

CONNECTING  COMMUNITIES

# STRENGTHENING SOVEREIGNTY

2014 - 2015

ANNUAL REPORT  
*National Congress of American Indians*



CONNECTING  COMMUNITIES

# STRENGTHENING SOVEREIGNTY

2014 - 2015

“Today, Indian Country is leading. Indian Country is innovating. Indian Country is growing. And the state of Indian nations grows stronger by the day. Tribal nations are steadily reclaiming our rightful place among the American family of governments. We believe that the greatest source of solutions that work for Indian Country is Indian Country itself.”

- NCAI President Brian Cladoosby, 2015 State of Indian Nations Address

## Why **NCAI**?

**If you are not already an NCAI member or contributor, please consider joining us.**

Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal nations, governments, and communities.

More than seven decades later, NCAI continues to answer the call of its founders to serve as the unified voice of tribal nations, providing the governments and leaders of those nations a powerful platform for consensus-based policy development and advocacy. In so doing, it protects tribal self-governance and treaty rights; promotes the economic development, health, and welfare of tribal communities; and educates the public toward a better understanding of tribal nations.

NCAI's effectiveness in strengthening tribal sovereignty and advancing Indian Country's priorities is rooted in the wisdom and involvement of our diverse membership, which includes a growing number of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, tribal citizens, and Native organizations from across the country. Working in partnership, NCAI and its members amplify the collective voice of tribal nations to achieve a brighter future for Indian Country and the generations to come.

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To learn more about NCAI, use a Quick Response (QR) Code scanner app on your smart phone or tablet to be taken to our website [www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org). Look for other QR Codes you can scan for more information throughout this report.

OCT. 2014



NCAI holds 71st Annual Convention in Atlanta, GA <sup>1</sup>

NOV. 2014



NCAI calls for national action to protect Native children following AG report on Native Youth and Violence

DECEMBER 2014



Attorney General Holder Announces Initiative on Indian Child Welfare Act

DECEMBER 2014 (cont.)



Alaska Native villages gain inclusion under the Violence Against Women Act



NCAI Congratulates Google on Changes to Better Acknowledge Tribal Nations on Google Maps

JANUARY 2015



NCAI highlights tribal priorities at first Indian Affairs hearing of 114th Congress

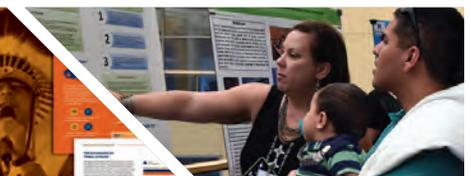
FEBRUARY 2015



NCAI Releases Analysis of President's FY 2016 Budget Request



The White House announces Generation Indigenous Native Youth Challenge



NCAI releases *Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction* at Executive Council Winter Session

BIA publishes new regulations to strengthen Native child protection under ICWA

MARCH 2015



General implementation of Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction under the Violence Against Women Act begins



NCAI Policy Research Center publishes widely used infographic on school-to-prison pipeline

APRIL 2015



First Lady and the White House convene Creating Opportunity for Native Youth event

APRIL 2015 (cont.)



NCAI testifies at House Natural Resources Committee hearing on tribal recognition

MAY 2015



National Indian Child Welfare Association hosts first tribal consultation with the BIA <sup>2</sup>



United Nations Universal Periodic Review begins, reviewing human rights records of UN Member States

NCAI testifies at House Natural Resources Committee hearing on trust land acquisition

## JUNE 2015



9th Circuit *Big Lagoon v. California* reaffirms the finality of land to trust decisions in favor of tribes

Supreme Court upholds insurance subsidies for tribes in federal health marketplace<sup>3</sup>

NCAI 2015 Mid Year Conference and Marketplace in St. Paul, MN

New Federal Recognition Rule announced at NCAI Conference

## JULY 2015



Department of Interior publishes the new final regulations on federal acknowledgment

Court upholds trademark cancellation of Washington football team

First White House Generation Indigenous Youth Conference

Pamunkey Tribe gains Federal Recognition

## AUGUST 2015



President Obama visits Alaska tribes, authorizes renaming of largest mountain to indigenous name Denali<sup>4</sup>

## SEPTEMBER 2015



DOJ announces program for enhanced tribal access to national criminal database for improved child safety

World Indoor LaCrosse Championships is first ever international sporting event held on indigenous lands at Onondaga Nation

NCAI hosts Tribal Impact Days in Washington DC

## SEPTEMBER 2015 (cont.)



NCAI and national Native organizations release new *Native Children's Policy Agenda: Putting First Kids 1st*

Departments of Interior, Justice announce \$940 million landmark settlement with tribes and tribal entities in *Ramah v. Jewell*



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS TIMELINE OF PROGRESS

2014 - 2015

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<sup>1</sup> Photo credit James Bokovoy; <sup>2</sup> Photo courtesy of NICWA; <sup>3</sup> Photo courtesy of NIHOE; <sup>4</sup> Photo courtesy of Hannah Colton/KDLG



## Letter from the President of NCAI

Brian Cladoosby

Dear Tribal Leaders, NCAI Members, Native Peoples, and Friends of Indian Country:

Please accept the thanks of NCAI and its Executive Committee for your support of the National Congress of American Indians and its work on behalf of our tribal nations. I give my thanks for the privilege of representing Indian Country in the capacity as NCAI President, and as my second year comes to completion I'm honored to share what NCAI has done for our tribal people.

Throughout the work that NCAI and all of our great inter-tribal organizations are doing in Washington DC and in capitals around the country, our success comes out of our teachings, our traditions, and our culture. Today, tribal nations are doing more than ever to fulfill the promise of tribal sovereignty and self-governance, each on their own terms. The best answers to our challenges are found in our own communities, based on our own wisdom.

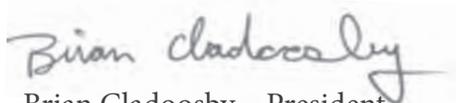
As we all know, 2016 will be a huge election year, and although voting day is more than a year away, we need to organize now. It is more important than ever that Native people show up and vote. And this starts in our communities. When we work together, we strengthen our communities. When our strong communities connect behind important issues, we have a united voice that is heard. And when we cast our votes in support of progress in Indian Country, we change history.

In this report you will read a review of the incredible work NCAI has done over the past year to help Indian Country control our land, resources and assets, and to imagine our own future and determine our own destiny. NCAI has grown in capacity, expertise, and influence as we remind legislators and agency officials that they must respect their federal trust obligations and our government-to-government relationship. The Embassy of Tribal Nations in Washington DC remains the symbol of our national congress of communities.

As the seasons change from summer to fall, our people exercise our treaty rights by harvesting our traditional foods to prepare for the months ahead. We must also exert our treaty rights to set a solid foundation for the generations ahead. This means equal treatment of tribal nations as sovereign governments in applying labor law to their enterprises; it means fixing the *Carciari* decision to reaffirm the Secretary's right to take land into trust for tribes; it means granting equal access to polling places for our tribal citizens.

We give thanks for your efforts, partnerships and support that contribute to NCAI's success, as we move forward on these initiatives to build a better future for us all.

Sincerely,



Brian Cladoosby – President  
*National Congress of American Indians*

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# NCAI Executive Board

## President

Brian Cladoosby – *Chairman*  
*Swinomish Indian Tribal Community*

## First Vice President

Randy Noka – *Councilman*  
*Narragansett Indian Tribe*

## Secretary

Aaron Payment – *Chairperson*  
*Sault St. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians*

## Treasurer

Arlan Melendez – *Chairman*  
*Reno-Sparks Indian Colony*

## NCAI Vice Presidents

<b>Alaska</b>	Jerry Isaac – <i>CEO</i> <i>Native Village of Tanacross</i>
<b>Eastern Oklahoma</b>	S. Joe Crittenden – <i>Deputy Chief</i> <i>Cherokee Nation</i>
<b>Great Plains</b>	Leander McDonald – <i>President</i> <i>United Tribes Technical College</i>
<b>Midwest</b>	Roger Rader – <i>Council Member</i> <i>Pokagon Band of Potawatomi</i>
<b>Northeast</b>	Lance Gumbs <i>Shinnecock Indian Nation</i>
<b>Northwest</b>	Fawn Sharp – <i>President</i> <i>Quinault Indian Nation</i>
<b>Pacific</b>	Rosemary Morillo – <i>Chairwoman</i> <i>Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians</i>
<b>Rocky Mountain</b>	Ivan Posey – <i>Council Member</i> <i>Eastern Shoshone Tribe</i>
<b>Southeast</b>	Ron Richardson – <i>Chief</i> <i>Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe</i>
<b>Southern Plains</b>	Stephen Smith – <i>Committeeman</i> <i>Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma</i>
<b>Southwest</b>	Manuel Heart – <i>Treasurer</i> <i>Ute Mountain Ute Tribe</i>
<b>Western</b>	Len George – <i>Chairman</i> <i>Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe</i>

## Alternates

Mike Williams – <i>Council Member</i> <i>Akiak Native Community</i>
John Berrey – <i>Chairman</i> <i>Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma</i>
Tony Reider – <i>Chairman</i> <i>Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe</i>
Carolyn Beaulieu – <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i> <i>Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe</i>
Cedric Cromwell – <i>Chairman</i> <i>Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe</i>
Aaron Hines – <i>Treasurer</i> <i>Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation</i>
Mark Macarro – <i>Chairman</i> <i>Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians</i>
Darrin Old Coyote – <i>Chairman</i> <i>Crow Nation</i>
Charles Yow, Esq. <i>United Cherokee Ani-Yun-Wiya Nation</i>
Elaine Huch – <i>Council Secretary</i> <i>Kaw Nation</i>
Joseph Naranjo – <i>Council Member</i> <i>Pueblo of Santa Clara</i>
VACANT



## Letter from the Executive Director

Jacqueline Johnson Pata

Dear NCAI Members, Friends and Supporters:

Strengthening the sovereignty of our tribal nations remains at the forefront of the advocacy work of the National Congress of American Indians. It is only through the combined efforts of our members, partners, tribal governments and Native people that we succeed in advancing the legislative priorities and meaningful initiatives of Indian Country.

This annual report shares the achievements made possible by our unified efforts to preserve and nurture that which is most important to us. Today, we enjoy stronger relations with our federal and state partners in governing than we have ever had. Our youth, the tribal leaders of tomorrow, are gaining skills and training to fulfill their potential to carry our nations into the future. The incredible awakening and transformation that is happening throughout Indian Country is fueled by our history and heritage.

Tribal nations have achieved many important victories by working together over the last six years of the Obama Administration. Major advances in health care were strengthened when the Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act; we've expanded criminal jurisdiction in Indian Country; Native people are no longer unfairly taxed for benefits they get from their own tribal governments due to the General Welfare Exclusion Act; and new Indian Child Welfare Act regulations were released this year.

Most recently, we've seen settlement of contract support costs to tribes from the federal government in the amount of nearly one billion dollars. It has been a remarkably productive time, and our job now is to keep adding to this list.

NCAI thanks the Executive Board, our members, NCAI volunteers and staff, and our remarkable partners as we continue to connect our communities and strengthen tribal sovereignty.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Johnson Pata – Executive Director  
*National Congress of American Indians*

# STRENGTHENING SOVEREIGNTY

| NCAI will always be ready to organize a vigorous defense of tribal rights as your champion for tribal sovereignty.

## NCAI Takes Action to Strengthen Tribal Sovereignty

NCAI was established in 1944 to organize the defense of tribal governments against termination policies of the federal government and attempts to take tribal lands. In the current era when Indian nations are working to strengthen tribal sovereignty, it is sometimes important to recall the fundamental purpose of NCAI in defending tribal sovereignty and rights. Progress for Indian Country is hard earned, and the effort behind it cannot falter. This was made clear when some Congressional events in April and May of 2015 evoked a return to the termination era.

In April the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on “The Obama Administration’s Part 83 Revisions and How They May Allow the Interior Department to Create Tribes, not Recognize Them.” A featured witness argued that the President has no authority to recognize tribes. It was further suggested that all existing tribes should be required to go through a Congressional process to decide tribal status. NCAI President Cladoosby provided testimony that while NCAI would not support the legislative “creation” of tribes, we insist that the Secretary of Interior has the delegated authority – and must have an accountable process – for the acknowledgment of tribes that have existed since time immemorial.

Then in May, House Natural Resources held an even more concerning hearing on “Inadequate Standards for Trust Land Acquisition in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.” The witnesses and hearing memorandum questioned the entire process and purpose of tribal land recovery. NCAI organized tribal leaders and advocates around a common message of support for tribal land restoration and received some notoriety for pushing too hard to defend tribes. We always want to build productive relationships as we educate Congress. But we gratefully accept the commentary of putting up a vigorous defense for tribal rights.

We are very fortunate in 2015 that the larger atmosphere in Congress is supportive of tribal sovereignty. So many tribal leaders have built good relationships with their Congressional delegations and tribes are working on many excellent pieces of legislation. NCAI labors diligently to secure these advances and keep sovereignty strong. It is a role that can easily fade into the background when times are good. But with your support and assistance, NCAI will always be ready to organize a vigorous defense of tribal rights as your champion for tribal sovereignty.



NCAI President Brian Cladoosby emphasizes tribal sovereignty during the 2015 State of Indian Nations Address.



“For Indian Country, it all goes back to trust, flexibility, and local solutions.”

## 2015 State of Indian Nations Address

In January 2015, NCAI President Brian Cladoosby delivered the NCAI State of Indian Nations Address to a capacity crowd in the Knight Studio at the Newseum in Washington, DC. Thousands tuned in to hear President Cladoosby’s comments through the live C-Span broadcast, over Native radio stations, or livestreamed on the internet.

In his address to members of Congress, senior Administration officials, and leaders of tribal nations, the President of NCAI called on Congress and the Obama Administration to follow through on a policy action plan to improve economic opportunity, education, and innovation in Indian Country.

President Cladoosby also called for the federal government to modernize trust relations with tribal governments and remove barriers to economic growth. He emphasized Indian Country’s legal authority to control its own destiny, asserting that tribal nations are the best suited to craft their own solutions at the community level. “It means respecting Native peoples for who we are,” he stated, “not who others think we are.”

Remarking on the historic visit by President Obama to the Standing Rock Sioux Nation last year, President Cladoosby extended a personal invitation to Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Reid – as well as every member of Congress – to visit Indian Country in 2015.



NCAI Executive Director Jaqueline Johnson Pata introduces President Cladoosby.

During the major policy address, NCAI and Cladoosby outlined a clear plan and top-level priorities for Congress and the Administration that could attract bipartisan support.

President Cladoosby also honored Native American activist Billy Frank, Jr. who passed in 2014. Billy Frank's activism laid the groundwork for an historic ruling on fishing treaty rights, among others. It was a legacy of activism for recognition of tribal sovereign rights. President Cladoosby noted the connection between the federal government and Native nations as "...the trust that defines our partnership, and the responsibility that is entrusted to all federal officials – especially members of Congress."

Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, provided the Congressional response to the State of Indian Nations address. He focused on the vision and priorities for the Committee across several policy sectors, and stated his commitment to promote tribal self-determination.

Questions from the studio audience and social media were answered by President Cladoosby following the address and Congressional response.



Members of the audience listen, and later asked questions of the speakers.



Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) delivers the Congressional response to the State of Indian Nations Address.

“ I intend to lead these efforts in a continued government-to-government relationship, respecting the power of each Indian tribe to govern itself. Together, we can make progress in helping Indian Country succeed and celebrating the promise of our shared values.”

- Senator John Barrasso (R-WY)



President Obama addresses tribal leaders at the 2014 White House Tribal Nations Summit.

## White House Tribal Initiatives

### Tribal Nations Summit

On December 3, 2014, President Obama hosted the sixth annual White House Tribal Nations Summit. At the Summit, tribal leaders representing the 566 federally recognized tribes heard from the President, Cabinet officials, the White House Council on Native American Affairs, and members of Congress. The key issues discussed included: upholding treaty and trust responsibilities; building stronger tribal businesses and economies; strengthening educational opportunities for Native youth; enhancing tribal justice systems; supporting healthy, strong tribal communities; promoting climate resilience and managing land and natural resources; and advancing the government-to-government relationship.

In conjunction with the Tribal Nations Summit, the President released a Native Youth Report that examined the challenges facing Native youth and made recommendations for policies that would remove the barriers that youth face in reaching their full potential. In addition, for the first time, President

“The United States shares a sacred bond with our Native nations. I will do everything I can to meet that responsibility, and honor that trust, and to do right by your nations, and your children and future generations.”

Obama invited 36 Native Youth Ambassadors, who joined tribal leaders in breakout sessions and panels and participated in leadership development training.

NCAI developed a Tribal Leader Briefing Book which was compiled after receiving input from national and regional organizations, NCAI membership and tribal leaders on the issues addressed at previous summits. The Briefing Book was provided to tribal leaders at an advanced briefing hosted by NCAI held prior to the Summit.



Scan here to read the President's 2014 Native Youth Report



Some of the youngest participants in the White House Tribal Nations Summit.

## White House Council on Native American Affairs

President Obama established the White House Council on Native American Affairs by Executive Order on June 26, 2013, and the inaugural meeting was held on July 29, 2013. The Council, which includes more than 30 federal departments and agencies, coordinates the Administration's engagement with tribal governments and works across executive departments, agencies and offices to develop policy recommendations and expand efforts to leverage federal programs and resources available to tribal communities.

The Executive Order establishing the Council also institutionalized the White House Tribal Nations Conference as an annual event. The White House Conference brings together tribal leaders from all federally recognized tribes with Cabinet members and senior Administration officials. Last year's White House Conference was held on December 3, 2014.

The Council has continued to prioritize its focus on issues such as: reform of the Bureau of Indian Education, promoting sustainable tribal economic development; and supporting sustainable management of Native lands, environments and natural resources.

## My Brother's Keeper Initiative

As part of the White House's "My Brother's Keeper" (MBK) Initiative announced last year, NCAI launched the Native American My Brother's Keeper Task Force, headed by NCAI President Brian Cladoosby and joined by partner organizations: the Center for Native American Youth, the Native American Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the National Indian Education Association, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and UNITY, Inc..

The task force will coordinate and serve as the central point for sharing important work, opportunities, and resources for Native youth in tribal communities across Indian Country. Last fall, the White House announced the launching of the "My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge" to encourage communities (including tribal nations) to implement a coherent cradle-to-college and career strategy aimed at improving life outcomes for all young people. The Challenge is not a new federal program, but rather a call to action for leaders of communities across the nation to build and execute comprehensive strategies that aim to improve the life outcomes of all young people.

Several tribal nations so far have joined the Community Challenge. In May 2015, President Obama announced the next phase of the My Brother's Keeper Initiative with the launch of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance, a new nonprofit that will continue and institutionalize the work of the MBK Initiative. The nonprofit will aim to eliminate the gaps in opportunity and achievement for boys and young men of color – making the American dream available to all. This will require strategic evidence-based interventions from community, private, public and social enterprise partners that holistically tackle these gaps from cradle to career. NCAI will continue to participate in the "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative as well as other youth initiatives.

## Generation Indigenous (Gen-I)

President Obama unveiled Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) at the 2014 White House Tribal Nations Summit. Gen-I is a new Native youth initiative that takes a comprehensive, culturally appropriate approach to help improve the lives of and opportunities for Native youth by making new investments and strengthening the Administration's engagement with public and private partners.

**Tribal Youth Gathering:** Under Gen-I, the first-ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering was held July 9 in Washington, DC in conjunction with the United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY), Inc. conference. The Gathering was convened to provide American Indian and Alaska Native youth from across the country the opportunity to interact with senior Administration officials and the White House Council on Native American Affairs. First Lady Michelle Obama talked with the attendees about the significance of Generation Indigenous. More than 1,000 youth participated, representing 320 tribes from 42 states. There were more than 170 watch parties held across Indian Country, which provided Native youth opportunities to tune in live to the event.

**Gen-I Challenge:** As part of the application process for the Tribal Youth Gathering, applicants needed to take the Gen-I Challenge, which encouraged youth to commit to making a difference in their communities. To date, more than 1,500 Native youth have signed



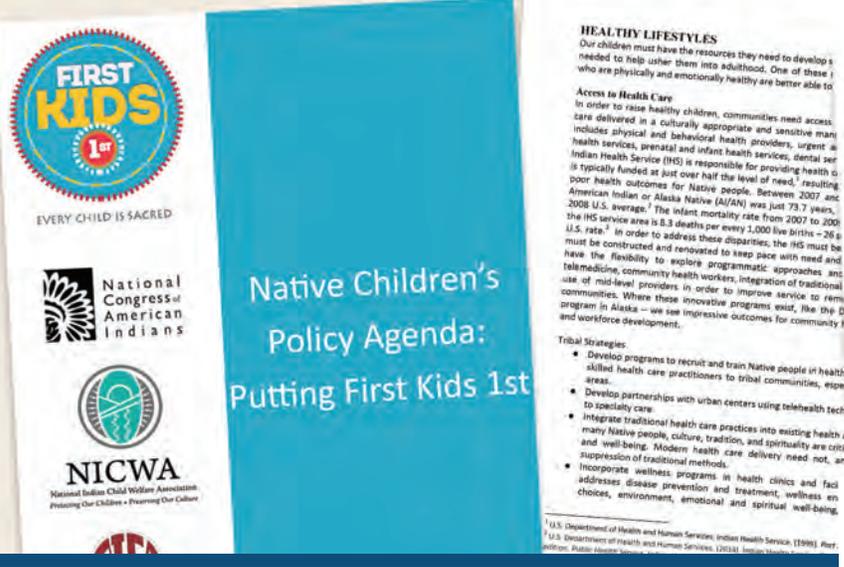
Generation Indigenous participants.

up to take the Challenge, with more youth signing on each day. Projects include community clean-ups, language and culture classes, advocating for protection of sacred sites, and much more. The Gen-I Youth Ambassadors network consists of leaders between the ages of 14 and 24 who want to directly connect with the Center for Native American Youth (CNAV), the Administration, and key stakeholders to actively promote Gen-I and encourage involvement in community projects. Currently, more than 200 youth have signed up to be Gen-I Ambassadors, and 28 tribes have accepted Gen-I's Tribal Leader Challenge.

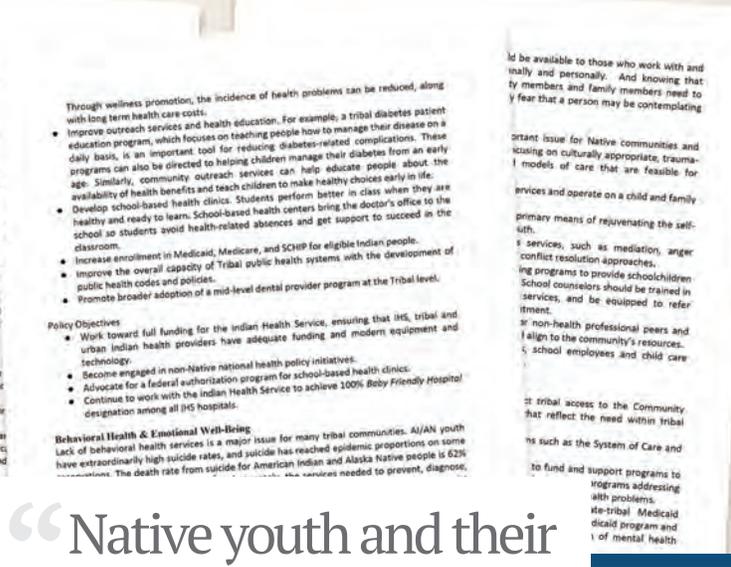
**Partners Supporting Native Youth:** As a follow-up to the April White House Convening "Creating Opportunities for Native Youth," outreach was initiated with philanthropic and Native organizations to identify, make, and expand investments in Native youth programs. NCAI is taking the lead in organizing this effort, working in partnership with CNAV, Native Americans in Philanthropy, Philanthropy Northwest, and other Native organizations. A meeting of partners was held in May at the NCAI Embassy of Tribal Nations and a work plan was developed for moving forward. Seven work groups were established, including: wellness and resiliency; systems of support; entrepreneurship and career-readiness investments; public-private task force; education; youth leadership; and data.



Participants of the White House Tribal Youth Gathering.



National Native organizations come together to release new Native Children's Policy Agenda: Putting First Kids 1st



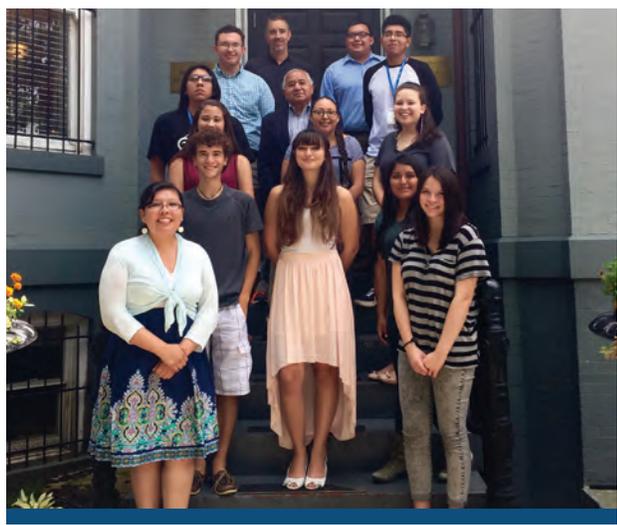
“Native youth and their supporters have had a remarkable year.”

# NCAI Youth Initiatives

## Native Youth Partners

Native youth and their supporters have had a remarkable year. So many Native youth-focused initiatives have been launched in the past twelve months, and NCAI is playing an influential role in ensuring their success. We are honored to do our part to help to give a voice to the Native youth of today, while protecting and strengthening sovereignty for our future generations.

During the Annual Convention, NCAI held a parallel “Youth Agenda” to provide Native youth a space where they could discuss issues important to them, learn about opportunities available to them through partner organizations, and meet with tribal and federal officials. They also held elections for the NCAI Youth Commission; ten new officers were elected by their peers to serve two-year terms.



The George Washington University INSPIRE Native American Political Leadership Program visits NCAI.

## First Kids 1st

NCAI's Native youth efforts kicked off at our Annual Convention in Atlanta in October 2014. NCAI, along with our First Kids 1st partners – National Indian Education Association, National Indian Child Welfare Association, and National Indian Health Board – soft-launched the First Kids 1st initiative. During the Annual Convention, we had: the breakout session “Advocating for Youth – Putting our First Kids 1st”; a general assembly First Kids 1st panel with partners from the Boys and Girls Club of America, NFL Players Association, UNITY Inc., Center for Native American Youth, and The White House; and commitment opportunities for all attendees to consider and act on

behalf of our Native youth and the future generations in the work they do every day.

Following the Annual Convention, tribal leaders convened at the White House Tribal Nations Summit where President Obama announced the Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) initiative. The vision for Gen-I, he shared, was born after he met with Native youth from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe during his visit to North Dakota. Gen-I is focused on removing barriers that stand between Native youth and their opportunity to succeed. Components include the: Gen-I Challenge; Native Youth Network; White House Tribal Youth Gathering; Cabinet Listening Tours in Indian Country; Native American Community Projects; and Partners for Supporting Native Youth. NCAI is assisting in the core planning and implementation of the Gen-I initiative as it aligns with and supports our First Kids 1st work.

Furthering its First Kids 1st work, NCAI has been involved with a number of other Native youth-focused activities during the past year, including:

- My Brother's Keeper
- "NAT\$VE in the BANK" financial capacity building initiative
- Tribal Stock Exchange Game
- National Native Youth Cabinet
- NCAI Fellowship and Internship Programs



2014-2015 NCAI Fellows Joel Chastain and MariKate Hulbutta.



Harmani Wilson of the Oglala Sioux Tribe joins NAT\$VE in the BANK.

## Youth-Related Tribal Assistance

At the end of 2014, NCAI concluded a 5-year cooperative agreement with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the Department of Justice to provide training and technical assistance to its tribal youth program grantees. During the first half of the award period, NCAI's work focused on coordinating the 2011 National Inter-Tribal Youth Summit and facilitating tribal participation in the 2011 Close Up Tribal Youth Training. NCAI also developed and delivered youth-driven leadership training curriculum at several partner conferences for both Native youth and adult leaders who work with Native youth.

During the second half of the award period, NCAI's technical assistance efforts included the dissemination of monthly newsletters with youth development resources; hosting professional development webinars for professionals working with Native youth that focused on resilience, leadership development, and financial capability; conducting on-site technical assistance site visits focused on resilience and financial education programming; identifying and providing financial capability resources; and disseminating resources related to college readiness and preparedness for Native youth.



Members of the NCAI Youth Commission with Executive Director Jacqueline Johnson Pata.

“The Youth Commission provides a safe place for Native youth to share ideas on what they can do for Indian Country...”

## NCAI Youth Commission

In 1997, the National Congress of American Indians established the NCAI Youth Commission to foster the voices of young Native leaders. The Youth Commission provides a safe place for Native youth to share ideas on what they can do for Indian Country and provide them with the resources and support that they need to create that change. It is a unique opportunity for Native youth to interact, inform, and learn from tribal leaders as well as gain a deeper understanding of NCAI’s work. By learning more about tribal governance, the Youth Commission members can better advocate for issues of importance to them in their own communities.

Every other year at the Annual Convention, NCAI holds elections for ten Native youth to serve on the Youth Commission. The Youth Commission is designed specifically for high school and college students ages 16 to 23 with an interest in political science, tribal governance, and Indian public policy and legislative affairs. The purpose of the Youth Commission is to serve as a resource to NCAI and tribal leaders, teach about NCAI’s organizational structure

and process, and build and cultivate the leadership skills of Native youth. Most importantly, the NCAI Youth Commission is a mechanism for providing a voice for Native American and Alaska Native youth.



NCAI Youth Commissioners listen to Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior Kevin Washburn.

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## Youth Commission Members

During the current Youth Commission term, members are focused on growing NCAI's youth network and encouraging youth to work to reach their full potential. The Commission's officers are as follows:

Tyler Owens – Co President  
*Gila River Indian Community*

Jared Massey – Co President  
*White Mountain Apache & Navajo*

Cassandra Church – Co-Vice President  
*Pokagon Band of Potawatomi*

Brian Weeden – Co-Vice President  
*Mashpee Wampanoag*

David Colbert – Treasurer  
*Muscogee (Creek) Nation*

Brian Barlow – Secretary  
*Cherokee Nation*

Mary Guenther – Member-At-Large  
*Aleut*

Michaela Custodio – Member-At-Large  
*Ho-Chunk Nation*

Skyler Daisy – Member-At-Large  
*Pokagon Band of Potawatomi*

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## National Native Youth Cabinet

The National Native Youth Cabinet (NNYC) is comprised of 20 youth between the ages of 15 and 24 from 18 different tribal nations. NCAI aims to foster their awareness of public policy and to learn more about Native youth priorities that can inform our policy work. In addition, NCAI is working with the NNYC to help them strengthen Native youth leadership at the regional level by providing the members of the NNYC with analytic, social media, and networking tools. Members of the NNYC convened at NCAI's 2015 Mid Year Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, to learn about using digital tools such as maps, infographics,

and viral videos to foster positive messaging around Native youth and communities. The session focused on health and food sovereignty topics as priority areas for the NNYC. Cabinet members have identified a range of topics from which to develop projects, including: creating guidelines for establishing a tribal youth council; generating resources to assist youth who feel alienated, including two spirit/LGBTQ youth, those experiencing bullying, and those struggling with trauma; developing culture and language resources for Native youth; and expanding information on how to pay for higher education.

## Youth Cabinet Members

Zachary Astakeesic  
*Upper Nicola Indian Band*

Dahkota Kicking Bear Brown  
*Wilton Band of Miwok Indian*

Sapphire Carter  
*Chippewa Cree Tribe*

Aliyah Chavez  
*Santo Domingo Pueblo*

Collin Church  
*Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*

Heather Curley  
*Navajo Nation*

Riley Delorme  
*Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians*

Alayna Eagle Shield  
*Standing Rock Sioux Tribe*

Cierra Fields  
*Cherokee Nation*

Simon Goldenberg  
*Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community*

Julian Juan  
*Tohono O'odham*

Stephanie Lefthand  
*Taos Pueblo*

Desirae Rambler  
*San Carlos Apache Tribe*

Jaysonha Revey  
*Lummi Nation*

Whitney Sawney  
*Cherokee Nation*

Sarah Jo Schilling  
*Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians*

Layha Spoonhunter  
*Eastern Shoshone, Northern Arapaho, and Oglala Lakota*

Malachi Stroud  
*Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma*

Candice Yazzie  
*Navajo Nation*

Kami Wright  
*Kenaitze Indian Tribe*

## Wilma Mankiller Fellowship Program for Tribal Policy and Governance

For more than a decade, NCAI's Wilma Mankiller Fellowship Program has provided bright, young Native professionals the opportunity to gain invaluable experience in policy advocacy, applied research, program development, community outreach, communications, and other key aspects of NCAI's work. During the 11-month program, Fellows gain invaluable skills and subject matter expertise in various policy and research areas that they then apply in furtherance of NCAI's mission to protect and advance tribal sovereignty.

NCAI has graduated more than 50 Fellows over the life of the program, with the 2014-2015 Fellowship cohort deepening the program's impressive legacy of commitment, excellence, and professional achievement. This year, NCAI hosted five fellows working on various projects, teams, and legislative priorities: Cesar Alvarez (*Three Affiliated Tribes*), Mikaela Brown (*Oglala Lakota*), Joel Chastain (*Chickasaw*), Rebecca Howlett, and MariKate Hulbutta (*Chickasaw, Seminole, and Muscogee (Creek)*). Together, the 2014-2015 cohort worked on a range of critical topics such as workforce development,

immigration, Native language revitalization, and healthcare. Fellows also worked on a number of NCAI initiatives focused on financial capability, Native Vote, and implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

In summer 2015, NCAI welcomed the 2015-2016 cohort: Tamera Begay (*Navajo*), Jalene Herron (*Yup'ik*), and Mike LaValley (*Blackfeet*).

Originally founded in response to tribal leaders' demands to build a pipeline of young professionals with extensive public policy, advocacy, and leadership skills and experience, the Wilma Mankiller Fellowship Program has cultivated many of today's leaders in Indian Country across the public, private, and civic sectors.



Scan here to learn more about NCAI's Fellowships and Internships



Tamera Begay, Mike LaValley and Jalene Herron join NCAI for their 2015-2016 fellowship term.

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## Native Graduate Health Fellowship

The NCAI Native Graduate Health Fellowship aims to build a pipeline of American Indian and Alaska Native health professionals and prepare them for leadership roles in developing health policies that address the unique needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives. In its fourth year, the fellowship is available to full-time graduate students pursuing a graduate degree in a health-related field.

Through a competitive application process and review, nine fellows were selected to receive a monetary award towards tuition and living expenses and to participate in a four-day policy workshop in Washington, DC in July 2015.

This year's fellows were Amber Anderson (*Cherokee*), Cynthia Begay (*Hopi/Navajo*), Kirsten Concha-Moore (*Taos Pueblo*), Carmella Kahn (*Navajo*), Tierra Robinson-Morgan (*Piscataway-Conoy*), Teresia Paul (*Oglala Sioux*), Lindsey Platero (*Laguna Pueblo/*

*Navajo*), Stacie Pozernick (*Navajo*), and Goldie Stands Over Bull (*Crow*).

The four-day workshop involved a series of meetings including an introduction to NCAI and tribal sovereignty; presentations by the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) and National Council on Urban Indian Health (NCUIH); a session on the Affordable Care Act; observations of the Medicare, Medicaid, and Health Reform Policy Committee (MMPC) meeting, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's Tribal Technical Advisory Committee (TTAG) meeting.

The Native Graduate Health Fellows also visited the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); took a tour of the White House and US Capitol; observed a session on advocacy in Congress; and joined an interactive session with NCAI's Policy Research Center staff.



The 2015 Native Graduate Health Fellows have a moment of fun during a busy workshop day.



US Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell addresses the NCAI Executive Board, tribal leaders and participants of the 2014 Annual Convention in Atlanta, GA.

## 2014 Annual Convention and Marketplace

### Tribal Governance for the Next Generation

NCAI's Eastern Area tribes, in a special partnership with USET (United South & Eastern Tribes), hosted NCAI's 71st Annual Convention and Marketplace in Atlanta, Georgia with the theme of "Tribal Governance for the Next Generation." In opening the Convention, NCAI President Brian Cladoosby encouraged attendees to remember the guidance of generations that came before, while moving forward to build a strong future for generations to come. Among other topics, sessions at the Convention focused on strategies for strengthening tribal governance, protecting cultural legacy and sacred places, investing in youth and giving them the tools they need to succeed, and modernizing the trust relationship between the United States and tribal nations.

Monday's full-day General Assembly began with Jacqueline Pata's NCAI Executive Director Report; a message from Jodi Gillette, White House Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs; and a

“Remember the guidance of generations that came before, while moving forward to build a strong future for generations to come.”

- NCAI President Brian Cladoosby

video message from Julian Castro, Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Gina McCarthy, Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency. The morning ended with an update by Kevin K. Washburn, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, US Department of Interior.

In the afternoon, Yvette Roubideaux, Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS), gave an update. She was followed by Mary Pavel, Staff Director, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; Robert A. McDonald, Secretary, Department of Veteran Affairs; and Zixta Martinez, Associate Director of External Affairs for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Ray Halbritter, Nation Representative of the Oneida Indian Nation, spoke on the mascots issue.

General Assembly highlights during the remainder of the week included an address by Secretary Sally Jewell of the Department of the Interior; presentations by

the finalists for the Harvard Honoring Nations awards, which recognize excellence in tribal governance; and the unveiling of NCAI's First Kids 1st initiative. Former NCAI President Jefferson Keel provided an update on the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, and former US Senator Byron Dorgan spoke about the Attorney General's Task Force on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence. The tribal leaders in attendance offered many enlightening and poignant comments that enriched the proceedings.

During Tuesday morning's General Assembly, a special World Café session provided tribal leaders and other attendees a unique, in-depth opportunity to deliberate and come together on key policy priorities and set a unified agenda for the next five years.

NCAI, IHS, and Nike N7 once again hosted the "Walking with the Next Generation" National Native American Just Move It! Healthy Lifestyles Walk, Run, Rally and Wellness Marketplace, sponsored by Roche Diagnostics. Due to rainy weather, the event was held indoors with fun stretching exercises and an indoor brisk walk around the property, made even more memorable by the sea of matching Replace/Rethink/Rename mascot t-shirts that everyone was wearing.

And for the first time at an NCAI Annual Convention, the basketball tournament "It's Hoop Time!" was held at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta. This fun event brought youth and elders together to let off some steam and show off their skills on the court.



NCAI has a Conference App! Check it out to find conference agendas, speakers, notices and more. Upload your photos and share your thoughts! Search for NCAI in your app store.

## Native Vote 2014

During the Annual Convention, the Native Vote initiative held a phone banking operation in the marketplace exhibit hall. NCAI leadership, tribal leaders, youth, and local volunteers visited the booth throughout the week to make calls to their home communities and encourage fellow Native voters to participate in the upcoming election. Thousands of calls were made in the outreach to communities.

A talent show and DJ with karaoke made for a fun celebration of Native Vote at the #OneLouder Native Vote Talent Competition event. As attendees got used to using the new NCAI conference app, photos came pouring in from every area of the Convention. These events are part of a larger move to strengthen tribal voting rights, and Get Out The Native Vote. Find more about NCAI's action on voting rights on page 32, and our role in Native Vote on page 46.



Mock voting booths at Annual Convention get voters ready for upcoming elections.



| Youth with tribal leaders at Executive Council Winter Session.

“ NCAI President Brian Cladoosby emphasized the duty of tribal leaders to protect, nurture, and empower Native youth. ”

## 2015 Executive Council Winter Session

Hundreds of tribal leaders, tribal delegates, Congressional leaders, and members of the Administration convened in Washington, DC from February 23-25 to discuss key policy issues effecting tribal nations. Seven members of President Obama’s Administrative cabinet addressed the plenary session, along with ten members of Congress.

In an address to the First General Assembly, NCAI President Brian Cladoosby emphasized the duty of tribal leaders to protect, nurture, and empower Native youth, reminding attendees that nearly half of the Native population is under the age of 25. In addition, the White House announced its Tribal Leader Gen-I Challenge, newly revised ICWA guidelines were announced, and updates on key legislation were provided during the course of the conference.

Featured on the agenda were a number of pre-meeting sessions designed to cultivate in-depth conversations about a range of topics including: transportation, the

Violence Against Women Act, the Affordable Care Act, Advocacy 101, Marijuana Laws in Indian Country, Federal Recognition, Taxation in Indian Country, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Tribal Homeland Security and Emergency Management.



2015 Indian Country Leadership Award winners. Photo credit: James Bokovoy

Several formal consultations with federal officials also were held in an effort to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship and a legislative help desk was set up to help prepare tribal leaders to be more effective during their visits to members of Congress on Capitol Hill.

Youth also were in attendance, with some shadowing their tribal leaders during the week as well as attending youth-oriented sessions. Native youth also took part in the Native Close Up Poster session, which provided Native students from across the nation an opportunity to present their proposed solutions to issues of concern in their communities. Session attendees included Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. Presenters shared their ideas for how to make a positive impact in areas such as education, substance abuse prevention, stronger youth councils, and heightened cultural awareness.

Meanwhile, the 2015 Indian Country Leadership Awards recognized individuals who have made significant contributions to Indian Country. Receiving awards during the evening banquet ceremony were US Representative Devin Nunes (Congressional Leadership Award), Jodi Gillette (Governmental Leadership Award), National Criminal Justice Association (Public Sector Leadership Award), and Suzan Harjo (Native American Leadership Award). Robert Burnette received the Special Recognition Leadership Award.

During the banquet, NCAI's Tribal Stock Exchange winners Tyler Bowsley and Levander Gillis, 11th-graders from Monument Valley High School in Kayenta, Arizona, were awarded plaques recognizing their achievement. The Tribal Stock Exchange program teaches financial capability skills to Native students in grades 4-12 at no cost through funding from the Bureau of Indian Education.



Tribal Stock Exchange award winners Levander Gillis and Tyler Bowsley with NCAI President Cladoosby. Photo credit: James Bokovoy



Resolutions Committee chair Juanita Ahtone swears in NCAI Treasurer Arlan Melendez.

## 2015 Mid Year Conference and Marketplace

### Nurturing Tribal Resources: Culture, Land & People

More than 800 participants attended the Mid Year Conference and Marketplace in St. Paul, Minnesota from June 28 - July 1. A strong contingent of the area’s Congressional representatives came out to address the General Assembly. US Representative Betty McCollum, US Senator Al Franken, and US Senator Amy Klobuchar — all from Minnesota — provided Congressional updates along with Megan Smith, United States Chief Technology Officer and Special Assistant to the President, and Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior. An Assembly of First Nations Update also was presented by Grand Chief Edward John, Akile Ch’oh.

In addition to the 47 resolutions passed by NCAI members during the Conference, the week featured the 10th Annual Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum, titled “Back to Our Futures: Re-searching for Justice.” Meanwhile, a special Native American Caucus/Town Hall Discussion focused on “Building a Stronger

“We have a responsibility to recognize those tribes that have maintained their identity and self-governance despite previous federal policies expressly aimed at destroying tribes.”

- Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs



Senator Al Franken (D-MN) shares a story.

Indian Country” was filled to capacity, and training was offered to attendees who were running for elected office. Other sessions and pre-meetings covered topics such as Native languages, trust modernization, the Land Buy-Back program, trust asset management, education and school reform, housing, dental health, leadership development, the Violence Against Women Act, federal recognition, workforce development, emergency management, protecting natural and cultural resources, juvenile justice, human trafficking in Indian Country, international advocacy and technology, homelessness, and tribal-state relations. Other timely topics including marijuana and tax policy, keeping up with social media, and financial education combined to make for a robust agenda.

Meanwhile, select leaders shared their personal stories and inspirational insights in the first ever NDN Talks: ‘I is for Indian’ event. Taking the stage were Jon Greendeer, President, Ho-Chunk Nation; Ray Halbritter, Nation Representative, Oneida Nation; Richard Luarkie, Former Governor, Pueblo of Laguna; and Jacqueline Johnson Pata, NCAI Executive Director. They all spoke about the future of tribal



Jon Greendeer speaks on the meaning of “I is for Indian” at the first NDN Talks.



Dancers celebrate their heritage at the cultural welcome reception.

sovereignty and how to celebrate and support Native cultures and communities across today’s generations and those generations yet to come.

Other highlights from the week included the Sunrise Ceremony in observance of Native sacred places, and a Moc Walk River Walk put on by the Ho-Chunk Nation and Ho-Chunk Gaming-Wisconsin. A lively welcome reception complete with a blues band and dancing, and the Cultural Night hosted by the Midwest Regional Local Planning Committee featured attendees dancing, drums, samples of delicious local Native foods, and chances to win an impressive array of raffle prizes.

# NCAI's Effective Advocacy

Tribal representatives gathered in Washington, DC in 1944 to bring their collective voices together to fight for tribal sovereignty. That fight continues today. As your representative, NCAI remains focused on bringing the collective voices of tribal governments and individuals to the policy makers in Congress and the Administration.

The relationship between tribal governments and the federal government is a sovereign one. In many ways, this sovereignty has never been stronger. In the Administration, the President held the sixth Tribal Nations Summit in 2014 with a focus on tribal sovereignty, economies, healthy communities, and strengthening the voice of Native youth. The White House Council has continued to engage tribal leaders on areas such as 1) promoting sustainable economic development; 2) supporting greater access to and control over healthcare; 3) improving the effectiveness and efficiency of tribal justice systems; 4) expanding and improving educational opportunities for Native American youth; and 5) protecting and supporting the sustainable management of Native lands, environments, and natural resources.

In Congress, the 114th Congress was sworn in with a Republican-controlled House and Senate for the first time in eight years. At the start of this Congress, NCAI and its partners worked to ensure that all new members of Congress had educational information about tribal governments and legislative priorities. NCAI has been committed to bringing the voice of Indian Country to the Congress by focusing our advocacy efforts in areas such as land restoration, labor, trust modernization, economic development, education, public safety, energy, and tribal infrastructure including transportation, housing, and telecommunications. There has been action in each of these areas this Congress and NCAI will continue to advocate for passage of legislation that will have a sustained and significant impact on the tribal communities.

NCAI is honored to represent our sovereign members in Washington, DC and ensure that tribes' voices are heard and considered at every stage of the advocacy process. Please read on to see how NCAI impacts the legislative process to improve the lives of tribal members and nations.

## Land Restoration and the “*Carcieri* Fix”

In the six years following the Supreme Court's decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar* in 2009, tribes have been calling on Congress to pass legislation to reaffirm the Secretary of the Interior's authority to take lands into trust for all tribes; and reaffirm the status of current lands held in trust for tribes.

In July, Senator Barrasso, Chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee introduced the Interior Improvement Act which accomplishes those two goals and also codifies parts of the existing regulations for land-in-trust; encourages cooperative agreements between tribes and states by incentivizing cooperative agreements, but does not penalize tribes if cooperative agreements cannot be reached; requires publication of land-in-trust applications on the Department of Interior website for increased transparency; and requires notice within 30 days of receipt of application to local governments as well as tribes.

This legislation complements three additional *Carcieri*-fix bills introduced by Senator Tester, Congressman Cole and Congresswoman McCollum intended to bring certainty into the land-in-trust process and address the myriad of legal and administrative issues that were brought about by the *Carcieri* decision. NCAI will continue to advocate for legislation that upholds the intent of the Indian Reorganization Act to allow tribes to restore their homelands.

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## Trust Modernization

Indian lands and natural resources are a primary source of economic activity for tribal communities, but the antiquated and inefficient federal trust resource management system contributes to the anemic condition of many reservation economies. NCAI is urging Congress and the Administration to support reforms that will eliminate the burdensome federal red tape stifling economic development in Indian Country, provide tribes with more flexibility and greater control over decision making, and prevent the reoccurrence of the trust mismanagement problems of the past. The goal is to essentially modernize the statutes and regulations which govern both the trust relationship and the trust asset management system. NCAI's Executive Board recognized the need to strengthen the focus on trust modernization and passed a resolution in early 2014 creating a Trust Modernization Workgroup tasked with reviewing the current system and making recommendations for improvement.

Since that time, NCAI has hosted breakout sessions at every conference seeking the guidance of our tribal leadership and the expertise within Indian Country. From those sessions and in conjunction with national and regional partners, a set of draft trust modernization principles and priorities has been developed to benefit tribes across Indian Country. The aim of the principles is to move the trust system and trust relationship into the 21st century, to recognize that tribes are in best position to address the needs of their communities and allow tribes to fully exercise self-governance and self-determination.

NCAI and the workgroup are working on short-term goals that the current Administration can enact to reinforce tribal sovereignty, strengthen trust standards, improve tribal-federal relations, and fully fund federal Indian programs and services. NCAI will continue this historic effort to help improve the trust land management systems and modernize the trust relationship to better serve the needs of Indian Country.



NCAI Executive Director Pata gives tribal leaders information on upcoming legislation.

## Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act

NCAI advocates for tribal parity as governments in the area of labor relations. In the 114th Congress, bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate that would amend the National Labor Relations Act to include tribal governments in the same exempt category as all governments. Like other governments, Indian tribes need the authority to regulate labor to suit their economic climate and should never be subject to devastating labor strikes. The current legislation has strong bipartisan support and the list of co-sponsors continues to grow. NCAI will continue its efforts to secure passage of tribal labor relations legislation during this session of Congress.

This issue has also been the subject of litigation. NCAI has provided legal support in the form of amicus briefs for the Chickasaw Nation, Saginaw Chippewa, and the Little River Band as their cases work their way through the federal courts of appeal. The Chickasaw case was recently dismissed by the National Labor Relations Board. It is our strong hope that other courts and Congress will soon follow suit. NCAI will continue its strong advocacy efforts in the Congress and courts to ensure that tribes achieve governmental parity in labor issues.

## Child Welfare

On February 25, 2015, after consultation with NCAI, tribal leaders, and tribal organizations, the Department of Interior published its final Guidelines for State Courts and Agencies in Indian Child Custody Proceedings. The Guidelines were published in response to the growing sentiment from tribal nations that state courts and agencies were either ignoring or misinterpreting the mandates of the Indian Child Welfare Act which was passed by Congress in 1978 to stem the wholesale removal of Indian children from their families and communities. If implemented as intended, the Guidelines will ensure compliance with ICWA's mandates, so that Native families are kept intact or restored, and reduce the trauma of removing Native children from their homes and communities.

Following the publication of the Guidelines, the Department of Interior released Proposed Regulations for State Courts and Agencies in Indian Child Custody Proceedings on March 20, 2015. Since 1978, this is the first time the Department has ever published regulations to implement ICWA. The Regulations are substantially similar to the Guidelines, but will have the force of law so that state courts and agencies comply with

ICWA at the outset of child custody proceedings. NCAI has advocated in favor of the Regulations, worked closely with the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), submitted comments on May 19, and recently passed Resolution MSP-15-031 supporting promulgation of the Regulations as well as full implementation of the Guidelines.

The backlash has already begun. Currently, NCAI is working on an ICWA Defense Project with NICWA, the Native American Rights Fund, and the ICWA Appellate Clinic at Michigan State University College of Law, to combat the most recent courtroom attacks on ICWA and the Guidelines. Through collaboration on the Defense Project, we will continue the ongoing work of defending our children through ICWA.



Read the Department of Interior Proposed Regulations for State Courts and Agencies in Indian Child Custody Proceedings here.



NCAI is working with partners to defend the interests of our Native children.



Access to traditional foods and control over tribal resources are central to the sovereign rights of our Native nations.

## Natural Resources

### Climate Change

Tribes' cultures, traditions, lifestyles, communities, foods, and economies are all dependent upon many natural resources that are disappearing faster than they can be restored due to the impacts of climate change. American Indians and Alaska Natives are disproportionately impacted by climate change, especially Native peoples who rely heavily on the cultural and subsistence practices of their ancestors to survive.

At the end of 2014, the White House Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience released its report and recommendations for the Administration, including tribal specific principles requesting: (1) tribal access to federal agencies' data and information related to climate change; (2) removal of barriers that prohibit tribal access to federal programs; (3) direct access to federal funding; and (4) the establishment of a permanent federal government Climate Adaptation Task Force.

NCAI is working to make sure the tribal principles are implemented. We are working with tribal leaders, partner organizations, and climate change experts to

“The federal government [must] ... recognize the role of traditional ecological knowledge in federal policy.”

ensure that the federal government improve methods to provide tribal access to federal programs and funding opportunities that address climate change impacts and planning, as well as recognize the role of traditional ecological knowledge in federal policy.

### Energy

Native peoples continue to rely on their natural resources to sustain key elements of their community and culture. The Constitution, federal laws, treaties, and agreements with tribal governments create a federal trust responsibility to Indian tribes to protect, manage, and allow tribal access to natural resources. However, the United States' responsibility toward tribes goes beyond supporting prior agreements; it must allow full tribal participation in the management of Native resources at the federal level.

Tribal energy resources are vast, largely untapped, and critical to national efforts to achieve energy security and independence, reduce greenhouse gases, and promote economic development. However, developing energy resources on tribal lands

continues to be a challenge as tribes face barriers to energy development, which do not exist outside of tribal lands.

NCAI works to increase the ability of tribes to manage their natural resources through legislative and administrative changes. This year we've worked on legislation aimed to improve tribal management and control over tribal forestry lands while improving the overall health of our forest systems, protection of waterways and fish ecosystems, and remove the stifling red tape that holds up renewable and traditional energy development in Indian Country.

## Tribal Infrastructure

### Housing

Tribes have made great strides toward improving housing conditions in their communities through the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 2008 (NAHASDA). But the need for adequate, affordable housing for Indian communities persists. Native Americans still face some of the worst housing and living conditions in the United States.

The NAHASDA authorizes the Indian housing programs within the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for American Indian and Alaska Natives to provide housing for community members. The current authorization of the NAHASDA expired on September 30, 2013.

The NCAI Task Force on NAHASDA Reauthorization has been working with tribal leaders and other partners such as the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC), to bring together recommendations from tribal leaders and tribal housing entities to advocate for reauthorization of NAHASDA with the inclusion of tribal-specific recommendations to improve administration of NAHASDA.

## Transportation

The thousands of miles of roadways in Indian Country are still among the most underdeveloped and unsafe road networks in the nation, even though they are the primary means of access to American Indian and Alaska Native communities by tribal and non-Indian residents and visitors alike. NCAI advocates strongly for increased funding and for the federal government to uphold their responsibility in maintaining this infrastructure.

NCAI published a Tribal Transportation Report depicting challenges facing Indian tribes on unintentional injuries in vehicular accidents. American Indians have the highest rates of pedestrian injury and death per capita of any racial or ethnic group in the United States. Adult motor vehicle-related death rates for American Indians and Alaska Natives are more than twice that of the general population. The information and tribal case studies within this brief was highly discussed and referenced by members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in a hearing on the safety of tribal roads held in April 2015.

NCAI works with tribes on the implementation by providing regulatory notices and information related to the Tribal Transportation Program and the Tribal Transit Program. In addition, NCAI has been collaborating with the Tribal Transportation Unity Caucus on developing national tribal transportation priorities that will be shared with Congress.



Read the NCAI Tribal Transportation Report *Tribal Transportation Insights: Preventing Unintentional Injury and Death* here.

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## Telecommunications

Access to telecommunications infrastructure and services in rural and tribal lands continues to lag behind the nation. Further, tribes experience significant barriers in policy and investment to deploy affordable and robust telecommunications services. NCAI has been working to strengthen consultation with tribes on these issues.

During the 114th Congress, NCAI conducted outreach and advocacy to educate new members of Congress on telecommunications disparities on tribal lands. NCAI also submitted testimony to the House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology oversight hearing on “Promoting Broadband Infrastructure and Investment.” NCAI’s testimony stressed the regulatory, legal, and financial barriers to broadband deployment on tribal lands.

NCAI participated in filings and meetings to protect the Tribal Land Bidding Credit and Small Business Designated Entity program in spectrum auctions; advocated for the preservation and increase of the enhanced Tribal Lifeline subsidy to support broadband services for low-income members residing on tribal lands; and urged the FCC to create a tribal mechanism to financially support the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure in high-cost areas such as tribal lands.

NCAI will continue its work to ensure tribes are included in the overhaul and reform of the Universal Service Fund programs, and that tribal lands are receiving eligible subsidies to obtain and maintain next-generation telecommunications services.

## Homeland Security and Emergency Management

During NCAI’s 2014 Annual Conference in Atlanta, the NCAI membership passed a resolution requesting that the federal government conduct research on the federal funding allocations for

emergency management and homeland security. At NCAI’s 2015 Executive Council Winter Session, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs committed to increased coordination with tribes to work through longstanding funding needs for homeland security programs.

NCAI has been working for the past 18 months with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on documents for tribal nations to directly request a declaration of emergency or disaster to the federal government. Currently, NCAI is encouraging DHS to establish a tribal government taskforce to its Homeland Security Advisory Council. Also, NCAI met with DHS leadership on the consideration of an Indigenous Border Summit in the Southwest to follow-up the first summit hosted by DHS in 2009.

NCAI has continued to work with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) and its newly created Tribal Working Group to ensure that tribal concerns are addressed. Key issues include efforts to secure US international borders and funding dedicated to southwest border security for the next 10 years. NCAI maintains its strong representation on the DHS SAFECOM Committee and the FirstNet Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC).

“NCAI continues to convert the policy ideas that inspire and guide tribal nations today into policy advice for the Administration and Congress.”

- Brian Cladoosby, NCAI President  
State of Indian Nations Address



The NCAI 2016 Fiscal Year and Budget Request highlights funding obligations and appropriations requests for Indian Country.

## Budget and Appropriations

As governments, tribes deliver a wide range of critical services to their citizens, such as education, healthcare, and first-responder and public safety services. As a consequence of federal actions and sequestration, Indian tribes across the nation have been forced to spend large amounts of scarce tribal funds to support services that should have been provided or paid for by the United States. NCAI is your representative fighting for responsible budgetary action at the federal level.

NCAI routinely publishes analyses of Administration proposals, Congressional activities, and budget formulation meetings to assist tribal leaders and planners in advocating for the fulfillment of trust obligations in the federal budget. Tribal leaders at national conventions, federal budget consultations, and meetings with federal officials have requested up-to-date analyses of trends in federal spending on programs fulfilling the trust obligation to Indian tribes. To improve understanding of the core programs for tribal governments and tribal entities, NCAI published papers examining large-scale trends

**Introduction | Budget Requests**

**The Federal Trust Responsibility:** Treaties and laws have created a fundamental contract between Indian Nations and the United States: tribes ceded millions of acres of land that made the US what it is today, and in return tribes have the right of continued self-government and the right to exist as distinct peoples on their own lands. The fundamental contract – the federal trust relationship – ensures that tribal governments receive funding for basic governmental services. As governments, tribes must deliver a wide range of critical services, such as health, education, workforce development, and first-responder and public safety services, to their citizens. Tribal governments exist to protect and preserve their unique cultures, identities, and natural environments for posterity. The federal budget for tribal governmental services reflects the extent to which the United States honors its contract and its promises to Indian people.

### Restoring Tribal Balance and Wellness

Many factors contribute to enhanced health status beyond improvements to the Indian Health Service itself: developing sanitation systems,<sup>1</sup> increasing tribal self-determination and accountability, easing housing and overcrowding,<sup>2</sup> addressing transportation needs,<sup>3</sup> for instance, all support health and wellness in Indian Country, strengthening tribal child welfare programs,<sup>4</sup> for instance, all support health and wellness in Indian Country, strengthening tribal child welfare programs,<sup>4</sup> for instance, all support health and wellness in Indian Country, strengthening tribal child welfare programs,<sup>4</sup> for instance, all support health and wellness in Indian Country.

Tribal nations and leaders often apply a holistic approach to healing, drawing on a sense of connectedness with culture, place, and land. The federal government, in meeting its treaty and trust obligations, plays a key role in the harmony of tribal communities. But when the federal government honors its commitments based in the trust responsibility, while promoting tribal self-determination, Native people and leaders can solve long-standing social and economic dilemmas.

Descriptions of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) health status often include discussion of intractable health disparities. However, while serious disparities persist, the trend in many health indicators should stir hope. From 1972 to 1994, AI/AN life expectancy rose from 64 years to 73 years, and on-the-ground activities in

“NCAI is your representative fighting for responsible budgetary action at the federal level.”

in funding for the major Indian programs over time compared to broadly similar aggregates in funding for the entire population.

NCAI again published a national Indian Country budget request document, which laid the foundation for testimony and letters throughout the fiscal year (FY) 2016 appropriations cycle. The FY 2016 Indian Country Budget Request, “Promoting Self-Determination, Modernizing the Trust Relationship,” offered recommendations for ways the federal government, partnering with tribes, should meet the educational needs of Indian youth; adequate health care for both direct and self-governance tribes; ensure responsible resource development; provide safe and secure tribal communities; and supply the long-term investments needed in tribal public infrastructure. The trust relationship in the 21st century must maintain the nation-to-nation treaty obligations, such as the provision of education, public safety, health care and more, while promoting tribal capacity and governance.

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## Health

NCAI continues its strong advocacy efforts to ensure that all Indian people have access to affordable and quality health care.

### Affordable Care Act

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act was permanently reauthorized in 2010 as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Since 2010, NCAI has continued to work with the Administration to ensure that implementation of the ACA is successful for tribes and tribal members. Under the National Indian Health Outreach and Education (NIHOE) initiative funded by the Indian Health Service, NCAI has worked with the National Indian Health Board and the National Council on Urban Indian Health on ACA outreach and education activities.

The NIHOE initiative was created to conduct outreach and education to tribes, tribal members, and Indian health care administrators on the special tribal benefits and protections under the ACA, and the requirements and opportunities available to tribal employers. In support of this initiative, NCAI provided technical assistance to tribes and tribal employers in 2014 and 2015, conducting over 25 in-person trainings and webinars.



Good education resources are central to the success of Indian Country.  
Photo CC: Reading is Fundamental.

### Dental Health Aide Therapist Initiative

NCAI is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to raise awareness to tribes on the Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) model, provide information on DHAT, and identify and support tribes interested in the DHAT model. A DHAT is a mid-level provider who is formally trained to provide routine and preventative dental care services under the general supervision of a licensed dentist offsite.

The DHAT model has been used worldwide for more than 90 years, and is permitted by state law in Alaska, Minnesota and Maine. The model can be replicated in other areas and is a viable solution to addressing the oral health needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Tribes in several states have been working to pass legislation to allow DHAT programs. To date, policymakers in California, Kansas, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, and Washington have introduced legislation to allow tribal DHAT programs.

“ Tribal nations are best suited to determine how their own youth are educated. ”

## Education

An investment in education equips the future leaders of tribal governments because there is no more vital resource to the continued existence of tribal nations than Native children.

NCAI and its Native education partners, including the National Indian Education Association and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, work together to develop and advocate on an array of educational topics including Native language

revitalization, increased use of culture in the classroom, a heightened role for Tribal Education Associations, and improved graduation rates for Native students.

NCAI will continue to advocate for Indian Country's priorities in the upcoming reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Higher Education Act reauthorization. In acknowledging that tribal nations are best suited to determine how their own youth are educated, and ensuring that Native languages and culture are an integral part of the curriculum, the federal government and tribal communities can provide a high-quality, holistic education to all Native students.

## Cultural Protections

Native cultures are intricately intertwined in many facets of identity, language, and religious practice. The protection of the diverse heritage of Native cultures involves complex legal structures. Often times the responsibility is placed on tribal peoples to defend the ongoing need and importance in protecting our ways of life. NCAI continues to prioritize its advocacy and education efforts to protect the religious freedoms and cultural practices of Native peoples to sustain future generations.



Children learn the Lakota alphabet as part of the language immersion program of Iyápi Glukínipi. Photo courtesy of Lakota Language Immersion Childcare.

NCAI has worked with tribes to protect sacred places such as Oak Flat in Arizona and the Badger-Two Medicine area in Montana, which are threatened by proposed non-Native mineral extraction and development that would cause irreparable damage to the lands. NCAI has also worked to uphold the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act to ensure that sacred items, objects, and remains are returned to tribes for proper burial rites and other religious practices. Issues regarding international repatriation efforts have also been included in a national dialogue as tribes continue attempts to repatriate objects and remains held abroad.

NCAI will continue to work for the advancement of policies that respect and preserve Native cultures, while continuing to educate the public of our cultural rights.

## Voting Rights

NCAI has a long history of protecting Indian voting rights, including litigation in Arizona and New Mexico in the 1940s that first ensured Native voting rights. More recently, NCAI has been involved with election monitoring efforts throughout Indian Country, and has participated in litigation on the acceptance of tribal identification documents and the placement of polling locations.

In 2014 NCAI convened interested tribal stakeholders to develop policy proposals to improve access to voting for Native American voters. The group identified recommendations that would give tribal governments a larger role in election administration decisions at the local level. NCAI has worked with federal policymakers to develop legislation to advance these recommendations.

As a result of these efforts, in May 2015 the Department of Justice took the rare step of submitting a legislative proposal to Congress for tribal governments to select polling sites on tribal lands. In addition, the Native American Voting Rights Act S. 1912 was introduced by Senator Tester and largely tracks NCAI's tribal

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recommendations. Several of our recommendations were also included in S. 1659, the Voting Rights Advancement Act introduced by Senator Leahy.

In July 2015, NCAI participated in a two-day strategic planning session with voting rights stakeholders from across Indian country. The group formed a Native American Voting Rights Coalition to ensure that our work to protect and advance voting rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives is coordinated and effective. NCAI is leading a sub-working group focused on capacity building to educate voters about their rights, and equip tribal leaders to monitor and engage in local decisions about election administration that impact tribal citizens.

## Tax and Finance

NCAI worked with Indian nations, partner organizations, and Congress to pass the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act of 2014, signed into law on September 26, 2014. This Act amended the Internal Revenue Code to exclude payments for tribal services to tribal members, their spouses, and dependents from income - so long as those payments are made under a governmental program for the promotion of general welfare.

The Act also requires the Department of Treasury

to establish a Tribal Advisory Committee and to create a mandatory training program for IRS agents, concerning the unique federal relationship with Indian tribal governments and implementation of the tribal general welfare exclusion.

NCAI advocates for parity for tribal governments in tax reform legislation, with a focus on providing economic incentives for projects in Indian Country including creation of Permanent Tax “Extender” Incentives; set-asides for New Markets Tax Credit and Low Income Housing Tax Credit; Tribal Empowerment Zones; and tribal government Inclusion in the Marketplace Fairness Act.

NCAI has been working with members of the House and Senate to propose legislation that would stimulate economic growth in areas such as: 1) Tribal Government Tax Exempt Bonds, 2) Tribal Government Employee Benefit and Pension Plans, 3) Tribally Funded and Controlled Foundations and Charities, 4) Tribal Child Support Enforcement Agencies, 5) Tribal Access to Clean Renewable Energy Bonds, and 6) Adoption Tax Credit.

A number of bills have been introduced this Congress that would amend individual sections of the Internal Revenue Code. NCAI is actively working to achieve tribal inclusion and parity, with an ultimate aim



Tribal leaders working with Congress can achieve landmark legislation for the benefit of tribal citizens.

of tribal inclusion in forthcoming comprehensive federal tax reform.

## American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans Programs and Issues

The NCAI advocacy on behalf of veterans and through Veterans Committee has addressed numerous issues critical to veterans' rights and benefits, including quality health care, housing, employment, and all needs as we honor the warrior tradition and are grateful for all the sacrifices made by all veterans and their families.

NCAI has recommended Veterans Administration (VA) regulatory changes enabling tribes to designate and train accredited Tribal Veterans Service Officers, to provide culturally competent representation to Native American veterans before the Regional Offices and the Board of Veterans Appeals. In the fall of 2015, VA plans to publish rules in the Federal Register to make the change. The publication will be dual; a final direct rule, and a companion proposed rule, virtually identical. Absent significant objections or adverse comments, the Direct Final Rule will take effect 60 days after publication.

NCAI, tribes, and individual veterans have for years urged Congress to restore pay to Native veterans who had state income tax illegally withheld from their military by the Department of Treasury, in some cases for more than twenty years. The veterans affected were domiciled on reservations during the time of their military service. Federal law prohibits states from taxing the pay of military service members who are not a domiciliary of that state, but only New Mexico has made attempts to reconcile the wrongful tax payments to veterans. NCAI is working to have states join New Mexico to restore the pay, and for federal legislation similar to a bill introduced several years ago.

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act through the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) mandates that the VA reimburse the Indian Health Service, tribes, and



Native Veterans at the 2014 White House Tribal Nations Summit.

tribal organizations for services provided to veterans. The VA construes the mandatory reimbursement statute as applying only to tribes that agree to enter into a model reimbursement agreement developed by VA. The VA model limits reimbursement to only direct service care. For instance, non-Native spouses of Native veterans, and non-Native veterans not close to a VA facility where a tribal facility is more accessible to the veteran, are not eligible. This year NCAI passed a resolution supporting VA reimbursement for eligible services retroactive to the enactment of the ACA, with implementation that is streamlined and focused on providing the quickest and best care to veterans regardless of their race.

### FACTS

- 48.9% of American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) ages 17-24 are active duty, reserve, and National Guard service members, compared to 34.6% of all other races.
- The vast majority at 47.5% of AI/AN service members are in the Navy, followed by the Army at 15%.
- At 19.3%, AI/AN females serve at higher rates than their counterparts in all other racial groups at 15.6%.
- 11% of AI/AN veterans are female, while female veterans for all other races is 7.2%.

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# International **Advocacy**

NCAI has engaged on international Indigenous issues through international forums, including the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States, to advance tribal interests at the international level. NCAI holds consultative status with the UN, which allows us to represent tribes in many UN meetings.

## **World Conference on Indigenous Peoples**

On September 22-23, 2014, the UN hosted the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP). The WCIP included over 1,000 indigenous representatives from all over the world, as well as all 193 UN member countries. Members of the UN and Indigenous peoples met to discuss implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Leading up to the WCIP, NCAI joined with a large group of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, inter-tribal associations, and non-profit organizations to advocate for four priorities:

1. Establishing an appropriate status for Indigenous governments at the UN;
2. Creating a UN mechanism to monitor and promote implementation of the UNDRIP;
3. Adopting measures to prevent violence against Indigenous women and children; and
4. Protecting sacred places and objects.

As an outcome of the WCIP, the UN General Assembly adopted an Outcome Document with concrete and action-oriented measures to implement and achieve the objectives of the UNDRIP. The Outcome Document addresses all four of our priorities. Over the past year there has been a great deal of follow-

up work to the WCIP, and NCAI in partnership with the Native American Rights Fund has been fully engaged in advocating with various UN bodies for meaningful action.

## **Organization of American States**

The Organization of American States (OAS) has been working on a regional Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for several years. NCAI participated in monthly negotiation sessions between February and May of 2015 that resulted in significant progress. Delays occurred from the inability of member states and indigenous representatives to reach consensus on several key points. As a result, the Indigenous caucus withdrew from the negotiations. The OAS plans to revive the negotiations in early 2016. NCAI will stay engaged in the process with the goal of securing a strong regional Declaration that provides additional tools for protecting and promoting indigenous rights in the Americas.

## **Universal Periodic Review**

In May 2015, the UN Human Rights Council conducted its Universal Periodic Review of the United States government's compliance with its international human rights obligations. NCAI co-submitted reports on violence against Indigenous women and Indian child welfare issues. As a result of NCAI's advocacy, the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review includes several recommendations made by UN member states for actions by the United States to improve its human rights compliance in these areas.

# SERVICE TO COMMUNITY

“NCAI is answering the call of its ancestors to support tribal self-determination.”

The past several decades have witnessed a movement among tribal nations to reclaim control over their own affairs and create vibrant futures of their own design. They also have seen a cultural reawakening in many tribal communities, and initiatives by many tribal nations to rebuild their systems of governance to better reflect their cultures, effectively address their priorities, and realize their long-term goals.

A fundamental component of NCAI’s mission is to serve tribes’ self-determined efforts to revitalize their nations, governments and communities. It does this in a number of ways, from documenting and sharing tribal best practices with tribal nations and leaders across the country to supporting tribally designed efforts to generate the data and information necessary to measure the gravity of their challenges and the effectiveness of their solutions.

NCAI serves as the go-to resource about how and why tribal sovereignty is working — and how tribal nations can build their capacity to exercise that sovereignty more fully and effectively. Through our work, NCAI is answering the call of its ancestors to support tribal self-determination and show the country and the world that it is the *only* policy that has ever worked for Native peoples.

In the pages that follow, you will learn a great deal more about NCAI’s service to the community of tribal nations across the United States.

**OUR NATIVE BOYS & YOUNG MEN**

In the interest of painting a portrait of Native boys and young men, select data are displayed below. This focus on Native boys does not take away from our Native girls. If we view any support for one group in our community as benefiting us all, then we can see that a focus on Native boys can strengthen our families and communities.

**IN & OUT OF SCHOOL**

Across 11 states with American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students, fewer than half (45%) of all young Native men graduated high school (Faircloth & Tippecannc, 2010).

In many instances, Native boys are “lured out” of school by well-paid jobs in high-risk industries (e.g. oil crews, commercial fishing) or by the military.

However, Native boys are also “pushed out” of school through suspensions, expulsions- and into juvenile and criminal justice institutions.

**FATHERS & HUSBANDS**

There are more Native single fathers (ages 18-24) than in any other racial/ethnic group. 1 in 6 young Native men are married (Lekielek & Brown, 2005).

**EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO VOTE**

In Montana and New Mexico, 89% of young Native men (ages 18-24) are registered to vote, surpassing their female counterparts (Native Vote, 2012).

**HEALTH CHECK-UP**

Native men experience the highest levels of psychological stress. The chart below reveals the results of a distress measure for “feeling hopeless” (Barnes, et al., 2010).

Race/Ethnicity	Stress Level (0-15)
AI/AN	12
White	4
African American	3
Asian	2
Hispanic	5

**SERVING OUR COUNTRY**

48.9% of young Native men (ages 17-24) are active duty, reserve, and National Guard servicemembers, compared to 34.5% of all other races (U.S. Veterans Affairs, 2012).

**EMPLOYMENT**

In 2010, 72% of young Native men (ages 16-29) were employed (Audi, et al., 2011).

**National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center**  
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NCAI’s Policy Research Center recently published data about Native boys and young men.



Panelists describe the importance of tribal data at NCAI's 10th Annual Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum "Back to our Futures: Re-searching for Justice".

# NCAI Policy Research Center

## Using Data and Information to Advance Sovereignty

When so much policy has had the impact of dividing our tribal communities over time and history, our collective success lies in linking arms and working together to sustain our cultures and lifeways. The NCAI Policy Research Center was established in 2004 to support Indian Country in shaping its own future by providing tribal leaders with the best available knowledge to inform their decision-making within a framework of Native wisdom to ensure the best futures for our peoples. We aim to add value to the work of NCAI by highlighting the strengths of Native cultures, leveraging our successes to assist those in need, and making sure research has a positive impact in tribal communities. As such, our 2015 Strategic Priorities are to:

1. Develop resources to aid tribes in strengthening Native youth development and leadership;
2. Foster stronger tribal-state relations to ensure the meaningful exercise of sovereignty;

“The NCAI Policy Research Center supports policy research and policymaking for Indian Country by Indian Country.”

3. Leverage information and network resources to advance policy advocacy (e.g., work with early childhood providers to strengthen their advocacy with Native families); and
4. Continue generating regional data and information resources.

In what follows, the staff of the NCAI Policy Research Center describe our efforts to contribute to the mission of NCAI over the past year and to exemplify the brilliance of Native people working together to shape our futures.



### *Develop Resources to Aid Tribes in Strengthening Native Youth Development and Leadership*



See NCAI's 2016 Federal Budget recommendations

#### **Synthesized Recent Federal Investments in Indian Country:**

One month after the January release of the FY 2016 Indian Country Budget Request, NCAI produced an analysis of the President's FY 2016 budget. It highlighted Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service funding increases, the inclusion of mandatory contract support costs, and strategic investments in Native youth, among other key points.

#### **Hosted Meeting of Tribal Epidemiology Center Staff to Discuss Native Youth Diabetes Prevention:**

In June 2015, the PRC hosted a meeting of seven staff members of tribal epidemiology centers to coordinate efforts to address Native youth diabetes prevention. We discussed existing tools, data sources, data challenges, and cultural measures. We have hosted some follow-up discussions and intend to leverage more resources to coordinate across tribal epidemiology centers to address this urgent challenge.



Scan for Native Youth infographic

#### **Released a Series of Resources and Infographics to Highlight Native Youth Needs:**

In early 2015, the PRC created an infographic that paints a portrait of the realities facing our Native boys and young men.



Find the School-to-Prison data here

More recently, the PRC released a two-page infographic with data on Native youth in schools titled, *Are Native Youth Being Pushed Into Prison? Data on the School-to-Prison Pipeline in Indian Country*. This resource revealed the ways in which students, particularly those with special needs and learning disabilities, are being funneled into juvenile justice systems as a result of zero tolerance policies, disproportionate rates of out-of-school suspensions, and insufficient school support systems. This resource has had over 22,000 unique opens on social media.



Scan for Native women and girls report

In May 2015, the PRC shared an update highlighting the status of Native women and girls—disseminating new data and reports that show where we are gaining ground and where further support is needed.

### *Foster Stronger Tribal-State Relations to Ensure the Meaningful Exercise of Sovereignty*



See the Towns on Reservations analysis here

#### **Analysis of Towns on Reservations:**

This analysis produced by the PRC includes the overall population, both Indian and non-Indian, living in towns/cities inside reservations, as well as square mileage. According to the data, there are hundreds of towns and cities within reservation boundaries that are predominantly populated by non-Indians.

## Hosted the 10th Annual Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum:

The PRC hosted the Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum on June 30, 2015, at NCAI's Mid Year Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota. This forum provided a space for tribal leaders and citizens, researchers, and policy organizations to discuss how to strengthen public policy and community-based initiatives, based on meaningful data and research. This year's theme was "Back to Our Futures: Re-Searching for Justice," and the Forum featured a morning plenary session and afternoon breakout sessions with panel presentations, research planning sessions, and a poster session. Session topics included improving tribal-state relations and initiatives emphasizing tribal-state coordination.

## *Leverage Information and Network Resources to Advance Policy Advocacy*

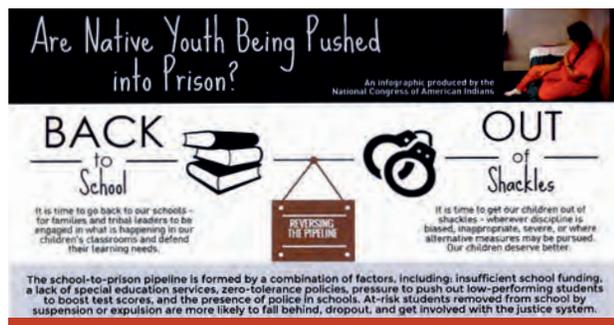


Read the Marijuana Policy brief here

### Developed Information for Tribal Leaders on Marijuana Policy in the US:

In response to the US Department of Justice's Cole Memorandum concerning tribal control over marijuana policies on their lands, the PRC produced an

informational one-pager to support tribal leader decision-making. This informed a session at NCAI's Executive Council Winter Session to support tribal leaders and communities in their decision-making in this arena.



The PRC's infographic on the School-to-Prison pipeline has had more than 22,000 viewers on social media.

## Collaborated with Early Childhood Providers and Advocates:

In early 2015 PRC staff met with leading early childhood providers, in partnership with the American Indian College Fund, to discuss how to build from their best practices to inform policy more broadly. This meeting informed the plenary session at NCAI's 10th Annual Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum, which focused on early childhood policy research. Several tribes have reported using the information and tools presented there to inform new efforts on early childhood development in their communities.

## Hosted Meeting with National Policy Organizations to Identify Meaningful Youth Measures:

In August 2015, the PRC hosted representatives from tribes, tribal organizations, national policy organizations, philanthropic organizations, and federal agencies to discuss strategies for identifying youth measures and indicators. Information collected will be used to inform Native youth policy and partnership development.

## *Continue Generating Regional Data and Information Resources*

### Released Research Updates and E-Updates:

The PRC released three Research Updates – at NCAI's Annual Convention, Executive Council Winter Session, and Mid Year Conference – to share policy research updates with NCAI members and disseminate best practices and resources to support and advance their work. We also released two e-updates during the months between NCAI conferences to apprise our networks of research information and resources that could inform their work. We have grown our listserv to over 2,500 members, which include leaders and key decision-makers representing Native nations in the US, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, as well as a wide range of federal partners and non-profit organizations.



Youth participants in Ysleta del Sur Pueblo's Tigua Nation Building Program, 2012. Photo credit: Ysleta del Sur Pueblo.

## NCAI Partnership for Tribal Governance

Established in 2009 as a long-term commitment by NCAI, the Partnership for Tribal Governance (PTG) seeks to identify, increase, enhance, organize, and make accessible the resources necessary to support tribes' efforts to strengthen their governance systems. Through partnerships with tribes, tribal intergovernmental and national Native organizations, academic and policy centers, practitioners, policymakers, and other groups, the PTG:

- supports increased governance education, training, and technical assistance opportunities for tribes;
- enhances communication, coordination, and collaboration among groups working to support tribes' efforts to strengthen their governance systems;
- supports the development and sharing of new knowledge and resources on tribal governance;
- develops and promotes a policy research agenda to strengthen tribal governance;

“The PTG serves as the organizational hub within NCAI to support tribes in their efforts to strengthen their governance systems and their exercise of sovereignty.”

- advocates policies to enhance and strengthen tribal governments;
- facilitates investments in self-determined tribal efforts to strengthen their governance systems;
- encourages increased public and media education about tribal governments and governance; and
- supports the internal capacity building of NCAI as an institution.

The PTG serves as the organizational hub within NCAI to support tribes in their efforts to strengthen their governance systems and their exercise of sovereignty in four core areas: governance reform, leadership development, citizen engagement, and public and media education. At the same time, PTG supports NCAI's institutional development as a vital anchor institution for Indian Country through its targeted integration and coordination of NCAI's various programs and activities.

During 2014-2015, the PTG advanced NCAI's mission in several ways.

### Documenting and Sharing Stories of Governance

**Success:** At NCAI's 2014 Annual Convention in Atlanta, the PTG provided a session to reform and strengthen tribal constitutions in order to reflect and preserve their distinct cultures and ways of life, more effectively address their contemporary challenges, and achieve their long-term priorities. NCAI also showcased the recipients of the 2014 Harvard Honoring Nations awards.

The PTG has been engaged in a major project examining innovative approaches to tribal workforce development. Through funding from the Northwest Area Foundation, the PTG will document and share workforce development efforts of six tribal nations. A session convened at NCAI's 2015 Mid Year Conference showcased the workforce development stories of three of those nations. The PTG will share what it has learned through a paper, videos of the sessions and related interviews with key representatives of the six tribal nations, and a webinar slated for late 2015.

**Building Capacity in Governance:** The PTG joined forces with the Rockwood Leadership Institute to design and deliver intensive, daylong leadership development trainings to tribal leaders and key decision-makers at its 2014 Annual Convention and 2015 Mid Year Conference. The customized curricula equipped participants with an array of proven leadership strategies and tools.

**Investing in Self-Determined Tribal Efforts to Strengthen Governance:** In 2014 and 2015, the PTG continued to shepherd the investments it has made in tribes' self-determined efforts to strengthen their governance systems. The 11 one-time investments, made possible by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, are supporting the work of selected tribes across nine states and several key governance areas, including constitutional reform, natural resource management, and implementation of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

In addition to the activities detailed above, the PTG is working together with other NCAI departments to build capacity and understanding around the following four key areas of concern to tribal governments, leaders, and communities.

## Financial Capability

In 2014 and 2015, the PTG enhanced its growing reputation as a national leader in cultivating financial capability in Indian Country. At the 2014 Annual Convention, the PTG convened a financial education summit focused on Native youth, which included a listening session with participation by members of the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans. At the 2015 Mid Year Conference, the PTG convened a session titled "Building Self-Sufficient Tribal Citizens through Financial Literacy," which showcased innovative models that tribal nations are using to help their citizens set financial goals, choose financial products, and build their skills in managing money, credit, and debt.

**2 ways to WIN!**

**NAT\$VE in the BANK**  
Empowering Native Youth to Get a Head Start on Building Their Financial Futures

**ANSWER THE CALL!**  
Must complete all four steps and fill out your application (located at [www.nfec.us](http://www.nfec.us)) by **SEPTEMBER 25th**  
ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 2 HOURS!

**STEP 1**  
COMPLETE FUN ONLINE COURSE  
Complete both "Bank On It" modules [moneysmartcbl.fdic.gov](http://moneysmartcbl.fdic.gov)

**STEP 2**  
OPEN BANK ACCOUNT  
Checking, Savings, College Fund, etc.

**STEP 3**  
TAKE A SELFIE WITH YOUR BANKER  
Post picture on NFEC's Facebook page or Twitter account #NATIVEintheBANK

**STEP 4**  
TELL YOUR STORY  
Share your story (in writing or art) about your financial goals and how you will achieve them

Complete all 4 steps and receive T-shirt!  
...And a chance to win an iPad Air!  
You must complete all 4 steps by September 25th

**LEAD THE WAY!**  
Must complete all steps in both "ANSWER the CALL" and "LEAD the WAY" and fill out your application (located at [www.nfec.us](http://www.nfec.us)) by **SEPTEMBER 25th**

**STEP 1**  
SHARE NAT\$VE in the BANK  
On Facebook and Twitter  
#NATIVEintheBANK #FinancialLiteracy #NativeYouth #NCAI1944 #FinancialEducation

**STEP 2**  
RECRUIT YOUR FRIENDS  
Recruit at least 3 friends to participate in the "NAT\$VE in the BANK" campaign (they each must complete all 4 "ANSWER the CALL" steps by September 25th)

Trip to San Diego!  
A chance to win a \$100 iTunes gift card, an iPad Mini, or a trip to San Diego to attend NCAI's 2015 Annual Convention!

Tribal youth are encouraged to increase their financial capability through the NAT\$VE in the BANK initiative.



Scan here to learn more about 'NAT\$VE in the BANK', a new NCAI and NFEC joint initiative designed to empower the financial capability of Native youth.

PTG staff played a coordinating role for the Native Financial Education Coalition (NFEC). In early 2015, NCAI and NFEC launched a new joint initiative called "NAT\$VE in the BANK" designed to empower Native youth to get a head start on building their financial futures by getting them to open a bank account.

The PTG continues to have a presence on the board of the Native CDFI Network, and to foster collaborations and partnerships designed to advance the Protect Native Money campaign. This effort seeks to provide tribal leaders and citizens with critical financial education and consumer protection information and resources.

## Tribal Implementation of Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

At the core of NCAI's work is the protection and enhancement of the sovereign rights of tribes and their ability to protect their citizens. An important and visible expression of those sovereign rights is a tribal court's exercise of tribal jurisdiction.

Following passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 2013, the Department of Justice (DOJ) provided a three-year grant to the NCAI Fund to provide technical assistance to tribes working to



Scan to access the Resource Center for Implementing Tribal Provisions of the Violence Against Women Act.

implement the new law. VAWA effectively restored limited tribal criminal jurisdiction over certain non-Indians who commit crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, or violations of protection orders in Indian Country.

In February 2014, three tribes were approved by DOJ to begin early pilot implementation of this jurisdiction—the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and the Tulalip Tribes. As of August 2015, eight tribes were exercising the special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction, and there have been more than 35 cases brought against non-Indians in tribal courts.

As part of ensuring the successful implementation of VAWA, NCAI has facilitated the work of the Intertribal Technical-Assistance Working Group on Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction (ITWG). NCAI supports ITWG by organizing in-person meetings, holding training webinars, developing and collecting implementation materials, reviewing tribal codes and implementation plans, producing informational videos documenting the experiences and lessons learned of the tribes who are already exercising VAWA's tribal provisions, and connecting tribes with other technical assistance resources.



California tribes mark the anniversary of the 2013 passage of VAWA.



NCAI staff provides training through embassy visits and webinars to a variety of partners.

## The PTG and Housing

In early 2015, the PTG wrapped up a successful 18-month cooperative agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide trainings and technical assistance to tribes, Tribal Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) eligible to receive an Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG), and IHBG sub-recipients.

The partnership with HUD's Office of Native American Programs Training and Technical Assistance (ONAP T&TA) enabled the PTG to provide more than 20 training sessions and technical assistance engagements to more than 400 elected leaders, housing authority staff, community planners and other tribal representatives from across the country.

The PTG and its partner trainers and technical assistance providers delivered targeted curricula and technical expertise on a range of critical topics from meth remediation to low-income housing tax credit compliance. Upon conclusion of the cooperative agreement, the PTG provided ONAP T&TA with a comprehensive set of lessons learned and recommendations designed to enhance its ability to support tribes' self-determined efforts in the housing arena.

## Tribal-State-County Relations

In 2014 and 2015, the PTG has focused increased energy on strengthening NCAI's relationship with key organizations dedicated to improving cooperation between, and enhancing mutual understanding among, tribal governments and officials and their state and county counterparts.

For example, PTG staff has engaged in ongoing discussions with the National Conference of State Legislatures and its constituent group the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators (NCNASL), which works to promote a better understanding of state-tribal issues among policymakers and the public at large. This fruitful collaboration led to former NCAI President W. Ron Allen delivering the keynote address at NCNASL's Annual Meeting in August 2015. NCAI is planning to build on this partnership through its convening of a special session on tribal, state and county relations at its 2015 Annual Convention in San Diego.

In addition, the PTG continues to steward relationships with other key partners in the intergovernmental realm, including the National Association of Counties, the only national organization representing counties in the United States.



NCAI educates about the sovereign status of tribal governments and encourages state and county cooperation.

# PUBLIC EDUCATION

Through public education NCAI has facilitated and advanced many critical concerns for Indian Country while continuing to share our stories. As NCAI President Cladoosby said in the 2015 State of Indian Nations Address, “It means respecting Native peoples for who we are, not who others think we are.”

## Change the Mascot Campaign

NCAI’s mission to educate the general public about the true diversity of Native peoples and cultures has existed as a cornerstone to the foundation of the organization. NCAI has long held a clear position against derogatory and harmful stereotypes of Native people. In 1968, NCAI launched a campaign to address stereotypes of Native people in sports, popular culture, and media. Many “Indian” themed sports mascots, names, and logos have dehumanized and devalued the diverse heritages of Native peoples.

In 2013, the Oneida Indian Nation of New York created the Change the Mascot initiative and shortly thereafter NCAI partnered with the tribe to increase awareness and educate the general public about harmful, stereotypical “Native themed” mascots, names, and logos. The Change the Mascot campaign has served to raise awareness of the multiple issues Native peoples face today.

“NCAI will ... advocate for the retirement of these derogatory names.”

There has been significant legal, social and commercial progress in changing the name and mascot of the Washington R\*dkins NFL team. Most recently, in July 2015 a federal judge ordered the cancellation of the Washington team’s federal trademark registrations.

President Obama, members of Congress, state politicians, school systems, current and former NFL athletes, partners for indigenous rights, and large numbers of the general public have also called upon the league to change this NFL team name. Alongside our partners, NCAI will continue to advocate for the retirement of these derogatory names and mascots, while continuing education efforts about the true cultural heritage of Native peoples.



Tribal leaders work tirelessly with partners and supporters to Change the Mascot.

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# Tribal Supreme Court Project

NCAI and the Native American Rights Fund cooperate through the Tribal Supreme Court Project to promote greater coordination and strategy on litigation that may affect the rights of tribes.

During its 2014-2015 term, the US Supreme Court decided on no cases relating to federal Indian law or tribal sovereignty. We view this as a sign of success for the Tribal Supreme Court Project, as it is the result of the significant effort and coordination among tribes and their attorneys to reduce the number of tribal sovereignty cases that are heard by the Supreme Court. This is accomplished by actively addressing cases at the certiorari stage, when the courts give written notice of review, encouraging tribes to carefully evaluate their cases.

Beginning in October 2015, the Supreme Court has accepted review in two cases important to Indian Country. The Supreme Court granted review in *Dollar General v. Mississippi Choctaw*, a case representing a direct challenge to tribal court jurisdiction over businesses on tribal land. The Court will also hear *U.S. v. Menominee Tribe*, which is a technical legal question about the amount of time permitted for a lawsuit on contract support costs under an Indian Self-Determination Act contract.

“We would like to thank all of the tribes and tribal attorneys for their generous assistance and gracious cooperation.”

NCAI has continued its legal work in cases involving the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and efforts to organize unions of tribal governmental workers. All other governments are exempted from the NLRA.

But in 2004 the National Labor Relations Board reversed longstanding precedent and asserted for the first time that a tribal government engaged in “commercial” activity was subject to the NLRA and required to permit unions. The DC Circuit sustained the Board’s decision in *San Manuel v. NLRB* in 2007. Three new cases are now in other federal courts of appeals: *Chickasaw Nation v. NLRB*; *Little River Band v. NLRB*; and *Saginaw Chippewa v. NLRB*. NCAI has filed amicus briefs supporting all three tribes. Tribes have argued that San Manuel’s distinction between “governmental” and “commercial” activities is wrong and unworkable; and that application of the NLRA would severely impair tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.

NCAI continues to also address the challenges created by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar*, where Court held that the Indian Reorganization Act applies only to Indian tribes that were “now under federal jurisdiction” on the date of enactment in 1934. *Carcieri* thus created two classes of tribes: those recognized prior to the IRA of 1934, and those recognized after. We saw a recent victory in *California v. Big Lagoon*. NCAI strongly supported the successful push for rehearing in the 9th Circuit, where a recent decision was unanimous against California’s effort to revisit the status of existing tribal trust land.

We are also assisting on several cases addressing reservation diminishment, and working to protect the legislative wins with the Violence Against Women Act. These are just a few of the important cases that the Tribal Supreme Court Project addressed this year and will continue working on in the coming year. We would like to thank all of the tribes and tribal attorneys for their generous assistance and gracious cooperation. We encourage tribes to consult with the Project at any stage of litigation, and particularly at the certiorari stage in the Supreme Court.



Communities across our lands are working together to increase the power of the Native Vote.

## Native Vote

NCAI's Native Vote continues to build on previous years' successful efforts. Native Vote has contributed to local, regional, and national impacts in recent elections. Several successful candidates at all levels have attributed their election victories to the engagement of Native people. NCAI continued its relationships with foundations, non-profits, and advocacy groups to provide grants, toolkits, Native Vote pins, stickers, and other voting-related items to community groups.

Native Vote organized a network of coordinators in tribal communities across the nation. Weekly e-newsletters informed voters about issues, forums, issues, and tribal community events, including youth rallies, classes, webinars, and other activities.



Indian Country is gearing up to make a difference in 2016 – Every Native Vote Counts!

“It is more important than ever that Native people show up and vote.”

- NCAI President Brian Cladoosby

A Summer of Action effort served to rally and inspire tribal coordinators to challenge their communities to engage in the 2014 election. A Native Vote Action Week preceded the election, calling to action coordinators, tribal leaders, and regional tribal organizations to strive to make a difference at the polls. Teach for the Native Vote Week focused on sustained civic engagement of the youth, and involved the National Indian Education Association and the National Education Association.

A voter training session was conducted at the NCAI 2015 Mid-Year Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, provided by long time Native Vote trainer Peggy Flanagan. Also, nationally recognized Native journalist Mark Trahan spoke during a plenary session on “What it will take for Indian Country to win the 2016 election.”

NCAI and all of Indian Country can be exceedingly proud and thankful for the volunteer work of coordinators throughout Indian Country and tribal communities. The hard work and commitment of tribal coordinators truly made a difference in setting a high bar for Native participation in elections to come. We know they will step up to the plate again and continue to push the bar higher.

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# Outreach

## Embassy and Visits

Since opening its doors in 2009, the Embassy of Tribal Nations has become an invaluable tool for NCAI in its efforts to answer the charge of the organization's founders to educate policy makers, the American public, and others about tribal nations and sovereignty. The Embassy serves as an increasingly potent symbol of our nation-to-nation relationship with the United States and the importance of tribal nations and peoples to America's past, present and future.

In the past twelve months, NCAI has hosted formal visits by more than 40 groups consisting of more than 300 people from tribal nations, states across the country, and countries around the world. Visits ranged from Embassy tours and informal discussions to educational and planning sessions. For example, in June 2015, the Embassy hosted 16 students from the Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute's Summer Policy Academy, who presented their policy platforms on timely issues such as the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act to NCAI staff. Meanwhile, international visitors included groups from Australia, Canada, Chile, and Ecuador.



NCAI hosts the Australian First Nations Writers Group.

The Embassy's learning experience has been greatly enhanced by NCAI's release of its book *Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction*, which is provided to visitors upon their arrival.

## Media and Press

NCAI is a trusted resource for major news outlets such as Time Magazine, CSPAN, NPR, and PBS, among others. Whether for background information on tribal governance or a television interview on policy issues, NCAI is always willing to educate the media and the public on Indian affairs. Foremost in this outreach is the importance of recognizing tribal sovereignty.

In 2014 and 2015 efforts included leadership on significant issues gaining national attention, including changing offensive sports mascots, affirmation of life and resiliency for Native youth, and challenges to tribal recognition. NCAI stays actively engaged with the media, its members, and the public on issues that are important to Indian Country and in telling our stories.

NCAI's media engagement is proactive, by providing resources for media to easily access materials such as press releases, briefings, statements, video, audio, and photography for use in reporting.



Indigenous delegates from Chile and Rapa Nui visit the Embassy of Tribal Nations.

## Communications

In February 2015, at our Executive Council Winter Session, NCAI released its new publication *“Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction”*. This booklet is one example of our outreach efforts. Since its release, hundreds of copies have been distributed to members of Congress, numerous advocacy organizations, tribal leaders, and nonprofits.

Our communication efforts continually center on providing our membership with the most current information. Through our weekly broadcasts and action alerts, we send out pressing news from Indian Country, Administration announcements, and notifications of upcoming hearings, webinars, and other events. In addition to those broadcasts, NCAI uses multiple social media platforms to keep the public informed and engaged in conversations that concern tribal sovereignty.

This year also marked the debut of the Tribal VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) and the Policy Research Center websites. In addition to disseminating content through our main website, we now have centralized locations/clearinghouses for specialized information and downloadable documents.

NDN Talks were also launched this year, in the interest of challenging our tribal leaders to share their stories in a TED Talks-style format. Four visionary presenters from across Indian Country spoke at the Mid Year Conference in St. Paul on the meaning of “I” for Indian. This event was recorded and posted on the NCAI YouTube page.



Scan here to view and download the guide *“Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction.”*

## Social Media

NCAI is constantly updating our resolutions, testimonies, and speeches on our website. If you missed the NCAI State of Indian Nations address, a conference or event, or any NCAI hosted webinar, they have been uploaded to our YouTube page.

NCAI has fully engaged in the dynamic platforms offered by social media to have conversations with people all around the world on tribal issues and events. As the demand for information on social media has risen, NCAI has met that rising tide of social engagement through an expanding number of avenues. During the White House Tribal Youth Conference in August 2015 as part of the Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) initiative, #geni was the top trending hashtag on Twitter out of Washington DC.

In addition to our NCAI main website at [www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org) and the websites for the NCAI Policy Research Center and for Tribal VAWA, you can join the NCAI discussion on a wide array of social media sites. NCAI is keeping up with new social media apps that are coming out and recently added a Periscope account to be able to broadcast certain events on Twitter.

NCAI has more than 43,000 followers on Facebook, and more than 20,000 people follow us on Twitter. You can keep up with NCAI as we share news of activities throughout Indian Country on the social media applications listed on the next page.



The *Tribal Nations and the United States* guide by NCAI provides a basic overview of the history and underlying principles of tribal government.

### Facebook:

- National Congress of American Indians
- Embassy of Tribal Nations
- First Kids 1st
- Generation Indigenous
- Tribal HealthCare
- Native Vote
- National Congress of American Indians Youth Commission

### Twitter:

- @NCAI1944
- @NCAIYouth
- @FirstKids1st
- @TribalHlthCare
- @NativeVote
- @NCAIPRC
- @NCAIClips

### Instagram:

- @NCAI1944
- @NCAIYouth
- @GenIndigenous
- @NativeVote

### Videos:

- Vimeo.com/ncai
- YouTube

## NCAI Membership

NCAI is a membership-driven organization. Our membership is a strong representation of the many nations, villages, communities, and individuals that support the whole of Indian Country. The organization engages in both legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of its membership. Moreover, NCAI strives to ensure that all member tribes and individuals are informed and educated about issues affecting the well-being of Indian nations.

NCAI membership is made up of tribes and individuals who have met the eligibility criteria and paid dues as outlined in Article III of the NCAI Bylaws. Members are determined to be in good standing upon full payment of dues and having fulfilled the requirements of the Credentials Committee.



Learn more about the benefits of NCAI membership here. If you are not a member, consider joining today to support NCAI's work.

- 1. Tribal Membership:** Any tribe, band or identifiable group of American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts shall be eligible for tribal membership provided it shall fulfill all of the requirements. You can scan the QR code on this page to see the full list of requirements and learn more about the benefits of NCAI membership.
- 2. Indian Individual Membership:** Any person of Indian and/or Alaska Native ancestry in the United States or a native of Alaska is eligible for individual membership. For the purpose recognized as a member by an Indian tribe, or combination of tribes and bands recognized by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Indian Claims Commission, Court of Claims, or a State.
- 3. Individual Associate Membership:** Non-Indian applicants may be admitted to non-voting associate membership upon the payment of annual dues as fixed by the Bylaws.
- 4. Organization Associate Membership:** Organizations may be admitted to non-voting associate membership upon the payment of annual dues as fixed by the Bylaws.

## Fundraising

Every day NCAI is working hard to make significant progress in advancing the rights our ancestors fought so hard to preserve. While we have made great strides, the rights of tribal citizens and tribal sovereignty continues to come under attack. To do this vital work NCAI recognizes the importance of ALL of our supporters.

The NCAI Fundraising Team continues to build upon our relationships with our partners and potential partners. Reaching outside of Indian Country to those with similar missions has been important to assist in extending the influence of our message, while gaining support for our cause.

The Fundraising Team continues to update and use the fundraising materials created last year for our 70th Anniversary “For the 7th Generation.” These materials share the accomplishments and work of NCAI over the past 70 years and focus our attention on building a strong future for the next 70 years. Research also continues to be done on the historical years of the organization as we prepare for the 75th Annual Convention returning back to Denver, CO where the first convention was held in 1944.

NCAI continues to use additional tools to make giving easier such as the Combined Federal Campaign, Amazon Smile, and a new fundraising section on the website.

A contribution envelope has been included in this annual report. Please consider a charitable donation to NCAI to help us continue our work.



Visit our website at [www.ncai.org](http://www.ncai.org) or scan the QR code here to be taken to our contributions page to learn more.

You can also extend your generosity and leave a meaningful legacy by building charitable giving into your estate planning.

Federal employees can support the work of NCAI through the Combined Federal Campaign, CFC #10110. You can also sign up under the AmazonSmile program, and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to NCAI whenever you shop with AmazonSmile.

Contributions to NCAI help us advocate for the next 7 generations.

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# Partners and Supporters

In November 1944, tribal leaders faced the terrible threat of the federal termination policy, but they responded by making a tremendous sacrifice that would change the history of Indian Country. In spite of the cost, they traveled to Denver, Colorado to gather with other tribal leaders and establish the National Congress of American Indians. They invested in the future and, today, our communities are still reaping the benefits of that investment.

The success of NCAI's work since that time is built on the generosity and ingenuity of tribal leaders, tribal nations, foundations, businesses, Native citizens, and non-Native allies. We are deeply grateful for the investments of the following NCAI partners:

- Aetna Life Insurance Company
- AMERIND Risk Management Corporation
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- BNSF Railway Company
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Centene Corporation
- Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Cherokee Nation
- Chickasaw Nation
- Chugach Alaska Corporation
- Dentons
- Desert Diamond Casinos & Entertainment
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Ford Foundation
- Forest County Potawatomi Community
- Google Inc.
- Kalispel Tribe
- Keel, Jefferson
- KeyBank
- Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
- Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- Mohegan Indian Tribe
- National Indian Gaming Association
- Native American Contractors Association
- Navajo Nation - Washington Office
- Norfolk Southern Railway Co.
- North Star Group
- Office of Hawaiian Affairs
- Poarch Band of Creek Indians
- Port Gamble S'Klallam Indian Tribe
- Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
- Public Interest Projects
- Puyallup Tribe of Indians
- Roche Diagnostics
- Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
- San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
- Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Seventh Day Adventist Church (Native Ministries) of Oklahoma
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Endreson, & Perry, LLP
- Southcentral Foundation
- Suquamish Tribe
- United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.
- US Department of Defense
- US Department of Health and Human Services
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- US Department of Justice
- Walmart
- Washington Indian Gaming Association
- WK Kellogg Foundation

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This annual report is printed on 30% post-consumer recycled paper.

The design firm for the report is Native American owned. Agency MABU is a private company founded by Mike Mabin, an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians in North Dakota.

The printing house, Tribal Print Source, is a division of Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association (SCTCA), a non-profit agency representing 19 Native American tribes in the San Diego County area.