



Photos by Andy Taylor

State champion Isaac Butler rides in a pickup driven by his dad, Lee Butler.



Other team members who wrestled at the state tournament include Kenneth Johnston Jr. (left) and Joshley Howell (right), who were joined by Isaac Hansen as the wrestling team was honored with a parade through the city of Siletz following the tournament.

Indian Nations, continued from page 1

This must end.

Indian nations have weathered every conceivable storm. We have overcome in the face of unthinkable challenges to our lives and our ways of life. We have stood steadfast in the face of policies meant to disperse and extinguish us.

Today, we say with one voice:

We have inherent rights. Not only were we born with them – we have earned them:

The right to be recognized as equal governments. The right to be seated at the table where key decisions are made. The right to contribute as much to America's future, just as we are contributing to its present.

We are at an important moment. Our governments and our communities stand on high alert.

For too many years, the echoes of America's colonial past have continued to reverberate:

Disparaging rhetoric
Failed policies

A disregard for the inherent sovereignty of Tribal nations

This is unacceptable.

Our message for our representatives in government is this: Respect our rights.

See us as equal partners. And uphold the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribal nations. Do so not on your own terms, but on the terms as they have been defined by hundreds of treaties, policies and legal precedent. That is our standard. That is a non-negotiable condition of our support at the polls on Election Day.

Far too often, people seem to forget just how profoundly Native peoples have influenced the world in which we all live today.

In developing agriculture and building infrastructure, in managing lands and natural resources, in governing and solving shared community challenges, we are – and have always been – innovators and leaders.

I want to touch on a few of these topics, starting with the food Native people put on our tables.

From wild rice and bison to salmon and blueberries, traditional Native foods are not only our way of life but are an economic driver too. Indian agriculture is a \$3.2 billion industry, supporting nearly 72,000 jobs in Indian Country.

And in 2018, no Farm Bill should pass unless it includes our priorities to recognize Tribal governments as sovereigns and to strengthen Indian Country's agricultural potential.

Native peoples are also builders and managers of roads and bridges, and other essential infrastructure. These projects are often in rural areas. They connect Tribal and surrounding communities with each other and the rest of the nation. Tribal infrastructure is American infrastructure.

In 2018, no infrastructure bill should pass unless it includes Indian Country's priorities. It must:

Offer us the same opportunities to raise capital as state and local governments. Invest adequate, equitable funding in our infrastructure needs. And remove barriers to us from making decisions at the local, Tribal level. Reaffirm our right to consent to developments that affect our lands and our people.

And in doing so, ensure every community has the infrastructure to thrive in our shared 21st century America.

Native peoples are also innovators.

Long before we conducted trade with newcomers, starting in 1492, Native peoples had woven a complex web of international commerce.

The Tohono O'odham was one of many nations to establish a network of trade routes that spanned the entire Southwest. Similarly, when Lewis and Clark arrived on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, they saw the same tools, with the same symbols, that they had seen in what is now North Dakota.

Today, Tribes continue to serve as economic engines across this continent. The Chickasaw Nation and the other Tribes in Oklahoma contribute billions of dollars to the state and local economies every year.

In Arizona, Native businesses generate hundreds of millions of tax dollars and pay \$1.9 billion in wages to tens of thousands of Native and non-Native employees.

In Mississippi, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians provides 6,000 full-time jobs through its diverse array of businesses, more than half of which are held by non-Natives. It also has re-invested over \$500 million of its profits in economic development projects across the state.

Not only do these jobs often pay more than other jobs, they're not going anywhere. You're never going to read about how they are being moved overseas because Native businesses don't pull up stakes, even when market conditions change. We root our businesses in our local communities – for good.

You want to 'Buy American'? Then do business with Indian Country.

And when Tribal economies prosper, surrounding communities prosper. To that end, Congress and the administration should adopt the measures that Tribal governments have deemed critical to spurring economic development:

Remove the outdated burdens placed on Native businesses, starting with the ones that require us to go to the federal government for permits that Tribes could readily furnish. Remove obstacles barring Tribes from accessing and leveraging capital.

Pass the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act, which affirms our right to determine our own labor regulations, just as city, county and state governments are allowed to do.

We have the right to build our own economic futures on our lands, on our own terms.

When it comes to our lands and resources, Native peoples were the original conservationists.

Long before the first churches and cathedrals were erected in America, we held relationships of faith and reverence with sacred places across this land. Today, we must work to preserve the sanctity of these places and in some cases restore access to them so that they can continue to provide cultural and spiritual sustenance.

Those who argue for the privatization of our lands believe that granting individual property rights will fuel economic development. However, they ignore the impact it would have on our sovereign authority to protect our homelands, economies and cultural resources for future generations.

For these reasons, it is critical that land policies be developed with Tribes from the outset, through true consultation and dialogue, on a government-to-government basis.

We say to policymakers: We have cared for this place for millennia. Seek our time-honored indigenous knowledge and expertise. Recognize our role and value in managing these lands to prevent costly mistakes and produce better outcomes.

We must remove the barriers that keep us from generating an estimated \$1 trillion through solar, wind and traditional energy resources. Remove the barriers that prevent us from restoring Tribal land bases according to our priorities.

Our lands made the United States what it is. Our wisdom will continue to sustain it, just as our wisdom played a role in creating it.

We know something about governing. We were peoples before "We the People."

Our proven ways of governing informed the governing approach forged by this country's founders. The U.S. Senate acknowledged this fact in 1987, declaring – and I quote – "the Congress, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, acknowledges the contribution made by the Iroquois Confederacy and other Indian Nations to the formation and development of the United States." End quote.

Tribal governments have always held a unique place in the American family