



# NCAI NEWS

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## **Cross Country ‘Sovereignty Run’ Making Its Way Across Minnesota**

(Washington D.C.) Runners representing hundreds of American Indian tribes and Alaska Native nations are now making their way across Minnesota on an historic 2800 mile cross-country coast-to-coast relay run in an effort to raise public awareness for American Indian and Alaska Native tribal sovereignty – the right to self-government.

The Run has made amazing time, racing across America, picking up runners and support. Tribal members, friends, civic and political leaders have all joined in to support tribal self-government and self-reliance. Children as young as eight and people as old as eighty, have come out to run, expressing Americas desire to honor Native people and tribal governments

The “Sovereignty Run” began just two weeks ago on the Pacific Ocean and will end on October 7 at the steps of the United States Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. – the site of a number of devastating court decisions that have been delivered against tribes over the past two decades. These decisions, made by the highest court in the land, are responsible for the continued erosion of tribal jurisdiction and authority, undermining the ability of Tribes to properly govern their lands, protect public safety and develop economically.

The “Sovereignty Run” is part of a larger program called the Tribal Governance and Economic Enhancement Initiative, also known as the Sovereignty Protection Initiative. The Initiative, which was launched in September 2001, is a coordinated all-tribal strategy designed to address the increasing diminishment of tribal self-government and jurisdiction as a result of recent Supreme Court rulings, such as Nevada v. Hicks and Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley – decisions that have raised strong concerns among tribes that the Supreme Court is on an accelerating trend over the past 20 years toward removing tribal jurisdiction within tribal territories. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Navajo Nation and prominent American Indian tribal leaders are spearheading the Initiative and the Run.

“It was a long haul from the Pacific coast all the way back to Minnesota, but it has been an exciting experience,” said Joel Shaugobay, a member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibway and a Minnesota runner who has participated since the run began. “I plan to run all the way to Washington. It feels great to represent my Tribe and all Indian people in this important effort.”

The Run has progressed with just eleven core runners traveling the entire route, while a number of tribal running groups have met them along the way, lending important momentum to the spirit of the Run. After tackling Minnesota along I-90 over the next two days, the Run will then make its way across Wisconsin.

Runners from throughout the United States are participating in the Run, which travels through the states of Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington, DC. Upon the runners’ arrival at the steps of the Supreme Court on Oct. 7, tribal leaders will hold a rally to educate the audience and the media about the issues identified in the Initiative.