

# **United Tribes News** [www.uttc.edu](http://www.uttc.edu)

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## **Tribal leaders to meet in Bismarck**

### ***UNITED TRIBES SUMMIT IS SEPTEMBER 4-6***

BISMARCK (UTN) – Leaders of North Dakota’s tribal nations and key tribal supervisors and employees are set to gather in Bismarck for the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual United Tribes Tribal Leaders Summit.

The event is organized by United Tribes Technical College and takes place September 4-6 at the Bismarck Civic Center Exhibit Hall.

“The summit is a forum that attracts tribal leaders, tribal professionals, and friends,” says Janet Thomas, conference coordinator. “We have a tradition of coming together to talk about relevant issues and exchange ideas.”

Participation is open to all interested in advancing Indian issues. Online registration is available, along with CEU’s for educators and students. The sessions are typically attended by members of the North Dakota Congressional delegation or their representatives and other leaders at the federal, state and local level.

“The political landscape in Indian Country is constantly changing,” says Thomas. “Paying attention to current realities is one of the best ways for leaders to work on behalf of the communities they serve.”

### **AGENDA ITEMS**

The agenda offers major sessions about energy, education, public safety, health care, economic development, the environment, and housing. Briefings and updates will cover gaming, taxation, emergency management, Veterans services, the budget, NCAI initiatives and the Violence Against Women Act.

The summit has two main tracks that share breaks, luncheons and general sessions: Tribal Leaders Summit and Tribal Transportation Planners Conference. Other conferences and meetings are scheduled for Bismarck in and around the same time.

### **LEADERSHIP HISTORY**

The event will also pay tribute to a gathering in Bismarck 50 years ago of tribal leaders from across the country. Amidst the nation's Civil Rights movement, the National Congress of American Indians held its annual conference in the capitol city in September 1963, featuring keynote speaker Robert F. Kennedy, the nation's attorney general.

### **TRADE SHOW**

The Tribal Leader's Summit begins Wednesday, September 4 at 9 a.m. with an opening ceremony. The theme is: "United, Tribal Nations Pursuing the Promise of Tomorrow."

The summit includes a trade show open to vendors with a current North Dakota Sales and Use Tax Permit.

View the agenda and registration form, along with listings of other meetings, by clicking here: <http://www.unitedtribespowwow.com/summit/>. Or contact Janet Thomas 701-255-3285 x 1431, [jthomas@uttc.edu](mailto:jthomas@uttc.edu). Trade show contact Debbie Painte 701-255-3285 x 1232, [dpainte@uttc.edu](mailto:dpainte@uttc.edu).

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### **Historic meeting in Bismarck 50 years ago**

BISMARCK (UTN) – Fifty years ago Bismarck was *the* destination for the nation's tribal leaders. In September 1963, delegates assembled here for the 20<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).

Of concern to the nearly 1,000 attending were some of the same issues facing the nation, then in the midst of the Civil Rights movement.

NCAI Executive Director Robert Burnette (Sicangu Lakota) opened with a report, citing chronic joblessness, state jurisdiction conflicts, Tribal land heirship, and racism. He challenged leaders to “unite to wipe out discrimination.”

Washington, DC attorney Marvin Sonosky reported on the pressing topic of the day: whether tribes should give over to states their criminal and civil jurisdiction in tribal areas.

Other speakers offered their insights, including Indian Affairs Commissioner Philleo Nash, North Dakota Governor William L. Guy, and Gold Seal Co. founder Harold Schafer.

### **Social Agenda**

In the south, as Alabama Governor George Wallace was fighting school integration and National Guardsmen were lining up in the streets of Birmingham, a huge crowd of locals in Bismarck turned-out to see a tribal parade through downtown and traditional dances at the local ballpark. An estimated 3,000 Native and non-native gathered at the Mandan rodeo grounds for a buffalo feed, and were treated to an international bronc riding contest, organized by North Dakota rodeo great Joe Chase (Three Affiliated).

### **Keynote**

Highlighting the week was an appearance by U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, who was showered with gifts from tribal delegations. His keynote speech signaled the administration’s readiness to help in Indian Country.

“America today is moving forward more rapidly and in more ways than ever before, toward fulfillment of its destiny as the land of the free,” he said in remarks to a packed downtown Bismarck hotel ballroom. “A nation in which neither Indians nor any other racial or religious minority will live in underprivilege.”

His remarks included John Kennedy’s 10-point presidential campaign pledge to bring about change in Indian Country and overcome injustice.

### **Pursuing Justice**

“When you look at Bobby Kennedy’s remarks at NCAI in 1963 you’re seeing the emergence of his activism in Indian affairs as he advances the cause of civil rights,”

says David M. Gipp, United Tribes Technical College president. "Later as a U. S. Senator he continues, with legislation in Indian education. And then his brother Ted Kennedy picks up the work in the early '70s. Their outlook was to pursue justice for those who had been denied, including American Indians."

Unfortunately, the vision never realized full potential from the Kennedy White House. Two months following the 1963 conference, President Kennedy was assassinated, leaving the work to subsequent administrations. A handful of years later, in 1968, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were gone too, victims of assassination.

### **Positive Outcome**

The theme of "unity" at the 1963 convention most certainly resonated with North Dakota's tribal leaders. They later addressed the issue of state jurisdiction by rejecting Public Law 280. Meeting together led them to form United Tribes of North Dakota in 1964. When the intertribal organization was formalized in 1968 the incorporators were: Aljoe Agaard, Fort Yates; Lewis Goodhouse, Fort Totten; Reginald Breien, Belcourt; August Little Soldier, Golden Valley; and Austin Engel, Bismarck. This parent organization worked to address joblessness, education and economic development by creating an employment training center that has since evolved into an accredited tribal college, United Tribes Technical College.

To this day the college and the intertribal organization continue to pursue justice, civil rights and self determination for Native People with the same passion that tribal leaders and Robert Kennedy displayed 50 years ago in Bismarck.

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Robert Kennedy was presented with two feathered headdresses at NCAI, this one upon arrival at Bismarck airport surrounded by women representing tribes at the conference.

North Dakota News Films Archive, courtesy SHSND

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Robert Kennedy in Bismarck in 1963

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### **John Kennedy's Ten Point Pledge to American Indians 1960**

1. Enact area redevelopment bill for industry in depressed areas, including reservations.
2. Credit assistance through expansion of the Indian Revolving Credit Fund.

3. Help retain Indian land through credit assistance and by removing elements of economic pressure and desperation that have caused land sales.
4. Make the benefits of federal housing programs available to Indians
5. Give young Indian people full opportunity to participate in Youth Conservation Corps.
6. Develop effective vocational training programs.
7. Develop better health programs for Indians.
8. Work with tribal groups to prepare community development programs.
9. Work for constant improvement in Indian education.
10. Emphasize genuinely cooperative relations between federal officials and Indians.

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