



23RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

WRAP UP REPORT



LEFT TO RIGHT: NCAI Great Plains Regional Alternate Vice President Garret Renville (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), NCAI President Mark Macarro (Pechanga Band of Indians), NCAI Southwest Regional Vice-President Raymond Aguilar (Pueblo de Santo Domingo), NCAI Southwest Regional Alternate Vice President Lora Ann Chaisson (United Houma Nation)

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) had a strong presence at [the 23rd Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held April 15-26, 2024, in New York City](#). This session marked an unprecedented moment with one of the largest gatherings to date of elected U.S. tribal leaders at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The growing attendance highlights significant strides made toward enhancing Indigenous self-determination and global diplomacy.

Representing Indian Country on behalf of NCAI were Mark Macarro, NCAI President and Tribal Chairman of the Pechanga Band of Indians; Lora Ann Chaisson, NCAI Southwest Regional Alternate Vice-President and Principal Chief of the United Houma Nation; Raymond Aguilar, NCAI Southwest Regional Vice-President and Tribal Councilman of Pueblo de Santo Domingo; Jack Potter, Jr., NCAI Pacific Regional Alternate Vice-President and Chairman of the Redding Rancheria; and Garret Renville, NCAI Great Plains Regional Alternate Vice-President and Chairman of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Former NCAI Youth Commission Co-President Jessica Lambert (Choctaw Nation and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians), NCAI Youth Commission Co-Vice President Kennedy Pete (Navajo Nation), NCAI Youth Commission Co-President Yanenowi Logan (Seneca Nation of Indians)

NCAI youth representation was also strong with the presence of NCAI Youth Commission Co-President Yanenowi Logan (Seneca Nation of Indians), alongside Co-Vice Presidents Charli Earth (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska) and Kennedy Pete (Navajo Nation), and Public Relations Chair Sharon Bassette (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska).

The theme of this year’s forum, “Enhancing Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: emphasizing the voices of Indigenous youth,” underscored the importance of ensuring tribal governments and youth are heard within the United Nations system.



U.S. Secretary of the Interior Debra Haaland [delivered the United States’ statement](#), reaffirming the Biden-Harris administration’s commitment to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) and highlighting the administration’s various initiatives aimed at tribal climate resilience, investment, and regulatory updates embracing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent with regard to ancestral remains and cultural items. The [full statement](#) can be found on the United States Mission to the United Nations website.

LEFT: U.S. Secretary of the Interior Debra Haaland



NCAI President Mark Macarro

NCAI President Mark Macarro [delivered an intervention](#) in support of enhanced participation for Indigenous Peoples within the United Nations system, calling for an appropriate status for Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions that distinguishes the governments of sovereign Indigenous Peoples from the representatives of civil society institutions, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities.



NCAI Pacific Regional Alternate Vice-President Jack Potter, Jr. (Redding Rancheria)

NCAI's Alternate Pacific Vice-President Jack Potter, Jr., [delivered an intervention](#) calling for meaningful climate solutions, including equitable access to climate finance for Indigenous Peoples, a human rights-centered approach to the transition to a "green" economy, and the aversion of non-economic losses, such as the destruction of sacred sites resulting from the impacts of climate change.

NCAI Policy Lead for International Affairs, Rochelle Morgan-Verdin (United Houma Nation), [delivered an intervention](#) directed toward the World Intellectual Property Organization, calling for a legally binding instrument governing genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge with provisions to ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples at all levels of the negotiations. NARF Senior Staff Attorney Sue Noe, [delivered an intervention](#) emphasizing the imperative for the forum to uphold and implement the Declaration's provisions, suggesting avenues for assessing progress and ensuring equitable participation.



NCAI Policy Lead for International Affairs, Rochelle Morgan-Verdin (United Houma Nation)



LEFT TO RIGHT: President Whitney Gravelle of the Bay Mills Indian Community, Deputy Director Nikki Enersen from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Inclusive Development Hub



NCAI and The Implementation Project, a joint initiative of NARF and the University of Colorado Law School, co-sponsored a side event entitled “Embracing the Declaration – Indigenous Peoples’ Policy in the U.S.,” featuring presentations by key U.S. and tribal officials. Speakers included Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Bryan Newland (Bay Mills Indian Community), Director Shaun Deschene (Turtle Mountain Band Chippewa) from the Office of Native Affairs and Economic Development at the Department of Commerce, Director Ira Matt (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s Office of Tribal and Indigenous Peoples, Deputy Director Nikki Enersen from the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Inclusive Development Hub, and President Whitney Gravelle of the Bay Mills Indian Community. Furthermore, NCAI hosted its third annual tribal leaders reception, entitled “Celebrating Indigenous Sovereignty through Global Diplomacy.” The reception was attended by more than 120 tribal leaders, international diplomats, U.S. government officials, members of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, member state delegates, international youth delegations, including NCAI’s youth commission, and funders.



THE IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

The Young Blood Singers of the Shinnecock Nation opened the reception with several songs, one of which was dedicated to all of the missing, murdered, and Indigenous persons, setting a reflective tone for an evening committed to honoring and advancing tribal sovereignty.



The Young Blood Singers of the Shinnecock Nation

NCAI Foundation President Greg Masten (Yurok, Hupa, and Karuk Tribes) introduced each speaker, including NCAI Youth Commission Co-Vice President Kennedy Pete, NCAI President Macarro, former NCAI President Fawn Sharp, Senior NARF Staff attorney Sue Noe, University of Colorado Law School Dean Lolita Buckner, and Co-Director of The Implementation Project University of Colorado Law School Professor Kristen Carpenter. NCAI Executive Director Larry Wright, Jr. (Ponca Tribe of Nebraska) closed the reception, acknowledging event sponsors, including the Christensen Fund, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, NARF, The Implementation Project, and the University of Colorado Law School.





LEFT TO RIGHT: NCAI Great Plains Regional Alternate Vice President Garret Renville (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), NCAI Southwest Regional Vice-President Raymond Aguilar (Pueblo de Santo Domingo), NCAI President Mark Macarro (Pechanga Band of Indians), NCAI Executive Director Larry Wright, Jr. (Ponca Tribe of Nebraska), NCAI Southwest Regional Alternate Vice President Lora Ann Chaisson (United Houma Nation)

As we reflect on the achievements and discussions at the 23rd session, it is evident that the collaborative efforts of NCAI, NARF, and partners are pivotal in advancing the rights and recognition of Indigenous Peoples on a global scale. We look forward to the forthcoming discussions at the 24th session, which will take place from April 21 to May 2, 2025, at the UN headquarters in New York City with the theme “The rights of Indigenous Peoples, including those in voluntary isolation and initial contact in the context of the extraction of critical minerals.”

An advanced unedited version of the Permanent Forum's Report on the 23rd Session is now available for review, providing a detailed account of the discussions and resolutions.

[DOWNLOAD THE REPORT HERE](#)

