

# LEVIN CENTER \* CLIMATE ACTION AWARD \* NCAI



With Senator Carl Levin (Retired from MI) and Jocelyn Benson, Dean of the Wayne State Law School.

**Aaron A. Payment, MPA**  
Tribal Chairperson  
Representing All Members Everywhere

*Ahneen, Boozo, Negee:*

## LEVIN CENTER

Recently, I received a call from retired Senator Carl Levin to ask me to serve on the newly created Levin Center at Wayne State University Law School. The Levin Center was created to continue the vision and work of Carl Levin, Michigan's longest-serving U.S. senator (1979-2014) who dedicated much of his public service to digging for the truth and using the tools of Congressional oversight to craft meaningful and fact-based public policy. Senator Levin also used a commitment to the facts to bridge party and political divides.

The Levin Center will educate future attorneys, business leaders, legislators and public servants on bipartisan, effective techniques to oversee public and private sector activities, using oversight as an instrument of change and as a means to increase integrity, transparency and accountability in civil society. Senator Levin will serve as a Distinguished Legislator in Residence, teaching classes and seminars on law and policy, legislative processes and oversight.

I am humbled to serve at Senator Levin's request to promote good governance and processes over partisan politics. Through my work for 22 years with the Michigan Political Leadership Program, I have trained each fellows class on tribal governance and sovereignty. Sixteen of MPLP Alumni currently serve in the Michigan Legislature. I hope to bring a similar contribution to the Levin Center."

Other members of the board include: U.S. Sen. Dr. Tom A. Coburn (R-OK); former U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle, (D-S.D.); former

U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller, (D-W.Va.); former U.S. Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, (R-ME) and Paul Hillegonds, an attorney and CEO of the Michigan Health Endowment Fund.

I am excited to have met these folks at my first meeting in June and I look forward to learning from them and sharing what I know about tribal governance. Again, I am grateful to have been requested by Senator Levin to serve on this committee.

## CLIMATE ACTION GRANT AWARDED!

I just got a call from Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary of Interior, to inform me that a grant for which we applied for Climate Action Implementation Funds was approved! We will receive \$87,000 for this purpose. Kudos go out to Eric Clark, our Inland Fish and Wildlife Manager for successfully writing this grant. Eric has built his program and worked very closely with me along with my Treaty Rights Implementation Team to secure federal funds in the amount of over \$455,000 annually so this program is not dependent on Tribal funds. This latest grant will mean additional funds that will supplement our inland wildlife program and collect data to better understand the threats to our natural environment.

I also want to recognize my Natural Resources Team which includes Eric Clark, Kathie Brosemer, Tom Gorenflo and our Planning and Development Team Member Nichole Causley, Susan McCoy, and Wendy Hoffman for their ongoing contributions here. I also want to give special recognition to both Jason Grondin, Great Lake Conservation Chairman, and Clarence Hudak, who work on various project teams with our Natural Resources Team so I count them as part of our team as well.

## NCAI

Way back in 1991, I graduated with a Master's degree in Public Administration. While some may not value a higher education, I transcended my days as a high school drop out with the motivation to come back and serve my people and to provide better opportunities for our youth to succeed. College is not for everyone, but for those who wish to attend, I strongly support this as it has opened many doors in my life. During my studies, I chose to write about U.S. American Indian Policy. This is when I learned of great authors like Dr. Vine Deloria Jr. who wrote the seminal, "Custer Died for Your Wins," "God is Red" and "Red Earth, White Lies."

I also learned of an organization that was formed in 1944 for fight for our tribal sovereignty, government-to-government relations, upholding the treaty and trust obligations and fighting for our very existence as a people. I cannot tell you how proud I am to serve as an executive officer for this organization. While some little minds on our board do not appreciate or understand the value here, I can tell you that service as an

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

One of the contributions I believe to NCAI and on a national scene for our people is that of helping to renew a crystalized focus on education issues. As a high school drop out who is on the cusp of completing my doctorate degree in education, I am proof that given the right opportunities, that our people can accomplish anything. I benefited from the Upward Bound program and give credit to Rosemary Gaskin for believing in me. This is why I created the Rosemary Gaskin Memorial Scholarship. I want to share this type of inspiration and opportunity with others. Thus, I am on the NCAI Education Subcommittee, to which I have brought attention to the need to address the high school drop out rate which languishes around 50 percent nationally.

To try to effectuate change, I have dedicated my graduate research and doctoral degree to understanding why our people have such a challenge in educational attainment. I know what made a difference for me, but I like to understand what works for others. I believe that regard-

## RESOLUTION TO FULLY FUND TUITION WAIVERS

During the NCAI subcommittee meeting on Education, a resolution was introduced to fund two colleges who accepted the responsibility to educate American Indians in their respective states (Colorado and Minnesota). Like in Michigan, the funding is not keeping pace with the rapid growth in American Indians in college. Thus, a resolution was introduced by a coalition of folks including retired U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, who is the only American Indian to serve in the U.S. Senate. I was happy to support this resolution and offered an amendment to add the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver to qualify for future federal funding. Talk about being in the right place at the right time. While some haters on the board complain about the national work I do, this may result in full funding for the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver and is well worth the effort.

**Chi McGwitch, Negee!** *Chi*



Top Row: NCAI President Brian Cladoosby; Assistant Secretary of the Interior Kevin Washburn; U.S. Senator Al Franken (D-MN); U.S. Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ); Middle Row: U.S. Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN); U.S. Senator Ben Night Horse Campbell (Retired from CO). To the right is Juanita Ahtone, whose father was a founding member of NCAI in 1944. She has spent her life in various capacities supporting and serving NCAI.

area vice president and now executive officer of NCAI has opened doors for our tribe as well as, provided me personally gratifying opportunity to serve American Indians across the nation.

less of our backgrounds and experiences, each and every one of us accomplish anything we choose. From the result of my research, I plan to publish and share my results to help tribal communities everywhere.

