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LEADERS FROM 22 NATIVE NATIONS PARTICIPATE IN TRIBAL LEADERS SUMMIT

(Prior Lake, MN – Oct. 2, 2009) On October 1 and 2, tribal leaders from 22 of the sovereign Native nations that exist within the boundaries of Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, gathered for a first-ever Tribal Leaders Summit, hosted by the Saint Paul, MN-based Bush Foundation. Minnesota Senator Al Franken, who sits on the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, spoke to the group on Friday afternoon.

He thanked the Bush Foundation and tribal leaders for their efforts to advance the well-being of the region's Native American populations and pledged to work with them to address the problems they face, including crime, poverty and lack of access to health care.

"I applaud every part of this conference," Franken said. "As a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, I am eager to work with the Bush Foundation and tribal leaders to find solutions to some very difficult problems we face. As everyone in this room knows, the best solutions for Indian Country come from Indian Country. Simply put, a nation's future is brightest when that nation controls its own future."

According to Jaime Pinkham (Nez Perce) who leads the Bush Foundation's efforts in this area, "When it comes to solving core issues facing the tribes, what has proven to be the driving force behind the most success is when tribes exercise their inherent rights of self-governance to create the governing infrastructure that works best for them.

"The Bush Foundation is committed to collaborating with the leaders of the Native nations as sovereign governments, supporting the leaders in using their authority to establish or rebuild institutions of nationhood that work for them."

To this end, the Bush Foundation has entered into a partnership with the Udall Foundation's Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy (NNI) at the University of Arizona and the Harvard Project on the American Indian. These two prominent nonprofit organizations work nationally and internationally with Native nations engaged in rebuilding or strengthening their infrastructure of nationhood and facilitated discussions during the two days.

The Summit provided an opportunity for a collective conversation among the tribal leaders on the Foundation's goal, a chance to meet resource partners, become familiar with nation-building tools and discuss next steps. At the Summit, the Bush Foundation also announced a revision of its mission statement to explicitly include the 23 Native nations with which it is working. The Foundation's restated mission statement is:

We improve the quality of life in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and in the 23 sovereign tribal nations that share the same geography, by strengthening organizational, community, and individual leadership.

The Foundation's commitment to the 23 tribes revolves around supporting Native nations in their self-determination efforts. "In the past, approaches meant to address tribal issues have been dominated by outside entities setting the agenda and outcomes," said Bush Foundation President Peter C. Hutchinson. "Our approach is intended to be consistent with self-determination, which means we will collaborate with each tribe on its individual agenda for self-determination. The tribes have been working on issues of self-determination for hundreds of years, but these efforts are radically different for the Foundation. We recognize that self-determination and nationhood are important concepts and are learning about them from our Native partners."

The Foundation's other two major goals focus on developing courageous leaders and engaging entire communities in problem-solving and on increasing educational achievement. While the Foundation's Native [self-determination goal](#) is focused exclusively on the 23 nations that share geography with Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, the leadership/community engagement and educational achievement goals extend to all communities within the three states and 23 nations.

Award-winning filmmaker Elizabeth Day (Ojibwe) was on hand to document the meeting of the tribal leaders. She was born on the Leech Lake Reservation and grew up in Minneapolis. In 2008, Day was awarded a Bush Artist Fellowship.

As a next step in the process, the Foundation will work with the individual tribal governments to develop partnerships to support nation rebuilding over the next decade and starting this December host the first Rebuilders' Workshop to support emerging leadership in tribal nations.

About the Bush Foundation

The Bush Foundation was established in 1953 by 3M executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth. The Foundation strives to be a catalyst to shape vibrant communities in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota by investing in courageous and effective leadership that significantly strengthens and improves the well-being of people in these three states.

In 2009, the Foundation is focusing on [Goals for a Decade](#)—in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota to develop courageous leaders and engage entire communities in solving problems, to support the self-determination of Native nations and to increase educational achievement. (To learn more about the Foundation's legacy or about Goals for a Decade, visit www.bushfoundation.org.)