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**USET Sovereignty Protection Fund President Kirk Francis
Condemns Disgraceful Federal Indian Policies and Calls on Indian Country to
Reawaken to its Own Power**

(Washington, DC)— In his opening remarks at United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) Impact Week, President Francis condemned all three branches of government for “centuries of paternalistic and shameful federal Indian policies.” He also expressed concern for the current situation in the United States, with the alarming increase in overt prejudice and abject racism.

“The roots of injustice and intolerance that were present from the very origins of this country, and that we mistakenly thought existed only as a faint image in our rearview mirror, have once again been exposed,” said Francis.

At the Impact Week meeting, Tribal leaders from 27 Tribal Nations across the south and eastern United States will discuss important topics such as Indian Country legislative priorities for 2018, current threats to sovereignty, and the battle against opioid addiction. After the posting of colors and prayer, meeting attendees listened to President Francis’s opening remarks.

Francis spoke of the revisionist history that pervades our schools and media and other U.S. institutions to this day: “We struggle with a system that seeks to hide these roots [of injustice and intolerance], to hide these truths, in an effort to preserve and reinforce a revisionist history that conceals the atrocities and reinforces its myths...an effort that attempts to dismiss these acts as acceptable and inevitable casualties in the march toward manifest destiny.”

Francis continued, saying “It is time for Indian Country to reawaken to its own power, to understand this power, and to leverage this power for the purpose of reclaiming our rightful place as strong sovereign indigenous governments and people with these lands. The moment, though hundreds of years in the making, is NOW.”

“It is no secret that our people have been waiting hundreds of years for the United States to keep its word; to live up to the agreements forged in the exchange of resources that are the bedrock of this nation’s strength and power,” said Francis. “When this day finally arrives—and we will not stop until it does—Tribal Nations and the United States will be able to move forward with a relationship rooted in diplomacy and mutual respect for each other’s inherent sovereign rights and authorities.”

USET SPF is a 501(c)(4) organization that focuses on educating Congress and the Executive Branch regarding issues challenging Indian Country and advocating for the policy and legislative needs of its member Tribal Nations. During Impact Week, Tribal Nations renew efforts to promote and protect the inherent sovereign authority of Tribal Nations.

USET President Kirk Francis has been chief of the Penobscot Indian Nation for 12 years. Before becoming Chief, he served in many leadership roles within the Penobscot Nation, and served three terms as a member of the Tribal Council.

USET Impact Week will take place Monday through Thursday, February 5-8, at the Marriott Crystal Gateway in Arlington, VA, and on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

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Because there is Strength in Unity