



# NACNA President's Update

Month of May 2023

***Hello! Spring Greetings to All Wishing You Happy Indian New Year!***

Thank you for your continued prayers for our way of life. The NACNA, Oklahoma and NCAI made a Joint Statement on Cultural Dispossession, Appropriation, and Inadequate Consultation. The Joint Statement was written and submitted to two federal agencies because as stakeholders we represent the best interests of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and the Native American Church's Peyote practitioners. We are deeply alarmed and concerned at the accelerating attempts of pharmaceutical companies to appropriate traditional plant medicines in particular, mescaline derived or synthesized from peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*). In response to all this, we requested that both the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) engage in government-to-government consultation on this issue of patenting medicinal treatments, or any other inventions based on peyote, its derivatives, or any synthetic variants as soon as possible prior to any patents being issued or approvals of any kind being authorized for production or use. This patent request was made recently by Journey Colab, a pharmaceutical company, that applied for "patents". We understand Journey Colab has marketed a pharmaceutical business model based on shared benefit, reciprocity to both investors and the FDA. NACNA sent inquiries to Jeeshan Chowdhury (Co-Founder & CEO of Journey Colab) and Sutton King (Former Chief Impact Officer) to find out how Journey Colab conducted their consultation and obtained consent from Indigenous Peyote Communities. NACNA also requested copies of their consultation record and a listing of the individuals and organizations that were represented during their consultation process. To date, Journey Colab has neither provided a list of who they consulted with or provided verification that these claimed individuals and "*Indigenous Representatives*" were authorized by the organizations or indigenous communities they purported to represent.

NACNA, Native American Church of Oklahoma and National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) declare that these historical institutions of representatives which have been entrusted by Indian country to advocate on behalf of the Native American Church were not consulted; were not offered an opportunity to express viewpoints concerning the commercialization of our heritage; nor gave permission to have the molecule extracted from peyote. Given the information at this time, we have no choice but to express our crucial concerns for the legitimacy of the Journey Colab's claims.

This is why we have been advocating the enforcement of the AIRFA. It is being violated every day. As NAC members, are we going to sit back and watch all this unfold right before us? Are we going to exercise the elder's prayers and teachings? Relatives, the time to act is now . . . better late than never but certainly before government agencies make policy changes without our knowledge or input! We all know our way of life is based upon love, faith, hope, and charity. We will uphold the teachings and prayers.

Political vibes are not good to bring around our NAC ways, but our own folks are in the mix of these initiatives, it makes it really tough. We all see it! Inviting the world to use what we have left of the