

New Leadership, Inspiring Visions and Wide-Ranging Opportunities Align for 27th Annual National Reservation Economic Summit (RES)

Business is booming in Indian Country – and the 27th annual National Reservation Economic Summit (RES), March 11-14 in Las Vegas, is poised to push it to even greater heights.

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development is the most firmly established national, non-profit organization in Indian Country, having been solely dedicated to developing American Indian economic self-sufficiency through business ownership for 44 years. The National RES, its signature event, is the largest and longest running American Indian business expo in the nation. It is also the NCAIED's annual fundraising event, helping to support its various programs and initiatives throughout Indian Country.

Gary Davis, the new President and CEO of the NCAIED, has contributed to the National RES for the past decade as a vendor, its host and emcee and NCAIED board member. This will be the first year that the national event includes his fresh approach to business in Indian Country – which includes, among other visions, the idea that the power of the National RES should be grown by way of regional summits throughout the year.

“Among the many economic development initiatives that we are spearheading at the NCAIED, we're very focused on building relationships between corporate America and our tribes and tribal enterprises,” he said. “Each of these new relationships has the potential to provide sustainable revenue and further diversify Indian Country's economic base. We will continue to grow these relationships throughout the year at our National and Regional Reservation Economic Summits.”

Indian Country is continually strengthening its presence on the national and global business scene. The U.S. Census Bureau, for example, reports that American Indian- and Alaska Native-owned businesses made \$3.7 billion in 1987, \$8.1 billion in 1992, \$26.9 billion in 2002 and \$34 billion in 2007.

The NCAIED has been fueling this extraordinary growth, helping to shape it and encourage its distinctly Native character. The National Center is vigilant about operating through its First Principals, a statement of the highest aspirations and the oldest elements of Native culture, as it fosters procurement opportunities between Native Americans and major companies that are rapidly recognizing and embracing this world-class event. Each year, countless Native-owned businesses are forged and strengthened because of the vibrant energy and the phenomenal opportunities that abound over the several days of RES.

This year, the business trade show will include exhibits from Fortune 500 corporations, tribes, tribal enterprises, federal agencies, small businesses and entrepreneurs, including those at the American Indian Artisan Market. The Procurement Pavilion will be integrated into the trade show this year, with prospective suppliers meeting with buyers at their booths on the trade show floor. Time dedicated to procurement meet-



Gary Davis

ings has been doubled from one day to two days. And an expanded offering of receptions, mixers and meals will encourage more networking than ever before.

This year's keynote speakers are hand-picked to inspire. Victoria Labalme has coached Fortune 100 executives at Microsoft, Starbucks, McDonalds, Oracle, Intel, Verizon and many other successful companies. Steven B. Wiley is a celebrated entrepreneur, author and highly acclaimed speaker who has influenced tens of thousands of top global executives hailing from Kellogg, Ford, Wells Fargo, Home

Depot, Bristol Myers, Verizon and many more.

In the session titled “Creativity, Leadership and Innovation: A Conversation with Frank Oz,” attendees will get to learn the incredible story of the man behind Yoda, Miss Piggy, Cookie Monster, Bert, Fozzie Bear, Grover, Animal and the director of twelve Hollywood feature films. Mr. Oz will be interviewed live on stage, where he'll give his vision about what it takes to lead a team under pressure – and what it takes to create iconic, legendary work. The feature films Frank Oz has directed include: *The Indian in The Cupboard*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *What About Bob?*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Housesitter*, *The Score*, *Bowfinger*, *In & Out* and the original film version of *Death at a Funeral*.

Breakout sessions will cover topics on energy, finance, technology, taxation, construction, entertainment, contracting, leadership training, teaming, global enterprise, non-profits, insurance, agriculture, procurement, innovation with Apple, Inc., hospitality and more.

Davis is committed to making sure RES's reach expands beyond Las Vegas – and well beyond a once-a-year occurrence. Last year, the first Regional RES, “RES Oklahoma,” happened in November at the Tulsa Hard Rock Hotel and Casino and was presented by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and Cherokee Nation Businesses. Davis envisions more such events – national in scope but sited regionally – throughout the year that will both carry forward and expand on the National RES.

“Sometimes we get blinded by the opportunities in our own state, or our own region,” he said. “Sometimes we forget that there's money to be made all over the country. And there's no reason we can't think even bigger.” Davis sees no reason why Indian Country can't shine in international trade. He visited the White House this past year to unveil NCAIED's new Native American Global Trade Center.

“At a time when diversifying our economic vision has never been more important,” Davis said, “the National Center's role in fostering global relations between Indian Country and other countries to facilitate new opportunities beyond the U.S. is the future.” ♣

For more information about the 27th annual National Reservation Economic Summit, visit www.ncaied.org.