



PRESS RELEASE
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Tlingit & Haida Holds 83rd Annual Tribal Assembly



Juneau, AK (April 21, 2018) – The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska’s (Tlingit & Haida) 83rd Annual Tribal Assembly was called to order on April 18, 2018 at the Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall in Juneau, Alaska with 105 of 110 Delegates present. Each year Delegates, who are the governing body of Tlingit & Haida while in session, travel in from Southeast Alaska communities and as far away as Washington D.C., San Francisco, Anchorage and Seattle, to conduct the business of the Tribe. The three-day assembly was declared a Constitutional Convention by Delegates at last year’s Tribal Assembly to act on remaining proposed amendments to the Tribe’s governing documents that were not reviewed last year due to time limitations.

The theme this year was “Indigenous Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow” and the assembly commenced with the Posting of the Colors, a Grand Entrance led by the *Has Du Eetéex’ X’aakeidix Haa Sitee* dance group and the introduction of Tribal Host Frederick Hamilton Sr. of Craig, Alaska and Tribal Hostess Bertha Karras of Sitka, Alaska. Special welcomes were provided by City and Borough of Juneau Mayor Ken Koelsch, Juneau Tlingit & Haida Community Council President Kenneth Southerland, Alaska Native Brotherhood/Alaska Native Sisterhood (ANB/ANS) Grand Camp President Sasha Soboleff and First Grand President Paulette Moreno.

Governor Bill Walker and Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott opened the assembly with a special address that reaffirmed the State of Alaska’s recognition of the inherent tribal sovereignty of Alaska tribes and the historical signing of a compacting agreement for child welfare services which has carved the path for further compacting opportunities in areas such as public safety and education.

During the State of the Tribe Address, President Richard (*Chalyee Éesh*) Peterson discussed the Tribe’s continued effort to attain economic sovereignty and explained why this has been priority for him. “One of the things I ran on four years ago was economic development and I know some people may not like this, but I’ve always said that we are only as sovereign as we can afford to be. We need economic sovereignty, we need to be able to manage ourselves sustainably and not be so dependent on the federal government so that we can exercise true self-determination and do what we see fit for our tribal citizens. One of my goals is that one day we never say the word ‘service area’ again and that’s only going to come from economic sovereignty. We are looking for those alternative sources of revenue and I’m very proud of our Tlingit Haida Tribal Business Corporation’s work.”

Tlingit Haida Tribal Business Corporation (THTBC) CEO Richard Rinehart’s report on the Tribe’s for-profit corporation and its subsidiaries’ activities reinforced President Peterson’s address. In just April alone, THTBC’s subsidiaries have secured two new government contracts totaling \$63 million. The priority to improve the economic

condition of Tlingit & Haida was further supported by a Keynote Address from Jerry Danforth, who currently serves as Chairman of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma Business Development Authority, who encouraged Tlingit & Haida's delegation to stay on the path of pursuing economic sovereignty through business and economic development by sharing the story of the Oneida Nation's rise to economic sovereignty despite many hardships and governmental obstacles.

Reports were also heard on Washington DC from Holland & Knight attorney Phil Baker-Shenk; National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) from Executive Director Jacqueline Pata; and from Tlingit & Haida's Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Tribal Court, Emerging Leader and standing committees (Audit, Judiciary and Enrollment).

On the second day of Tribal Assembly, elections were held for President, Vice Presidents (VP), Tribal Court Judge, Emerging Leader, and Delegate/Citizen of the Year. President Richard Peterson ran unopposed as was unanimously re-elected to another two-year term. Jacqueline Pata (2nd VP), Will Micklin (3rd VP), Rob Sanderson Jr. (4th VP), Ralph Wolfe (5th VP) were all re-elected to the Executive Council while Yodean Armour (1st VP) and Catherine Edwards (6th VP) were newly elected. Other election results: Lisa Lang was unanimously re-elected to another two-year term as Tribal Court Judge, Stephanie Masterman was elected as the 2018-2019 Emerging Leader and Michelle Demmert was unanimous elected as Delegate/Citizen of the Year.

Following elections, Juneau Delegate Paul Marks II called upon the governing body to take immediate action to support House Concurrent Resolution No. 19 (HCR 19) which urges the Governor to issue an administrative order recognizing a linguistic emergency. The body responded to the call to action by recessing the Tribal Assembly early so that Delegates could attend the Senate State Affairs Committee hearing on the resolution ([see press release](#)).

Delegates and guests gathered at the Centennial Hall for the 3rd Annual President's Award Banquet which included a dance performance by *Ldakát Naax sati' Yatx'I* (All Nations Children) dance group and special fundraiser which raised over \$36,000 to support the Tribe's language initiatives. Award recipients included: Dr. Gil Truitt (President's Lifetime Achievement Award), DonnaRae James (Culture Bearer), Eva Rowan (Emerging Leader), Barbara Franks (Hold Each Other Up), Ronnie Fairbanks (Inspiring Educator), Ben Young (Language Warrior), Nancy Barnes (Tribal Ally) and Barbara Dude (Youth Mentor).

As one of the final actions of the day, Delegates reviewed the proposed amendments to the Tribe's Constitution, Standing Rules of Order, Rules for the Election of Delegates, and Statute Title 1 – General Provisions. All amendments were adopted.

“Our governance is vital to and the foundation upon which we protect and exercise our inherent sovereignty,” said President Richard (*Chalyee Éesh*) Peterson. “Like any other foundational document, our governing documents should hold true to the Tribe's founding principles while still having the fluidity to evolve and adapt to the needs and times of our citizens. I think we have done our due diligence to ensure our governing documents remain current and improve tribal governance and efficiency in assembly procedures.”

The Tribal Assembly also reviewed a total of 48 resolutions that were brought forth by Delegates and Tlingit & Haida community councils. A full listing of all resolutions will be made available on Tlingit & Haida's [website](#).

The Tribal Assembly and President's Award Banquet were video recorded and webcast live and can be viewed on [LiveStream](#).

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