



## Editor's Message: Getting to Know People the Old-Fashioned Way

February 26, 2018 Message

Being wrapped in a blanket taught me the value of appreciating a different culture in a business setting. I was at the 2017 Pipeline Leadership Conference in Dallas last November when I was involved in a blanket ceremony. Robert Williamson (left), a representative of the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma, and Bobby Gonzalez, of Tribal Energy Resource, conducted the honor at the conclusion of a panel discussion, titled "How Tribes and Pipeline Companies Can Work Together."

The presentation was led by Lou Thompson, also of Tribal Energy Resource, and included Doug Kennedy of Plains All American Pipeline and Ian Stewart of Sempra Energy. The panelists described how developing relationships led to mutual benefits between indigenous groups and the pipeline industry. The blanket ceremony was conducted as a thanks to the Pipeline Leadership Conference organizers for inviting Williamson to the event. It was my great honor to accept the gift on behalf of Benjamin Media, Continuum Capital and the Program Committee.

In speaking to Williamson and Gonzalez after the presentation, they imparted to me that the biggest difference in dealing with tribes (or the First Nations in Canada) vs. other public stakeholders is how indigenous communities conduct business.

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"We don't want to jump right into negotiations," Williamson said. "We want to sit down with you and have a meal. That way we get to know you a little bit."

Gonzalez, who is also of indigenous heritage, shared similar thoughts. If a pipeline company wants to be successful in working with tribes, it has to build a relationship and recognize the cultural differences between each community.

It may seem like an old-fashioned way of doing business, but the results can be mutually beneficial.

I was happy to revisit that discussion and expand upon it in our **January/February cover story**. I spoke to Thompson and Art Cunningham, a 30-year veteran of indigenous relations in the pipeline industry. They talked about how partnerships between pipeline companies and tribes can reduce or avoid pipeline protests and benefit both sides from a business and social standpoint.

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