

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### PRESIDENT

**Mark Macarro**  
Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians

### 1ST VICE PRESIDENT

**Brian Weeden**  
Mashpee Wampanoag

### RECORDING SECRETARY

**Nickolaus D. Lewis**  
Lummi Nation

### TREASURER

**David Woerz**  
Chickasaw Nation

## REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS

### ALASKA

**Brian Ridley**  
Native Village of Eagle

### EASTERN OKLAHOMA

**Joe Deere**  
Cherokee Nation

### GREAT PLAINS

**Ryman LeBeau**  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

### MIDWEST

**Leonard Fineday**  
Minnesota Chippewa Tribe  
Leech Lake Band

### NORTHEAST

**Lance Gumbs**  
Shinnecock Indian Nation

### NORTHWEST

**Leonard Forsman**  
Suquamish Tribe

### PACIFIC

**Leo Sisco**  
Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi Yokut Nation

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN

**Jennifer Finley**  
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

### SOUTHEAST

**Reggie Tupponce**  
Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe

### SOUTHERN PLAINS

**Reggie Wassana**  
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma

### SOUTHWEST

**Raymond Aguilar**  
Pueblo of Santo Domingo

### WESTERN

**Randi Lone Eagle**  
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Larry Wright, Jr.**  
Ponca Tribe of Nebraska



## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #NO-23-038

### **TITLE: Supporting Pueblo de Cochiti's Effort to Reacquire Ancestral Cultural and Homelands Now Known as the Caja del Rio**

**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, through its inherent and sovereign rights, Pueblo de Cochiti will promote the language, health, economic and natural resources, and educational advancement of all Pueblo people; and

**WHEREAS**, Pueblo de Cochiti possesses inherent government authority and sovereignty over its lands; and

**WHEREAS**, the Pueblo possesses its own cultural territory and sovereign right to protect its cultural resources, including its traditional cultural properties and sacred sites, whether or not these cultural resources are located within Pueblo's current exterior boundaries; and

**WHEREAS**, in the history of the United States' federal land management policy, Pueblo People have been absent from the decision making process associated with the stewardship of our existing cultural resources and landscapes; and

**WHEREAS**, the protection of the Pueblo's cultural resources, landscapes and access to continued use of lands beyond our Pueblo's existing landholdings is necessary for our survival; and

**WHEREAS**, Pueblo de Cochiti people are deeply connected to our languages, traditions, and cultural resources, all of which embody the gifts of the Creator, to support our responsibilities to be caretakers and stewards of the present world; and

**WHEREAS**, the Caja del Rio is recognized by our Pueblo's traditional leadership as a significant region of Pueblo de Cochiti cultural properties where our ancestors built housing structures, ceremonial kivas, roads, irrigation infrastructure, petroglyphs, and other cultural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, the Caja del Rio contains a dense concentration of thousands of sacred sites, structures, petroglyphs, irrigation systems, and other cultural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, Pueblo de Cochiti maintains an ongoing connection and use of the Caja del Rio landscape and its cultural resources, and sacred sites through story, song, pilgrimage, and prayer. The preservation of the landscape's original historic and cultural context and setting is critical for ongoing cultural religious access and use; and

**WHEREAS**, many of these cultural resources and sacred sites are not documented and the Caja del Rio cultural landscape may be eligible for nomination and inclusion as a traditional cultural property in the National Register of Historic Places; and

**WHEREAS**, the Caja del Rio is a multi-jurisdictional landscape containing federal, state, and private land, and currently managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS), New Mexico State Land Office, and the Bureau of Land Management; and

**WHEREAS**, under the existing multi-jurisdictional landscape, the Caja del Rio continues to suffer longstanding management challenges including the desecration of cultural sites, misuse of off highway vehicles (OHV) beyond authorized law, undeterred dumping of refuse, poaching, and unregulated shooting, all of which continue to result in serious unmitigated, cumulative, and irreversible impacts to cultural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, Because of Pueblo de Cochiti's existing deep connection to Cochiti Pueblo's ancestral and present-day homelands, now known as the Caja del Rio, Cochiti maintains a diligent watch over the happenings of this area; and

**WHEREAS**, Pueblo de Cochiti Cochiti is now pursuing a pathway to reacquire these homelands to prevent further desecration and trespass of sacred sites and ensure permanent undisturbed access to current culturally significant areas for future generations.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) supports Tribal Nations in pursuit of the reacquisition of their ancestral and present day homelands to ensure current and future access to undisturbed sacred sites; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) supports Pueblo de Cochiti’s effort to reclaim its ancestral and present day homelands by pursuing federal protection, inclusive of funding, that prioritizes Pueblo de Cochiti’s cultural and religious homelands; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2023 Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians, held November 12-17, 2023, in New Orleans, Louisiana, with a quorum present.



---

Mark Macarro, President

**ATTEST:**



---

Nickolaus Lewis, Recording Secretary