

Students invited to inspire others

You are invited to participate in **The Great American NO BULL Challenge**, an annual campaign that inspires America's 25 million teens to stand up against bullying by creating videos with an anti-bullying message.

The NO BULL Challenge is a free campaign and platform that can be used to educate middle and high school students about bullying awareness and prevention by integrating social media, scholarships, prizes and a red carpet awards event (Teen Video Awards, produced by Live Nation) to highlight the best of the best videos from around the country.

Both students and educators are provided all of the necessary resources via the online NO BULL toolkits. To learn more about the campaign or to get started, visit nobullchallenge.org. Video upload deadline is March 15, 2012.

Imagine Tomorrow challenges ninth- to 12th-grade students from Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Washington to seek new ways to support the transition to alternate energy sources. Students research complex topics then innovate technologies, designs or plans to mobilize behavior. They forge connections in their communities and create positive change. In this competition, as in life, solutions are limited only by imagination.

There is no registration fee and housing and meals are provided at no cost. In addition, small grants are available to help teams launch their 2012 projects.

Registration opens March 1 and closes April 2. Register early – space is limited. The competition will be held May 18-20 at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash.

Visit imagine.wsu.edu to learn more or contact organizers at imagine@wsu.edu or 509-335-1467.



Courtesy photo

Bud Lane (left) from the Siletz Tribe and Bobby Mercier (right) from Grand Ronde attend the inauguration of the new president of Willamette University, Stephen Thorsett, on Feb. 10 in Salem, Ore.

Indian Nations, con't from previous page

Governmental flexibility

Protecting the Indian budget is the first step, but long-term success depends on Tribal nations having the same opportunities to protect and preserve our communities that are available to state and local governments. We exercise jurisdiction over lands that would make us the fourth largest state. We run dozens of social programs previously administered by federal agencies or states. And we protect reservation environments in the manner that states regulate off reservation lands.

Tribal governments have proven our capacity to grow our economies, educate our people and manage our resources. We need the federal government to put decision-making power back in the hands of the people who live in Indian Country – the people who know best because these are our homelands, these are our people.

The old way of doing things causes missed opportunities every day. The Swinomish Tribe, in Washington state, saw this firsthand. The Tribe had worked out a deal with Wal-Mart for a big new store on the reservation. This was a great deal – a million dollars a year in lease revenue for the Tribe and new jobs for Tribal members and people throughout the community.

As with every lease on Indian lands, the federal government needed to approve it. The process took more than a year and by the time it was approved, economic conditions had changed and Wal-Mart had made other plans. A million dollars a year for Swinomish, gone. All those jobs, gone. And this is not an isolated story. Many Tribal leaders can tell you stories about business opportunities lost because of red tape.

This is why our federal partners have already proposed crucial lease reforms to free our economies. Tribal nations have proven our capacity. We don't need the government involved in all our business decisions, we need flexibility. And by creating it, we will remove the barriers that cost us jobs and opportunity. This is a goal I think we can all agree on, across the political spectrum, and it is something we can achieve with a change in policy, not an increase in spending.

That is the kind of solution Washington is crying out for and we in Indian Country are eager to answer the call.

Moment of opportunity

Ensuring governmental flexibility will yield more efficient programs and spending because decisions will be made by those in the best position to respond to community needs. It will also relieve administrative burdens at the federal level.

This message comes directly from Tribal leaders. We went to them with one simple question: What can we do with what we have already – without asking for more resources – that will provide greater opportunity for Indians and create more impact for federal programs? Over and over, the answer came back: We need freedom at the local level to best use our limited resources. We know what's best because we live in Indian Country. We know where the needs are and we know what works for our people. No one understands Indian life better than the Indian nations themselves. Give us flexibility.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota is delivering broadband services across their reservation because of governmental flexibility. The FCC's decision to designate Standing Rock Telecom as an eligible telecommunications carrier means they are the first fully Tribally owned and operated broadband company that can receive universal service funds.

This designation has empowered Standing Rock to own and operate essential telecommunications infrastructure. This offers avenues for economic development, opportunities to preserve Tribal languages and culture, and infrastructure for distance learning programs. That is the kind of flexibility we need in Indian Country when only one in 10 Native people have access to broadband today.

The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony in Nevada opened a 65,000-square-foot health facility in 2007 that showed the promise of tax-exempt bond financing. Almost \$16 million in bonds funded a full-service clinic that serves 100,000 people each year. This project created permanent jobs and built the infrastructure for quality health services.

Tribes were denied full access to this source of financing until the Recovery Act created a limited bond offering. Based on that experience, the Treasury released a report in December recommending they have the same access to bond financing available to our governmental peers. This will bring huge economic benefits to Tribes and surrounding regional economies.

Education is another example where flexibility can prepare our children for the global marketplace. The Cherokee Nation's Language Immersion School formed an innovative partnership with Apple computers to integrate technology and the Cherokee language. They developed Cherokee language software for use on Macintosh computers, iPhones, iPods and iPads. Students even chat online – in Cherokee – with students from the Eastern Band of Cherokee in North Carolina. This is a powerful example of Tribal innovation and initiative – the type of innovation that vesting Tribes with greater authority over our own programs unleashes.

Whether in economic development or education, health care or energy, the key to getting it right is the freedom to identify and tear down barriers to our success.

A new era for the trust relationship

Tribal leaders carry with us a dream. It's a dream passed down from our parents and grandparents. It doesn't look forward to 2012 or 2016, it looks to the seventh generation. We see a future where the trust relationship actually works. Works for Tribal nations and works for our federal partners.

Our ancestors knew that Tribes could govern our nations like no one else. Today, we have proven it. Residents of rural Oklahoma are driving to our health facilities because they offer the best services around. States and counties are turning to our traditional knowledge to best manage natural resources. Citizens of those states are coming to Tribes for job opportunities and a good education at Tribal colleges. And companies are coming to us to set up businesses on the reservation and bring American jobs home.

When we have the tools and freedom we need, we are creating businesses,

delivering services and leading the way. It's time to build our trust on that reality.

That trust also requires consultation, legally enforceable consultation. Without the power of legislation and accountability, "free, prior and informed consent" are just some nice words on a page. As President Obama himself said when he announced his support for the UN Declaration – "What matters far more than words ... are actions to match those words." We call for action to make consultation count.

Enforceable consultation means we must talk about another idea – Tribal consent. There would be a public outcry if the federal government tried to impose policy on a state without its consent. But the concerns of Tribal nations are routinely overlooked, even when more than a dozen Tribes are larger than some northeastern states. This must not stand.

Our America

Our America is a place where all candidates know that we matter and America sees it at the ballot box. It's a place where each and every president honors our unique nation-to-nation relationship, where Indian Country is always at the table – not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's the smart thing to do. Our America is home to a Congress that works across party lines to free our economies. Our America is a place where governments keep their promises.

Our America is where Tribal nations create economic opportunities, where people come to us for the best jobs. It's a place where Tribes are on the forefront of new technology – high-tech manufacturing, telemedicine, clean energy. Our America is where indigenous peoples reach across borders and bring home economic opportunity for all Americans.

As the oldest governments in America, Tribal nations understand what is required to overcome stark economic conditions. Perhaps more than any other time in history, our nations must stand together, empowered to make profound and permanent improvements in the lives of our people. Our nations are committed to the success of the United States of America. Let us realize that future together so that our nations thrive, today and forever.