



“Sovereignty has to mean something, it has to be more than a name, it has to be that tribes decide for themselves what is right.”

– Secretary Ryan Zinke, Department of the Interior (DOI)

MONDAY

The 2017 NCAI Mid Year Conference & Marketplace (Mid Year) pre-meeting day kicked off the week with a packed schedule of task force meetings and sessions covering everything from child welfare to the Farm Bill. Also featured on the afternoon agenda were several listening sessions hosted by the Department of Justice, the Department of the Interior, and the United Nations.

Rounding out the day was a spectacular Welcome Reception sponsored and hosted by the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut, which featured a buffet with dishes like buffalo meatloaf and pan-seared salmon. The atmosphere was further highlighted by live dance performances from Seneca Nation and Mohegan Tribe dance groups, and a special performance by Donny Most, formerly of “Happy Days”, accompanied by swing dancers. Thank you to our wonderful hosts and attendees for making the night a memorable one.

TUESDAY

Tuesday morning was buzzing with excitement as it marked the first official day of Mid Year and the First General Assembly. NCAI President and Swinomish Tribal Indian Community Chairman Brian Cladoosby called the meeting to order at 8:30 am and introduced the posting of the colors and honor song provided by Unity of Nations drum group, followed by an invocation by Mohegan Chief Lynn Malerba and a warm welcome message by Mohegan Chairman Kevin Brown “Red Eagle”.

The NCAI Rules & Credentials Committee Chair Yvonne Oberly took the podium to present the Rules of the Convention, closely followed by the Resolutions Process Report from NCAI Resolution Committee Chair Juanita Ahtone who remarked, “I do this all in honor of my father’s memory.”



Evaluation #NCAIMY17



Your feedback is valuable! Help us develop and evolve our next conference by providing feedback via the 2017 NCAI Mid Year Conference & Marketplace Evaluation.

Visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NCAIEval> to complete the evaluation now.



Did you participate in Native Vote? We'd love to hear from you. What did you learn? What worked and what didn't? How can we improve? We want to know all about it. Take the Native Vote Survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NativeVote2016>

State of Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy welcomed the crowd to his home state while acknowledging the special relationship between his office and Connecticut's two tribes.

"NCAI has played an important role in having our country understand its obligations. We have a legal and moral obligation to tribal nations," said Governor Malloy. "Connecticut has a great relationship with tribal nations and the state government. During my seven years as governor, I have worked to improve the understanding and relationship we have with the members of tribal nations. We have made great progress in that relationship."

President Cladoosby followed Governor Malloy with the President's Report and focused his remarks on the importance of recognizing the resiliency of tribal nations and Native peoples.

"This is a pivotal moment in our history... We are not victims, we are survivors. You are survivors. You're still here, loud and proud. We have overcome past challenges. We learned how to play the long game. That's what has enabled us to survive and persevere on our own terms in accordance with our own cultures and values," said President Cladoosby.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke then gave his first address to a national gathering of tribal nations since taking office.

"Sovereignty has to mean something, it has to be more than a name, it has to be that tribes decide for themselves what is right," said Secretary Zinke. "Not only should the department meet our treaty obligations but exceed our treaty obligations. I'm honored to be your champion."

Secretary Zinke spoke about his commitment to tribal sovereignty, equal partnerships between tribes and DOI based on respect, and the need to address improvements within DOI, including at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE).

"My pledge is to work with you as an equal partner and be your advocate to fix a system that is broken," said Zinke. "We live in a great nation, and we should not accept failure as a standard. We should not accept failure as normal. It is my pledge to be your advocate."

Following his remarks, Secretary Zinke was honored in a blanket ceremony by two former NCAI Presidents Joe Garcia, Councilman, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo and Jefferson Keel, Lt. Governor, Chickasaw Nation, both of whom are veterans joined by the Mohegan Tribe Chairman Kevin Brown "Red Eagle". Zinke, who served for 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL, was draped in the blanket honoring his service in the United States Armed Forces while an honor song was performed by Leander McDonald, NCAI Area Vice President and President of the United Tribes Technical College.

Directly following his discussion with tribal leaders, the Secretary met with the NCAI Youth Commission to discuss issues affecting Native youth. To see photos, visit the NCAI Flickr page <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ncai/>.

The First General Assembly concluded with the Tribal Policy Agenda: Opportunities vs. Challenges panel led by NCAI Executive Director Jacqueline Pata that featured three tribal leader speakers: Roger Rader, Councilman for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Jefferson Keel, Lt. Governor of the Chickasaw Nation; and Kevin Frost, Councilman for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.

The panel discussed tribal priorities, Administration priorities, strategies to further economic development opportunities, and how to further tribal self-determination.

The afternoon sessions were stacked to the horizon with relevant and timely information, and panelists and moderators engaged in meaningful conversations about mental health, education, international advocacy, tribal lands and resources, juvenile justice, and tribal-state relationships. The evening concluded at the Foxwoods Resort Casino's 25th Anniversary Reception at the High Rollers Luxury Lanes and Lounge with bowling, entertainment, and a private buffet dinner reception to celebrate tribal sovereignty and NCAI's continuing mission to protect, enhance, and improve the quality of life of Native people.



Governor Dannel P. Malloy



President Brian Cladoosby



Secretary Ryan Zinke



Blanket Ceremony



Councilman Kevin Frost