

* Native Leaders to Speak. Non-native Leaders to Listen. Communication Experts to Analyze. Unique Symposium on the Missing Indian Perspective

***American Indian leaders, journalists, religious groups, elected officials to discuss media effects on public perceptions and public policies**

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For Immediate Release

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The absence of Indian voices in the mainstream media and popular culture affects public perceptions which in turn affect public policies. Participants in the Native American media symposium, "Who Wants to Hear Our Story" will discuss ways to improve coverage and address misinformation in the media. Religious groups and non-profit associations will figure out practical mechanisms to support indigenous people through their publications. Strategies will be worked out to assure that representative, accurate, and timely stories will be included in mass communications. To learn more about the event and to register go to: http://www.fcnl.org/nativeam/media_symp.htm

The absence of a real conversation between Native and non-Native communities in the U.S. means that Indian Country and Native Americans are a complete mystery to most people. While demeaning images and rampant stereotypes persist, realities and cultural strengths remain hidden. Working with journalists and other opinion leaders to inform the public about conditions facing Native peoples, and about historic and legal rights, is a key component in efforts to persuade politicians and the public to do right by Native Americans.

"When Native peoples are discussed by others, it is rarely in human terms and the one-dimensional portrait is hurtful. The viewpoints of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians are nearly always missing in media," explains Patricia Powers of the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the group coordinating the conference. "Why isn't there more interest, respect, and fairness from image-makers and policy-makers?" Powers asks.

Among the many speakers are Native academics such as Donald Grinde and Native leaders such as Jacqueline Johnson, executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, Jackie Old Coyote, Harvard Honoring Nations program, and Suzan Shown Harjo, who sued the Washington Redskins and helped launch the National Museum of the American Indian. Journalists associated with Native publications, broadcasting, and associations will include Kim Baca, Jose Barreiro, and Tim Giago. Non-native speakers will include current and former U.S. senators and representatives and Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer.

The event will include open debate about controversial issues; discussions contrasting the current challenges and realities in Indian Country with the public images portrayed in the media; focused workshops on achieving representation of Native Americans in the news and entertainment industries; and the telling of success stories and sad stories through videos, speeches, and personal narratives.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers) is coordinating the symposium which is co-sponsored by Native American organizations, advocates for Native American issues, and faith-based groups. The co-sponsors are American Indian Policy and Media Initiative, Americans for Indian Opportunity, American Friends Service Committee, Call to Renewal, First Nations Development Institute, Honor Our Neighbors' Origins and Rights (HONOR), Institute for Tribal Government, The Interfaith Alliance, National American Indian Housing Council, National Congress of American Indians, National Council of Churches, National Indian Child Welfare Association, National Indian Council on Aging, National Indian Health Board, National Native American Families Together, National Urban Indian Family Coalition, Native American Journalists Association, and Native American Rights Fund.

Read Indian Country Today's Op-Ed about the symposium:
<http://www.indiancountry.com/content.cfm?id=1096412262> and
<http://www.indiancountry.com/content.cfm?id=1096412257>

The Friends Committee on National Legislation is a non-partisan Quaker lobby in the public interest that represents 26 Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends (called Quakers). FCNL speaks for itself and like-minded individuals. Working with a network of constituents in every congressional district in the United States, FCNL seeks to bring the concerns, experiences and testimonies of Friends to bear on national policy decisions. FCNL has had a Native American advocacy program since 1973.