This week, tribal leaders from across the country are gathered on the homeland of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation in Mashantucket, Connecticut…for the National Congress of American Indians mid-year convention.

Leaders are addressing top issues facing their communities, and advancing tribal priorities for N-C-A-I to advocate on behalf of their tribal governments and communities.

Monday’s agenda included discussions about the Indian Health Service, violence against women, and Native education. Among concerns of attendees are recent actions by the Trump administration…including possible funding cuts to federal programs and services for tribes.

Chairman of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Rodney Butler says Indigenous people are resilient and have been through many tough times. Butler says that the N-C-A-I gathering is a place to interact with government officials, fellow tribal leaders and other stakeholders in Indian Country.

(Take bite-Chair Butler :53)

“We are born out of perseverance and we will get beyond these moments, right? That's the most important thing in sharing that. But also, that recognizing that there are some opportunities even in the clouds that we're seeing. So, like, the interim Assistant Secretary of Interior will be here, Scott Davis, and he's going to talk a lot about what tribes can do with this administration and, you know, in advancing sovereignty and growing our tribal economies in other areas where their priorities do overlap. Not perfectly with ours, but there's certainly opportunity in there. And so that's a lot of what we're talking about and just sharing the war stories of how did you navigate this scenario with your grant reductions and what's the best path forward. And you see a lot of that. And that's the beauty of NCIA, broadly speaking, is just being able to share those experiences with sister tribal nations. And we all learn from each other.”

Tuesday’s agenda includes conversations about Native child and family wellbeing, Indigenous determinants of health, and N-C-A-I /Native American Rights Fund priorities. The N-C-A-I convention and marketplace continues through Wednesday.