

Massaway selected to attend National Congress of American Indians with others in tribal delegation



**KEITH MASSAWAY,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

A tribal delegation was sent out to the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) conference last month and I was selected to attend. It was a very busy conference and all the tribal board members and chairman worked hard on many aspects of our tribal needs.

My focus was mainly on government-to-government relations. This encompassed many different topics, but the one I will elaborate on is the consultations. When I first became a tribal board member nearly eight years ago, tribal consultation with other government entities was non-existent. The idea of

consulting with the tribes was thought to be worthless and the governments knew what was best for the tribes. We kept insisting to the federal government and the state, counties and cities that we were to be contacted and have meaningful discussions on anything that could affect the tribe. This usually fell on deaf ears.

As the years went by and our constant educating of people of the laws, we began to make headway. I have to say now that recently the federal government has finally taken up its role to include the tribes in nearly all aspects of the government con-

sultations. We have our voices heard at senior levels on subjects far and wide. Topics like education, environmental, housing and health to name a few. We have not gotten full inclusion on some other areas, but we continue to seek inclusion on those topics also.

Working with the state has been more difficult and a slower process. Their understanding of consultation seems to be that they contact us and tell us what they are going to do and then do it whether or not we agree or disagree with the item. I must say this area has also gotten better since I first arrived on the

board. Back then, they did not even acknowledge they had to talk to us at all. With the counties and the cities, it has been great in some areas and non-existent in others. Usually we find that just sitting and talking to the parties involved we arrive at a good understanding of what is expected and mandated to occur. Have a safe and fruitful hunting season and a happy Thanksgiving.

Thank you always for the phone calls and the e-mails.

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