

NCAI Recognizes Indian Policy Leaders at 11th Annual Leadership Awards Banquet

WASHINGTON—March 3, 2009—The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the largest and oldest national Indian organization, honored leaders in Indian policy at its 11th Annual Leadership Awards Banquet during the organization’s Executive Council Winter Session in Washington, D.C. The honorees were recognized for their outstanding service to Native people and their ongoing support of initiatives that promote sovereignty and government-to-government relationships.

“There are many friends and partners of NCAI that work hard to support tribes and protect our sovereignty,” said NCAI President Joe A. Garcia. “Today we honor those who have gone the extra mile to support the efforts of tribal communities, and thank them for their unwavering dedication to Indian Country.”

The Honorees:

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski United States Senator

Congressional Leadership Award

In appreciation for her bi-partisan support and leadership on Native issues as Vice-Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs including championing issues such as Indian health care, Native veterans and public safety in tribal communities.

“As the Senator from the state of the union that has the greatest number of Native people as a percentage of our total state population, I am greatly honored to accept this award. During my tenure as an Alaskan legislator from an urban district, I worked hard to represent the interests of Native people in urban and rural Alaska. Since I came to the United States Senate, I have been an active member of the Committee on Indian Affairs. Although my term as Vice-Chairman of the Committee has ended, I remain deeply committed to improving the conditions our Native communities face. We still have much work to do in reducing the disparities facing our American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities. But I see great strength in our Native leadership, and I look forward to continuing my work in the Senate for the betterment of our first peoples.”

Roberta Valente, J.D. General Counsel, National Network to End Domestic Violence

Public Sector Leadership Award

In appreciation of her work to end domestic violence for all women, and in particular for standing with our Indian women in the fight for additional resources and authority to bring safety and justice to Native communities.

“I am truly honored to receive this award. I thank President Garcia, the Board and the NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Indian Women for their kindness and their hard work. The members of the Task Force have been my teachers and dear friends in seeking justice for Indian and Alaska Native women who have suffered sexual and domestic violence. Together, we must continue to work to make sure tribes’ sovereignty is recognized to address these and other crimes. I know you join me in looking forward to the day when tribal courts will exercise full jurisdiction to address the wrongs done to members of their tribes, a day when tribal ways of life will be respected by all non-Indians, and Indian and Alaska Native women will be honored as they deserve to be.”

Rachel Joseph
Co-Chair, National Steering Committee for the Reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act

Native American Leadership Award

In appreciation of her years of work to improve the lives of Native people by advocating tirelessly for passage of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

“When we work together we can accomplish great things. NCAI is definitely a family of nations. In Indian Country we have a lot of fantastic leaders. I am appreciative of the mentoring from the NCAI family. Thank you for this great honor. My prayers are that I will always be deserving of this award. I am honored to be recognized by such a great organization.”

Scott Burns
Former Deputy Director, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

Governmental Leadership Award

In appreciation of his leadership at the Office of National Drug Control Policy and your commitment to helping eradicate drug abuse and trafficking in Indian Country by leading the department in the development of Native American focused anti-meth ad campaigns.

“I am honored to receive this award. It is my hope that our work together on the Indian anti-meth advertising campaign will help save lives and eradicate meth from Native communities. Indian Country is something of a passion for me. It brings me humility to receive this award.”