

Tribal Leaders Launch Organization to Support Growth of Tribal Green Economy: Indian Country Renewable Energy Consortium

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EXECUTIVE

(Washington D.C.) On July 21, tribal and Alaskan Native business and government leaders, all of which with significant involvement in renewable and electric transmission issues, met in Washington D.C. and formalized creation of the Indian Country Renewable Energy Consortium (ICREC). This group of leaders from across Indian Country represents interests in renewable and transmission development, projects, investment and green job creation and is taking affirmative steps to ensure that Indian Country has a voice in the critical national dialogue regarding the emerging green economy generally and renewable energy and infrastructure development specifically.

"We are united in trying to bring the right kinds of opportunities to Indian Country," said the newly elected Consortium Board President, Osage Nation Principal Chief Jim Gray, who went on to say, "as governments and businesses, we are seeing extraordinary and positive change happen before our eyes, and we will make sure that this time around Indian Country will take a more active role in leading that change."

The Consortium's primary goal is to present solutions to the obstacles which have inhibited renewable energy and transmission development to date as it can provide credible, ground-truthed, experienced policy leadership. Tribal government, tribal corporation and Alaskan Native Corporation members all have active renewable development initiatives underway ranging from wind, solar and biomass projects to transmission projects to manufacturing proposals to green jobs training. They are also, by necessity, on the forefront on climate change issues, as ICREC Board Vice President, Chris McNeil, CEO of Sealaska Corporation, states, "Alaska Natives are at ground zero of climate change and energy crisis. Electricity in Alaska Native villages can cost as much as ten times that in the rest of the US. Renewable energy development is a key factor that could help create new and sustainable economies in our Alaska Native communities."

During last week's Clean Energy Week, the White House hosted a historic afternoon meeting with Consortium tribal leaders and with the highest-level White House and Administration officials directly involved in federal renewable and transmission matters.

Kimberly Teehee, White House Domestic Policy Council, and Van Jones, White House Special Advisor on Green Jobs & Innovation, hosted the meeting. Other White House and Administration representatives included Carole Browner, White House Office of Climate Change and Energy, Heather Zichal, Deputy Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change, Assistant Secretary of Interior Larry Echohawk, and numerous other appointees and officials from the Departments of Energy, Interior, Agriculture and Office of Management and Budget. Jodi Gillette, White House Deputy Associate Director Intergovernmental Affairs was instrumental in coordinating the meeting. "I expect the Consortium to play a critical role in ensuring that Tribes have a more substantive opportunity to lead in the development of renewable energy on their reservation and trust lands," according to Ross Swimmer, who represented Principal Chief Chad Smith of the Cherokee Nation.

Tribal governments and businesses have encountered a variety of obstacles ranging from difficult transmission access, long federal lease approval times, and ill-fitting financial incentives and are now seeking workable solutions. These policy priorities are squarely in line with Nation's and the Obama Administration's strategic objectives and Consortium members, amongst its priorities, strongly support America's energy independence and creating and keeping sustainable jobs. Consortium Secretary-Treasurer, Chairman Rick Hill of Oneida Nation, points out, "Indian Country will never export these jobs anywhere further than our surrounding communities. We have more than a vested interest in keeping green jobs here - Indian Nations are not going anywhere."

ICREC membership is open to tribal governments, tribal businesses, Alaska Native Corporations, and tribal consortia supportive of the development of tribal renewable energy. The founding board includes Indian Country luminaries such as Chris McNeil, CEO, Sealaska Corporation, Chief Chad Smith, Cherokee Nation, Dan King, CEO, Dakota Futures Inc., Chairman Rick Hill, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin and Chief Jim Gray, Osage Nation. Numerous other Tribes, tribal organizations and Tribal corporations have also joined and more are in midst of formalizing their membership.

"We are not a single issue consortium, nor are we limiting to ourselves to just development of renewable resources. Indian Country needs clean energy infrastructure to grow our economies, which will grow regional economies," stated the ICREC's Executive Director, Tracey LeBeau (Cheyenne River Sioux). "ICREC is now very active in Washington, finding areas of common

ground and creating a supportive dialogue across diverse industry sectors. The reaction has been overwhelmingly positive," said LeBeau.

ICREC's General Counsel, Keith Harper (Cherokee), adds, "The emerging green economy is a once in a generation opportunity for this Nation and Indian Country, but to take full advantage, the policies in place must provide a level the playing field with other renewable energy players. The Consortium is focused on making that a reality and we are heartened by the inclusiveness the Obama Administration has shown."

The INDIAN COUNTRY RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSORTIUM is a corporation headquartered in Washington D.C. and comprised of Tribes, tribally-owned corporations, Alaskan Native Corporations and intertribal organizations from across Indian Country. ICREC's Founding Board of Directors include: Board President, Chief Jim Gray, Osage Nation; Board Vice President, Chris McNeil, CEO, Sealaska Corporation; and Board Secretary/Treasurer, Chairman Rick Hill, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. Other founding board members include, Chief Chad Smith, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and Dan King, CEO, Dakota Futures, Inc. (Lower Sioux Indian Community). ICREC's Executive Director is Tracey LeBeau, Partner, Red Mountain Energy and General Counsel is Keith Harper, Partner, Kilpatrick Stockton LLP.

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