Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON –– The White House hosted its first ever lacrosse clinic today on the South Lawn featuring some of the nation's best lacrosse players showcasing the health benefits of the nation's fastest growing sport to 100 youth as part of the First Lady's Let's Move! in Indian Country (LMIC) initiative.

The clinic, organized by the White House Office of Public Engagement and the Department of the Interior, brought players from the Iroquois Nationals Team, Major League Lacrosse, the National Lacrosse League, MetroLacrosse and representatives from New Balance to introduce local and Native American youth to the sport and its cultural traditions. The event also kicked off national commitments made between LMIC and major lacrosse leagues and equipment firms to expand Native youths' access to, and participation in the sport.

"The Iroquois Confederacy is well known for its cultural ties to lacrosse and the ceremonial roots involving healing," said Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk. "It is wonderful to have Iroquois representatives demonstrate the continuity and diversity behind the secular sport of lacrosse and its sacred historical relationship to many American Indians."

Youth from the District of Columbia and Annapolis and Native youth from Baltimore's Native Lifelines, Menominee Nation and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians learned lacrosse skills as well as the sport's rich cultural traditions from members of the Onondaga Nation. Chefs from the National Museum of the American Indian also served healthy, traditional foods.

The game of lacrosse originated as a ceremonial American Indian healing game, often called the "Medicine Game," which valued creating a healthy and physically agile community. Today, the game has become the fastest growing sport in the United States, spawning professional, amateur, collegiate and high school leagues and creating many opportunities for boys and girls across the country to engage in rewarding physical activity.

The event was part of the White House Summer South Lawn Series that engages youth in outdoor activities and recreation. As a part of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative, LMIC was launched on May 25th, 2011 to bring together federal agencies, communities, nonprofits, corporate partners and tribes to end the epidemic of childhood obesity in Indian Country within a generation. Native youth are more likely to suffer from childhood obesity and related diseases, such as type-2 diabetes, than any other race or ethnic group.

LMIC aims to support and advance the work that tribal leaders and community members are already doing to improve the health of American Indian and Alaska Native children by 1) creating a healthy start on life, 2) developing healthy learning, 3) increasing access to healthy, affordable and traditional foods, 4) ensuring opportunities for physical activity.

Deputy Assistant to the President and Counselor to the Senior Advisor for Strategic Engagement Michael Strautmanis, White House Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs

Associate Director Charlie Galbraith and White House Domestic Policy Council's Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs Kimberly Teehee were joined at the event by Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Jodi Gillette, and Youth Office Director Julie Rodriguez. Professional lacrosse players included Brett Bucktooth and Jeremy Thompson, who are also members of the Iroquois Nationals team which is supported by Nike N7, and Danny Glading. Also participating was former Division I Collegiate athlete Jenny Collins.

Also taking part were NLL Commissioner George Daniel, MetroLacrosse CEO Emily Helm, representatives from New Balance, Iroquois traditional Lacrosse Stick Maker Alf Jacques, and Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation (Iroquois Confederacy) Oren Lyons as well as Iroquois Confederacy Tadodaho Sid Hill. LMIC will work with these leagues and organizations, among others, to expand access to and participation in lacrosse programs, clinics, and camps. Below is a list commitments from professional lacrosse leagues and national organizations that will help us meet our goal of creating a healthier generation of Native youth who can continue to share the traditions of this game.

- **Major League Lacrosse**: The expansion team, the Charlotte Hounds, are committing to outreach with clinics in Native American communities in North Carolina.
- **National Lacrosse League**: The Minnesota Swarm is hosting camps and clinics for Native youth on the Fon du Lac and Prairie Island reservations and supporting the first all-Native youth box lacrosse team in Minnesota. Additionally, the NLL's Washington Stealth will be implementing similar programs with Tribes in the Pacific Northwest.
- **MetroLacrosse**: MetroLacrosse will continue servicing current communities as well as working to link urban lacrosse programs around the country with Urban Indian Centers to introduce Native youth to the sport through leagues and programming.
- **New Balance (NB**): Main Supporter of MetroLacrosse and will continue supporting them in their outreach to underserved, urban communities. Additionally, NB donated 100 Let's Move! In Indian Country t-shirts to today's young participants.
- **Nike N7**: Supports the Iroquois National lacrosse team, as well as four VISTA volunteers who will work in native communities this summer to provide sports clinics and programming for Native youth.

To learn more about Let's Move! in Indian Country visit www.letsmove.gov/indiancountry.

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