

The Obama Administration To Address The Effects Of Climate Change In Indian Country

WASHINGTON, DC – Following the White House Tribal Nations Conference, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is pleased with the prospect of progress on addressing the challenges of climate change in Indian Country.

During the Conference, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and many government officials— including President Obama—spoke to the severe impacts climate change has had on American Indians and Alaska Natives while focusing on how the federal government can work with tribal leaders to best address these challenges.

Secretary Jewell set the tone for the conversation on climate change by remarking on the importance “of the ongoing dialogues we need to have as we work together toward tribal self-determination and self-governance and promoting prosperous and resilient tribal nations.”

Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz discussed the over 30 Alaska Native villages that are facing imminent threats from rising seas levels and how hydroelectric and other energy projects have been stymied by climate change. Further, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy encouraged inter-governmental communication by asking tribal leaders to “help us explain why Climate Change must be addressed now and why it is our responsibility” to combat it for seventh generation and beyond.

President Obama reasserted his dedication to protecting tribal lands:

“The health of tribal nations depends on the health of tribal lands. So it falls on all of us to protect the extraordinary beauty of those lands for future generations. And already, many of your lands have felt the impacts of a changing climate, including more extreme flooding and droughts. That’s why, as part of the Climate Action Plan I announced this year, my administration is partnering with you to identify where your lands are vulnerable to climate change, how we can make them more resilient.”

The Climate Action Plan includes the President’s Executive Order “Preparing the U.S. for the Impacts of Climate Change” and his appointment of two tribal leaders to the twelve-member Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience.

It is critically important that tribal leaders are at the table because too often, Native voices are left out of federal conversations around mitigating the effects of climate change. Indian Country faces some of the most difficult challenges stemming from climate change because of the remote location of many tribal lands and, particularly in Alaska, the dependence on the land and animals for subsistence living. NCAI applauds

the Administration for this effort and is hopeful that by working together, government-to-government, tribal communities will have the tools necessary to address climate change.

Also this week, NCAI joined an amicus curiae in support of young people suing the federal government for not acting to reverse climate change. Filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the amici emphasizes the drastic effects climate change has in Native communities, particularly Alaska, and “These communities contribute little, if at all, to the problem of climate change, and, yet, bear a disproportionately large adverse impact from climate change given their unique vulnerability.”

The brief states that “climate change ravages Native Nations, and the federal government, which includes the defendants-appellees in this case, has a responsibility to assist these Nations by rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change.” The federal government has trust responsibility to tribes to lower greenhouse gas emissions and act in the best interest of tribes.

NCAI is committed to working with the Administration, Congress, and within the federal courts to ensure the voice of Indian Country is heard and tribal leaders are in involved in planning and action conversations around addressing the urgent problem of climate change.

The lawsuit was filed with the help of Our Children’s Trust, an Oregon-based non-profit orchestrating a game-changing, youth-driven legal campaign in the United States and across the globe. The following organizations joined with leading climate scientists, law scholars, national security experts, government leaders, faith groups, and environmental NGOs in signing onto the amicus curiae brief:

- Akiak Native Community*
- Alaska Inter-Tribal Council*
- Forgotten People*
- Indigenous Peoples Climate Change Working Group*
- National Congress of American Indians*
- National Native American Law Student Association*

About The National Congress of American Indians: Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the country. NCAI advocates on behalf of tribal governments and communities, promoting strong tribal-federal government-to-government policies, and promoting a better understanding among the general public regarding American Indian and Alaska Native governments, people and rights. For more information visit www.ncai.org



Mr. Zachary James Rice and Ms. Breanna Rose Faris

University Of Oklahoma Graduates

On December 13, 2013, Zachary and Breanna graduated with a Bachelors of Arts degree in Native American Studies at the Lloyd Noble Center. Their immediate plans are to join the workforce until next fall semester. In August, they will return to the University of Oklahoma for graduate school. Zachary will pursue higher education in linguistics and Breanna will pursue higher education in social work.

Zachary James Rice; he is an enrolled

Pawnee Nation member, as well as being a descendant of the Sac & Fox Nation through the late Charlie Smith and descendant of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe through the late Velma Smith. He is the son of James (Pawnee) & Kelly Ann Rice (Sac & Fox) of Pawnee, OK.

Breanna Rose Faris; Zachary’s fiancée; an enrolled Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribal member. She is the daughter of Mr. Michael Faris of Noble, OK and Ms. Bernice Youngbear of Watonga, OK.

ATTENTION TRIBAL MEMBERS

A MEMBER OF THE TAX COMMISSION STAFF WILL NOW BE AT THE SHAWNEE MULTIPURPOSE CENTER TWICE A MONTH.

THE TAX COMMISSION WILL BE THERE ON THE FIRST (1ST) AND THIRD (3RD) THURSDAYS OF EACH MONTH.

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INTEREST TO SERVE ON COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS, AND BOARDS

The Sac and Fox Nation’s Business Committee will be appointed people to fill vacancies, as they occur, on various Committees, Commissions, and Board. If you are a tribal member 18 years of age or older, and wish to serve, please complete the information form below and return the completed form to the Tribal Secretary.

NAME: _____ Roll Number: _____

Address _____ Telephone: _____

CITY: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

I wish to be considered to serve on the following Committees, Commissions, or Boards, as prioritized below:

Priority #1: _____

Priority #2: _____

Priority #3: _____

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____