



NCAI NEWS

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Inter-Tribal Cross Country ‘Sovereignty Run’ Arrives in Wisconsin

(Washington D.C.) Runners representing hundreds of American Indian tribes and Alaska Native nations are arriving in Wisconsin on Saturday as part of 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.

In Wisconsin, a group of Wisconsin Indian youth training for an upcoming marathon will join in to help relay the run across the state. Tribal members, friends, civic and political leaders from throughout America have all joined in to support tribal self-government and self-reliance.

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.

“We can’t get over the response we’re getting,” said Fawn Sharp, a member of the Quinault Indian Nation and the Run’s primary organizer. “We’ve had people with cancer, kids of all ages, towns hosting parades, and mayors running for tribal self-government. In Wisconsin we’re being joined by tribal leaders and youth, helping us fill this critical link across America.”

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 making it’s way through Wisconsin on the 28th and 29th along the I-90 route, the Run will then make its way through Illinois.

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 public and the media about the issues identified in the Initiative.