



For immediate release: May 12, 2022
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Ohio History Connection's Alex Wesaw Named to 40 Under 40 List **Director of American Indian Relations Division earns national recognition**

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Alex Wesaw, Director of the American Indian Relations Division for the Ohio History Connection and a Tribal Council Member At-Large for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, has been named to the 2022 class of Native American 40 Under 40 award recipients by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development.

The Native American 40 Under 40 awards represent the best and brightest emerging Indian Country leaders. Every year, 40 American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian leaders under the age of 40 are inducted in recognition of their leadership, initiative and dedication, and for making significant contributions in their business and/or in their community. Award winners include leaders working in numerous fields, including academia, government, nonprofits, tourism, nature conservation and technology.

Wesaw, 32, lives in the Columbus neighborhood of Clintonville. He grew up in Bremen, just outside Lancaster, and graduated from the Fairfield Union Local School District.

Wesaw earned his Ph.D. in city and regional planning from the Knowlton School of Architecture at The Ohio State University, his Master of Public Administration from the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service at Ohio University in Athens and his bachelor's degree in communications from Ohio University—Lancaster.

At Ohio State, he served as president of the Council of Graduate Students for two terms. He worked with the university to recognize and celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day on the second Monday in October and have it listed on the academic calendar annually, making Ohio State the first Big Ten school to do so.

In 2017, Wesaw was elected to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians' governing body, the Tribal Council, and was reelected in 2020. The Pokagon Band's 10-county service area includes four counties in Southwestern Michigan and six in Northern Indiana. He also serves on the Pokagon Gaming Authority, which is the board of directors of the Tribe's four Four Winds Casinos in Michigan and Indiana.

"Alex Wesaw possesses many unique qualities that makes him a valuable asset for the Tribal Council of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians," said Rebecca Richards, the Tribal Chairwoman of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians who nominated Wesaw for the award. "He is a smart strategic thinker that always maintains a positive attitude. His enthusiasm to help others is matched by his willingness to learn and empathy for others. I am proud to have him as a member of our Tribal Council, as his hard work and dedication to public service will continue to make a significant difference in the lives of nearly 6,000 Pokagon Citizens that comprise our Tribal Nation."



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In addition, Wesaw has been appointed as a national at-large delegate by the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on the Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee, representing the 574 federally recognized tribal governments in the U.S.

"In working with Alex, I have found him to be very dedicated and committed to his role both as a board member for his tribe and as the Director of American Indian Relations for the Ohio History Connection," said Chief Billy Friend of the Wyandotte Nation, a member of the Ohio History Connection board of trustees who also has served with Wesaw on the board for the Indian Gaming Association. "I believe Alex's communication and interpersonal skills have contributed to the success he has achieved at such an early stage in his career. There are currently 574 federally recognized Indian Tribes in the United States, and each of our nations has our distinct challenges. There is currently a great need in Indian Country for young native men like Alex who have a passion to take on the challenges that we face."

This year, the National Center will resume the tradition of honoring Native American 40 Under 40 awardees during an in-person reception from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on May 25 in Draï's at The Cromwell Hotel in Las Vegas.

"Inductees into the 2022 Native American 40 Under 40 Awards showcase the hard work, perseverance and dedication that have come to define this prestigious award," said Chris James, President and CEO of the National Center. "The Native American 40 Under 40 represent leaders in tribal government, medicine, law, politics, activism, agriculture, Native cuisine, economic development, media and many other areas. They are a reminder that Native American leaders are making a difference in every aspect of American life. I can't wait to welcome the Class of 2022 40 Under 40 Award Winners to the Reservation Economic Summit 2022, and I hope you'll join us to celebrate their achievements."

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About the Ohio History Connection:

The Ohio History Connection, formerly the Ohio Historical Society, is a statewide history organization with the mission to spark discovery of Ohio's stories. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization chartered in 1885, the Ohio History Connection carries out history services for Ohio and its citizens focused on preserving and sharing the state's history. This includes housing the state historic preservation office, the official state archives, and local history office and managing more than 50 sites and museums across Ohio. For more information, visit ohiohistory.org. Support for Ohio History Connection programs is provided by the [Greater Columbus Arts Council](#).

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