



Native Governance NEWS

Supporting Tribes. Empowering Leaders.

Stories from the Campaign Trail: Rebuilder Peri Pourier and SD House District 27

Native Nation Rebuilder Peri Pourier's efforts to win the South Dakota House District 27 race extend far beyond simply talking about issues. In addition to promoting her political platform, she's undertaking a voter mobilization and education campaign to increase turnout among Native voters in her district. "The challenge is to get people out to vote," Peri explains. "There's a lack of understanding of how the state level is just as important as the federal. And plus, there's voter disenfranchisement with Native people when it comes to outside governments."

Five southwest counties make up South Dakota House District 27. Although the highest population base in the district comes from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the two incumbent Representatives are non-Native. Peri is passionate about ensuring that Native people have a voice at the state level in South Dakota, and she sees a connection between sovereignty and political



Cohort 9 Rebuilder and South Dakota House Candidate Peri Pourier, Oglala Sioux Tribe

representation. "My campaign is really pushing 'Protect Our Sovereignty. Register to Vote.' Our future is at stake. There's too much on the line for us to be complacent," assesses Peri.

To mobilize voters and spread her message, Peri is focusing on the grassroots. She believes that every individual vote matters and attributes this outlook to what she's learned from the Native Nation Rebuilders program. "Real authentic change doesn't happen until we get the buy-in at the grassroots. This has been validated by the Rebuilders program," Peri states. During the two-year, cohort-based program, Native Nation Rebuilders learn about the importance of grassroots-level buy-in on political decisions and receive training on

community facilitation strategies. Peri is a member of Rebuilders Cohort 9 and will graduate from the program in December 2018.

A US Navy veteran and a current Background Investigator/Adjudicator for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Peri brings experience serving both her Tribe and her country to her candidacy. She grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and her family emphasized the value of education from a young age. They encouraged her to go out and seek real-world experience and knowledge before returning home.

Peri joins several other Native candidates running in statewide races in South Dakota, including Red Dawn Foster, Alli Moran, Margaret Ross, and Tamara St. John. Peri recalled the most rewarding part of her campaign so far: "What I really cherish is seeing our youth and seeing our kids. Man, they're so smart! There are kids who understand, 'This woman is running for a state government position.' And when I meet them, I look in their eyes and see hope in the future." With more Native American candidates running for office across the United States than at any other time in history, 2018 is a record-breaking year. Peri's candidacy contributes to that history while inspiring younger generations to make their voices heard and take action.

FALL 2018 FEATURES

Lessons Learned Running for Office

New Board Members and Team

Announcing Cohort 10 Rebuilders



**NATIVE GOVERNANCE
CENTER**

60 Plato Blvd. E, STE 400
St. Paul, MN 55107-1832
651-571-0826
hello@nativegov.org
nativegov.org

Sovereignty Matters

Our mission is to assist Tribal nations in strengthening their governance systems and capacity to exercise their sovereignty.

Board of Directors

Twyla Baker (Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara Nation)

Rochelle Diver (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa)

Frank Ettawageshik (Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians)

Tadd Johnson (Bois Forte Band of Chippewa)

Dr. Joe Kalt, Secretary

Cris Stainbrook (Oglala Lakota), Chair

Tracey Zephier (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), Treasurer

Staff

Wayne Ducheneaux II, Executive Director

Jayne Davis, Program Director

Apryl Deel-McKenzie, Program Manager

Lisa Giefer, Operations Coordinator

Lauren Kramer, Development Manager

Jane Townsend, Development Director

Pearl Walker-Swaney, Program Manager

Update from Our Executive Director

If I could sum up Fall 2018 in just one word, it'd be leadership. We're witnessing a watershed moment for Indigenous leadership right now. Because of the awakenings from Standing Rock, Native people are finally realizing that our voices do matter. We're seeing that we can galvanize **everyone** around issues, not just other Native people. In this election season, I've been inspired by the many Native leaders - especially Native women - who have emerged in the political arena.

Let's return to Standing Rock for a moment. The events there emphasized the importance of taking leadership roles outside of Tribal government. Standing Rock showed the value of getting involved in other forms of government. The oft-used quote, "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu," is very fitting here. Additionally, Standing Rock helped people realize that you don't have to be a Tribal chairman to lead. You can be a young person that runs a document from Fort Yates in North Dakota to the Army Corps of Engineers in Washington, DC. And that can ignite a movement.

Standing Rock also highlighted the power and leadership of Native women. From time immemorial, Native women have been the backbone of society. In Lakota society, they were the property owners. At Standing Rock, Native women took on every aspect of the movement to make it successful. They were the legs that carried the message and the arms that did the work at camp. Now, they're continuing to organize and galvanize around large-scale issues by running for public office. This edition of our newsletter features stories from two Native women candidates, and I'm so proud to call them members of our Native Nation Rebuilders family.

Our Rebuilders inspire me every day. I see a lot of connections between our work around leadership and what's happening more broadly across Indian Country. At Native Governance Center, we're training the next generation of Native leaders who will move this work forward. These leaders will help grow the movement that will allow Indian Country to rise. I look forward to continuing to support them, and I invite you to join me.



Wayne Ducheneaux II, Executive Director

Wayne Ducheneaux II, Executive Director

Rebuilder Lyz Jaakola and Lessons Learned from Running for Office

Cohort 9 Native Nation Rebuilder Lyz Jaakola (Fond du Lac Band) believes that there's no better time than fall 2018 for Native women to run for office. "I think this is our time," Lyz explains. "Really, more than at any other time in the past. It's our time to step up and to be present in the process at every level. And that's kind of what we're seeing right now in Minnesota. It's exciting." Lyz's perspective influenced her own decision to run for city council in Cloquet, Minnesota earlier this year. While she did not advance from the primary, she learned several valuable lessons that she plans to use to inform her future political career.

Lyz is an enrolled member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. She lives on the Fond du Lac Reservation, which is located in northeastern Minnesota. The boundaries of the city of Cloquet overlap with Fond du Lac: about half of the city is located on the reservation. Lyz has been active in her community for many years. For example, she started a women's singing group to encourage local women to use their voices to advocate for other women and to run for office. She'd planned to run for Cloquet City Council in 2020 (when her district seat opens), but several community members encouraged her to run in 2018 when an at-large member moved out of the city limits. She agreed, and she soon launched her campaign.

Lyz's campaign required her to balance her family and work responsibilities (including speaking gigs and performances) with voter engagement activities. She teaches music full-time at the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, and she also runs a language and culture resource center there. Given her jam-packed schedule, Lyz

made an impressive effort: she made signs, did outreach on social media, and talked to community members. If she decides to run for city council again in 2020, she hopes to strategically arrange her schedule to leave more time to get out the vote. "During the time when I should've been knocking on doors, I was busy working and doing other types of community work. Which on one hand is partly how people know me, but on the other, I should be at people's doors."

Aside from the need to create more time for voter engagement, the campaign taught Lyz a great deal about her own strengths as a candidate. To illustrate, she learned that she's a skilled public speaker due to her years of experience as a teacher. "I was involved in a couple of public discussions," Lyz states. "Which could've been pretty nerve-wracking for me, but I



Cohort 9 Rebuilder Lyz Jaakola, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

"Really, more than at any other time in the past. It's our time to step up and to be present in the process at every level."

– Rebuilder Lyz Jaakola

was surprisingly relaxed in those settings. I've been public speaking for so long that my default is to just go and present. So that worked out well."

Finally, Lyz realized that losing didn't actually feel all that bad—she sees her first campaign as a learning experience. "I learned that it's not such a heartbreaking bad deal to not win, you know? People were kind of like, 'Oh, do you feel bad?' And I was like, 'No, I feel pretty good that I ran. And that people voted for me.' And I didn't need it to be negative in any way."

Lyz says that if everything in her life outside of campaigning remains basically the same as it is now, she'll seriously consider a bid for a city council seat in 2020. In the meantime, she'll be cheering on other Native women running in the 2018 elections: "People recognize that Native women have, especially Ojibwe and Dakota women, for centuries held leadership positions. And that there's just this little hiccup where people were trying to silence us or oppress us. And we're back. And you might even say back with a vengeance."

Native Governance Center Welcomes Two New Board Members

We recently interviewed our two newest board members, Dr. Twyla Baker and Rochelle Diver, who officially joined the Native Governance Center board in May 2018.

Rochelle Diver (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa)

Rochelle is a Consultant on Environmental Health and Development for the International Indian Treaty Council.

Native Governance Center (NGC): Tell us a bit about your background and history.

Ms. Diver: I grew up in northern Minnesota, and I'm a member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Fond du Lac Reservation is just about 15 minutes from the city of Duluth, right on the tip of Lake Superior. I actually didn't come back

home here until I was about five years old because my grandparents were moved to Cleveland during the Indian Relocation Act. Three out of four of their children were born there. I was born there as well. But my mom brought me back home when we were young. I attended the University of Minnesota Duluth for two years, and then I finished up at the main University in Minneapolis. I studied American Indian Studies and Sociology. When I graduated in 2005, I taught English in Korea for three years. It's been quite a journey. I'm now back [in Minnesota] in 2018, after being gone for 12 years.

NGC: What motivated you to join the Native Governance Center board?

Ms. Diver: The work that I've done really focuses on Indigenous peoples, Indigenous

women, and international law. And I've always been motivated to do more work domestically—across the US, but also here in the Great Lakes region. But also for our Ojibwe people. I really wanted to come and contribute to positive initiatives and really bridge that gap in the work that I do. I'd never seen an organization like Native Governance Center before.

Through my work in the international arena, sovereignty is one of the words that comes up most. It's a concept that's recognized in international law. And people in the room understand what we're talking about when we're talking about sovereignty. I don't feel like that's happening in the United States. I think that there's a huge disconnect between what the results of the treaty signings



NGC Board of Directors: (front, l-r) Tadd Johnson, Frank Ettawageshik, Rochelle Diver; (back, l-r) Dr. Joe Kalt, Tracey Zephier, Dr. Twyla Baker, Cris Stainbrook.

New Board Members (continued)

were and what established governments are. We are nations. We signed treaty agreements that are international and binding. And that's the stance we've had in the United Nations since 1977. We are not civil society, we are Indigenous people with a different set of rights recognized there.

I really want to contribute to initiatives that bring light to Tribal governments and sovereignty and to bridge that gap of misinformation that's really happening in society. This is a very strong Ojibwe territory and Dakota territory. And I think that most people who are non-Native and live here don't know the history of the lands that they're on, let alone about governance. For me, that's a really exciting conversation to have with people. And part of helping to bridge that information gap is being on the board here and anything I can do to speak with people, to speak with donors, I'm just really honored to be a part of.

Dr. Twyla Baker (Three Affiliated Tribes)

Twyla is the president of Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College located in New Town, North Dakota. She's also a Cohort 2 Native Nation Rebuilder.

Native Governance Center (NGC): Tell us a bit about your background and history.

Dr. Baker: My background is in research, STEM, and higher education. I am currently the President of the Tribal college for the Three Affiliated Tribes in North Dakota. Our college is Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College. And I was born and raised on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. I'm enrolled there. I've worked in Indian Country for all of my professional life. Even when I was not living on the reservation, I was working for Tribal nations across the country. First, I started out as a graduate student at the National Resource Center on Native American Aging. And then I kind of stepped up into the role of director of that particular office. I then wrote a grant with several of my partners, and we built the National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative. And

that focused on elder abuse and elder justice. So, I've been kind of working all over the place in Indian Country. It's what feeds my spirit. It's what I love to do.

NGC: What motivated you to join the Native Governance Center board?

Dr. Baker: Wayne reached out to me and asked if I would be willing to consider the position. And honestly, the Rebuilders program changed my perspective in regard to my network and everything that's going on in Indian Country. So, I saw it as an opportunity to be able to expand my own professional development and also to give back. The [Rebuilders] program itself really plugged me into this enormous network of people that I still tap into for help, whether that's technical assistance or just plain old moral support from these relatives that are all doing the same work that I am. And we all understand each other, and we're all very driven. We're all very devoted to our given Tribal nation. And a lot of the work that we do echoes each other. We're all just trying to do good things, and we're all just trying to support each other in that way, so it was an honor. It was a no-brainer for me to serve on the board.



Did you know that Native Governance Center is participating in **Give to the Max Day 2018?**

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.

Meet Our Newest Team Members

Native Governance Center welcomed two new Program Managers in September 2018. Read on to learn more about them.

Pearl Walker-Swaney (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and White Earth Band of Ojibwe)

Pearl is a program manager for Native Governance Center and a Cohort 7 Native Nation Rebuilder.



Pearl Walker-Swaney, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and White Earth Nation

Native Governance Center (NGC): Tell us a bit about yourself.

Pearl: I'm from Standing Rock, and also from White Earth. I grew up in Leech Lake, went to Bemidji High School, and graduated from Bemidji State. That's really where I had the opportunity to grow—personally, professionally, and culturally. It is where I learned about policy impacts on Tribal communities, how environment impacts health, and how being involved in a community keeps doors open for you. I am now passionate about a holistic view of health. I received a Master of Public Health degree at the University of North Dakota. Being in the Native Nation Rebuilders program taught me more about what policy and governance means for Tribes. Most recently, I worked with Tribal colleges in North Dakota to build research capacity.

NGC: What excites you most about joining

the Native Governance Center team?

Pearl: A lot of things! I think being in Rebuilders gave me insight into the way the team operates. And that was something I was looking forward to. I'm just really excited to be a part of the work that Native Governance Center does supporting our communities.

NGC: What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Pearl: I have a son who's two and a half, a husband who is in grad school, and a dog who is almost like having another child. I am a Netflix junkie. I watch so many shows on Netflix! I love going on family walks with my son and my dog. I love to read and write. I write poetry, and write a blog on being a mom in the 21st century while trying to carry traditional values and ways of living.

Apryl Deel-McKenzie (Navajo Nation)

Apryl is a program manager for Native Governance Center.



Apryl Deel-McKenzie, Navajo Nation

NGC: Tell us a bit about your background.

Apryl: I'm Diné, and I was born in Tuba City, Arizona on the Navajo Nation. Eventually my family and I moved to New Mexico. I spent many summers with my maternal grandfather on the Rez who taught me a lot about being Diné, but it was hard to truly connect at that time. It was my

undergrad experience at Occidental College in Los Angeles that motivated me to reconnect to my Native identity and community. As one of only a few Native students there, I wanted to learn more and advocate for our Indigenous communities. After receiving a bachelor's in sociology with a minor in psychology, I worked for a Native nonprofit in Albuquerque before moving to the Navajo Nation where I worked for Diné College's student services department. While there, I reconnected to my culture and community. I still have a lot to learn, but my commitment to working in Indigenous communities is much stronger. Recently, I completed a Master of Social Work at Washington University with a concentration in American Indian/Alaska Native studies. I also studied social entrepreneurship, community development, and policy work.

NGC: What excites you most about joining the Native Governance Center team?

Apryl: Everything! This is a really new field for me. I've been passionate about my work in higher education and college access work, but at Diné College, I realized I wanted to do more with revitalizing Native cultural teachings and practices to tackle the challenges that our people face daily. Being here is exciting because I'm looking forward to working with a Native organization that does things differently in their support of Native nations.

NGC: What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Apryl: I love to dance. I've been dancing since I was very young—ballet, hip hop, salsa—so I'm excited to look for dance studios in the Twin Cities. I'm a major foodie and love checking out new restaurants. I've never lived this far away from home and want to explore this region. My husband and I finally live back together again after two years apart at different schools, so I'm ready to just spend time with him in our down time.

Cohort 10 Native Nation Rebuilders Announced

21 citizens from 14 Tribes join program to strengthen leadership skills, serve Native communities

We are pleased to announce that 21 citizens from 14 of the 23 Native nations in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota have been selected for the tenth cohort of the Native Nation Rebuilders program. Rebuilders are emerging and existing Native leaders looking to build leadership skills and nation building knowledge.

Over 139 Native leaders have graduated from the program during the

past nine years. With the selection of Cohort 10, Rebuilders now represent all 23 Native nations located in the three-state region.

The Bush Foundation launched the Native Nation Rebuilders program in 2009 in response to the guidance of Tribal leaders. In early 2016, the Bush Foundation transitioned delivery of the Rebuilders program to the newly-created Native Governance Center, a Native-led nonprofit organization that supports Tribes in strengthening their sovereignty.

“Rebuilders gain a deeper understanding of Native nation building and leadership in a cohort format,” said Native Governance Center Program Director Jayme Davis. “This allows them to form supportive relationships that continue years into the future. Armed with an understanding of nation building principles, Rebuilders share this knowledge with their communities and contribute to the long-term success of their governments, economies, and people.”

Rebuilders will come together for four structured sessions during which they will develop action plans to share knowledge with community members and their respective Tribal governments. The sessions involve partner organizations and individuals with expertise in nation building, organizing, and issues specific to Indian Country. National partners include the Native Nations Institute, the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, and Parrish Digital. The application process for the next cohort of Rebuilders will be announced in the summer of 2019.



NATIVE NATION REBUILDERS

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COHORT 10 REBUILDERS!

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

Kathy Aplan
Julie Thorstenson

***Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior
Chippewa***

William Blackwell, Jr.

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Benjamin Benoit

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe

Rebecca (Agleska) Cohen-Rencountre

Lower Sioux Community

Justice Wabasha

Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation

Thomasina Mandan

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Valerie Harrington

Oglala Sioux Tribe

Angela Koenen
Dallas Nelson
Kiva Sam

Prairie Island Indian Community

Blake Johnson
Melanie Urich

Red Lake Nation

Charles Dolson
Cherilyn Spears
Deanna StandingCloud

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

Melinda Stade

Spirit Lake Nation

Natasha Gourd
Alicia Gourd-Mackin

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

Michael Laverdure

White Earth Nation

Nicole LaFrinier



NATIVE GOVERNANCE
CENTER

60 Plato Blvd E, STE 400
St. Paul, MN 55107
651-571-0826
hello@nativegov.org

Sovereignty Matters

TRIBAL LEADER ORIENTATION SESSION

*Connect with other Tribal leaders during this two-day
professional development training.*

Build leadership skills

Assess the state of your nation

**Learn community engagement strategies for
moving Tribal nations forward**

JANUARY 17 - 18, 2019

Grand Rapids, MN

Registration now open at nativegov.org