



TRIBAL BUSINESS NEWS

Gun Lake Casino & Resort
1123 129th Avenue, Wayland, MI 49348

[AGENDA](#) (updated 9/8/2025)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Registration Opens & Continental Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - 9:20 a.m. | Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, Opening Remarks

- Posting of Colors - Ogitch-E-Daa Color Guard
- Land Acknowledgement - Brian Edwards
- Welcome Remarks - Ben Brenner - Assistant Council Secretary, Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Tribe (Gun Lake Tribe)

9:20 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. | Michigan's Tribal Economic Success Story

A deep dive into the groundbreaking 2024-25 study revealing how Michigan's 12 federally recognized Tribes have built non-gaming business entities generating over a billion dollars in economic impact. The fireside discussion will explore the path to economic diversification, sovereignty through business development, and how tribal enterprises are creating sustainable revenue streams while strengthening communities statewide through strategic economic opportunities beyond gaming.

- Deidra Mitchell, Waséyabek
- Jessi Goldner, Waséyabek
- Heather TePastte, Waséyabek

10:00 a.m. - 10:35 a.m. | Tribal Energy Sovereignty in a Shifting Federal Landscape

With the Trump administration's pivot away from green energy initiatives, federal clean energy funding for Indian Country faces significant cuts. Despite this shifting landscape, tribal nations continue identifying pathways to energy independence through workforce development, strategic partnerships,

and innovative project financing. Panelists will explore emerging opportunities and adaptive strategies for achieving energy sovereignty in today's challenging policy environment.

- Jen Lerch, Tribal Energy Finance Consultant
- Kevin Blaser, Colusa Energy
- Art Rave, Cheyenne River Long Term Recovery Group

10:40 a.m. - 11 a.m. | Tribal Energy Finance Announcement

- To be announced

11:00 a.m. - 12 noon | 'Don't Wait for Permission to Lead' - A conversation with Bryan Newland

Former Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland delivers a candid discussion on navigating federal policy shifts and building tribal economic independence. As Washington signals retreat from Indian affairs, where should tribes focus? Newland, a member of Michigan's Bay Mills Indian Community, explores lessons on federal dependency, successful resistance strategies, and why the strongest development comes from tribes taking action themselves—building from inherent strengths nobody can take away.

12 noon - Lunch & Networking

1 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. | SBA Tribal Business Development: Navigating Federal Resources and Opportunities

An informal conversation with SBA's Diane Cullo exploring federal contracting opportunities and practical resources for Native entrepreneurs. This interview-style session covers accessing SBA programs, building federal partnerships, and regional considerations for Great Lakes tribal communities while encouraging audience engagement.

- Diane Cullo, Assistant Administrator of SBA's Office of Native American Affairs

1:50 p.m. - 2:35 | Federal Contracting Opportunities: Unlocking Tribal Market Potential

With only a handful of the 36 Great Lakes tribes actively pursuing federal contracting, massive opportunities remain untapped. The CEO of Makwa, the Mille Lacs Band's federal contracting business, joins us for a fireside chat exploring how they have leveraged tribal advantages, navigated procurement systems, and scale into high-growth sectors like cybersecurity and IT for sustainable revenue growth.

- Anne Defot-Sido, CEO, Makwa Global LLC, a Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures Company

2:40 p.m. - 3:00 | Federal Contracting Announcement

The Nebraska Indian Community College APEX Accelerator has expanded to serve Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and eastern South Dakota—filling a critical gap in procurement assistance for Native businesses. Led by enrolled tribal members with real federal contracting experience, this specialized program provides free technical assistance exclusively for tribally-owned businesses seeking government contracts in our region.

- Mike Channell, NICC Apex Accelerator

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | The Sovereignty Blueprint: Building Codes as Self-Determination Tools

A growing movement across Indian Country is transforming mundane building regulations into powerful sovereignty tools. Learn about the newly-formed Native American Code Officials (NACO)—the first indigenous chapter recognized by the International Code Council—and how tribes like Michigan's Pokagon Band are using building codes to prevent substandard construction, protect investments, and hold contractors accountable while exercising self-determination

- Matt Beaudet, Native American Code Officials
- Anthony Foerster, Building Official, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. – Reception for Summit Attendees, Speakers, Guests

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2025

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

9:00 a.m. – 10 a.m. | Native Student Success in Uncertain Times: The Role of Higher Education

As federal policies target DEI programs and create uncertainty for Native students, how can universities adapt? Higher education leaders from Michigan discuss navigating federal directives, building resilient support systems, and strengthening partnerships with Tribal Nations. This interactive session explores institutional strategies for promoting Native student success while addressing unique cultural and academic needs during challenging times.

- Lin Bardwell, Grand Valley State University
- Alison Bell, Western Governors University
- Dr. Kevin Leonard, Michigan State University
- Dr. Dee Sherwood, Western Michigan University

10 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. | Filling the Credit Gap: Native Financial Institutions Drive Economic Sovereignty

Where traditional banks won't lend and communities lack access to capital, Native-owned banks and Native CDFIs step in with innovative solutions. Join leaders from the national Native CDFI network and Oneida Nation's 30-year-old bank to explore how culturally-informed lending, relationship-based underwriting, and flexible terms are transforming tribal economies.

- Pete Upton, CEO, Native CDFI Network
- Jeff Bowman, CEO, Bay Bank

10:40 a.m. – 11:10 a.m. | Cross Border Trade Opportunities: Is It Time to Move Forward?

With new tariff pressures, increased communication between tribes on both sides of the U.S.–Canada border, and recent Potawatomi confederacy discussions, cross-border trade opportunities are gaining momentum in Indian Country. Attorney Jen Saeckl of Native-owned law firm Mshkawzi explores Foreign Trade Zones, ancient trade routes, tribal customs brokering and practical strategies for tribes ready to leverage sovereignty in international commerce.

- Jennifer Saeckl, Of Counsel, Mshkawzi Law

11:10 a.m. – 11:40 a.m. | Ten Years of Data Sovereignty: The Center for Indian Country Development

Join Phil Gover from the Minneapolis Fed's Center for Indian Country Development for a fireside chat marking CICD's 10th anniversary. Discussion will cover the center's mission, tribal-centered research approach, and focus on data sovereignty. Gover will also highlight the national launch of the Survey of Native Nations and how CICD builds research capacity by working directly with tribal communities.

- Phil Gover, Senior Fellow & Project Manager, Center for Indian Country Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

11:40 a.m. – 12 noon | Wrap Up

Time to synthesize what we've learned over the day and a half Summit. We'll review major themes, recap key takeaways from the sessions and talk about next steps.

- Tom Durkee, Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Levi Rickert, Indian Country Media LLC
- Brian Edwards, *Tribal Business News*

Noon | Box Lunch (Grab-and-Go or Network in Meeting Room)

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Following the Summit, the SBA will host a tribal consultation in an adjacent room at Gun Lake Casino.

1 p.m. – 4 p.m. | Tribal Consultation Meeting with U.S. Small Business Administration

The Small Business Administration will host a [tribal consultation](#) in Wayland, Michigan to gather input on improving access to SBA programs for tribally-owned businesses. Discussion will cover financial assistance programs, contracting opportunities, business counseling, and technical assistance services. Participants are encouraged to share feedback on program effectiveness and suggest improvements to reduce regulatory barriers and enhance efficiency. Send pre-registration requests to attend and/or testify to Diane Cullo, Assistant Administrator of SBA's Office of Native American Affairs, U.S. Small Business Administration, 409 3rd Street SW, Washington, DC 20416; Diane.Cullo@sba.gov; or Facsimile to (202) 481-2177.