

**Rural Education Conference  
National Museum of the American Indian  
Dr. G. Wayne Clough  
Secretary, Smithsonian Institution  
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*(text as prepared for delivery)*

Good morning. Thank you, Secretary Duncan, for the introduction. And thank you for the outstanding job you are doing for the youth of our nation. A special welcome as well to FCC Chair Julius Genachowski and other guests from the Administration, particularly the Department of Agriculture.

Welcome, all, to the Smithsonian and the beautiful National Museum of the American Indian which is celebrating the fifth anniversary of its opening this year. It is the youngest of our museums, with the oldest being the Castle Building, which is 155 years old—where my office is. I hope you take some time to enjoy this museum while you are here and see some of the permanent and new exhibits about American Indian culture and history. Too many people think a museum is a place where nothing changes, but we have around 100 new exhibits each year at the Smithsonian. Hopefully you can enjoy some of these that are up now in our museums. And right here in this museum I recommend a visit to the Brian Jungen exhibit where you will find an exhibit that will surprise, challenge and delight you.

Secretary Duncan has said, “Providing every child in America with a good education is both a moral imperative and an economic imperative. It is also a matter of social justice. It is the civil rights issue of our generation—the one and only way to overcome the differences of wealth, background and race that divide us and deny us our future.” I couldn’t agree more.

That’s why we are pleased to participate in the new online Learning Registry described by Secretary Duncan. Our collections are vast and varied, containing the world’s most extensive science collection as well as treasures of history, art and culture. These treasures belong to the American people and we are determined, as outlined in our new Strategic Plan, to open our holdings to the public.

I have devoted all of my professional life to education. I have been fortunate to serve at some of the finest universities in the country, most recently as president of Georgia Tech, and now it is an honor to serve the Smithsonian Institution, one of our nation’s and the world’s greatest educational resources.

This conference is about rural education, something I know a good bit about personally. My parents were born in 1902 on farms in the Deep South and were educated in a one room school in Snipesville, Georgia, a town that no longer exists. I grew up in the nearby small town of Douglas and was fortunate to have received as good an education as this community could provide. But later in life my parents moved to Chattanooga,

Tennessee, where I learned that even though I was an A student in Douglas, I was behind the curve in Chattanooga. And I learned about cultural resources available in a regional city that were not there in my hometown. I was very lucky to have taken advantage of my transition because of great parents and family and teachers along the way who saw something in me and helped me, often in spite of my tendency to live up to some of my more immediate talents like shooting pool.

Our country is founded on the basis that everyone, including kids in small towns and rural America, deserve a fair chance to succeed, regardless of race, creed, family resources or place of birth. Our country's ability to succeed in the future will depend in part on whether it lives up to this promise. In the days to come, we will need every smart and motivated person we can muster to compete in a world economy where the ante is going up, and others will have more people, and perhaps more chips, than we do to put in the game.

When I came to the Smithsonian two years ago, I realized this grand old institution stood on the doorstep of a rebirth. While we had traditionally served millions of visitors through the traditional museum visit, a new possibility was emerging. Not only could we envision a new era where our collections could be digitized, but also one where our remarkable scientists and scholars, their research and scholarship, and our far flung operations in over 90 countries could become part of a new interactive web based educational network. It was apparent if we could find the resources needed for the new possibilities and constructively link them with an existing powerful array of educational activities already in place, something special could happen.

It did not take long to find creative folks at the Smithsonian who accepted the challenge and took off running with the ball. We found people and foundations that shared our vision and now have a host of new web-based activities that we are experimenting with to see what works and what does not. If there is one way in which I remain in the picture it is to remind our folks that if any pilot is to be judged a success, you have to prove to me it is reaching areas of need, like rural America. Like the place where I grew up.

And they have. We have conducted a series of interactive online conferences that met all of the tests for success, including my own. In response to our first webinar on Lincoln, a teacher from my hometown of Douglas said:

- “Thank you—next best thing to being there! The part of the conference that was so valuable to my students (and to me) was that the moderators commented on and responded to several of our comments. In high school lingo, that was ‘cool.’”

Our plans for the future are more likely to succeed because they are part of the Smithsonian Institution, the largest museum and research complex in the world—it has 19 museums and galleries, 20 libraries, numerous research centers and the National Zoological Park. Collections include a remarkable 137 million artifacts, works of art and scientific specimens.

More than 30 million people from across the country and around the world visited the museums and the National Zoo in 2009, and nearly 190 million virtual visitors went to our websites. I believe this is a good start. The day should come when a billion visitors use our websites. I mentioned that we have activities in nearly 100 countries around the globe. For example, Haiti. I recently returned from a trip there with Rachel Goslins, Executive Director of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and her colleagues on the committee. Together, we are working with the State Department and the Haitian government to recover Haiti's artistic and cultural treasures that presently lie in the rubble of their museums and archives. We are not only training Haitians in how to recover their own art—we will be using our activities in Haiti as a means to help students here in the U.S. understand the level of devastation this country has sustained. And how important art and history are to a country's health and future, and how a people in a nation that is subject to both hurricanes and earthquakes manage to find a meaning to life.

Looking ahead, our new approaches will be guided by a new strategic plan that is grounded on the principle of “shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge and sharing our resources with the world.” It focuses our efforts towards four grand challenges facing our nation and the world: Unlocking the Mysteries of the Universe, Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet, Valuing World Cultures and Understanding the American Experience. We have special resources in all of these areas and can create partnerships with educational and research institutions to create a full package where needed. We can offer educational programs that will complement the efforts of our K-12 systems and improve educational outcomes. We believe if we have great ideas that work and can build the partnerships that are needed, others will help us find the resources we need.

One element of our plan is to reach new audiences, especially younger audiences, who don't communicate or learn like we used to. We now have more than 300 social media accounts across the Institution and this number is growing rapidly. On our YouTube offerings, we have had more than 260,000 video views. The MEanderthal application at our Hall of Human Origins at our National Museum of Natural History now has more than 125,000 downloads. Our second app is the Yves Klein exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and is Apple's 12th most popular educational app. Dozens more will follow this year.

To coordinate and stimulate our plans, we were successful in attracting donor support to hire our first ever Director of Education, Claudine Brown. I hope you have met her or will do so while you are here. Claudine has been an integral part of designing this conference. Claudine comes to us with a history of being able to innovate and she is already making a difference. She will oversee an enterprise that has recently conducted three successful interactive online conferences: on Lincoln, climate change and access to Smithsonian experts. To date these conferences have included:

- 34 hours of live programming
- 20,000 participants from 100 countries, all U.S. states and territories, more than 3,000 cities and 6 continents

Audiences have included K-12 teachers and students, university and community college faculty and students, librarians, congressional staff members, Girl Scout troops, tribal councils and staff of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, museums, corporations and the general public. We're now working with Microsoft Partners in Learning on two more.

What we learned is that these programs have a special impact in rural areas. A history teacher in Wisconsin wrote...

- "I teach ...in a small, rural district with approximately 1,800 students...Nearly 25% are economically disadvantaged, but many more are culturally disadvantaged—they have not experienced much of the world outside their own small community. The online resources of the Smithsonian help bring the world to my students—and all of them are free. I have shared these resources with colleagues in my district and around the state. (*Beth A. Oswald (Evansville WI), Seventh Grade World History Teacher, 2008 Wisconsin State Teacher of the Year*)

Bob Williams, the 2009 Teacher of the Year in Alaska took his conclusions to YouTube, answering the question, "Is the Smithsonian Better than Megan Fox?" He pointed out that in 2009 the top internet searches were for Michael Jackson, The Twilight Saga, World Wrestling Entertainment, Megan Fox and Brittany Spears. His conclusion may have been biased by being a math teacher, saying, "When you are searching for something meaningful and useful in 2010, your best bet is giving Smithsonian education a shot."

And there is a lot to Smithsonian education. We're working with the Department of Education on a number of projects including partnering with more than 20 Local Education Authorities and universities on U.S. Department of Education Teaching American History Grants.

We're working with the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop new instructional materials to for teachers' professional development that address common core state standards.

Last year, Our Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies recorded 1.2 million views of lesson plans, 360,000 downloads and 2.4 million visitors to SmithsonianEducation.org.

We also have an expansive science education initiative. For the past 25 years, the National Science Resources Center (NSRC) has leveraged the research and expertise of the Smithsonian and the National Academies to develop science education programs. It is now in K-12 science programs in more than 1,200 school districts representing 30% of the U.S. student population in 48 states—as well as overseas in nine countries. NSRC and

our partners are working with an estimated 4 million students representing rural communities.

We have prepared information packets on all these outreach programs and others I am not able to cover for you.

We look forward to working with our donors, the Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture, the FCC and other partners to improve education in this country. Every year, roughly 1 million kids drop out of high school. Roughly half say they leave because they're bored. We believe what we do will provide powerful tools for the work ahead. We have the unique ability to shape our offerings for different segments of the K-12 environment using the expertise found in this museum, our Latino Center, our Asian Pacific American Program and our emerging National Museum of African American History and Culture. And we know and respect the teachers who are out there working on the front lines.

President Obama made it clear how important education is to our nation's future when he identified three areas as absolutely critical to our economic future: energy, health care and education. As he said, "In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity—it is a pre-requisite." He also warned that "the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow." We want to work with all of you in meeting this challenge that will face us and future generations.

Thank you for allowing me this time with you this morning. Now it is my pleasure to introduce another committed public servant like Secretary Duncan.

As the Chairman of the FCC Julius Genachowski has important plans for connecting the country and is working with the Department of Agriculture on "Broadband Opportunities for Rural America." He said in a recent speech:

"Imagine a connected America where kids in poor neighborhoods, living in rural towns or city apartments, can have access in their classrooms to the best teachers in the world..."

Please welcome the Chairman of the FCC Julius Genachowski.

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