Conference Highlights

2011 SOUTH DAKOTA INDIAN BUSINESS CONFERENCE

The 2011 South Dakota Indian Business Conference was a great success. Over 100 government officials, federal program representatives, non-profit organizations, and Native entrepreneurs came together to advance Indian business development in South Dakota. The conference, held May 17th and 18th at the Ramkota Hotel & Convention Center in Rapid City, South Dakota, focused on the theme, “Inspiring a New Native America.”

The 2011 South Dakota Indian Business Conference featured new elements designed for the Native entrepreneur, including the Resource Track of sessions full of information to help build business, the Coaching Corner staffed by professional technical assistance providers to offer resources and information, and complimentary exhibit booth space for Native entrepreneurs.

In addition, the list of conference speakers was packed full of key policy makers and federal officials, including JR LaPlante, South Dakota Secretary of Tribal Relations; Ray Joseph, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians; Steve Smits, Office of Capital Access of the Small Business Administration; Jason Gant, South Dakota Secretary of State; Elsie Meeks, USDA Director of Rural Development; Beth Cooper, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Kevin Killer, South Dakota Legislative House Member; and Chris James, US Treasury’s CDFI Fund. Conference attendees were able to take advantage of this unique opportunity to hear from and interact with some of the most highly esteemed professionals in the Native community and economic development field!

Highlights of the 2011 South Dakota Indian Business Conference included:

- Opening remarks by South Dakota Indian Business Alliance's Chair, Tanya Fiddler, presented conference attendees with a look into our "New Native America" where the economic momentum index on our Reservations exceeds that of the state. Data showed that real progress has been made in the way of increasing income and developing new businesses.

- Policy roundtable discussions on opportunities and challenges remaining in the areas of governance, infrastructure, financing, and resources as related to Indian business development. Beth Cooper and Kevin Killer both participated to provide their unique perspective and to learn the perspective of those working in our state's Native economic development field.

- Presentation and performance by Frank Waln, a 21-year-old Native entrepreneur from the Rosebud Reservation successfully pursuing a music career. His hip-hop group, Nake Nula Waun, gave an inspiring performance for conference-goers on the second day of the conference.

BE SURE TO JOIN US FOR THE NEXT SOUTH DAKOTA INDIAN BUSINESS CONFERENCE IN MAY OF 2013!