a tribally driven "think tank" for Indian Country can play a pivotal role in shifting the discourse in Native policy from a problem-focused approach to truly proactive, future-thinking strategy development. ***NCAI is seeking \$2,850,000 in operating costs for the initial launch of a National American Indian Research Institute.***

◆ SACRED SITES

NCAI has launched a Sacred Lands Protection Coalition (SLPC) in collaboration with the Seventh Generation Fund, the Native American Rights Fund, and the Association on American Indian Affairs. The SLPC is playing a key role in efforts to strengthen legal protections for sacred sites and to secure administrative accommodations for the use of sacred places by Indian religious practitioners. ***NCAI is seeking \$100,000 in operating expenses to administer the SLPC.***

◆ NCAI BUILDING FUND

Homeownership makes financial sense—and NCAI should have a home of its own in Washington. The NCAI Headquarters office space has always been leased at great expense to the organization, particularly as the cost of rental space in the nation's capital has skyrocketed in recent years. By purchasing a building for the organization, we can decrease our monthly expenses, supplement our revenues with rental income, and create a headquarters from which a range of national Indian organizations and tribal offices could choose to make their base in Washington. ***NCAI is seeking \$2,000,000 toward purchase of a permanent building.***

◆ EMERGENCY RESPONSE PREPAREDNESS

As sovereign nations, many tribes are on the front lines of emergency response. In their communities, preparedness is critical. NCAI conducts a Tribal Response/Emergency Preparedness (TREP) Workshop designed to inform Tribal government officials and first responders about basic emergency response training concepts, and assist Tribes in all hazardous emergency preparedness programs. ***Sponsorship of a national or local TREP workshop is \$50,000.***

◆ NUCLEAR WASTE PROGRAM

NCAI's NWP is a long standing program tracking issues impacting tribal cultures, lands, and people. The NWP also monitors the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as transportation and waste storage matters related to radioactive waste management programs. The NWP also works with the Department of Defense to identify and address environmental and safety concerns related to munitions that remain at former DOD ranges that are no longer operational. NCAI coordinates and disseminates information to assist tribes to become better informed about DOE and DOD issues. ***NCAI is seeking \$50,000 in operating expenses to administer the Nuclear Waste Program.***

◆ WELFARE REFORM PROGRAM

For the past four years, NCAI has been facilitating work in Indian Country around the implementation of welfare reform and its related programs: TANF, Child Care, Employment and Training, Child Support, Medicaid and Food Stamps. NCAI convenes Tribes operating or interested in operating TANF on a quarterly basis to share best practices, provide information about federal and state policies, and organize to impact TANF reauthorization. After the reauthorization of TANF, NCAI will continue to assist Tribes with the development and dissemination of information on the implementation. NCAI will also continue to work with national organizations representing the interests of state human service programs in order to have dialogue about the coordination of state and tribal programs. ***NCAI is seeking \$200,000 in operating expenses to support the Welfare Reform Program.***

◆ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

NCAI is moving ahead with its economic development initiative to help those tribes that continue to struggle with slow economic growth. Building strong, diversified economies is essential to sustaining healthy tribal governments, and NCAI has heeded tribal leaders' call to address the need for sustainable development that is complementary to cultural preservation. We have produced, *Weaving Our Future*, a comprehensive economic stimulus package aimed at action for the 108th Congress. Next steps for the economic development initiative include continuation of the National Summit on Emerging Tribal Economies as well as expanding a long-term plan for tribal economic stimulus. ***NCAI is seeking \$300,000 to continue the economic development initiative.***

◆ NATIVE VOTE

NCAI is committed to increasing American Indian and Alaska Native participation in the full political process through increased voter registration, and education. NCAI plans to be at the forefront of efforts to make sure that every American, including the first Americans, has access to the ballot box. NCAI plans to develop a tool kit to aid tribal governments in educating citizens on how to get involved in the political process and perform their civic duty of voting. ***NCAI is seeking \$150,000 in operating expenses to administer the Native Vote 2004 Campaign.***

◆ TEA-21 REAUTHORIZATION TASK FORCE

The TEA-21 (Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century) Task Force has been working since November 2001 to put together a comprehensive legislative proposal to address tribal transportation issues during the legislative processes of TEA-21 Reauthorization. The task force has created the Tribal Transportation Equity Act, which includes provisions to increase roads funding, maintenance funds, bridge programs, and to create direct tribal contracting authority with the Department of Transportation. Funding is needed to continue Task Force work as we move into the critical legislative phase of our work. ***NCAI is seeking \$200,000 in operating expenses to administer the Task Force and fund this year's legislative activities.***

◆ DIGITAL DIVIDE INITIATIVE

Indian Country is hobbled by a digital divide that severely limits economic growth and impairs community service offerings on tribal lands. Since 2000 alone, NCAI has endeavored to improve the telecommunications and information technology landscape for tribes by organizing several seminars, performing ongoing outreach, hosting the Digital Divide Task Force, and maintaining NCAI's web-based technology and telecommunications policy clearinghouse. NCAI has been able to perform these educational and outreach services most recently through a grant from the Ford Foundation, but additional funding is now required in order to continue and broaden these activities. ***NCAI is seeking \$60,000 in operating expenses to support the operations of the Digital Divide Initiative.***

◆ IMPROVING STATE-TRIBAL RELATIONS

As tribal and state governments evolve, change is continually taking place in the relationships between these entities—many are discovering areas of mutual interest and new ways to cooperate, but in some cases friction in state-tribal relationships has led to potentially devastating legal and legislative challenges to the very core of tribal sovereignty and self-determination. In their ongoing partnership to foster improved state-tribal relations, NCAI has partnered with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) in a shared effort to build communication and respect between state and tribal governments. ***NCAI seeks \$200,000 to expand these efforts.***

◆ NAGPRA COMMISSION

The NCAI Commission on Repatriation and Burial Sites Protection meets during NCAI's midyear and annual sessions to address issues involved in repatriation and burial sites protection and preservation. The Commission conducts investigations, issues reports, advocates for appropriate legislation, articulates positions on repatriation and burial sites protection, and represents NCAI in appropriate forums, such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review committee meetings. ***NCAI seeks \$20,000 for oversight of the NAGPRA Commission.***

◆ INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

With only two years left in the International Decade on indigenous peoples, NCAI will continue to participate in the United Nations Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Organization of American States Working Group to Prepare the Draft American Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is important that tribal governments work with the United States Government to address vital human rights issues and work towards incorporation of international law into United States jurisprudence. NCAI will continue to participate in both the UN and the OAS working groups as Indigenous peoples continue to struggle to have basic human rights recognized. ***NCAI seeks \$25,000 for staff time and travel expenses.***

◆ MENTORING YOUNG LEADERS

NCAI has instituted a range of new internship and fellowship opportunities to provide up and coming young American Indian and Alaska Native leaders with a unique opportunity to engage on the front lines of legislative action and policy development from within the oldest, largest, and most representative organization of tribal governments. Semester internships are available to students, and year-long fellowships are available to college graduates looking to gain experience in the legislative arena. The program has been an enormous success to date. ***NCAI seeks \$100,000 to cover intern and fellowship program administration and to expand the stipends available to enable more young people to take advantage of this unique opportunity***

❖ ***Miss NCAI Scholarship Program*** - During the annual convention, the Miss NCAI Scholarship Pageant Program hosts talented and articulate young women from throughout the United States, each vying for the title of Miss NCAI. Each contestant demonstrates deep respect and understanding for her cultural heritage and is engaged in the pursuit of educational and personal goals. Miss NCAI educates others about the issues affecting Native Americans and reaches out to support charitable causes throughout the nation this while pursuing her education and gaining skills that will prepare her to challenge, amend, and improve the conditions of American Indian people.

❖ ***Youth Commission*** - The NCAI Youth Commission is designed specifically for college & high school students with an interest in political science, tribal government and Native American legislative and governmental affairs. The Youth Commission provides a strong mentoring program, opportunities for volunteerism, informative workshops, leadership training, and a voice within NCAI.

◆ HEALTH

There is an enormous disparity that exists in both the overall health status and access to health care of AI/ANs. The impact of this disparity is felt throughout Indian Country. Indians face dramatically higher diagnosis rates and overall death rates from many chronic illnesses including diabetes, health disease, and cancer. NCAI will be developing papers to educate Congress and the Administration on the disparate impact low levels of funding have on Indian health. Additionally, NCAI will continue to partner with national health advocacy organizations to make sure American Indian and Alaska Natives are included on their legislative health agenda.

❖ **Diabetes Initiative** - Type-two diabetes poses an enormous health risk to Native Americans, with an alarmingly high percentage of Indian people (more than 50 percent in some communities) affected by the disease through hereditary and increasingly poor eating and exercise habits. NCAI is committed to efforts that will greatly diminish and eventually eradicate the incidence of diabetes among our people. Financial resources are needed to facilitate meetings of like-minded health officials from both the federal government and Tribal sides, and to produce written materials and other information that is suitable for Tribal communities. ***NCAI is seeking \$100,000 in operating expenses for the initiative.***

❖ **Cancer** - American Indian and Alaska Native populations have a very high incidence rates for specific cancer sites and poor survival rates for most cancers. In addition to advocating for legislation that will make cancer treatment and prevention services more accessible to tribal members, NCAI will assist tribes in increasing community awareness and understanding of cancer.

❖ **Women's Health** - Native Women play an important role in tribal communities by ensuring the health and future of their culture and their families. NCAI will continue to advocate for services that will respond to the unique health needs American Indian and Alaska Native women face and encourage women to participate in preventive health services.

◆ APPROPRIATIONS TASK FORCE

Recession, the cost of war, and fiscally conservative agendas have tightened the flow of funding available to public services. Given both the unique trust responsibilities of the federal government to provide tribes with basic services and the historically insufficient funding levels dedicated to tribal programs, Indian Country cannot afford to suffer the negative repercussions of a cash-strapped federal budget. In 2003, NCAI created the Appropriations Task Force to analyze federal budget proposals, understand true programmatic funding needs, prioritize objectives, and perform education outreach. ***NCAI is seeking \$20,000 to coordinate the Appropriations Task Force, develop outreach materials and distribute information to tribes, members of Congress, and tribal-affiliated organizations.***

◆ CONFERENCES & RELATED ACTIVITIES

NCAI is organized as a representative congress of consensus on national priority issues. As NCAI members, tribal delegates deliberate issues of pressing concern in accordance with their government's policies, goals, and needs. NCAI coordinates three conferences a year, the Executive Council Winter Session, Mid-Year Session, and the Annual Session at an approximate cost of \$620,000. Along with the standard orders of business that take place during conference time, we also have the following programs that serve to develop our youth:

◆ OPERATING RESERVE FUND

NCAI is seeking assistance in establishing a reserve fund to enable the organization to operate consistently through the peaks and valleys in our seasonal funding streams, as well as to sustain the organization in case of unexpected financial emergency. Most organizations maintain an emergency cushion of 3 to 6 months worth of operating funds to cover salaries and basic expenses, but NCAI has never had such a cushion in place. NCAI's funding streams are highly seasonal in nature; to stabilize our financial systems, as well as to ensure our preparedness in the face of the range of political and economic uncertainties we face in the world today, it is more important than ever that NCAI maintain an operating reserve fund to ensure the continuing presence and financial stability of NCAI. ***NCAI is seeking \$500,000 to establish an operating reserve fund.***

◆ INDIAN EDUCATION

Our children are our most precious asset and the education of our children ensures our prosperity and the survival of our sovereignty. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires all schools to implement higher standards of performance in order to help every child improve their academic achievement. In partnership with the National Indian Education Association, NCAI has committed to assisting Indian tribes implement this Act within their school systems. NCAI has also been actively involved in advocating for Indian tribes with higher education initiatives. ***NCAI is seeking \$50,000 in operating expenses to continue in its advocacy role.***

◆ LAND RECOVERY TASK FORCE

On November 9, 2001, the Department of Interior withdrew the "Final Rule on Acquisition of Land in Trust" that was published on January 16, 2001, citing the need for "clear direction and processing standards" for land into trust applications. The Department indicated that it plans to consult with Indian tribes before beginning the development of the new rule. The process for trust land reacquisition is extremely important to addressing the impacts of land loss in Indian Country, and to ensuring the long-term survival of Indian Nations. NCAI and the Land Recovery Task Force have devoted countless hours to monitoring this rulemaking, submitting comments and continuing the ongoing education of Congress, the Administration and the public on the importance of tribal land recovery. ***NCAI is seeking \$50,000 in support for this ongoing effort.***

◆ **TRIBAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TASK FORCE**

Unrecognized Indian tribes have a right to pursue federal recognition through a fair and efficient process. Currently, federal policy makers are seeking to undermine the status of federally recognized tribes in Alaska, are challenging the sovereignty of Native Hawaiians, and are continuing to deny rights to terminated and other non-federally recognized Indian tribes. Through the Tribal Acknowledgment Task Force, NCAI will continue to address existing deficiencies in the federal recognition process and protect the status of Indian tribes whose recognition is under attack. ***NCAI is seeking \$100,000 to continue its efforts to ensure a fair and timely federal recognition process and maintain the Tribal Acknowledgment Task Force to address these concerns.***

◆ **ENERGY POLICY**

It is no secret that Indian tribes are literally left in the dark on some Indian reservations. Unreliable access to electricity threatens tribal economic and social well-being. Ironically, many Indian reservation lands have tremendous potential for both renewable and conventional energy development, but often have been shut out of access to that energy down line, or have seen their resources depleted by outside developers at great environmental impact and with little compensation to the tribe. Many tribes are seeking to take the reigns of energy generation in their communities. NCAI is committed to assisting tribes in pursuing sound policies that provide them with the authority and information needed to make their own choices regarding energy development. ***NCAI is seeking \$100,000 in operating expenses to continue its advocacy efforts on tribal energy concerns.***

◆ **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Indian tribes have sovereign authority to regulate activities affecting the natural environments of their reservations. In addition, Indian tribes and nations typically have environmental concerns that extend beyond reservation boundaries, in some cases because of on-reservation impacts of off-reservation activities and in other cases because off-reservation places hold cultural or religious importance. NCAI is committed to helping tribal governments carry out their unique role of enforcing federal environmental laws and developing their own tribal environmental quality codes so that the exercise of tribal sovereignty protected and maximized. ***NCAI is seeking \$200,000 to cover operating expenses for expanded efforts in the environmental protection arena.***

A Voice for the Future - A Tradition Established

NCAI has grown to become the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the United States, with over 250 member tribes and thousands of individual members from throughout the country. Now as in the past, NCAI serves to secure and preserve rights for American Indians and Alaska Native people today and for generations to come; to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of Indian people; to preserve tribes' rights under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States; and to promote the common welfare of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

We hope you consider a donation to our organization and to the future of Indian Country.

 Yes, we will support the continuing work and purpose of NCAI and are willing to make a contribution of:

 \$5,000

 \$10,000

 \$25,000

 \$50,000

 \$75,000

 \$100,000

 Other: \$ _____

Make Checks Payable to: **NCAI**
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