



Sovereign Nations

TribalSelfGov.org

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Reflecting on 2017 - A Message from the SGCE Board of Directors

The Self-Governance Communication & Education Tribal Consortium (SGCETC) has had a whirlwind year with conferences, trainings, quarterly meetings, and strategy sessions from coast-to-coast.

The year 2017 proved to be a flagship year for self-governance engagement with over 1000 people attending SGCE events, and a total of seven newly compacted self-governance tribes.

During the 2017 Self-Governance Strategy Session at Mohegan Sun in Uncasville, CT, the SGCE Board of Directors and Membership identified key areas of focus as we approach 2018 including the 30th anniversary of Self-Governance.

The Strategy Session attendees provided insightful input and reflected on the importance of communicating our successes over the past three decades as self-governance tribes and focusing on the technical aspects for the future of Self-Governance including but not limited to: sovereignty education, federal budgets impacting tribes, regulatory and consultation policies, legislation, and community engagement. Presentations from the 2017 Self-Governance Strategy Session are now available for download on the [SGCE website here](#).

Earlier this year we also saw the resignation of SGCETC Executive Director Terra Branson as she achieved the life-long goal to serve her own Tribal Nation, Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

The Board of Directors continues to actively search for the best individual to lead the SGCETC, while still maintaining a stable and effective organization. As we continue our search for a new Executive Director, we ask for your help in identifying candidates and contractors who can help SGCETC continue the critical work needed to protect, advance, and expand Self-Governance. Please find the [job description here](#). If you have any questions or concerns during this transition process, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Board of Directors or [Rhonda Farrimond](#), Interim Executive Director.

As we look forward to another flagship year, we want to thank all of you for helping to make 2017 such a success. Make sure and send any ideas our way in the coming months as we plan for 2018!

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2017 SGCE HIGHLIGHTS



Blazing the Trail...Literally



Mountain bike riders test out a section of the 10.5 miles of trails at the Fire Mountain TRAIL System located 100 yards from the Oconaluftee Indian Village in Cherokee, North Carolina. Photo Credit: Visit Cherokee NC Website.

Ingenuity and innovation are qualities held closely by self-governance tribes. Always looking to the future and integrating traditional values, self-governance tribes are constantly looking to reinvest into their communities.

Sovereign Nations recently caught up with Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) as they blaze the trail for the future of their community with an economic development venture in eco-tourism.

"It is something that has created a buzz," said EBCI Secretary of Operations Jeremy Hyatt. "We were trying to find something that was uniquely Cherokee, unique to the world, unique to this region, and how we can utilize that resource without exploiting it."

EBCI's foray into eco-tourism became a reality this past summer when the Fire Mountain TRAIL System opened on June 9, 2017. Free to the public, the TRAIL System provides the opportunity for not only tribal members to get out and get healthy but also the surrounding community.



Fire Mountain TRAIL System opening ribbon cutting ceremony. Photo credit: SCOTT MCKIE B.P./One Feather photos.

A nearly four-year journey from inception to opening, the Fire Mountain TRAIL System is set on 40 acres of EBCI trust land with 10.5 miles of trails ranging from beginner to intermediate to advanced. Hyatt attributes the success and the drive to create the innovative economic development venture to the EBCI's Project Management Team and is extremely excited about the future due in part to EBCI Principal Chief Richard Sneed's forward thinking and progressive leadership.



Fire Mountain TRAIL System map. Photo credit: SCOTT MCKIE B.P./One Feather photos.

"The Fire Mountain Trail system will be providing healthier recreational opportunities for our visitors and for our community," stated EBCI Principal Chief Richard Sneed. "We have provided our visitors with unique experiences for many years and the tourism has benefited our local community through the creation of more recreational activities for our people. The Fire Mountain Trail has provided a new opportunity to invest in our community while also investing in economic development."

Since the TRAIL System opening, EBCI has garnered interest from local communities in North Carolina looking to create similar community-based trail systems as well as bike race competitions, running challenge courses, and more.

"I think that we have really built something – we've done a heck of a job," said Hyatt. "We knew that we want to be a world-class attraction. Being a self-governance tribe allowed us to identify the right partners for the job and enabled us to pull EBCI departments and manpower in the most effective way we possibly could."

The EBCI team is currently developing the next phase in the development of the Fire Mountain TRAIL System and are looking forward to the exciting possibilities it will bring.

To learn more about the Fire Mountain TRAIL System visit http://visitcherokeenc.com/itinerary-builder/poi/Fire_Mountain_Trails/ or contact Jeremy Hyatt via email at jerehyat@nc-cherokee.com.

GAO Call for Tribal Nation Interviews

Government Accountability Office (GAO) – Reviewing Federal Programs Impacting Indian Country

At the request of the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs’ Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is conducting a review to describe how tribal nations are using various mechanisms, such as self-governance compacts, self-determination contracts, and the HEARTH Act, to take over federal programs and functions. The review will focus primarily on those programs and functions associated with the management and use of Indian resources and land, records management, economic development, and environmental protection. GAO’s review will also identify factors that have facilitated or hindered tribal nations from taking over federal programs and functions.

As part of the GAO study, they are requesting meetings with Tribal leaders to learn about your experiences with the various mechanisms and any suggestions for improvement. GAO is also seeking thoughts on any factors that may discourage a tribal nation from seeking to use any of these mechanisms. The input GAO receives from tribal leaders and officials will be crucial for them to provide Congress with helpful information.

If you are interested in speaking with GAO about this review, please contact Jay Spaan at spaanj@gao.gov or 214-777-5636.





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*Happy
Holidays*
AND A
JOYFUL NEW YEAR