In May the tribal air community gathered at the Seneca Niagara Resort and Casino in Niagara Falls, NY, for its annual Big Event. This year’s National Tribal Forum on Air Quality was big: attendance broke all previous records, with over 260 people taking part. The participants were a mix of tribal air pros, EPA, state and local air representatives, staff of academic institutions and non-governmental organizations, and others. The mix of attendees benefits all who take part: new staff gain the perspectives and problem-solving expertise of veteran airheads, while long-timers draw on the energy and fresh ideas of new staff. Participants of all stripes gain fresh connections, mentor/mentee relationships, and a chance to experience the rich cultures of both the host tribes and those of other attendees.

The event’s location a few blocks from iconic Niagara Falls might have had something to do with its popularity (the forum is held in different geographic regions each year to maximize participant access). But NTFAQ attendance has grown steadily nearly every year since the event’s inception—pretty good evidence that tribal air professionals find the event a worthwhile addition to their ongoing professional development.

ITEP and the National Tribal Air Association, co-sponsors of this year’s NTFAQ (with the added expertise of the ITEP/TAMS Center staff), extend our thanks to the leadership and staff of the Seneca Nation of Indians and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, this year’s forum co-hosts.

An NTFAQ Menu of Options

The three-day NTFAQ was really a four-day affair, with specialty sessions and a cultural tour of Niagara Falls taking place the day before the conference began. Clean Air Act 101, a session meant to help those who are new in the field get up to speed on the primary federal...
Greetings. I hope you’re enjoying the warm days with family and friends and having a great summer.

I first want to thank all who participated in this year’s National Tribal Forum on Air Quality in Niagara Falls, with special thanks to the leadership of this year’s tribal co-hosts, the Seneca Nation, whose spectacular facility on the edge of the Falls provided attendees with a memorable experience; and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, who generously provided financial and other support that helped to make NTFAQ’16 such a success. Thanks also to the event organizers, presenters, the Haudenosaunee Singers and Dancers, and especially all those who came to Niagara Falls for the Forum—you are the heart of each year’s experience.

At ITEP we’re staying busy during the summer months, providing classes and support while also developing the next round of support to tribes. Our air-quality training program is gearing up for a new roster of courses. This year, along with the usual air-quality training program is gearing up for a new training and support. They successfully completed their first Climate Change Adaptation Planning training in Pala, CA and it was excellent.

Enjoy your summer, and we hope to have the privilege of serving you over the coming year.

From the Executive Director
Ann Marie Chischilly

Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals
Northern Arizona University

20th Anniversary

Native Voices is published by NAU with a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
intricacies of the grant-application process. At the Emissions Inventory table, Kris Ray discussed how to access tribal EI software and tutorials. Sue Rose, ITEP’s former Tribal Climate Change Program Manager, addressed ways to present grant proposals that showcase tribal resources to their best advantage—an important component in “selling” a project. She also introduced program courses and webinars and facilitated a group discussion on climate-related activities.

NTAA Lunch Meeting

The first day of the forum was packed with activities, and for some, that was true even during the lunch break. The annual open meeting of the National Tribal Air Association was held at one of several casino dining halls, where staff from many of the more than 100 NTAA member tribes discussed the group’s recent activities. They also witnessed the annual hand-off of the association’s Status of Tribal Air Report by NTAA Chair Bill Thompson to EPA-OAR representative Pat Childers.

The NTAA has been especially active over the past year, not only engaging in tribal-government policy support, researching and releasing the 2016 STAR report, and assembling factsheets on federal rules that impact tribes, but also embarking on a new project, the Tribal Indoor Air Quality Needs Assessment. A survey exploring IAQ challenges and needs of tribes across the U.S., the assessment provides a valuable snapshot to help inform the development of indoor-air services and training that the NTAA and ITEP/TAMS provide over the coming year. The first day ended with optional tours. One took attendees to the infamous Love Canal neighborhood, site of widespread pollution and a tragic focal point of the early environmental movement. An NTFAQ group tours the Love Canal neighborhood, site of widespread pollution and a tragic focal point of the early environmental movement. An NTFAQ group tours the Love Canal neighborhood, site of widespread pollution and a tragic focal point of the early environmental movement. An NTFAQ group tours the Love Canal neighborhood, site of widespread pollution and a tragic focal point of the early environmental movement.

NTAA Chair Bill Thompson presents the 2016 Status of Tribal Air Report to EPA-OAR representative Pat Childers.

The urgent issue of climate change, and its impacts on tribes, was the subject of the Day Two opening session. A Plenary: Climate Change and Renewable Energy plenary session presented a comprehensive look at tribal energy, climate, adaptation and sustainability. EPA’s Laura McKelvey discusses renewable energy. GPI’s Dennis Wall, ITEP’s Glenn Gehring (R) talks with Hopi Envir. Specialist Alfonso Mahkewa.

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**The 2016 Virgil Masayesva Tribal Air Quality Program Excellence Awards**

**Angela Benedict**

At allergies are a nuisance, but for Angela Benedict, such an allergy may well have helped set the direction of her professional life. Originally considering a career as a veterinarian, this year's co-winner of the Virgil Masayesva Tribal Air Programs Excellence Award, decided to choose a different path, the field of chemistry. Maybe as a nod to fate, during her undergrad studies she was invited to an internship with the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, CO, where she used her chemistry skills to (indirectly) analyze air quality. By 1995, Angela was working with the Environmental Division at the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe as a Water Technician; she was also handling solid-waste duties. Before long, she was also responding to indoor-air calls from residents and local businesses. When she transitioned to air quality full-time, Angela faced several tasks: pushing through a Tribal Implementation Plan that a previous staffer, Joyce Barker, had produced and gotten in the pipeline; working on the Tribe's National Atmospheric Deposition Program monitoring sites; conducting fluoride monitoring of local plant tissues (stemming from emissions from a nearby aluminum plant); and continuing to respond to indoor-air complaints from tribal members. She faced a full plate in her new field that many would consider daunting, but Angela says her initial switch to full-time air work didn't feel all that challenging. She attributes that largely to the availability of ITEP air-quality training (she estimates she's completed 15-20 of the Institute's air courses). "If you think about it," she says, "for new people coming in, ITEP covers most of what you need. You just take the classes—one, two, three, she says, "for new people coming in, ITEP covers most of the Institute's air courses). "If you think about it," Angela says, "for new people coming in, ITEP covers most of what you need. You just take the classes—one, two, three, fundamentals, 101 type classes. It kind of overwhelms you at first, but it also eases you into getting on with air quality work."

The air at Saint Regis these days, she says, is reasonably clean; particulates are the major issue. The reservation lies within an ozone-transport zone, but except for an occasional elevated reading, the area is in attainment. Air quality at Saint Regis has improved in recent years largely due to the region's changing economy—a paper mill on the Canadian side of the river has shut down, as has the aluminum-processing plant near tribal land that may have been responsible for fluorosis in cattle. A second aluminum plant remains in operation 10 miles from Saint Regis and is presently funding a long-term fluoride-monitoring program. Even though the air at Saint Regis is in reasonably good shape, Angela's work still keeps her busy. Along with overseeing activities of the air staff, she and staff conduct about 15-20 home visits each year to consult on indoor-air issues of every description, determining the problem and advising homeowners on their options. She also serves as the tribe's Quality Assurance Officer, reviewing Quality Assurance Project Plans and making sure the tribe's Quality Assurance Management Plan is up to date. The tribe's TIP includes open-burning, new-facility permitting—standard air quality stuff, and it includes fluoride [standards] as well. As a member of the tribe's Environmental Response Team, she conducts monitoring related to the occasional hazardous-materials incident (mostly fuel-oil spills). One of her favorite accomplishments, from assisting individual Villages to providing policy input on national air quality and other environmental issues. She says she's particularly happy to have assisted in developing NTAA's yearly Status of Tribal Air Reports, which describes air-quality issues and progress across the region needs help, we do what we can. It's not just me, it's everybody." Modesty aside, Rose has been instrumental in a long list of accomplishments, from assisting individual Villages to providing policy input on national air quality and other environmental issues. She says she's particularly happy to have assisted in developing NTAA's yearly Status of Tribal Air Reports, which describes air-quality issues and progress across the nation and the world, and his PR efforts were significant in keeping the public informed on an issue that disproportionately impacts indigenous people. Rose adds that ongoing efforts to keep federal agency staff knowledgeable and aware of tribal environmental issues is crucial and comes down to “outreach, outreach, outreach. It’s a never-ending process. Someone new comes in and you have to start all over again.”

Rosalie Kalistook

Rosalie Kalistook, co-winner of the Virgil Masayesva Tribal Air Programs Excellence Award, would not be surprised if her total air mileage over the past 15 years in support of Alaska Native Villagers has approached a million miles. The precise number is hard to figure—Rose seems always to be traveling, from one Village to the next in support of their solid-waste or air quality issues, to a myriad of training courses over the years, to one or another National Tribal Air Association (NTAA) event—usually in the lower 48 states—or to one of many other destinations to address a variety of environmental issues.

Travel from her home Bethel, AK, to just about anywhere in- or outside our largest state, always means a drawn-out journey. At the close of May's National Tribal Forum on Air Quality in Niagara Falls, NY, for example, she was looking at a 16-hour series of flights back to her home. All the time and effort she spends in transit has yielded impressive results, but Rose refuses to take personal credit for the many accomplishments she's helped push through on behalf of Native people. "It's not just me who won this award," she says, "it's all of AK. I would get the message [from tribal members] and I would share that with NTAA, TAMS and of course EPA. It's teamwork. When a rep from a particular region needs help, we do what we can. It's not just me, it's everybody."

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Rosalie Kalistook in traditional dress.

Angela Benedict

Angela Benedict addresses the 2016 Virgil Masayesva Tribal Air Quality Program Excellence Awards crowd. She accepts one of this year's Virgil Masayesva awards.

Rosalie Kalistook

Rosalie Kalistook in traditional dress.

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Rosalie Kalistook

Rosalie Kalistook in traditional dress.
The EcoCafe featured displays on tribal climate change, policy, indoor-air quality, and an array of other environmental topics.

The Haudenosaunee Singers and Dancers entertained and educated the crowd with traditional dances and song. Passamaquoddy Environmental Specialist Marvin Cling comments during a climate-change breakout session.

and purpose of various dances and inviting audience members to participate.

Breakout Sessions

Through the course of the forum, participants explored a wide range of air-related topics at dozens of breakout sessions. Breakouts covered a wide range of topics, including the use of social media in air programs, the efficacy of new portable air monitors, tribal climate change efforts, federal policy initiatives, indoor and ambient air quality, and many more. A common "complaint" at the NTFAQ involves the breadth of topics offered and the inability of attendees to attend more of them.

At top: Dancers entertain attendees, some of whom join in the action. Above: Forum participants congratulate the award recipients.

The National Tribal Forum on Air Quality 2016 was truly a celebration of the tribal air community and the good work you do. We thank all who participated this year and hope to see you at next year's National Tribal Forum on Air Quality.
ANGELA – from page 7

activities is environmental outreach with tribal students. “I love doing that,” she says. “It’s really fun working with kids, trying to get them interested in the sciences.”

Along with her duties at Saint Regis, Angela has served tribes for well over a decade on the national level as a charter member of the National Tribal Air Association. She’s proud of the NTAA’s many accomplishments, and she’s especially pleased about the recently formed Indoor Air Quality Workgroup and a nationwide tribal IAQ needs assessment the group conducted. “We got HUD, BIA, FEMA, the American Lung Association…all these groups got together, had a listening session on the problems people are having. How often do you get that opportunity with agency higher-ups? I think it’s amazing what the workgroup was able to accomplish.”

She says a big lesson she’s learned over the years is the importance of listening. “You have to know that you don’t know everything. Not everything is as it seems. Keep an open mind. Somebody will tell you something, and you might say, ‘That’s crazy, that can’t happen.’ But it can happen. You can always learn something new.” She lives that philosophy—although she has attended most of ITEP’s air-quality classes, she says there are a few more she would still like to get under her belt.

On winning the Virgil Masayesva Award, she says, “It was awesomely incredible. I was shocked—there are a whole lot of people doing a lot of amazing things in tribal air who deserve recognition.”

She is clearly one of those people. We congratulate Angela Benedict on winning this year’s Virgil Masayesva Award and look forward to her continuing good work on behalf of Native communities.

ROSALIE – from page 7

more fires,” she says.

Melting permafrost, Rose notes, is another concern as it unleashes a new air-related challenge: mercury locked into the ice is being released into surrounding waters. Climate change and its impacts are a major focus of her work. She has partnered with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and many others on this and other climate issues.

Her long association with the Orutsararmiut Native Council, which ended last December, had her representing the interests of Villages throughout Alaska. When she began her work with the Council just a handful of tribes took part. By the time she left, more than 300 people were calling in to the ONC’s meetings. “Not all of those who call are members,” she says, “but we encouraged everyone to be involved.” Through the NTAA, Rose launched the Alaska Tribal Air Workgroup. Starting with seven members, that association has expanded to include some 66 Alaska Native Villages.

Rose received most of her AQ training through ITEP: “I have a gazillion certificates from ITEP.” As she’s built her expertise, she has shared it generously with both Native Alaskans and members of tribes throughout the U.S. As with her travel mileage, Rose can’t even guess at the number of committees and groups for whom she’s worked over the years.

Of her Masayesva Award, Rose says, “I thank everyone. I thank ITEP and the NTAA. And I thank Virgil Masayesva. I knew Virgil for many years. He came up to Bethel when I worked there; we would meet in Anchorage. He was always there for us, always encouraged the tribes to never give up. I’m very fortunate to have known him.”

We are pleased to celebrate Rosalie Kalistook as a winner of this year’s Virgil Masayesva Tribal Air Programs Excellence Award.

The Haudenosaunee Singers and Dancers