



## 9th Annual National Tribal Child Support Association Conference -- An Inspired Success!

By Deborah Yates, NTCSA President

The National Tribal Child Support Association's 9th Annual Training conference theme *Together We Can* was infused with a "can do" attitude throughout the organization's recent event in Milwaukee, WI.

Traditional prayers offered in their native languages by Forest County Potawatomi elder Billy Daniels, Jr., Artley Skenandore, Jr. Oneida Nation, and Office of Child Support Enforcement's (OCSE) Dr. Kenneth Ryan, Assiniboine Nation resounded powerfully throughout the conference reminding attendees of traditional values, beginnings and responsibility.



Newly appointed OCSE Commissioner Vicky Turetsky galvanized the gathering as she elevated the conference theme into a challenge of – "*Together We Must*". The increasing number of tribal child support agencies; with exponential growth from the original nine to an astounding 45 programs in the past five years, offers limitless opportunities.

Commissioner Turetsky's message encouraged mutually beneficial partnerships and collaboration between tribal, federal and state partners.

Former Comanche Nation Chairman Wallace Coffey spoke of the responsibilities inherent in a government to government relationship.

Attendees laughed until their sides ached at the motivational stories and humorous anecdotes of speaker and author D.J. Vanas (Ottawa Nation).

Comedian Chance Rush (Hidatsa Nation) spoke of the joys and responsibilities of fatherhood from a generational perspective. Chance's ability to connect on a very humble level was inspiring and frequently infused with hilarious stories from his personal experience as a father and as a professional athlete.



NTCSA members attended training sessions throughout the five day event (July 12th – 17th, 2009) with workshops dedicated to legal/judicial matters, start-up program specific workshops, panels and workshops for comprehensive programs and a track for caseworkers.

The general membership meeting yielded a commitment from the Mescalero Apache Nation in New Mexico to host the 2010 NTCSA Training Conference. Mr. Lee Spoonhunter, Director of the Northern

[Honorable Eugene Whitefish](#)

Arapaho Child Support Program threw his ring into the hat for 2011 with the conference site designated for Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

NTCSA recognizes outstanding professionals at the yearly conference awards banquet. This year's winner of the Lucille Dawson Award for Professional Excellence went to NTCSA President and Comanche Nation Child Support Program Director Deborah Yates (Osage).



NTCSA awarded Sheila Drake of OCSE the Partnership Award for Professional Excellence.

The competition for Judges Award for Professional Excellence was such that the award was bestowed upon Judge Stephen Tourillot-Grochowski of the Menominee Nation of Wisconsin and Judge Michael Swallow from Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate in South Dakota.

The President's Award was received by Tami Lorbecke, Director of Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Office of Child Support Services.



The Outstanding Tribe Award was received by Forest County Potawatomi Community, hosting tribe of the NTCSA Conference.

FCPC Administrator, Eugene Shawano presents the award to two FCPC Council Members.



The evening was topped off by the Navajo comedy duo of James and Ernie who broke up the crowd with their hilarious antics and comedy skits. The healing nature of laughter was in overdrive throughout the event.

Artley Skenandore closed the conference on the final day with somber words, reminding the attendees how they had come together with a request to keep their eyes open and clear, their ears ready to listen and their minds prepared to learn.

The group assembled in a "talking circle" to express how the conference had impacted them and what lessons they would take home to their communities. The wafting smoke of burning sage carried these sentiments and encouragement for safe travels throughout the banquet room and beyond.

Additional information on NTCSA may be found on the organization's website [www.supporttribalchildren.org](http://www.supporttribalchildren.org) or by calling Deborah Yates at 580.357.3699.