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## NEWS

# At 73, Ray Emanuel isn't finished helping Tennessee's Native Americans



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Ray Emanuel had his left hand blown off as a 5-year-old when the longtime Native American Indian Association of Tennessee director unknowingly picked up dynamite.

“My family didn’t pity me, I had to pull my own weight,” Emanuel said.

The dynamite he encountered was sometimes placed for stump removal at the North Carolina farm his where his family worked.

“I never considered myself handicapped,” the Franklin resident, who belongs to the Lumbee tribe out of North Carolina, said. “You have to keep going. You’ve got to eat. You can’t sit back.”

Emanuel still doesn't sit back as the energetic 73-year-old longtime leader of the Indian organization, which has its most visible event — an annual pow wow that typically draws thousands — Friday and Sunday at Long Hunter State Park.

## Hopes to build new Indian Center

Emanuel has led fundraising efforts to build a new Circle of Life Indian Cultural Center for more than 20 years that has been full of letdowns and disappointments with still no construction.

The cultural center would centralize the NAIA’s job assistance, education and emergency services programs and have a public museum for schools and groups to visit.

The Greater Nashville Regional Council is working with the NAIA on a matching grant application from the U.S. Economic Development Administration that could help fund the

center. The association already owns land for the center on Bell Road in South Nashville.

The NAIA was chartered in 1982 and has headquartered since 2003 in a small and cluttered house on Spence Lane, where Emanuel continues to work daily to help Native Americans he believes "don't feel part of the system" in Tennessee.

"He's the power in this organization," said Sally Wells, a co-founder of the NAIA with Emanuel. "He's just happy to help people. He goes out of his way to help one person. He is so dedicated to this organization."

## **Can the money be raised?**

The estimated cost for the the center is estimated just over \$1.5 million, Michelle Lacewell of the GNRC said.

The NAIA would be responsible for \$757,500 through the grant, if approved, and has raised about \$492,000 for the center.

Emanuel, retired from the U.S. Postal Service, will request state funding to make up the approximate \$265,000 balance. He's been in contact with several legislators and lobbied for state funding toward the center for years without success.

"He is a tenacious, tireless, yet very humble in his approach to this," said State Rep. Glen Casada (R-Franklin), who has advocated for the center. "He keeps coming back year after year ... and he may have found a way this year."

## **Annual pow wow at Long Hunter**

**What:** Fundraiser for Native American Indian Association of Tennessee programs and its building fund

**When:** Friday through Sunday, Oct. 19-21. Gates open at 9 a.m. Friday and 10 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. The pow wow goes until dark Friday and Saturday and to 5 p.m. Sunday.

**Where:** Long Hunter State Park, 2910 Hobson Pike in Nashville

**Tickets:** Adults \$8. Seniors \$4. Ages 6-12 \$4. Ages 5-under are free.

**Friday school days:** Seniors can attend for free, along with students joining a number of school groups that typically attend.

**Highlights and attractions:** Native American dancing, teepees, storytelling, food,

jewelry, Indian games, arts and crafts and demonstrations. Wahlalah Brown and Sandy Brown are native Cherokee who will conduct live cultural and historical presentations.

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