



CENTRAL COUNCIL

Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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80th Annual Tribal Assembly Adjourns

The Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Central Council) brought to a close its 80th Annual Tribal Assembly on April 17, 2015 at the Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall in Juneau, Alaska. Tribal Host Herman Davis Sr. of Sitka and Tribal Hostess Shirley Kendall of Anchorage joined 115 Delegates from Southeast Alaska, Anchorage, San Francisco, and Seattle. Central Council is a regional federally-recognized tribe governed by 137 Delegates representing nearly 30,000



enrolled tribal citizens. Delegates are elected to a two-year term and are the governing body during Tribal Assembly that possess the sovereign and plenary power to legislate for and govern, conduct and manage the affairs and property of Central Council.

"Our Way of Life is Our Future" was chosen as the theme for this year's assembly to honor the importance of our customary and traditional foods and continue to draw attention to the current threat to our rivers in Southeast Alaska (Taku, Stikine, and Unuk) by upriver transboundary mining development in British Columbia, Canada. Central Council has been diligently working to address the transboundary mining issues through the United Tribal Transboundary Mining Work Group, State of Alaska, and United Nations.

A special welcome from Alaska Governor Bill Walker was received on the first day of Tribal Assembly. Delegates used the opportunity to voice their concerns directly on budget cuts to the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) and hastened the adoption of a resolution requesting the Alaska State Legislature to give the highest level of priority to continue funding AMHS operations and vessel replacement planning.

Delegates adopted a total of 26 resolutions submitted by Tlingit & Haida Community Councils and Delegates. Key resolutions gave support for the expansion of Medicaid; reduction of halibut bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea trawl fisheries; passage of a new tribal statute authorizing the development of language immersion charter schools, amendments to the Alaska Native Veterans Allotment Act, establishing an Indigenous Peoples' Day on the second Monday in October of every year; and the withdrawal of the State's request for a rehearing in the *Tununak II v. State of Alaska* case.

This year's assembly increased its focus on program and service activities delivered by Central Council. President Richard Peterson's State of the Tribe Address focused on representation, collaboration, restructuring and greater communication on program and

governmental activities for transparency and accountability. Chief Operating Officer Corrine Garza provided a report on the operational and financial activities of Central Council.

The delegation also heard reports on business development activities under the Tlingit Haida Tribal Business Corporation; 2014 financial audit; and activities of the Tribal Court which included a recent announcement of the Central Council's new Title IV-E maintenance agreement with the State of Alaska that increases the role of the Tribe and Tribal Court in child welfare services including foster care placement. Special reports were also heard from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Alaska Regional Director, Alaska Marine Highway System, National Congress of American Indians; and tribal attorney Phil Baker-Shenk on future federal funding and tribal trust lands. All presentations are available on Central Council's website at www.ccthita.org/government/assembly/events/.

In addition to receiving reports, the delegation re-elected Aurora Lehr of Anchorage to a two-year term as Tribal Court Judge and elected Marina Anderson of Kasaan as Executive Council Youth Representative and Fred Lauth Sr. of Washington as Delegate Citizen of the Year. Each year two community councils are selected to receive recognition for efforts and activities that support the Native community. This year, Juneau was selected as Large Community Council of the Year and Hydaburg was selected as Small Community Council of the Year.

On the final day of the assembly, Delegates addressed the very heavy topic of modifying the Tribe's governing structure in order to reduce general government costs following recent changes in federal regulations for the administration of federal funding. A special governing committee was formed last year to review the governance structure of Central Council and develop proposals that would increase the financial feasibility of the governing body while maintaining adequate representation from communities. After much deliberation, the governing body agreed to amend the Delegate ratio in the Rules of Election eliminating 32 Delegate seats and reducing the total number of Delegates from 137 to 105.

Central Council closed the three-day assembly with a special Honor Dinner at Mount Roberts Tram that recognized the lifetime achievement of Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott. The dinner was co-sponsored by Sealaska and attended by Governor Walker and his wife. During the event, Governor Walker was adopted into the *Kaagwaantaan* clan and given the Tlingit name Gooch Waak.

"As we closed our 80th Tribal Assembly, I feel reenergized to begin working on the tasks set forth by Delegates," said President Peterson. "We participated in a process that was engaging, transparent, and empowering. Our Delegates showed us their strength and that unity can be achieved when difficult decisions have to be made to move our Tribe forward."

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