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Oklahoma Tribes Answer Fundraising Challenge in Support of Native Rights

Shawnee, OK-In an unprecedented move last month, the Tulalip Tribes of Washington used their charitable contribution of \$50,000 to launch a nationwide campaign called "Preserving Native Lifeways" established to protect Native American Rights. The Tulalip Tribes' goal was to help the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) raise an additional \$50,000 to support their non-profit legal and advocacy work on behalf of the rights of Native peoples. The Tulalip Tribes' Chairman Melvin R. Sheldon Jr. issued a national challenge "to ALL tribes, individuals, organizations and businesses to join us with a commitment of their own." This challenge was generously answered at the end of July by the Sac & Fox Nation and Citizen Potawatami Nation, both of Oklahoma. Each tribe contributed \$10,000 to the Preserving Native Lifeways Campaign and helped NARF pass the half-way mark to its \$100,000 campaign goal.

During a reception and dinner held in conjunction with the Oklahoma Tribal Water Summit held at Fire Lake Grand Casino on July 29th, Principal Chief George Thurman and the Sac & Fox Nation's Business Committee presented NARF attorneys with a check for \$10,000 as part of the Preserving Native Lifeways Campaign. The Oklahoma Tribal Water Summit was a joint project organized by the Sac & Fox Nation and NARF that brought Oklahoma Tribal Leaders together to learn about and discuss Indian water rights and water issues facing their respective Nations.

"It is the Sac and Fox Nation's privilege to make a contribution to NARF," stated Sac & Fox Nation Principal Chief George Thurman. "NARF has been meeting a need in Indian Country for nearly 40 years; a need which has not gone unnoticed. The Nation appreciates NARF's dedication to all tribes and individual Indians. Principal Chief

Thurman added, "The Nation also looks forward to continued excellence from NARF for generations to come and we are pleased that we can contribute to their work."

NARF, in turn, honored the Sac & Fox Nation's contribution by a presentation of a star quilt to Principal Chief Thurman and with an honor song by the Black Bird Singers for the Sac & Fox Nation's Council. "We were deeply touched and honored by the Sac & Fox Nation's generous contribution to NARF and our Preserving Native Lifeways Campaign," stated NARF attorney David Gover.

Immediately following the check presentation ceremony, the Citizen Potawatami Nation's Tribal Chairman, John Barrett, made a pledge of \$10,000 on behalf of his Nation to the Preserving Native Lifeways Campaign. Chairman Barrett's match to the Sac & Fox Nations contribution to NARF caused a stir of excitement in the audience of more than 60 attendees representing 16 tribes from Oklahoma.

The contributions by the Sac & Fox Nation and Citizen Potawatami Nation has now propelled the Preserving Native Lifeways Campaign past the half-way mark of reaching its goal of raising \$100,000 for NARF. To date, the Tulalip Tribes' challenge campaign has raised approximately \$76,000 to support NARF. The Preserving Native Lifeways has now extended its deadline to August 15th in effort to reach its goal of \$100,000 raised. Updated campaign results will be announced at NARF 7th Annual Visions for the Future Benefit Art Auction in Santa Fe, New Mexico on August 22nd.

"We are exceptionally grateful to the Tulalip Tribes of Washington, the Sac & Fox Nation of Oklahoma, the Citizen Potawatami Nation and the numerous other tribes, organizations and individuals who have contributed to this campaign," stated NARF Executive Director John Echohawk. "Without this generous support our work to defend tribal sovereignty and the rights and lifeways of Native peoples would not be possible," added Echohawk.