

# Native American Journalists Conference in Buffalo, New York for 17<sup>th</sup> Annual

## "Journalism Without Borders"

By Brent Merrill

**B**uffalo, NY — The 17th Annual Native American Journalists Association Conference was held in Buffalo, New York at the Adam's Mark Hotel on June 13-16. This year's conference was hosted by the six Tribes of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy — the Onandaga, Oneida, Seneca, Cayuga, Tonawanda and Tuscarora. Buffalo is the aboriginal land of the Seneca Nation.

Veterans from the Confederacy opened the event with the traditional presentation of the color guard. Jack Johnson, Mohawk Nation, led the color guard presentation.

Following the presentation of the colors, Seneca children from the Faithkeeper School on the nearby Allegheny Reservation welcomed conference participants with a prayer of thanksgiving called the Ganonyon. The children delivered the prayer in their traditional language, then they danced.

Throughout the conference, workshops and classes were held in print, broadcast, visual and new media like Internet news and web design. Workshops focused on advanced reporting, excellence in editing, investigative writing, community-based journalism, design and layout, photojournalism fundamentals and digital photography.

This year's conference featured a career fair, a student recognition banquet and keynote addresses by Gary Brouse of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and Kevin Klose of National Public Radio (NPR).

Brouse talked about his goal of educating America's corporate population into investing their money into businesses that don't perpetuate traditional stereotypes of minority groups.

Klose talked about his desire to have a closer relationship with Indian Country and the journalists who work in Tribal communities. Klose said he would like to see more Native journalists in the radio medium in the future. As the President and CEO of NPR, Klose said he would do everything in his power to see the gap between the numbers of Native journalists and non-Native journalists close.

Despite the usual excitement that is inherent at typical NAJA conferences, this gathering was different. People were excited, especially the young people who are a huge part of every NAJA conference, but one of the usual smiling faces was not present this year.

Richard LaCourse, the recognized dean of Native journalists, passed away on March 9 from a stroke during heart surgery. LaCourse was just 62.

LaCourse was a mentor and role model for many Native journalists and he was remembered with a testimonial at this year's conference.

LaCourse would have loved the idea of journalism without borders — the theme of this year's conference. The backdrop of Buffalo and its proximity to several reservations and the land of First Nation's people (Canada) was the perfect setting for this year's gathering. ■

▼ **Spectacular View** — One of the most amazing natural wonders in the world, Niagra Falls, is located just minutes from Buffalo. The view, at left, shows Bridal Veil Falls with the mist from Horseshoe Falls in the background and the view, at right, shows Horseshoe Falls with the Peace Bridge linking the United States to Ontario, Canada in the background.



**Welcome Song** — Dustin George and Jessie Beavers of the Buffalo Creek Dancers sang a traditional song while other members of the group danced and welcomed this year's NAJA participants.



**Warrior Tradition** — Veteran Jack Johnson, Mohawk Nation, led the presentation of the color guard. Johnson, of the North American Iroquois Veteran's Association, was in the 11th Airborne Division of the United States Air Force serving in Korea from 1950-1953.



Photo by Kim Mueller



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