FALL 2017 FEATURES
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Welcome to the inaugural edition of Native Governance News. This newsletter will provide updates about our work—in the areas of leadership development and Tribal governance support—and spread the word about future events and convenings. We look forward to sharing our stories with you and hope that you find them both inspiring and informative.

We’ve had a busy year! Since the start of 2017, we’ve hosted five large events, undertaken several new projects with Tribes in our region, and hired two additional staff members. We’re very excited about this extra capacity; having more staff members means that we have an even greater ability to assist Tribes in strengthening their governing systems and sovereignty.

We started out the year with our Nation Building Strategies seminar for Tribal leaders in Fargo, North Dakota. Despite the snowstorm and cold temperatures (Fargo in January? Who knew?), 40 leaders from 15 Tribes traveled to the session to learn about the tenets of nation building and to hear from Tribal leaders such as Richard Luarkie, former Governor of Laguna Pueblo, and Patty Hoeft, former Oneida Nation Secretary.

Next, we traveled to Keystone, South Dakota for the second session of the eighth cohort of our Native Nation Rebuilders Program. In addition to several nation building case studies, the Cohort 8 Rebuilders participated in a facilitated Insights session. Insights is a psychology-based tool that allows individuals to better understand their strengths, weaknesses, and communication styles. One of our Rebuilders was so inspired by Insights that he brought a training to his workplace shortly after the Keystone session.

During the summer months, we hosted two large events in the Twin Cities: the Native Nation Rebuilders Reunion and our First Annual Celebration of Nation Building. Both events emphasized networking and bringing together leaders from across Indian Country to promote collaboration and idea sharing.

Looking ahead, in December we will graduate our eighth cohort of Rebuilders and facilitate several constitution meetings with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. At Native Governance Center, we strive to be a catalyst for advancing the field of nation building. We look forward to continuing this work, and we wish you a productive and happy fall season.

Wayne Ducheneaux II, Executive Director
Cohort 8 Native Nation Rebuilders Session Held in Onamia, MN

Rebuilders representing 10 Native nations gathered at Eddy’s Resort (owned by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe) in Onamia, Minnesota on September 20-22 for the third session of Cohort 8 of the Native Nation Rebuilders Program. During the retreat-style gathering, Rebuilders learned nation building principles and facilitation skills for mobilizing their communities and engaging their fellow citizens.

One of the highlights of the session was an in-depth case study on the Ktunaxa Nation. The Ktunaxa Nation’s traditional territory spans parts of British Columbia, Alberta, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The Ktunaxa Nation is currently undergoing treaty negotiations with the Canadian government to assert its sovereignty and ensure that traditions are passed down to future generations.

At the session, Rebuilders engaged in a role-playing exercise as members of Ktunaxa’s four bands to better understand how nation building principles fit into the treaty negotiation process. Ktunaxa Nation Council Chair Kathryn Teneese joined the Rebuilders for the session to answer their questions and share her real-life experiences as a First Nations leader. Speaking on Ktunaxa’s current nation building work and the emphasis on creating culturally-relevant institutions, Chair Teneese said, “We try to weave all of the knowledge related to where we come from into what we do today.”

Rebuilders also learned facilitation techniques from Leslie Kabotie (Crow Nation) of Indigenous Collaboration, Inc. The training emphasized the importance of respecting the inherent value that each participant brings to a conversation balanced with the day-to-day realities of working in Tribal communities. Rebuilders often say this training is one of the most valuable parts of the program due to its relevance in community organizing efforts, the workplace, and personal relationships.

Cohort 8 members will graduate from the Native Nation Rebuilders Program at the end of November. They’ll attend a final session at Treasure Island Resort & Casino (Prairie Island Indian Community) during which they’ll help welcome the incoming members of Cohort 9.

“We try to weave all of the knowledge related to where we come from into what we do today.”

– Chair Kathryn Teneese
Tribal Governance Support

Native Governance Center is dedicated to assisting Tribal nations in strengthening their governance systems; we work side by side with Tribes to help them create and implement solutions by providing grants, technical assistance, and other consulting services. Below are a few examples of our most recent Tribal governance support projects:

**Constitution Meetings: Minnesota Chippewa Tribe**

In August, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) invited us to assist with a series of constitution meetings that will gather information regarding the changes that enrolled members would like to see made to the MCT constitution. Working with the University of Arizona’s Native Nations Institute, we’ve been helping the six MCT bands facilitate these constitution meetings. MCT’s goal is to make the process transparent and to ensure that meetings are consistently facilitated across the six bands. They want their enrolled members to have their voices heard and information from the meetings passed on to those in leadership positions. Each meeting begins with MCT attorney Phil Brodeen providing members with an overview of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe’s constitutional history. This introductory portion gives attendees an opportunity to learn important background information and better understand the history behind and the challenges associated with the current constitution. We look forward to continuing our engagement with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe as the year progresses.

**Enrollment Ordinance Modification: Yankton Sioux Tribe**

The Yankton Sioux Tribal Council approached Native Governance Center with a request to fund an enrollment conference that would begin the process of modifying their enrollment ordinance. We awarded them a $7,600 grant for the Ihanktonwan Sovereignty Summit on Tribal Enrollment Governance, which they successfully hosted in late 2016. The conference featured a dialogue with Zeke Garcia, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Tribal Records Officer, on how the issue of blood quantum affected the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. The conference was well-received, and we are working with the Yankton Sioux Tribe to determine how we can support them in their next steps.

**“Nation Building 101” Session: Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians**

Native Governance Center hosted a “Nation Building 101” session for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (TMBCI) at the request of the TMBCI Tribal Council in April 2017. We define nation building as the processes by which a Native nation enhances its own foundational capacity for effective self-governance and for self-determined community and economic development. The Full Tribal Council, Chairman, and Human Resources director attended the two-day executive education session held in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The session featured nation building case studies presented by the University of Arizona’s Native Nations Institute and strategic planning sessions. The Tribal Council created a series of action plans to implement upon their return home.

TMBCI District I Councilman Jamie Azure said the following about the session: “I think strategic plans now have a much better chance of being followed through upon. The session put a lot of things on the table. People were working on the same plans, but they didn’t know about it. Everyone agreed to start working together and to hold each other accountable.”

“Everyone agreed to start working together and to hold each other accountable.”

– Councilman Jamie Azure
Rebuilders Unite Across Cohorts and Tribes

Since the launch of the Native Nation Rebuilders Program in 2009, seven cohorts of leaders have graduated from the program and gone on to carry out nation building projects in their own communities. To celebrate their accomplishments and further strengthen their connections across cohorts and Tribes, we hosted a Rebuilders Reunion in June 2017. The event brought together 43 Rebuilders representing 16 Native nations.

Rebuilders had the opportunity to connect with one another during team building exercises and a networking reception. We emphasized networking during the event because many Rebuilders have expressed that, while they may have strong bonds with Rebuilders from their own cohort and Tribe, they have few opportunities to interact with Rebuilders from other cohorts and Tribes.

Rebuilder Tipiziwin Tolman explained, “I was able to connect with other Rebuilders [at the Reunion]; otherwise, I have almost no opportunities to connect with these individuals.”

Several Rebuilders told us that they found the networking portion to be the most valuable part of the event; in response to their feedback, we are planning several regional networking sessions.

Rebuilders also attended sessions on topics ranging from social media strategies to culturally-based self-care. One session entitled “Art as Activism” featured artists from Native Pop!, a traveling collective of Native pop artists, and invited Rebuilders to learn about the role that art plays in activist movements. During the session, each Rebuilder had the same task: complete a painting on a small canvas using a pattern provided to them by the artists. Rebuilders came together at their tables to help one another with the painting process, offer feedback, and exchange stories. The pieces were then assembled to form a larger, collective work of art.

Rebuilder Marlene Schroeder stated, “It was nice to get outside of our Tribal boundaries to be involved in the work of a professional artist. It gave us a sense of relationship and belonging.”

We’ve already started the planning process for our ten-year Native Nation Rebuilders Reunion, which we plan to host in the Twin Cities area in 2019.
Program Director Rebecca Crooks-Stratton Receives NCAIED “40 Under 40” Award

We are proud to announce that the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) selected Native Governance Center Program Director Rebecca Crooks-Stratton as a recipient of its prestigious “Native American 40 Under 40” award for 2017. Each year, NCAIED selects 40 individuals from across Indian Country under the age of 40 who have made significant contributions in business and their communities for the award. Rebecca traveled to Tulalip, Washington with her family in early September to receive the award.

She describes her experience at the awards ceremony as follows: “I was absolutely humbled and inspired to stand with 39 other individuals who have made outstanding contributions to Indian Country. I have to share credit for the award with my family (especially my husband), my community, and my colleagues; they’ve all provided me with amazing support, opportunities, and encouragement over the years.”

As Native Governance Center Program Director, Rebecca’s primary role is to direct the design and implementation of our leadership programs and Tribal engagement strategies. Rebecca is an enrolled member of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) and has served her community in elected positions on the SMSC Gaming Commission and the Gaming Enterprise Board of Directors. Rebecca also worked for the SMSC in Tribal administration for seven years, leading projects such as the Tribal Nations Plaza at TCF Bank Stadium and helping open a Montessori classroom at the Tribal daycare program. She is a graduate of the Native Nation Rebuilders Program, Cohort 2. Rebecca has a bachelor’s degree in political science and American Indian studies from the University of Arizona.

Did you know that Native Governance Center is participating in Give to the Max Day 2017?

Your support helps provide Tribal governance-related resources and leadership development opportunities for Native Americans.

Visit us at givemn.org/organization/native-governance-center.

Give today. Your support matters.
25 Leaders from 12 Tribes Selected for 9th Cohort of Native Nation Rebuilders

We are pleased to announce that 25 leaders from 12 of the 23 Tribes in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota have been selected for the ninth cohort of the Native Nation Rebuilders Program. The Rebuilders Program provides emerging and existing Native leaders with nation building knowledge and leadership skills. With this newest cohort, 165 Native leaders call themselves Rebuilders. The Bush Foundation created the program in 2009 and transitioned its delivery to Native Governance Center in early 2016.

“Rebuilders have gone on from this program to support nation building projects in their home communities after gaining a deeper understanding of the tenets and strategies that will contribute to the long-term success of their governments, economies, and people,” said Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, Program Director at Native Governance Center. “They learn about nation building and leadership in a cohort format, allowing them to form supportive relationships that will continue years into the future, and they develop tangible plans for themselves and their nations.”

Rebuilders convene for four structured sessions during which they also develop action plans to share knowledge with peers and their respective Tribal governments. The sessions feature partner organizations and individuals with expertise in nation building, organizing, and issues specific to Indian Country. Partners include the University of Arizona’s Native Nations Institute and Indigenous Collaboration, Inc., among others. Rebuilders also meet several current and former Tribal leaders during their sessions; they hear examples of nation building initiatives from these leaders firsthand and have the opportunity to ask questions. The first session for Cohort 9 will take place at Treasure Island Resort & Casino (Prairie Island Indian Community) at the end of November 2017.

If you’d like more information on the Rebuilders selected for Cohort 9, please visit our website. We will announce the next round of applications for the tenth cohort of Native Nation Rebuilders in the summer of 2018.

First Annual Celebration of Nation Building

Native nations are working tirelessly to rebuild their political systems, reclaim their identities, and assert their rights in order to more effectively exercise their sovereignty. They are moving beyond gaming-related lobbying efforts into initiatives that address barriers preventing Tribal citizens from reaching their full potential. Through a variety of partnerships—with other Tribes, nonprofit organizations, and local/state/federal governments—Native nations are strategically combining their resources to accomplish mutual goals.

To celebrate innovative examples of these partnerships, we brought together Tribal leaders, nonprofit professionals, Native Nation Rebuilders, and community leaders for our inaugural Celebration of Nation Building in August. The event focused on those who inspire and lift up Native nation building through collaboration in the name of sovereignty and self-determination. The celebration showcased strong inter-Tribal partnerships throughout the region and allowed attendees to connect and brainstorm opportunities for partnerships within their own communities.

Over 100 elected Tribal leaders and others who work in Native communities attended the event. Guests heard from speakers including Minnesota State Representative Peggy Flanagan, Oglala Sioux Tribe Chairman Scott Weston, and Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Chief Judge Lorrie Miner about partnerships in the areas of food sovereignty, clean energy, and restorative justice. At the close of the event, presenter Kim Tilsen-Brave Heart facilitated a Rez Café session, which allowed participants to share knowledge on resource needs and Tribal priorities, among other topics.

Of the attendees who responded to our post-conference survey, we were pleased to discover that all indicated an interest in having Native Governance Center play a role in their work. We will connect with those who listed specific opportunities for collaboration with us on their surveys to discuss how we can help them in their nation building work.
Native Nation Rebuilder: Josh Flute

Food insecurity is prevalent across Indian Country; as a result, many Tribal citizens lack access to affordable, healthy foods and must either purchase groceries from convenience stores or take their dollars off-reservation. Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate is addressing this problem head-on through a new Tribally-run grocery store called Dakota Crossing.

Josh Flute, a Cohort 7 Native Nation Rebuilder, is CEO of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Economic Development Corporation and has been heavily involved with the Dakota Crossing project since 2015. The official ribbon cutting ceremony for Dakota Crossing took place in early October of this year, and now that the store is officially open for business, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate citizens can affordably shop for food within their own community and support their local Tribal economy in the process.

Josh sees the Dakota Crossing project as an example of nation building in action: “We’re creating jobs, and we’re creating a new tax revenue stream that’s helping to fund our Tribal programs. Essentially, it allows these programs to become more self-sustaining and increases our ability to self-govern.”

Congratulations on your hard work, Josh!