



# ACHIEVING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR TRIBAL NATIONS

2011 White House Tribal Nations Conference  
Progress Report

DECEMBER 2011





*“We know that, ultimately, this is not just a matter of legislation, not just a matter of policy. It’s a matter of whether we’re going to live up to our basic values. It’s a matter of upholding an ideal that has always defined who we are as Americans. E pluribus Unum. Out of many, one. That’s why we’re here. That’s what we’re called to do. And I’m confident that if we keep up our efforts, that if we continue to work together, that we will live up to the simple motto and we will achieve a brighter future for the First Americans and for all Americans”*

—President Barack Obama, December 16, 2010



President Barack Obama meets with tribal leaders in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, December 15, 2010.  
(Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)





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# Executive Summary

At the White House Tribal Nations Conference on December 16, 2010, President Obama, joined by Cabinet Secretaries and other senior Administration officials from the Departments of State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Education, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and the Environmental Protection Agency, met with leaders invited from all 565 federally recognized tribes to strengthen the relationship between the U.S. government and tribal governments. In his opening remarks, President Obama discussed his Administration's comprehensive strategy, developed in consultation with tribal governments, to meet the challenges facing Indian Country—including growing the economy and creating jobs; taking land into trust for federally recognized tribes; improving health care for Native Americans and all Americans; enhancing tribal schools from primary education to tribal colleges; and reforming the way justice is served on Indian reservations.

President Obama also announced that the United States was lending support to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Declaration). Like the Administration's strategy for Indian Country, the decision to support the Declaration followed multiple consultation sessions with tribal leaders and other meetings with interested groups and individuals. However, the decision to support the Declaration was not an end in itself. As President Obama made clear: "What matters far more than words—what matters far more than any resolution or declaration—are actions to match those words."

The Administration's commitment to that standard of action is reflected in the many federal policies and programs discussed throughout this report that are being implemented by federal agencies in response to concerns raised by American Indians and Alaska Natives. These policies are focused on healthcare, education, public safety and economic development for American Indian and Alaska Native communities and protecting tribal lands and the environment. And federal agencies will continue to be informed by the Declaration as they implement these policies and develop new initiatives together with tribal leaders.







# Obama Administration Accomplishments for American Indians and Alaska Natives

Since taking office, President Obama and his Administration have made tremendous progress in addressing the major issues of concern to Indian Country. Underlying this progress is President Obama's strong belief that tribal leaders must be part of the solution and have a seat at the table. At both the 2009 and 2010 White House Tribal Nations Conferences, tribal leaders had discussions with the President and Cabinet officials. In addition, at the 2009 Conference, the President signed a memorandum directing federal agencies to fully implement an Executive Order on tribal consultation. Both actions have led to greater tribal consultation and feedback that has helped shape the Administration's policy priorities for American Indians and Alaska Natives, which have included improving the quality of care offered by the Indian Health Service, promoting economic development in Indian Country, and making tribal communities safer.

The following highlights some of the key accomplishments that this Administration has achieved in support of Native Americans.

- **Strengthening the Government-to-Government Relationship:** In 2009, President Obama signed a memorandum to signal a new era in the government-to-government relationship with Indian Tribes, which has improved communication and inclusiveness. The President directed every agency to develop detailed plans to fully implement Executive Order 13175, "Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments." Federal agencies have submitted the required plans and progress reports, and consultations are now at historic levels. In addition, the President has hosted two White House Tribal Nations Conferences, inviting tribal leaders from each of the 565 federal recognized tribes to meet with Cabinet secretaries and senior Administration officials.
- **Improving Health Care and Healthy Living:** President Obama signed into law the Affordable Care Act, which is improving the quality of health care and make it more accessible and affordable for all Americans, including Native Americans. The law permanently authorized new and expanded programs and services available to those who use the Indian Health Service, which includes most American Indians and Alaska Natives. In addition, First Lady Michelle Obama launched *Let's Move! in Indian Country*, bringing together federal agencies, local communities, nonprofits, corporate partners, and tribes to end the epidemic of childhood obesity in Indian Country within a generation by creating a healthy start on life for children; ensuring families access to healthy, affordable, traditional foods; and increasing opportunities for physical activity.
- **Promoting Sustainable Economic Development in Indian Country:** President Obama has taken significant steps to promote the economic well-being of Native Americans. The Recovery Act provided more than \$3 billion to help tribal communities renovate schools on reservations, spur job creation in tribal economies, improve housing and energy efficiency, and support health facilities and policing services. Recognizing that Indian Country faces unique challenges when it comes to sustainable economic development, the White House Rural Council is working across federal agencies to address these challenges and promote economic prosperity and

quality of life in Indian Country and across rural America. The Administration has already made important investments in infrastructure to support economic development in Indian Country. In order to bring high-speed, affordable broadband into tribal communities, both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce have dedicated programs for this effort and have awarded loans and grants worth over \$1.5 billion for projects to benefit tribal areas.

- **Making Tribal Communities Safer:** President Obama signed the Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) into law in July 2010. The TLOA gives tribes greater sentencing authority, improves defendants' rights, establishes new guidelines and training for officers handling domestic violence and sex crimes, strengthens services to victims; helps combat alcohol and drug abuse, helps at-risk youth, and expands recruitment and retention of Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal officers and gives them better access to criminal databases. Also, in July 2011, the Department of Justice submitted to Congress a legislative proposal that would recognize certain tribes' power to exercise concurrent criminal authority over domestic-violence cases, regardless of whether the defendant is Indian or non-Indian. This proposal would significantly improve safety for Native women and allow federal and tribal law enforcement agencies to hold more perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their crimes.
- **Resolving Longstanding Disputes:** President Obama has resolved several significant and longstanding Native American legal claims against the United States. In 2010, the Administration reached a \$760 million settlement with Native American farmers and ranchers in the *Keepseagle* case, alleging discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in loan programs. Under the agreement, USDA will pay \$680 million in damages and forgive \$80 million of outstanding farm loan debt. President Obama also signed into law the Claims Resolution Act which includes the *Cobell v. Salazar* settlement agreement. This class-action suit lawsuit regarding the U.S. government's trust management and accounting of over three hundred thousand individual American Indian trust accounts had been long-running and highly contentious. In addition, the Claims Resolution Act included four water settlements benefitting seven tribes in Arizona, Montana, and New Mexico.
- **Addressing Indigenous Issues:** The President announced the United States' support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in December 2010. President Obama and his Administration are working to improve relations with indigenous peoples by looking to the principles embodied in the Declaration in its dealings with federally recognized tribes, while also working with all indigenous individuals and communities in the United States.
- **Ensuring Greater Representation for Native Americans:** To ensure that Native Americans are represented in this Administration, President Obama appointed Larry Echo Hawk of the Pawnee Nation as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, Dr. Yvette Roubideaux of the Rosebud Sioux tribe as the Director of the Indian Health Service, Hilary Tompkins of the Navajo Nation as the Solicitor of the Interior, Lillian Sparks of the Rosebud and Oglala Sioux Tribes as Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans, Tracie Stevens of the Tulalip Tribes as Chairwoman of the National Indian Gaming Commission, Charles Galbraith of the Navajo Nation as Deputy Associate Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs,

Kimberly Teehee of the Cherokee Nation as Senior Policy Advisor in the White House Domestic Policy Council, and others. Working with tribal leaders, this team is helping shape federal policies that impact tribal communities.

## **Strengthening the Government-to-Government Relationship**

### **Maintaining an Open Dialogue Through Meaningful Consultation**

President Obama is committed to including the voices of tribal officials in formulating federal policy. At the Tribal Nations Conference in November 2009, the President signed a Memorandum directing every federal agency to develop a plan to fully implement Executive Order 13175, "Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments."

Federal agencies are currently implementing consultation plans and tribal consultations are at an unprecedented level throughout the U.S. government. At least eight agencies have established or taken steps to establish dedicated offices to oversee tribal issues and to organize tribal consultations. Additionally, at least seven agencies have established intra-agency or interdepartmental advisory or coordination groups to ensure that all divisions within their agencies are properly involved with the consultation process. Some agencies, such as the Departments of Justice and the Interior are working cooperatively with tribal representatives to establish standing Native American working groups with both agency and tribal representatives.

### **Supporting Self-Governance**

President Obama strongly supports tribal self-determination and self-governance. This support reflects a true commitment to improve tribal governments' capacity for controlling their own futures. Self-governance compacts and self-determination contracts provide tribal governments with greater program flexibility during fluctuations in the federal budget. By increasing program flexibility, tribal governments can prepare for new budget challenges that will be shared across the federal government. That is why we are working to improve opportunities through the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (Public Law 93-638 or "638", as amended by Public Law 103-413), and the Indian Employment, Training, and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-477 or "477") in a way that will help tribes to maximize federal programs in the future.

Over the past year, the Interior Department has worked with tribes and lawmakers on a legislative proposal to streamline the 638 program and self-governance compacts, and today, the Interior Department joins tribes in supporting a legislative proposal to improve tribes' ability to control tribal programs under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. There is a similar story in the area of 477 program funding. Under the 477 program, tribes can combine formula-funded federal grant funds that are employment- and training-related into a single budget. This provides tribes with the opportunity to be flexible in how they maximize services for tribal members. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is working hard to promote and organize this program so that tribal governments can take better advantage of federal funding that will increase job opportunities in Indian country.

## Resolving Longstanding Disputes



Leaders of the Osage Tribe join officials from the U.S. Department of Justice and Department of the Interior to commemorate the historic Osage Tribal Trust Settlement, October 21, 2011.  
(Department of Interior photo)

President Obama has made extensive efforts to resolve longstanding Native American legal claims against the United States and private entities related to lands, natural resources, and other issues.

In 2010, the Administration reached a \$760 million settlement with Native American farmers and ranchers in the *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* case alleging discrimination by the Department of Agriculture in loan programs. Under the agreement, the United States will pay \$680 million in damages and forgive up to \$80 million of outstanding farm

loan debt. Important programmatic relief is also included in the settlement, including establishment of a Council on Native American Farming and Ranching, technical assistance to enable greater access to programs, publishing of a guide to programs; and other important efforts to improve access to USDA programs.

President Obama also signed into law the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 in December 2010, which authorizes and funds the *Cobell v. Salazar* settlement agreement. In addition, the Claims Resolution Act included four water settlements benefitting seven tribes in Arizona, Montana, and New Mexico. The \$3.4 billion *Cobell* settlement will resolve the federal government's historical accounting for trust accounts maintained by the United States on behalf of more than 300,000 individual Indians. This includes a fund of \$1.5 billion to be distributed to class members to compensate them for their historical accounting and potential trust fund and asset mismanagement claims. In addition, to address the continued proliferation of thousands of new trust accounts caused by the "fractionation" of land interests through succeeding generations, the settlement establishes a \$1.9 billion fund for the voluntary buy-back and consolidation of fractionated land interests. The land consolidation program will provide individual American Indians with an opportunity to obtain cash payments for divided land interests and free up the land for the benefit of tribal communities. Furthermore, up to \$60 million will be set aside to provide scholarships for higher education for American Indian and Alaska Native students.

The *Cobell* settlement is a key priority for the Obama Administration and signals a new era in the U.S. Government's relationship with Indian Country. The *Cobell* settlement not only resolves the contentious 15-year litigation, but also honorably and responsibly turns the page on an unfortunate chapter in the Department of the Interior's history. While the *Cobell* settlement will not be finalized until all appeals are completed, much progress is being made. This year, the Department of the Interior has engaged in seven government-to-government consultations with tribal leaders to receive meaningful input on how to best implement the Trust Land Consolidation Program under the *Cobell* settlement.

In October 2011, officials from the Departments of Justice, the Interior, and the Treasury, joined by officials of the Osage Nation, commemorated in a ceremony at the Department of the Interior the final settlement of a long-running lawsuit by the Tribe regarding the United States' accounting and management of the Tribe's trust funds and non-monetary trust assets. The negotiated settlement agreement will end litigation regarding the Department of the Interior's accounting and management of the Tribe's trust accounts, trust lands, and other natural resources, including the Tribe's mineral estate. The United States will pay the Osage Nation \$380 million to compensate the Tribe for its claims of historical losses to its trust funds and interest income as a result of the government's management of trust assets. The parties also will implement measures that will lead to strengthened management of the Tribe's trust assets and improved communications between the Department of the Interior and the Tribe, including procedures for delivery of periodic statements of account, annual audit information, and information relating to the management of the mineral estate to the Tribe. Importantly, the agreement also provides dispute resolution provisions to reduce the likelihood of future litigation.

## Promoting Sustainable Economic Development

### Reducing Unemployment in Indian Country

The President's FY 2012 Budget Request includes \$54 million, representing a \$1.5 million increase over FY 2011 funding, for the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) Indian and Native American Program, which grants funding to tribes and Native American non-profits to provide employment and training services to unemployed and low-income Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. From July 2009 to June 2010, approximately 33,000 adults were served through 178 grants awarded to support employment and training services and nearly 7,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 21 were served through grants awarded to 78 tribes, tribal consortiums, or tribal non-profit organizations to offer summer employment and training activities for American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian youth.

The Recovery Act allocated over \$17 million for the Native American Supplemental Youth Service Program that was awarded to 78 grantees to support summer employment and training opportunities for disconnected youths and veterans. This additional funding allowed the Native American program to serve an additional 5,610 youth through June 30, 2010 with summer employment and work readiness skills.

In addition to the Indian and Native American Program, through a nationwide network of more than 2,900 One-Stop Career Centers, more than 26,000 Native Americans were served by the Workforce



U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Education Secretary Duncan, and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Donovan meet with Senator Mark Begich and Native elders during a 'Rural Tour' community forum in Bethel, Alaska, to discuss efforts by the Obama Administration to rebuild and revitalize rural America, August 2009. (Department of Agriculture Photo by David Valdez)

Investment Act (WIA) Adult Program and nearly 10,750 received services through the WIA Dislocated Worker Program from April 2010 through March 2011.

In June 2010, Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis announced \$75 million in Recovery Act On-the-Job Training (OJT) National Emergency Grants (NEGs) to provide workers affected by layoffs with OJT opportunities in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and three federally-recognized Native American tribes: the Orutsararmiut Native Council in Alaska, the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. OJT offers a method of reemployment for dislocated workers experiencing prolonged unemployment by enabling employers to create training and job opportunities for these individuals, giving participants the chance to develop applicable occupational skills while earning a paycheck.

The Administration is committed to addressing the employment and training needs of Indian Country by making grant solicitations accessible to all populations. The first example involved regional innovation clusters, where federal agencies, including the Departments of Commerce and Labor have worked together to provide funding to 20 clusters across the country. Awarded in September 2011, these Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge grants are reaching communities typically left out of economic development efforts. An award totaling \$1.7 million was made to a coalition of tribal and technical colleges to operate the Upper Missouri Tribal Environmental Risk Mitigation (UM-TERM) project, which is designed to meet the region's needs for qualified environmental technicians, improved natural resource management, and business development.

In another example, four tribal colleges, applying together as the Tribal College Consortium for Developing Montana and North Dakota Workforce, won an award of over \$18 million in the Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance/Community College and Career Training grant competition. These grants, also awarded in September 2011, support partnerships between community colleges and employers to develop programs that provide pathways to good jobs, including building instructional programs that meet specific industry needs. Finally, American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center, a tribal community-based organization in Minnesota won an award of \$5 million through the Department of Labor's H-1B Technical Skills Training grant to provide training for high-growth occupations and industries.

The Department of Labor continues its networking and outreach to tribal governmental and business leaders on ways to increase employment opportunities for Natives with disabilities. Outreach to grassroots Indian Country is made by the production of posters for National Disability Employment Awareness Month in three tribal languages: Navajo, Cherokee, and Lakota. In addition, Add Us In, an initiative sponsored by the Department of Labor, is designed to identify and develop strategies to increase employment opportunities within the small business community for individuals with disabilities. Of the four Add Us In grants awarded to consortia last year, one grant awarded to a consortium led by Oklahoma University specifically includes tribal populations, and several members of its consortium are tribal organizations or those serving tribal populations.

The Department of Labor also launched an initiative in November 2011 to deliver enhanced job search services to post-9/11 era veterans, including Native Americans, through One-Stop Career Centers. "Gold Cards" are being offered to assist post-9/11 service members get back into the labor market as quickly as

possible. The “Gold Card” services include a combination of skills assessment, career coaching, and job search assistance over a six-month period to jump-start their job search process and reconnect them to the civilian labor force in high-demand sectors. Based on their representation in the active duty force, 2,340 Native Americans may be eligible. Veterans will be able to print a Gold Card and get information how to access available services at One-Stop Career Centers on the Department of Labor website. Here, veterans will be able to print a Gold Card and get information on how to access available services at One-Stop Career Centers. Other entities, such as the National Resource Directory and the Department of Veterans Affairs’ EBenefits, will be publicizing their services and linking to the Department of Labor website. Post-9/11 era veterans going through the Transition Assistance Program’s (TAP) Employment Workshop will also be informed of the availability of the Gold Card services and how to access those services.

The Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) assists tribal economic development efforts through targeted investments. EDA contributed funds to the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge grants described above. Other EDA investments have focused on incubating new tribal businesses or assisting in infrastructure improvements. In central Oregon, the data center industry is one of the fastest growing segments in the regional economy. Building on this growth, EDA made a \$2.75 million investment in FY 2010 in the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians of Roseburg, Oregon, to help renovate an existing building for use as the Roseburg Incubator and Data Center. The facility will provide work space, technical assistance, and secure data servers to local entrepreneurs developing new business ventures, which will create higher-skill, higher-wage job opportunities for Native American tribal communities in central Oregon.

### **Supporting Native American Small Businesses**

Small businesses play a critical role in communities across the United States—spurring investment, creating jobs, and meeting community needs. Since the beginning of the Obama Administration, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), part of the Department of Commerce, supported the creation of nearly 11,000 new jobs and saved tens of thousands of existing jobs while helping minority-owned firms obtain nearly \$7 billion in contracts and capital.

MBDA funds 30 MBDA Business Centers, which assist minority businesses across the country with access to capital, contracts, and to new markets. Native American tribes are included in the minority client base of MBDA. In addition, MBDA funds six Native American Business Enterprise Centers located in Mesa, Arizona; El Monte, California; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Bismarck, North Dakota; Seattle, Washington; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The potential of the minority business community has yet to be fully realized. Native Americans continue to face challenges gaining access to capital and securing federal contracts. That is why the Administration has put the resources in place to support Native Americans starting and sustaining small businesses. Since the beginning of the Administration, the President has enacted 17 tax cuts for small businesses, including billions of dollars in tax credits, write-offs, and deductions for Americans who start new businesses, hire the unemployed, and provide health insurance for their employees.

As part of the Administration's ongoing efforts to expand small business development in underserved communities, the Small Business Administration (SBA) launched the Council on Underserved Communities (CUC). The CUC provides SBA with input, advice, and recommendations on strategies to help strengthen competitiveness and sustainability for small businesses in underserved communities. These strategies are aimed at increasing entrepreneurship and technical assistance, creating outreach and training strategies, and educating underserved communities about SBA programs and services. Many Native American communities can benefit from the CUC, which focuses on communities and populations that have traditionally faced barriers in accessing credit, capital, and the other tools they need to start and grow businesses. The Advisory Council on Underserved Communities consists of 20 members from across the country, including two representatives from the Native American community.

In addition, the SBA promotes entrepreneurial success and job creation through increasing outreach to areas historically challenged by high levels of unemployment and poverty. The goal of the SBA Native American Emerging 200 Initiative is to identify Native American owned businesses across the country that show a high potential for growth—and to provide them with the network, resources, and motivation required to build a sustainable business of size and scale. This year, 10 Native American communities were selected as e-200 training sites and more than 150 Native American small business owners enrolled in the program.

### **Increasing Access to Capital**

Native American entrepreneurs and business-owners continue to struggle to gain access to capital. Regardless of firm size, minority-owned firms are less likely to receive loans than non-minority owned firms.

The Department of the Interior Indian Loan Guaranty Insurance and Interest Subsidy Program was established by the Indian Finance Act of 1974 to stimulate and increase American Indian and Native Alaskan entrepreneurship and employment through establishment, acquisition, or expansion of—Indian or Native Alaskan—owned economic enterprises, to benefit the economic development of Indian reservations, former reservations, and Tribal Service Areas. This program is administered by the Department of the Interior's Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development. In FY 2011, the program made over 46 loan guarantees, totaling more than \$78 million.

The Treasury Department Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund's Native Initiatives program is designed to increase access to capital, credit, and financial services for Native populations across the nation. This is accomplished by building the capacity of Native community development financial institutions (Native CDFIs) to provide financial products and services to Native Communities. It includes the Native American CDFI Assistance Program (NACA Program), which is a financial and technical assistance program for certified or certifiable and emerging Native CDFIs. Native CDFIs provide financial products and services to small businesses, microfinance entrepreneurs, homebuyers, and consumers to help grow tribal economies and stimulate job creation. A unique component of the NACA Program is that technical assistance grants can be awarded to Sponsoring Entities, including tribal entities, to help set up a Native CDFI.

As of September 30, 2011, there were 69 Native CDFIs. In August 2011, the CDFI Fund announced the Financial and Technical Assistance awards for the FY 2011 NACA funding round. Out of 88 organizations



requesting nearly \$35 million in assistance, the CDFI Fund made 35 awards totaling almost \$12 million. Awardees were located in 17 states.

In addition, \$2 billion in Tribal Economic Development Bonds (TEDBs) were allocated under the Recovery Act. The interest on these bonds is tax exempt, lowering the cost of financing tribal investment projects. Due to ongoing weakness in the credit markets, however, only a very small amount of TEDBs have been issued to date. Bond issuance authority that remains unused at the December 31, 2011 deadline will be reallocated to maximize ultimate usage of this tax incentive for lower borrowing costs. In order to facilitate issuance of such bonds, the Treasury Department and the IRS have issued Announcement 2011-71, published in Internal Revenue Bulletin 2011-46 (November 14, 2011) seeking tribal input regarding the process that should be used to reallocate the unused TEDBs. In addition to written input, several telephone sessions will be held so that tribal governments can dialogue directly with the IRS. Announcement 2011-71 also contains a process for tribes to request an optional three-month extension to unexpired allocations of volume cap. In addition, the Treasury Department is continuing with work on a study of the TEDB provision and is considering comments received from tribal governments.

In 2011, USDA Rural Development invested in businesses in Indian Country through multiple programs that included \$7.6 million for their Business & Industry Loan Guarantee program and another \$4.2 million in grants to support economic development through 45 separate awards. The Department of Agriculture also provided over \$50 million through Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs to improve and benefit trust lands across the country. Other programs in the Risk Management Agency and Agricultural Market Service provided multiple grants to develop Native agricultural producers for just over \$500,000.

Additionally, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF/HHS), funded five Native Asset Building Initiative projects, a first time funding opportunity offered through the Administration for Native Americans and the Office of Community Services. The two program offices within ACF partnered to increase access to and awareness of asset building opportunities in Native American communities.

### **Supporting Infrastructure Development in Indian Country**

At previous Tribal Nations Conferences, tribal leaders cited the inadequacy of infrastructure as one of the primary obstacles to economic development on Indian reservations. They explained that tribes lack access to high-speed internet, adequate housing, and other basic infrastructure necessary for their communities to attract outside investment. In order to address these problems, the Recovery Act allocated \$510 million to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Native American Housing Block Grant program for new housing construction, acquisition, rehabilitation, and infrastructure development; \$23 million to the Department of the Interior for the Housing Improvement Program in the BIA for new housing construction; \$310 million to the Department of Transportation for the Indian Reservation Roads Program; and over \$142 million to the BIA for roads maintenance. Additionally, the Department of Commerce received \$4.7 billion to increase access to broadband services in underserved areas of the country, and awarded almost 30 percent to Indian tribes and individual recipients that indicated their projects would benefit tribal areas. Aside from supporting the mission of the Administration's to provide for infrastructure needs, these programs generate employment and economic opportunities on and around Indian Country.

## Housing

*Progress Made Under the Recovery Act:* Through June 30, 2011, HUD grantees have reported that HUD's Recovery Act funds have resulted in 2,362 new housing units constructed or acquired and 15,810 housing units rehabilitated. As of that date, HUD's tribal grantees had expended \$449,269,881 or over 88 percent of the \$510 million provided. In addition, the Recovery Act allocated \$23 million to the Department of the Interior, BIA, Housing Improvement Program.

*More Than 3,000 Loans Guaranteed for Native American Homeowners:* Historically, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians had limited or no access to private mortgage capital, primarily because much of their land is held in trust by the government. HUD's loan guarantee programs encourage private lenders to invest in Indian Country, and in FY 2011, 131 native Hawaiian families and 2,943 American Indian and Alaska Native families obtained mortgage financing with assistance from these programs. HUD's Office of Loan Guarantee works closely with lenders to counsel and service borrowers who are delinquent. The foreclosure rate has consistently remained at less than one percent for these loans.

*Native American Housing Needs Assessment:* HUD's national Native American Housing Needs Assessment Study is currently underway. In 2010 and 2011, HUD held seven regional outreach meetings with tribal housing stakeholders, as well as a national consultation meeting in Washington, DC, to seek tribal input on the survey methodology and survey instrument design. The study's outreach plan and survey instruments have been refined based on input from these sessions and comments from the expert panel formulated specifically for the study. At the request of a national tribal organization, HUD will hold additional tribal consultations on the survey instruments and study design in 2012. Also in 2012, HUD will begin the secondary data review and begin primary data collection for the Hawaiian portion of the study.

*Home Loans to Native American Veterans:* The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Loan Guaranty Service Loan Guaranty Service continues to work with federally-recognized tribes to provide direct home loans to Native American Veterans pursuant to 38 U.S.C. § 3761 et seq. VA currently has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in place with 80 tribal governments. Through May 2011, VA has made over 860 loans to Native American Veterans for the purchase, construction, or improvement of homes located on federally-recognized trust land. The Loan Guaranty Service routinely communicates with Tribal Governments, including the Pacific Island Territorial Governments, in the course of implementing the Native American Veteran Direct Loan (NADL) Program. This routine communication takes the form of letters, emails, and conference calls with tribal representatives. Loan Guaranty personnel participate, on an ad hoc basis, in tribal town hall sessions and conduct routine outreach to tribal representatives to proactively (1) confirm the smooth operation of the NADL program among participating tribes; (2) resolve any issues before a crisis develops, if necessary; and (3) work with nonparticipating tribes to see if they are amenable to permitting VA to offer this home financing benefit to their eligible tribal Veterans.

## Transportation

In addition, over \$142 million was provided through the Recovery Act to the BIA for road maintenance. The Department of Transportation (DOT) continues to support the development of critical transportation

infrastructure in Indian Country through the Indian Reservation Roads program, which provided \$450 million to Tribes for road projects this year. A total of \$17 million was provided through the Recovery Act to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for the Tribal Transit Program. FTA will provide \$15 million in competitive grants to improve public transportation on tribal lands this year. In the President's FY 2012 Budget, the Administration proposed to fund the new Tribal Transportation Program at \$600 million in FY 2012 (up from \$450 million in FY 2011).

DOT also received \$310 million for the Indian Reservation Roads Program through the Recovery Act. DOT continues to work with tribes who received this funding, which has supported the development of over 8,500 jobs in Indian Country.

In addition, the Department of Transportation supports highway safety in Indian Country through the development and implementation of a national tribal safety plan and technical assistance to several tribal governments nationwide. Safety summits in 11 states over the past two years have identified tribal safety priorities and strengthened partnerships to address safety challenges. Safety plans were developed with tribal leadership in places such as the Ft. Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota, where a dramatic increase in truck traffic has impacted the local community.

### *High-Speed Wireless Internet*

The Administration is also working with tribal leaders to bring their communities into the 21st century by equipping them with high-speed access to the Internet. Both the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Commerce have programs to address this need.

In 2010, USDA awarded \$32 million to bring high-speed, affordable broadband to the Navajo Nation. USDA also received Recovery Act funds to expand broadband access, and through those funds, provided grants and loans totaling over \$400 million to expand broadband access in tribal communities through the Broadband Initiatives Program. This included \$182 million for ten infrastructure investments directly to tribes and tribally-owned businesses and eleven technical assistance awards to tribes to assist with regional broadband plans to promote economic development.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) of the Department of Commerce awarded almost 30 percent of the \$4.7 billion that the Department received from the Recovery Act to Indian tribes and individual recipients that indicated that their projects will benefit tribal areas. This funding, provided through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), will be used to increase access to broadband services in underserved areas of the country. For instance, the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority received a \$32 million grant to provide high-speed broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the Navajo Reservation in Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico through construction of 570 miles of fiber and the provision of wireless service on 59 towers. The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe was given a grant of \$7 million for its project, "Natukwena Nagwesenoo," which in the Paiute language means "to weave information." This project will bring high-speed fiber optics to key community anchor institutions on the reservation, including educational institutions for children and adults, regional health services, and community centers. NTIA awarded a \$1.6 million dollar grant to the Nez Perce Tribe to provide wireless broadband to the home in three counties. In addition, the Tribe will partner with two other BTOP grantees to serve Nez Perce Tribal members. The Ute Tribe received a

\$1.5 million grant for fiber optics and wireless broadband to serve social services, police, and homes on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation.

Many other BTOP grantees will be serving Indian Country. For example, Pine Telephone received \$9.5 million to provide wireless broadband to the Choctaw Nation in South Eastern Oklahoma. Ronan Telephone Company will serve the Blackfeet and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Native American tribes of Montana with a \$13.8 million grant. The State of Oklahoma, with its \$74 million grant, will provide broadband service to 17 tribes. In South Central Alabama, the Poarch Creek Tribe will receive high-speed broadband through the \$59 million grant to Trillion Communications, and the Sac and Fox Tribes of the Mississippi in Iowa will be served through the \$16 million grant to the Iowa Communications Network.

BTOP has facilitated the exchange of ideas, solutions to problems, and best practices regarding the delivery of high-speed broadband in Indian Country through a Tribal Affinity Group that includes tribes and grantees serving tribal lands. The Tribal Affinity Group has met at BTOP conferences and holds conference calls on a variety of topics related to providing and using broadband service in Indian Country.

Additionally, in FY 2010, EDA awarded \$820,550 to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe headquartered in Fort Yates, North Dakota. The project will provide voice and broadband services for small and home-based businesses, educational institutions, health care facilities, and government. Standing Rock Telecommunications is projected to support 1,096 business lines when fully operational. Tribal telecommunication ownership will enhance long term infrastructure improvement and increase the opportunities for small business creation in information technology, manufacturing, call center services, and home-based businesses.

Lack of telecommunications is one area where insufficient infrastructure can severely limit economic growth. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, located in a remote part of central Oregon, had limited phone service and no broadband. EDA awarded \$200,000 to the Tribes in FY 2009 for a study to determine basic design, acquisition cost, and improvement costs for modernizing the telecommunication system on the Warm Springs Reservation, as well as planning to train the workers to operate the system. This study led the Tribes to apply and receive a \$2.72 million grant and a \$2.72 million loan from USDA, which they are using to purchase infrastructure in the service area, including the reservation.

### *Clean Energy Development*

The Obama Administration, in consultation with tribes, is focused on building the infrastructure needed to support a clean energy economy in Indian Country, because the countries that lead in clean energy will be the countries that lead the 21st century global economy. At last year's White House Tribal Nations Conference, Secretary of Energy Dr. Steven Chu announced the appointment of Tracey LeBeau, Cheyenne River Sioux, as Director of the Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs at the Department of Energy. Since January 2011, the Office of Indian Energy has conducted a major outreach initiative to Indian Country through eight roundtable discussions with tribal leaders around the country to engage in discussions about current needs and priorities related to Indian energy policy and programs and established the Indian Country Energy and Infrastructure Working Group, an informal group of tribal leaders who provide advice and input to the Office of Indian Energy and the Department on issues

related to energy development and opportunities in Indian Country. The Office of Indian Energy has also developed programs for tribal leader energy education, strategic and targeted technical assistance for tribes on renewable energy project deployment, transmission and electrification, innovative project development, and best practices forums for tribal leaders.

In addition, using \$53.2 million in Recovery Act funding through the Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG), Tribes are creating long-term energy plans, reducing energy use, and installing clean energy projects within their communities. Under these 3 year projects, these funds will support over 2,129 building retrofits, the installation of 1.4MW of new wind and solar energy generation, and the development of over 140 energy strategies.

In FY 2011, the Department of Energy's Tribal Energy Program invested \$5.6 million in 30 tribal energy assessments and initiatives to audit over 200 tribal buildings and initiate strategies for the reduction of 30 percent in energy use in another 13 tribal buildings. These funds will also assist Tribes in training tribal members, assessing clean energy options, and building energy organizations.

The Forest County Potawatomi Tribe has completed a solar photovoltaic installation project in Milwaukee, funded in part with \$2.6 million from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The project is one of five Community Renewable Energy Deployment (CommRE) projects that received DOE funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and is the first to be completed. DOE's CommRE projects help communities implement long-term renewable energy technologies, create jobs, and provide examples for replication by other local governments, campuses, and small utilities.

Electric transmission projects are one specific area where the Administration is acting to catalyze the transition to a clean energy economy. Transmission projects involve multiple federal, state, and tribal agencies and are subject to a wide array of processes and procedural requirements for compliance. Delays in securing needed statutory reviews, permits, and consultations can threaten timely completion of these projects. Recognizing the need for federal agencies to coordinate their efforts on transmission and to quickly respond to challenges, nine federal agencies have been closely coordinating their review of electric transmission on federal lands under a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed in 2009. Building on the cooperation developed through the MOU, and in response to the Presidential Memorandum, the Administration has created a Rapid Response Team for Transmission (RRTT).

The RRTT aims to improve the overall quality and timeliness of electric transmission infrastructure permitting, review, and consultation by the federal government on both federal and non-federal lands through, among other things, applying a uniform and consistent approach to consultations with tribal governments. The RRTT is a common-sense approach in support of the effort to speed job creation in the near term while increasing our competitiveness and strengthening the economy in the long term. The RRTT will focus initially on seven pilot project transmission lines which, when built, will help increase electric reliability, integrate new renewable energy into the grid, and save consumers money. Of the seven pilot projects, there are several projects that represent the potential of strategically facilitating the development and transmission of tribal energy generation in the western marketplace. These seven RRTT projects will also benefit other nearby tribes simply by making renewable energy projects in their area more feasible.



Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar addresses Pueblo leaders at the implementation meeting on the Aamodt water rights settlement in Sante Fe, N.M., September 28, 2011. (Department of Interior Photo by Tami Heilemann)

### Water Infrastructure

President Obama signed the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 which included, in addition to the Cobell settlement, an unprecedented authorization and funding for four Indian Water Rights Settlements. In addition to resolving long-standing legal disputes, the settlements will provide basic water infrastructure for seven Indian Tribes in Arizona, Montana, and New Mexico. In total,

the newly authorized settlements will provide over \$1 billion for new water infrastructure projects to meet drinking water supply needs and rehabilitation of existing, aging infrastructure. The Department of the Interior is moving forward with implementation of the newly enacted settlements and is also continuing progress on existing settlements. The Navajo-Gallup project is a major component of the Navajo Nation's water rights settlement with the State of New Mexico and was selected by the Administration as one of 14 infrastructure projects across the country to be expedited through the permitting and environmental review processes. Construction is expected to begin in 2012. The project will provide hundreds of jobs and will result in bringing a reliable supply of water to Navajo and non-Indian communities that currently rely on hauling water or diminishing groundwater supplies.

### Looking Forward: The American Jobs Act

While the current economic crisis has challenged all Americans, we know this to be especially true for Indian Country where some reservations face unemployment rates of up to 80 percent. Though the economic challenges of Indian Country are significant, President Obama is committed to forging a brighter future with tribes by identifying and developing long-term solutions that will help break the generational history of unemployment in Indian Country.

Most recently, to continue the fight to promote sustainable economic development in Indian Country and across the country, the President announced the American Jobs Act, a plan that will put more people back to work and put more money in the pockets of working Americans. With unemployment among Native Americans at an unacceptably high rate, the President believes that inaction is not an option. That's why the President has put out a plan to increase the pace of job creation and why he has called on Congress to act on this plan. The American Jobs Act will make a difference in Indian Country. For example:

- **Tax cuts to benefit over 20,000 Native American-owned small businesses.** The President is proposing tax cuts that will go to every small business nationwide, providing incentives to hire and make new investments.

- **An estimated 1.5 million Native American workers will benefit from the extension of the payroll tax cut.** By extending the payroll tax cut for employees next year, the President’s plan will help increase the paychecks of 1.5 million Native American workers—providing them with more money to spend in their communities and support their families.
- **The extension of unemployment insurance will benefit Native Americans and their families, while providing targeted support for the long-term unemployed.** In addition to extending unemployment insurance, the President is calling for reforms and tax incentives that will help the long-term unemployed—including the disproportionately high rate of Native Americans who have been looking for work for more than six months—find a job.
- **“Pathways Back to Work” will support subsidized jobs and summer/year-round jobs for low-income Native American youth and adults.** In an environment with an intolerable high unemployment rate for Native American youths, the President is proposing to build on successful programs like those used in the Recovery Act to create jobs for those hardest-hit by the recession.
- **A commitment to rebuilding and revitalizing communities across the country will target investments to the communities hardest-hit by the recession.** The President’s investments in infrastructure include a school construction initiative that will provide \$125 million for schools funded by the BIE and \$12.5 million for tribal colleges, as well as a new initiative to expand infrastructure employment opportunities for minorities, women, and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, including Native Americans. And under the President’s proposal, \$310 million will be directed towards the Indian Reservation Roads program.
- **Expanding Access to High-Speed Wireless in a Fiscally Responsible Way:** The President is calling for a deficit reducing plan to deploy high-speed wireless services to at least 98 percent of Americans, including those who live in tribal areas and in more remote rural communities, while freeing up spectrum through incentive auctions, spurring innovation, and creating a nationwide, interoperable wireless network for public safety.

## Health Care

Since the very beginning of his Administration, the President has led the way for historic expansions in health coverage and security for all Americans. The President’s efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of the Native American community extend beyond expanding access to health coverage. In partnership with the private sector, the Administration has taken steps to expand access to preventive care, reduce chronic disease, focus on childhood obesity, and end health disparities.

The Obama Administration is committed to improving health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Administration requested increases for the Indian health care system in each year of this Administration, which began with a 13 percent funding increase in FY 2010.

The Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, established the first HHS Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC) to improve services, outreach, and consultation efforts with tribes. The STAC signals a new level of attention to the government-to-government

relationship between HHS and Tribal Nations, and the committee's work has resulted in important policy changes across HHS. As a result of the STAC recommendations, Secretary Sebelius sent a letter to all state governors encouraging consultation with tribes on programs run with federal dollars.

### **The Affordable Care Act and Implementation of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act**

President Obama achieved historic gains in health security for every American family through the passage of the Affordable Care Act, which included the permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). IHS began implementation of IHCIA in the Spring of 2010 with the identification of specific actions, timelines, and opportunities to coordinate with other agencies and partners. The IHS Director sent several letters to Tribal leaders with updates on implementation of provisions that were self-implementing or required additional work, and consulted with Tribes on IHCIA implementation priorities in the budget formulation process. By March 2011, the IHS accomplished, on time, all statutory requirements with specific deadlines of one year after IHCIA enactment. Specifically, IHS completed reports on behavioral health training, health facilities needs, and mental health care needs as required by the law. IHS made progress on implementation of other IHCIA provisions including revisions of the Department of the Interior-IHS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on substance abuse and mental health issues and completion of the IHS domestic and sexual violence prevention and treatment policy and protocols. In addition, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently provided a progress report on its implementation of the "Access to Federal Insurance" provision with the first effective coverage date of May 1, 2012 for tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations to purchase federal insurance for their employees. A tribal workgroup is assisting with implementation details.

The Affordable Care Act also includes special provisions for Indians related to implementation of the State Affordable Insurance Exchanges that will allow enrollment to purchase affordable health insurance or participation in the planned Medicaid expansion in 2014. American Indians and Alaska Native individuals, tribes, and health facilities will also benefit from this new law through several new sources of funding for health care programs. For example, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in cooperation with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and supported by the Affordable Care Act, was able to make funding available for Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Programs for states, tribes (through a 3 percent set-aside), and territories that plan to deliver services for early childhood home visitation programs that provide comprehensive services and improve outcomes for families living in at-risk communities. In FY 2010 \$3 million was awarded to 13 tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations through the Tribal MIECHV Program on September 29, 2010. In FY 2011, six additional tribal sites have received Tribal MIECHV cooperative agreement awards to support home visiting services.

### **Addressing Health Disparities**

While the overall health of the Nation has improved over time, striking health disparities continue to exist between American Indians and Alaska Natives and other racial and ethnic groups. A recent report by the Institute of Medicine emphasized that inadequate data on race, ethnicity, and language barriers lowers the likelihood of effective actions to address health disparities.





Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius meets with members of the first HHS Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee, September 2011. *(Department of Health and Human Services Photo)*

The Affordable Care Act puts a renewed focus on efforts to eliminate disparities that Native Americans currently face in health and health care, including investments in data collection and research about health disparities. The law requires that any federally conducted or supported health program, activity, or survey must collect and report data on race, ethnicity, sex, geographic area, primary language, and disability status.

The Affordable Care Act also codifies into law the Office of Minority Health within HHS, and a network of

minority health offices within the Department, to monitor health, healthcare trends, and quality of care among minority patients at the state and federal levels and to evaluate the success of minority health programs and initiatives. Finally, the Affordable Care Act elevates the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health from a Center to a full Institute, adding to the nation's capacity to address health disparities for minorities.

### Providing Greater Access to Health Care

IHS is strengthening federal efforts to improve the quality of and access to Indian health care through its internal reform efforts to improve its business practices and the care it provides, as well as through key collaborations with other federal entities. For example, IHS and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) collaborated to designate all Indian health sites eligible for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) program, a partnership that will improve the recruitment and retention of healthcare providers in the Indian health care system. As of August 2011, the number of NHSC clinicians increased to 206 serving at 490 Indian health program sites, and they will provide over 800,000 patient visits in FY 2011.

HRSA's community health center program grantees served over 217,000 American Indian and Alaska Natives in 2010. A total of approximately \$52 million was awarded to dually-funded health centers in FY 2010, and approximately \$47.4 million was awarded in FY 2011.

IHS became the first federal health care system to have its Electronic Health Record (EHR) certified for Meaningful Use, which will allow its facilities to qualify to receive incentive payments for implementing the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) requirements for Meaningful Use of an EHR. After tribal consultation, CMS modified tribal eligibility for Medicaid Meaningful Use incentives to allow all tribally-operated clinics to be treated as Federally Qualified Health Centers to qualify for these incentives by meeting the needy individual patient volume threshold, rather than the Medicaid patient volume threshold, which will allow more tribally-operated clinics to qualify for these incentives.

In addition, IHS and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding to better coordinate care for American Indian and Alaska Native veterans eligible for both IHS and VA services.

### Reducing Diabetes and Heart Disease

The Administration supported the recent 2-year extension of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) through 2013 to continue the achievement of important goals in the fight to prevent and treat diabetes and its complications. In partnership with tribal communities, IHS continues to demonstrate successful efforts to reduce diabetes and cardiovascular disease risk factors in Indian Country with innovative and culturally appropriate activities. The Diabetes Prevention Demonstration Project grant programs adapted and implemented the curriculum from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) and demonstrated similar weight loss outcomes as the original NIH study to prevent diabetes. The SDPI Healthy Heart project demonstrated reduction of cardiovascular disease risk factors through implementation of evidence-based clinical care and results from studies such as the NIH-led Strong Heart Study that documented rising rates of cardiovascular disease in American Indians and Alaska Natives.

### Combating Childhood Obesity in Indian Country

Over the past three decades, rates of childhood obesity in this country have tripled. Today, nearly one in every three children in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Childhood obesity and related diseases affect Native communities and children at disproportionately high rates. American Indian and Alaska Native children are twice as likely as the general population to be overweight. The negative impacts of this reality can last a lifetime, significantly increasing the likelihood of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic obesity-related illnesses, while lowering life expectancy and quality of life of the child. This is a critical issue that cannot go unaddressed if we hope to create a bright future for Native communities.

In February 2010, the First Lady unveiled a nationwide initiative—*Let's Move!*—to fight the epidemic of childhood obesity and improve the health of children. An integral part of this initiative includes addressing the needs of populations where childhood obesity rates are particularly high, including American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The White House, the Departments of the Interior, Education, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services, and the Corporation for National and Community Service came together in May 2011 to launch the *Let's Move! in Indian Country* (LMIC) initiative on the Menominee Reservation. As a part of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative, LMIC brings together federal agencies, communities, nonprofits, corporate partners, and tribes to end the epidemic of childhood obesity in Indian Country within a generation.

Since the launch of LMIC, the White House has hosted several events focused on American Indian and Alaska Native youth. On June 4, 2011, the First Lady joined American Indian children for an afternoon in the White House kitchen garden planting the “three sisters” crops (corns, beans, and squash). And in July 2011, as part of the White House Summer South Lawn Series that engages youth in outdoor activities and recreation, the White House hosted its first-ever lacrosse clinic on the South Lawn, bringing players from the Iroquois Nationals Team, among others, to introduce local and Native American youth to the sport and its cultural traditions.



First Lady Michelle Obama participates in a Garden Harvest Event with children and members of the American Indian community, in the White House Kitchen Garden on the South Lawn of the White House, June 3, 2011.  
*(Official White House Photo by Samantha Appleton)*

**The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (P.L. 111-296):** This groundbreaking piece of legislation was signed into law so all kids have healthier food in school and even more have access to a healthy lunch. The legislation gives the USDA the authority to set nutritional standards for all foods regularly sold in schools during the school day, including vending machines, the “a la carte” lunch lines, and school stores. The legislation also provided additional funding to schools that meet updated nutritional standards for federally-subsidized lunches, helps communities establish local farm to school networks, and increases the number of eligible children enrolled in school meal programs by approximately 115,000 students using Medicaid data to directly certify children who meet income requirements.

**Development of Goals and Metrics:** Based on the work of the Childhood Obesity Task Force and the feedback received through more than 50 meetings with tribal leaders, native organizations, and urban Indian centers, among others, the LMIC interagency partners have set 4 specific goals:

- 1. Creating a Healthy Start on Life:** IHS launched the Baby-Friendly Hospital campaign to promote breast-feeding in IHS facilities. In support of this effort, IHS funding in the amount of \$150,000 has been distributed to facilitate the Baby-Friendly certification process and to deliver train-the-trainer courses for hospitals. Action Guides that list online resources for healthy weight management programs and activities have been developed, and IHS is unifying all Indian health system efforts to promote healthy weight among American Indians and Alaska Natives with the Healthy Weight for Life initiative. In addition, IHS has strengthened relations with local leadership, CDC, and Baby-Friendly USA to bring together IHS regional Nurse Consultants and designated hospital leads to discuss implementation of the Baby-Friendly process. IHS is unify-

ing all Indian health system efforts to promote healthy weight among American Indians and Alaska Natives with the Healthy Weight for Life initiative. Healthy Weight for Life Action Guides have been developed that list online resources for healthy weight management programs and activities for use by health care teams and leaders, as well as for communities, individuals, and families. In March 2011, the NIH Obesity Research Task Force published the Strategic Plan for NIH Obesity Research of which addressing health disparities in obesity rates is an integral component.

2. **Creating Healthy Learning Communities:** USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) delivered 6 trainings to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools in 2011, providing information on how schools can participate in the HealthierUS School Challenge, Fuel Up to Play 60, obtain funding for infrastructure development, and access programs and resources to serve healthier meals and snacks year-round. Because of the President's commitment to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act which reauthorized the Child Nutrition Act, the BIE began the process of updating agency standards to create a healthier school environment through a bureau-wide Health and Wellness Policy for schools. This policy will be piloted in the coming year and eventually rolled out bureau-wide to ensure that Native youth have access to the nutritious and healthy foods they need to grow and thrive.
3. **Fostering Healthy, Comprehensive Food Systems Policies:** USDA is encouraging the establishment of 20 tribal or inter-tribal food policy councils/committees across Indian Country to enhance comprehensive food system policy and improve access to affordable, healthy food. Many of these food policy councils are already underway with the goal to ensure families have access to healthy, affordable, and traditional foods.
4. **Increasing Opportunities for Physical Activity:** Last spring, the BIE launched the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) Challenge and had 6,000 PALA completions. In November 2011, BIE announced that it will roll out a second PALA Plus program to reach the goal of 25,000 completing for LMIC. BIE has partnered with Nike's N7 Program to encourage American Indian and Alaska Native youth to take part in PALA through athlete ambassadors, including Sam Bradford (St. Louis Rams), among others. N7 has committed to funding four VISTA positions across Indian Country, working closely with schools and communities to increase access to sports. In addition, BIE has partnered with Coach-Across-America (CAA), with match funds from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), to fund 6 coach positions during the 2011-2012 school year in targeted Indian Country communities. These coaches will act as physical education teachers and support before-and-after-school physical activity programming where it otherwise would not exist.

**LMIC Tools and Resources:** In May 2011, the *Let's Move! in Indian Country* Toolkit and Resource Guide was unveiled along with the LMIC website, logo, and two public service announcements. The toolkit contains step-by-step instructions and guidance for tribal communities, schools, individuals, and organizations to assist with accessing resources and funding to build healthier communities. The LMIC website contains best practices, updates, resources, training, and information on how to commit to

LMIC. The logo is available for LMIC community participants to use to build local LMIC initiatives. The public service announcements were made by professional athletes including Sam Bradford and others.

**Other Partnerships and Funding for National Capacity Building:** USDA partnered with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the National Society for American Indian Elderly, Boys and Girls Clubs in Indian Country, and Southwest Youth Services to place 200 AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates in Indian Country to support LMIC implementation, positive youth development, and healthy lifestyles in at least 15 states. The Administration for Native Americans (ANA), provided funding to ten tribal communities to implement LMIC initiatives—including summer camps for youth, counseling for parenting adolescents, designing and implementing trails and recreation planning, and healthy eating and exercise to reduce the rate of diabetes among elderly tribal members.

### **Addressing Behavioral Health Issues: Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Suicide**

Many of the challenges facing Indian Country are rooted in substance abuse and mental health issues. These issues have mental, social, physical, and spiritual consequences that can weigh on tribal communities and require a coordinated effort.

The Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA), signed into law on July 29, 2010, created within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) an Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse to improve coordination among three federal agencies. One year later, the Departments of Health and Human Services, the Interior, and Justice signed an agreement that established the roles and responsibilities of the federal agencies and set the foundation for further implementation of the TLOA. The work of the new Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse will help inform the Administration's National Drug Control Strategy as overseen and coordinated by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

### **Combating Prescription Drug Abuse in Indian Country**

American Indians and Alaska Natives lead all other ethnic groups in past 30-day misuse of prescription-type drugs (psychotherapeutics). The Obama Administration is taking action to address the country's prescription drug abuse epidemic. In April, the Administration released a Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Plan that outlines an unprecedented strategy for federal agencies to save lives and reduce the serious burden that prescription drug abuse places on our communities by focusing on four key areas of action: education, prescription drug monitoring, proper disposal of unneeded prescription drugs, and crack down on those who illegally distribute prescription drugs. IHS has been actively working with tribal health officials on prescription drug monitoring, as addressed in the IHCA. Several state prescription drug monitoring programs have established relationships with IHS facilities and/or tribes to share dispensed controlled substance data.

### **Addressing Suicide in Indian Country**

Administration officials announced in 2010 the creation of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. The Action Alliance is charged with advancing the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and includes Native American membership from the public and private sectors on its executive committee. In December 2010 the Action Alliance announced several new task forces to address suicide

prevention within high-risk populations, including American Indians and Alaska Natives. Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk and Dr. Roubideaux co-lead this task force along with private sector lead McClellan Hall, executive director of the National Indian Youth Leadership Project.

SAMHSA's behavioral health work in Indian Country includes the following:

- Over 400,000 individuals have now been trained to recognize and respond to the warning signs of suicide, including almost 25,000 individuals in tribal communities.
- The Suicide Prevention Resource Center has made available the recently completed dissemination manual for the "model adolescent suicide prevention program," which has been evaluated through the University of New Mexico and found to reduce suicidal behavior in a tribal community.
- In FY 2011 SAMHSA awarded \$71,065,895 to tribes and tribal organizations of which \$8,930,303 went to 21 tribes, tribal colleges, and tribal organizations specifically for suicide prevention projects. This more than doubled the previous cumulative total of tribal suicide prevention grants from 19 to 40. In addition, four suicide prevention grants totaling \$5,760,000 were awarded through the Affordable Care Act's Prevention Fund. Overall, \$52.9 million went to states and tribes to support efforts to prevent suicide by bringing together public and private sector organizations.
- SAMHSA collaborates with the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to better meet the needs of tribal youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

The Administration's budget proposal for FY 2012 includes the Behavioral Health- Tribal Prevention Grant (BH-TPG) administered by SAMHSA. The proposal for the BH-TPG emerged from SAMHSA's participation in tribal consultation sessions and from tribal leaders identifying services and resources needed that would improve behavioral health in Indian Country. BH-TPG would be non-competitive funding to prevent substance abuse and suicide for every federally-recognized tribe. The program would provide flexibility to appropriately allow for tribal self-governance.

SAMHSA updated the 2012-2013 application packages for the Community Mental Health Services and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funds. The streamlined uniform application includes two new requests that will address suicide. The State's application will include evidence of tribal consultation with the federally recognized tribes within its borders. In addition, the State will submit their suicide prevention plan; if no such plan exists, the state will submit a timeline for the development of the plan.

Further, the HHS and the Department of the Interior jointly conducted a series of ten tribal listening sessions across Indian Country on suicide prevention to gather information about tribal needs. The input shaped the theme and agenda for two Action Summits for Suicide Prevention. The Summit themes focused on the importance of collaboration among tribal, federal, state, and community- and program-level leadership to promote American Indian and Alaska Natives' behavioral health. The IHS American Indian and Alaska Native National Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health Strategic Plans were released at the Action Summit.

The BIE has taken an active role in addressing the serious issues of suicide and bullying in its BIE-funded schools. Ongoing regional training beginning in 2010 has prepared school personnel at BIE-operated schools to plan and implement school-based bullying and suicide prevention policies and activities. The BIE has also developed a National Policy Memorandum to mandate a best practice approach to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention in BIE-operated schools. Signed in June 2011, NPM-EDUC-22, Suicide Prevention, Early Intervention, and Postvention Policy, requires BIE-operated schools to develop and implement suicide prevention, early intervention, and postvention policies and programs.

## Public Safety

During the Tribal Nations Conference in 2009, President Obama pledged the Administration's fullest support for the Tribal Law and Order Act. On July 29, 2010, President Obama was proud to sign the Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) of 2010 into law, as it fills key gaps in our criminal justice system that for far too long were not addressed. TLOA seeks to address many of the challenges faced in tribal justice systems, to establish greater accountability for federal agencies responsible for prosecuting crime on reservations, and to provide tribes with the tools to combat extremely high rates of crime. In signing the bill, President Obama remarked that it is "unconscionable that crime rates in Indian Country are more than twice the national average and up to 20 times the national average on some reservations."

The TLOA is already helping us better address the unique public safety challenges that confront tribal communities. Tribes have gained greater sentencing authority. The rights of defendants are stronger.



President Barack Obama signs the Tribal Law and Order Act during a signing ceremony in the East Room of the White House, July 29, 2010.  
*(Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)*

Services for victims are better. Federal agencies are working together to combat alcohol and drug abuse, and to help at-risk youth in more effective ways. The law has established new guidelines and training for officers handling domestic violence and sex crimes. It has also expanded recruitment and retention of Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal officers and given them better access to the criminal databases they need to keep people safe. These are important steps in addressing serious issues, and the Administration is committed to continuing to work with tribes on a government-to-government basis to increase public safety in Indian Country.

### Implementing the Tribal Law & Order Act

Since July 2010, the following steps towards implementation of the TLOA have been taken:

- **Establishment of the Office of Tribal Justice as a Separate Component within the Justice Department:** In conformity with the TLOA, on November 17, 2010, Attorney General Holder announced the establishment of the Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) as a separate component within the organizational structure of the Department. OTJ has a key role in the Department's ongoing initiative to improve public safety in Indian Country and serves as an important resource on matters of Indian law.
- **Bureau of Prisons Pilot Project to House Tribal Offenders Sentenced in Tribal Courts:** In November 2010, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) launched a four-year pilot program to accept certain tribal offenders sentenced in tribal courts for placement in BOP institutions. The pilot program allows any federally recognized tribe to request that BOP incarcerate a person convicted of a violent crime under the terms of the TLOA and authorizes BOP to house up to 100 tribal offenders at a time, nationwide.
- **Coordination of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Efforts:** As discussed above, the Department of Justice, Department of the Interior, and Department of Health and Human Services entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that the agencies would collectively determine the scope of the alcohol and substance abuse problems faced by American Indians and Alaska Natives, identify the resources each agency can bring to bear on the problem, and set minimum standards for applying those resources. In addition to the creation of the Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse established within SAMHSA, the Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee (IASA Committee), an interdepartmental coordinating council, has formed to guide the overall direction of the new federal effort to improve its work with tribal communities on alcohol and substance abuse issues. The TLOA requires that the MOA partnering agencies cooperate with federally recognized tribes in the development of tribal-specific Tribal Action Plans (TAP), to coordinate resources and programs to assist tribes in achieving their goals in the prevention and treatment of substance abuse. The TAP workgroup, a sub-workgroup of the IASA Committee, recently released TAP Guidelines, an operating framework for TAP development. Finally, SAMHSA's Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse launched a new website on August 5, 2011 to improve and strengthen the communication between the federal government and Indian Country relative to alcohol and drug abuse.



- **Long-Term Plan to Build and Enhance Tribal Justice Systems:** As required by the TLOA, the Departments of Justice and the Interior, working in close coordination with other federal agency partners, developed a long-term plan to build and enhance tribal justice systems primarily by developing a long-term plan to address Indian Country adult and juvenile incarceration issues. Formal consultation sessions and focus groups were held to develop the plan, which was issued in August 2011. Assumption of Concurrent Federal Criminal Jurisdiction: The Department of Justice is preparing a final rule to implement Section 221 of the TLOA, which authorizes the Attorney General to assume concurrent jurisdiction over crimes committed on certain tribal lands. Through this rule, an Indian tribe that is subject to Public Law 280 may request that the federal government accept concurrent jurisdiction within the tribe’s Indian Country and, if the Attorney General consents, federal authorities can investigate and prosecute criminal offenses.
- **Guidance on Special Law Enforcement Commission Agreements:** The Department of the Interior has published policy documents to institute changes to the Special Law Enforcement Commission and Deputation Agreement process, which will shorten the amount of time it takes to enter such agreements, and to ensure regional training sessions are held to aid tribes in meeting the requirements.
- **NCIC Access Project:** Although initiated prior to the enactment of the TLOA, Section 233 of the Act regarding access to national criminal information databases provided extra impetus to a Department of Justice (DOJ) project to increase the number of tribal police departments with access to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI)’s National Crime Information Center (NCIC) databases. A collaborative effort between the Office of Tribal Justice, the Community Oriented Policing Services office, and other DOJ components led to seventeen additional tribal law enforcement agencies gaining access to NCIC.
- **Native American Issues Coordinator Designated in the Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA):** DOJ has maintained the position of Native American Issues Coordinator, designated in EOUSA. The Coordinator provides advice and assistance to U.S. Attorneys Offices (USAOs) on legal and policy issues pertaining to Native Americans and Indian Country, and serves as a liaison between DOJ components and law enforcement agencies.
- **Compendium of Crime Data for Indian Country:** In June 2011, the DOJ’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) issued a Compendium of Crime Data for Indian Country, which focuses on existing data on criminal justice issues in Indian Country.
- **Indian Law and Order Commission:** The Departments of Justice and the Interior have provided funding for the work of the Indian Law and Order Commission (ILOC), and have assisted the ILOC in connection with office space, administrative support, and personnel.

### Supporting Tribal Justice Systems

The Administration understands the need for additional support for law enforcement in Indian Country. Accordingly the President’s FY 2012 Budget Request requested increases for tribal public safety initiatives over the FY 2011 enacted amounts. The FY 2012 Budget Request also sustains FY 2010 appropriations increases for BIA-funded public safety and law enforcements efforts. These increases build on over

\$250 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds made available to tribes in FY 2009 to address criminal justice needs.

In February 2010, DOJ announced a streamlined approach for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to apply for funding opportunities. The Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS) serves as a single application for existing tribal government-specific grant programs administered by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

### **Enhancing Prosecution, Training and Outreach Efforts to Keep Tribal Communities Safe**

The Department of Justice has directed an unprecedented increase in personnel to fight crime in Indian Country. Today there are more federal prosecutors and victim specialists working in Indian Country than ever before. In the past two years, DOJ has deployed 28 new Assistant U.S. Attorneys to prosecute violent crimes in Indian Country, and the FBI has deployed 9 new investigators, 11 new victim advocates, and one Forensic Child Interview Specialist into areas where victim services are needed most.

In August 2011, the Department of the Interior partnered with Assistant United States Attorneys, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, the U.S. Department of Justice Access to Justice Initiative, federal and tribal prosecutors and public defenders to provide a three day hands-on trial skills training to tribal judges, tribal prosecutors, tribal public defenders using a domestic violence fact pattern. Five additional trainings of this kind are planned for 2012, which will also be supported by the Office of Defender Services Training Branch of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

The BIA's Office of Justice Services has also partnered with the University of New Mexico, the American Indian Law Clinic, Tanana Chiefs and the University of Alaska to create innovative interactive computer training programs. Some of the computer training programs are specifically designed to address domestic violence issues arising in a court room.

### **Supporting Tribal Law Enforcement to Reduce Drug Trafficking**

The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) have been working to respond to the unique threats faced by Indian Country on drug use and trafficking. HIDTAs are uniquely positioned to work with local and tribal communities to promote and participate in community-based drug prevention programs. ONDCP recently announced \$10.6 million in discretionary funding to 27 HIDTAs to enhance targeted enforcement and drug prevention efforts nationwide. Discretionary dollars were awarded to five Native American projects: the Northwest HIDTA Yakima County Task Force; the Oregon HIDTA for the Warm Springs Police Department; the Arizona Region of the Southwest Border HIDTA; the New York/New Jersey HIDTA for the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe; and the North Texas HIDTA for Native American projects in Oklahoma.

As part of ONDCP's effort to enhance drug-related intelligence gathering and share demand reduction strategies, the Arizona HIDTA hosted an Indian Country Intelligence Network (ICIN) strategy meeting in October with all 21 Arizona tribes participating. Nationwide, HIDTAs continue to engage tribal law enforcement within their respective designated areas and are committed to working with tribal governments to reduce drug use within their borders.

Further, to enhance the consultation process of the National Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy, ONDCP conducted a five-state consultation tour that included stops in Seattle, Washington; Blackfeet Nation, Montana; Grand Rapids, North Dakota; Detroit, Michigan; and Upstate New York from March to May 2011. The consultation meetings included discussions with the U.S. Attorneys, HIDTA Directors, and panels of federal, state, local, and tribal officials. ONDCP met with representatives of various tribal law enforcement entities at each stop, including a visit to the Blackfeet Nation in Montana and the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation in New York. Based on those consultations, Chapter Four of the *National Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy* focuses on Tribal Lands.

### Reducing Violent Crime through the High Priority Performance Goal Initiative

The BIA implemented the High Priority Performance Goal (HPPG) crime reduction initiative in October of 2009. The initiative was intended to reduce violent crime on four targeted Reservations across Indian Country by 5 percent over a 24-month period. In collaboration with the tribal law enforcement officers identified local resources and analyzed crime trends, they developed proactive local initiatives to address the specific crime trends in tribal communities. As a result of this collaborative work between BIA and Tribal law enforcement and tribal governments this initiative has resulted in a combined reduction in violent crime of 35 percent. This initiative is now being expanded to two additional Reservations.



Attorney General Holder lays a wreath at the Wounded Knee Memorial Site, Pine Ridge Reservation, S.D., July 2011.  
(Department of Justice Photo)

### U.S. Attorney's Offices' Tribal Engagement

In January 2010, then-Deputy Attorney General David Ogden issued a memorandum to all U.S. Attorneys declaring that "public safety in tribal communities is a top priority for the Department of Justice." He directed that: (1) every U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) with Indian Country in its district, in coordination with our law enforcement partners, engage at least annually in consultation with the tribes in that district; and (2) every newly confirmed U.S. Attorney in such districts should conduct a consultation with tribes in his or her district and develop or update the district's operational plan within eight months of assuming office, unless an extension of time is provided by the Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA). In addition, every U.S. Attorney with Indian Country jurisdiction has appointed at least one tribal liaison to serve as the USAO's primary point of contact with tribes in the district. U.S. Attorneys also are

recruiting tribal prosecutors to serve as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys to assist in prosecuting federal offenses committed in Indian Country. Several such appointments have been made.

U.S. Attorneys from 30 of 47 districts with Indian Country serve on the Attorney General's Advisory Council (AGAC) Native American Issues Subcommittee (NAIS). The NAIS focuses exclusively on Indian Country issues, both criminal and civil, and is responsible for making policy recommendations to the Attorney General regarding public safety and legal issues. In July 2011, the NAIS met in Rapid City, South Dakota, and on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, to hear from tribal leaders, law enforcement officials, and community members about public safety issues in Indian Country, including violence against Native American women. Attorney General Eric Holder, Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli, Assistant Attorney General Ignacia Moreno, and other DOJ and BIA officials participated in the meeting.

### **Combating Violence Against Native Women**

A disproportionately high number of Native American women are raped during their lifetimes. President Obama made clear that this "shocking and contemptible fact" is an "assault on our national conscience" that cannot be ignored any longer.

Implementation of the TLOA has resulted in partnerships between federal departments to address the needs of sexual assault victims in Indian Country to restore dignity, respect, and mental and physical health to victims of sexual assault. More effective and victim-centered investigations and prosecutions are top priorities. For example, the FBI's Office of Victim Assistance (OVA) is partnering with the IHS to expand and support Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) programs in Indian Country. These partnerships have resulted in: (1) assessment of the ability of Indian Health facilities to collect, maintain, and store sexual assault forensic materials for submission to law enforcement; (2) a newly established sexual assault policy in the IHS that includes a uniform standard of care for sexual assault victims seeking clinical services; and (3) timely approval of subpoenas related to testimony of federal employees in sexual assault cases in tribal, state, or federal court.

At the suggestion of tribal leaders, the Department of Justice created the Violence Against Women Federal and Tribal Prosecution Task Force. The Task Force, composed of federal and tribal prosecutors, was created to facilitate dialogue and coordinate efforts between the Department and tribal governments regarding the prosecution of violent crimes against women in Indian Country.

In addition, in July 2011, the Department of Justice proposed legislation that would significantly improve the safety of Native women and allow federal and tribal law enforcement agencies to hold more perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their crimes. The proposed legislation would address three legal gaps by: (1) recognizing certain tribes' power to exercise concurrent criminal jurisdiction over domestic violence cases, regardless of whether the defendant is Indian or non-Indian; (2) clarifying that tribal courts have full civil jurisdiction to issue and enforce protection orders involving any persons, Indian or non-Indian; and (3) providing more robust federal sentences for certain acts of domestic violence in Indian Country.

## Working with Tribal Leaders on Homeland Security and Disaster Relief in Indian Country

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Tribal Relations program has evolved into a more robust effort to include tribal governments in many facets of homeland security and emergency management. Examples of the strides DHS has made include Intelligence and Analysis Tribal Law Enforcement Assessments to address drug and human trafficking through tribal lands; Customs and Border Protection joint law enforcement operations along the southern borders including apprehending individuals trying to cross the border illegally, and seizing drugs; United States Coast Guard initiatives in Alaska including innovative approaches to education and tribal program development; Transportation Security Administration (TSA) development of a brochure outlining Information for the Native American Community on TSA's Airport Security Screening; and a new focus on cybersecurity outreach to Tribal Nations.

In response to feedback from tribal leaders expressing a desire to work more closely with the DHS and its Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in responding to disasters that affect tribal members and lands, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate conducted listening sessions and directed FEMA's National Tribal Liaison to review and revise FEMA's Tribal Policy.

FEMA updated and strengthened its Tribal Policy, which Administrator Fugate signed in June 2010. The FEMA policy compliments DHS's overarching tribal consultation policy signed by Secretary Janet Napolitano in March 2011, and the subsequent coordination plan. In both policies, DHS and FEMA commit to government-to-government relationships, collaboration with tribes on DHS and FEMA policy development with tribal implications, and to minimize the imposition of unfunded mandates upon American Indian Tribes.

In the FEMA-Tribal Policy, FEMA committed to a government-to-government relationship with federally-recognized tribal governments, consultation to the extent permitted by law before taking actions that affect federally recognized tribal governments, and acknowledged the trust responsibility of the federal government to tribal governments as established by specific treaties, court decisions, statutes, executive orders, regulations, and policies. DHS and FEMA are committed to working in partnership with other federal departments and agencies to foster cooperation and partnerships between federal, tribal, state, and local governments and public and private entities.

In addition, the new policy expressly states that FEMA will identify and take reasonable, appropriate steps to eliminate or diminish procedural impediments to working directly and effectively with tribal governments. In particular, the policy states that FEMA will review portions of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief & Emergency Assistance Act, and other laws, policies, and administrative rules in emergency management activities to determine how FEMA may work more directly with local tribal communities. FEMA encourage states to incorporate the inclusion of tribal governments into grant programs and processes. FEMA has also considered the designation of full-time tribal liaisons in appropriate FEMA regional offices and explore the possibility of assigning attorneys within the FEMA Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) who are trained and experienced in federal Indian law, and send senior FEMA leadership periodically to engage tribal government leadership in planning discussions prior to disasters and coordinate follow-up visits

to discuss practical solutions. FEMA is also considering expanding existing training efforts to include the development and delivery of regional homeland security and emergency management training to tribal locations (on-site).

Since the authorization of the FEMA's Tribal Policy in June, 2010, the Agency has taken specific actions to enact its policy commitments. To encourage states to include tribal governments into grant programs, FEMA is constantly working with states to allow and enhance tribal governments to access FEMA assistance. Some states, however, have laws that restrict or prevent tribal governments from accessing federal grants that must, as a matter of law, flow through states. Recently, we have asked the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), Legal Counsel Committee, which includes government attorneys from the states, to inform us if there are any state laws or interpretations which act to restrict or prevent their states from allowing Indian tribal governments to access FEMA grants, so that we may identify potential access issues and work with states to amend their laws or legal interpretations to allow tribal governments such access.

As part of the Administration's commitment to helping Indian Country prepare for all hazards, DHS raised the nationwide total for Tribal Homeland Security Grant Programs from less than \$2 million to \$10 million in FY 2010 and continued to fund tribal efforts at the same level in FY 2011. In addition, FEMA expanded the Ready.gov emergency preparedness initiatives to Indian Country in September 2011. Ready Indian Countrybill uses public outreach and the support of tribal elders to encourage individuals and families in Indian Country to take the basic steps necessary to prepare themselves for potential emergencies.

In addition, during FY 2011, 991 members of tribes and public safety agencies were directly trained through National Institute of Health -funded hazardous waste and hazmat disaster preparedness training programs. An additional 113 Native American and public safety responders were trained to recognize the hazards that may be present in the event of a disaster involving hazardous materials. In addition, the Emergency Management Institute conducted a record 17 courses from its Tribal Curriculum in FY 2011 and issued 373 certificates of completion in three of its five courses specifically designed to assist tribal governments to build an emergency management capability and become better integrated into the national emergency management system.

The Department of the Interior, Office of Emergency Management, in coordination with Indian Affairs, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (OHSES), commissioned an expert study on "Defining the Department of the Interior's Indian Affairs Role in Emergency Management." Recommendations are currently being addressed to improve federal coordination and the government-to-government relationship with tribal governments during and after emergencies and disasters.

OHSES is part of the focus group that includes DHS Office of Tribal Affairs, FEMA Office of Intergovernmental and Tribal Affairs, the Emergency Management Institute, the National Fire Administration, and tribal representatives supporting the development of the National Tribal All Hazards Incident Management Team (NTAHIMT) program. The NTAHIMT will utilize a proactive, all hazards approach to develop a comprehensive NTAHIMT program following United States Fire Administration standards. The program

recognizes that, “not every Tribe needs an Incident Management Team, but every tribe needs access to an NTAHIMT”.

OHSES is partnering with the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) to offer Tribal Nations the opportunity to obtain critical geospatial information during disasters. The NGA supports tribes by providing geospatial information about disaster affected areas based on imagery from commercial and U.S. government satellites.

In partnership with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), OHSES developed a survey for Tribal Nations regarding aviation security. Twenty-five tribes responded to the survey and ODNI is currently working to determine the optimal result in intelligence and information sharing in the air domain.

OHSES in partnership with SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center are working on a needs assessment survey on disaster behavioral health issues for tribal communities and are also assisting SAMHSA with the distribution of two brochures to Indian Country, one on Disasters Training & Technical Assistance and the other on Crisis Counseling Assistance & Training Program.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive-21 articulated a vision for protecting the nation from catastrophic disease outbreaks in humans that include a call for a national biosurveillance capability that enhances the timeliness of detection and the quality of situational awareness for response. The Department of the Interior is working with the Government Accountability Office regarding biosurveillance in Indian Country to discover how many tribes have biosurveillance programs or are receiving biosurveillance information. The second draft of this study has been sent to tribal governments for review and comment.

## Education

President Obama recognizes that our nation’s economic competitiveness and the path to the American Dream depend on providing every child with an education that will enable him/her to succeed in a global economy. For years, our nation has tolerated a status quo where too many students are stuck in struggling schools. As of the 2009-2010 school year, only about 58 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students graduated high school. President Obama has made it a priority of the Administration to support tribal communities in improving the education of Native American students. This Administration’s approach to education in tribal communities reflects suggestions from previous Tribal Nations Conferences and agency consultations, including support for Native American language and culture and increased tribal control over education.

### Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

The Administration’s proposal for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) would maintain dedicated funding for the Indian Education program, the Native Hawaiian Education program, and the Alaska Native Education program, to address the unique needs of Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native students. The proposal would expand eligibility for tribes to receive Indian Education formula grant funds and would explicitly authorize the use of funds for Native language



Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar visits with students at the Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) Riverside Indian School located in Oklahoma, which serves over 500 students representing 72 Tribes, March 15, 2011.  
*(Department of Interior Photo by Tami Heilemann)*

restoration and immersion. This proposal would also enhance the role of tribal educational agencies through a new pilot authority, which would support tribal educational agencies in working closely with districts and schools located on reservations. This pilot authority would allow them to enter into collaborative agreements with states and assume responsibilities for some state-level functions in administering ESEA programs.

### **Supporting Tribal Colleges and Universities**

The Administration has also maintained its strong support

for Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCUs). For instance, the Department of the Interior provided TCUs forward-funding so TCUs would have access to funds in July before the beginning of the school year. Furthermore, the Department of Education (ED) provided approximately \$150 million to TCUs in FY 2010. This amount included funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of TCUs through grants to institutions under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and grants and loans to TCU students under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 with over \$93 million in FY 2010.

### **Continuing Collaboration with the Bureau of Indian Education**

At the request of tribal leaders, the Department of Education has also continued its collaboration with the BIE. Specific examples of this include the provision of technical assistance to the BIE's Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) regarding reinstatement of SIPI's accreditation; continued implementation of a performance improvement accountability plan for K-12 education; and support in the design of a collective bargaining agreement for teachers in BIE-operated schools that would include student achievement in teacher evaluation systems.

### **Increasing Outreach and Support to Indian Communities**

During the Department of Education's 2010 and 2011 consultations with Tribal leaders, Education officials heard those leaders express a need to better understand the federal education grant application process in order to make tribes and tribal organizations successful in competing for these funds. As a result, the Department of Education held its second federal technical assistance workshop in



Albuquerque, New Mexico, to describe this process and demonstrate how Department of Education programs can help to create a cradle to career strategy to ensure that more American Indian / Alaska Native children enter school ready to learn, more students graduate from high school, and graduate from college.

On August 26, 2011, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan delivered the commencement address at Sinte Gleska University on the Rosebud Sioux reservation in South Dakota. It was the first time that a U.S. Secretary of Education has given the commencement address

at a TCU. During his speech, the Secretary spoke about the importance of the Four Virtues of the Lakota: Wisdom, Bravery, Fortitude, and Generosity. "Education is the key to Lakota future," Duncan said. "The Lakota must speak the Lakota vision." Secretary Duncan also participated in a roundtable discussion with tribal leaders on the issue of Indian education and visited a school located on the reservation.



Secretary of Education Arne Duncan receives honorary degree from Sinte Gleska University, Rosebud Sioux Reservation, S.D., August 26, 2011. (Department of Education Photo)

### *Investing in Innovation Fund*

The Investing in Innovation Fund, one of the Obama Administration's evidence-based grant making initiatives, awarded a validation grant of more than \$14 million to the Parents as Teachers National Center to replicate a program called BabyFACE, the evidence-supported, home-based services of the successful Family and Child Education (FACE) program, in 24 BIE schools. The program will serve approximately 1,000 children annually over the five years of the grant.

### *Promise Neighborhoods Program*

The Obama Administration has also secured \$40 million over the past two years to develop Promise Neighborhoods program, which is inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone and provides communities with the continuum of services—from cradle to career—to meet educational challenges. In 2010, the Department of Education included a priority for tribal communities in the program and awarded a \$500,000 Promise Neighborhoods planning grant to the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation.

### *National Advisory Council on Indian Education*

President Obama appointed members to the Department of Education's National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE), as authorized by the ESEA, who met on November 3, 2010, for the first time since the President renewed its charter. The Council advises the Secretary of Education on the funding and administration of Education Department programs that include or may benefit American Indians and Alaska Natives, makes recommendations to the Secretary on filling the position of Director of Indian

Education, and reports to Congress on any recommendations that the Council considers appropriate for the improvement of federal education programs that include or may benefit Native Americans. In June 2011, NACIE submitted its annual report to Congress.

### *Increasing Support for American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services*

The American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (AIVRS), authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, assists tribal governments to develop or increase their capacity to provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities residing on or near federal or state reservations. The number of grants awarded by ED's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) increased from 77 in FY 2009 to 85 grants in FY 2011. In FY 2010, RSA took advantage of the availability of Recovery Act funds to establish the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Continuous Improvement of Rehabilitation Counselors, Leaders, and Educators project to provide culturally appropriate training and technical assistance for Tribal VR programs. RSA works closely with the Consortium of Administrators of Native American Rehabilitation in its administration of the AIVRS program.

### *American Indian Research and Education Initiative (AIREI)*

In June 2011 Department of Energy announced a unique multi-year partnership between the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) to bring science, technology, engineering, and mathematics research and education funding to Native American students at our Nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and mainstream institutions with active AISES chapters. The program will recruit American Indian students to join student/faculty teams to participate in courses and workshops offered through a new two-week Energy Institute hosted by Tribal Colleges and Universities and our National Laboratories and to complete energy research projects on Tribal lands, with the mentorship of the Department's National Laboratories. Each year for three years, AIREI will fund a total of 2 student teams from TCUs and 2 student teams from mainstream institutions to work with DOE national labs on research thereby incorporating Department of Energy and National Laboratory science resources into the national American Indian STEM educational infrastructure.

## **Protecting Native American Lands and the Environment and Respecting Cultural Rights**

At last year's Tribal Nations Conference, the President acknowledged that he signed the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010, which included a bipartisan resolution that recognizes "the sad and painful chapters in our shared history." President Obama fully supports this resolution, "recognizing that no statement can undo the damage that was done." The President remarked that "[i]t's only by heeding the lessons of our history that we can move forward."

The United States recognizes that some of the most grievous acts committed by the United States and many other States against indigenous peoples were with regard to their lands, territories, and natural resources. For this reason, the United States has taken many steps to ensure the protection of Native American lands and natural resources. It is also for this reason that the United States stresses the importance of provisions of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that call on all states to recog-

nize the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories, and natural resources.

### Land Into Trust

Lands held in trust for tribes are used for housing, economic development, government services, cultural and natural resource protection, and other critical purposes. Recovering and protecting tribes' land base is a hallmark objective of this Administration. The Obama Administration has acquired over 157,000 acres of land in trust on behalf of Indian tribes and individuals, which is 130,000 more acres than were acquired in the three years preceding this Administration. In July of this



Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki receives a star quilt from Charles Murphy, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Tribal Chairman, and Chairman Tex G. Hall, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, at the United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) in Bismarck, N.D., July 5, 2011. The presentation of the star quilt has deep significance to the Plains Indian people. The star on the quilt is symbolic of the traditional importance of the stars to Plains Indian culture, and the presenter uses colorful fabric to emphasize the high regard in which they hold the recipient.  
*(Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson)*

year, version two of the Fee-to-Trust handbook was released which streamlined the processing guidance for acquisitions and expanded the guidance to off-reservation and mandatory acquisitions.

### Carcieri

After the recent Supreme Court decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar*, the Department of the Interior, in consultation with the Department of Justice, has interpreted the trust acquisition authority in the Indian Reorganization Act and has resumed taking land into trust. This approach will not address the situation faced by all tribes. To this end, legislation has been introduced in Congress, which is fully supported by the Administration, to reaffirm the authority of the United States to take land into trust on behalf of all federally recognized Indian Tribes.

### Protecting the Environment

The Administration is committed to protecting the environment, consult with tribes on environment issues, and recognizes that many indigenous peoples depend upon a healthy environment for subsistence fishing, hunting and gathering. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes ("Policy") was finalized on May 4, 2011 after extensive collaboration with tribes and a public comment period. The Policy establishes a broader standard regarding the type of Agency actions and activities that may warrant consultation. This broader standard is drawn from EPA's 1984 Indian Policy, which states that "tribal concerns and interests are considered whenever EPA's

actions and/or decisions may affect” tribes. During the first six months of the new Policy being in effect, nearly 120 Agency consultations were planned or occurring.

In 2011, The EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) finalized long awaited regulations filling Clean Air Act gaps in Indian Country. The Tribal New Source Review rules finalize non-attainment and minor source New Source Review rules for Indian country, bringing regulatory parity and certainty to sources in or considering locating in Indian Country. This is especially important to the oil and gas industry as resource related activities on reservations in the mid-west continue to increase.

OAR is also working closely with tribal governments to finalize changes to attainment designations under Title 1 of the Clean Air Act. Tribes have objected in the past to attainment designations for National Ambient Air Quality Standards being based on county boundaries, which in many cases fails to address tribal sovereignty and reservation boundaries based on treaties. This new policy supports tribal involvement in the designations process and recognition of unique issues for Indian Country, including assessment of tribal airsheds and recognition of tribal boundaries when making attainment designations.

The Department of the Interior’s Tribal Wildlife Grants Program has provided partnership support totaling more than \$20 million to 120 Indian tribal governments to conserve protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats over the past 3 years. In Fiscal Year 2011, the Department of the Interior’s Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), in partnership with tribes, tribal colleges and universities implemented ten Native American youth programs to introduce Native American students to careers in conservation. FWS will continue to partner with tribes to emphasize enhancement of tribal fish and wildlife resource management capacity into the future.

USDA invested \$66 million dollars in water and environmental projects benefitting tribal communities throughout FY 2011 in the lower 48 and an additional \$46 million dollars for similar projects benefitting 36 tribal communities in Alaska through the Rural Alaska Village Grants program. A further \$8.6 million was invested in essential community facilities benefitting tribal communities—and of that total \$3.7 million in grant funding was provided to 1994 Land Grant Tribal Colleges and Universities to improve their facilities.

The Department of Energy (DOE) provides technical assistance and grants to many Native American communities to help them to develop renewable energy resources and energy efficiency measures in ways that benefit both those communities, and the environment, and serve as models for the rest of the U.S. With DOE assistance, tribes are developing a wide-range of renewable energy resources and conservation measures, including geothermal, solar energy, wind and biomass technologies and comprehensive recycling programs. These programs reduce the carbon footprint of tribal communities while creating jobs and reducing costs.

In FY 2011, EPA distributed over \$67 million to over 500 tribal governments, including inter-tribal consortia, through the Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP), which provides technical and financial assistance to tribes to develop and administer federal environmental programs. Through GAP and other environmental assistance, the total number of tribes implementing at least one of their own environmental programs has increased from 4 in 1994, to 60 in 2011.

In continued support of this important work, the President's FY 2012 Budget Request seeks increases in funding to GAP to further address these underfunded activities in Indian Country.

EPA also awarded targeted grants to tribes to address environmental degradation, including \$12 million in grants to 83 tribes to establish Tribal Environmental Response Programs to address contamination on tribal lands.

Recent efforts of another EPA program, Border 2012, have focused on providing, improving and expanding clean water and wastewater management capacity to tribal communities in the border areas.

On October 25, 2011, Administrator Jackson signed proposed changes to the Underground Storage Tank (UST) regulations, which among other things, impose certain UST requirements in Indian Country that are similar to certain UST requirements under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 in states that receive federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Subtitle I funding. Additionally, each year, BIA participates with EPA, IHS, the Department of Defense, and USDA in the Tribal Solid Waste Interagency Workgroup for the "Tribal Solid Waste Management Assistance Projects." In FY 2011, the agencies awarded \$808,604 in funds to tribes to manage new solid waste initiatives.

### **Furthering Tribal Research**

The EPA-Tribal Science Council was created in partnership with tribal representatives to help integrate Agency and tribal interests, specifically with respect to environmental science issues. For 2011, two tribal science priorities have been proposed, one of which is the Integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in environmental science, policy, and decision-making.

Building on EPA's Tribal Science Council priorities, the Agency launched the Tribal ecoAmbassadors Program in September 2011. EPA invested \$410,000 for the pilot year of the program to support professors from Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) as they work to develop locally-relevant solutions to protect public health and the environment.

Selected professors from eight different TCUs will work with a group of students to solve environmental and public health issues ranging from sustainable building materials to monitoring of local drinking water wells. The professors will collaborate closely with neighboring tribes and EPA scientists to ensure that available resources are leveraged and resulting data are verified.

### **Increasing Cooperation in the Beringia Area**

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Shared Beringian Heritage Program by the National Park Service (NPS). This program has taken on an even greater significance after Presidents Obama and Medvedev issued a joint statement on May 26, 2011, declaring an intention to deepen cooperation in the region and the importance of protecting the area's unique natural and cultural resources and the rights of Native peoples in both countries. Recognizing that the success of continued programs and new initiatives depends on a meaningful consultative process, NPS is expanding its outreach significantly to Alaska Native Corporations, villages, and appropriate sister agencies. Most recently, at the request of Alaskan Native groups, NPS invited the Department of State to participate in the annual Beringia Days Conference from September 9-10 in Nome. It was the largest such gathering to date with over 200 participants, including representatives of Alaskan and Chukotkan Native peoples and senior

officials from the federal, state, local, and tribal governments. This forum, and the visits the Department of State and NPS made to several Alaska Native villages, gave us the opportunity to listen to a variety of perspectives and consider ways to move forward on future Beringia initiatives.



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack meets with more than 30 Students from Eastern and Western Tribes, Southeast Alaska, and Tuba City, Arizona who came to the Nation's Capitol to plant vegetable seeds that are indigenous to North America. The garden is called The Roots of American Agriculture, and is part of the Headquarters' People's Garden, April 27, 2011.

*(USDA Photo by Lance Cheung)*

### Improving Subsistence and Food Access Programs

Under the Recovery Act, the U.S. Forest Service released \$211 million to benefit tribes and tribal lands, including \$28.2 million for wildland fire management, improving habitat and watersheds that support rural subsistence, and capital improvements. Additionally, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service received \$97 million in FY2011 in support of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, which provided a monthly package of nutritious food to an average of about 78,000 individuals each month.

### Respecting Cultural Rights

As President Obama has recognized, the indigenous peoples of North America have invaluable cultural knowledge and rich traditions, which continue to thrive in Native American communities across our country. The activities of many U.S. agencies impact these cultures and traditions, and several agencies have taken formal steps to institutionalize respect for the rights of Native American communities and their traditions.

#### *Indian Arts and Crafts Amendments Act*

In July 2010, President Obama signed into law the Indian Arts and Crafts Amendments Act to strengthen the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which makes it illegal to sell, offer, or display for sale any art or craft product in a manner that falsely suggests it is Indian-produced, an Indian product, or the product of a particular Indian tribe. The new law empowers all federal law enforcement officers to enforce this prohibition and differentiates among penalties based on the price of the goods involved in the offense. The total market for American Indian and Alaska Native arts and crafts in the United States is estimated at a billion dollars, with an unknown but substantial amount of those sales going to misrepresented, non-authentic works.

***Protection of Sacred Sites and Repatriation of Human Remains and Cultural Items***

In July 2010, USDA and the Forest Service began a comprehensive effort across Indian Country focused on improving federal approaches to sacred site issues. Over 50 national and local forest listening sessions with tribal governments have been conducted to inform recommendations for improvement. USDA has released a draft report and recommendations, and after consultation at the local, regional and national levels, a final report and recommendations for changes will be released in early 2012.

***Consideration of Policy Regarding Eagle Feathers***

The Departments of Justice and the Interior have been working closely with tribes to facilitate tribal members' access to eagle feathers for religious and cultural purposes and to address tribal concerns about the effects of enforcement of federal laws protecting eagles on tribal religious and cultural practices. For example, the Department of Justice is reviewing tribal input on a proposed policy that would memorialize its practice, consistent with that of the Department of the Interior, of enforcing federal wildlife laws in a manner that respects the ability of members of federally recognized tribes to use eagle feathers and other bird feathers and parts for cultural and religious purposes.

In addition, the Department of Justice, in collaboration with EPA, is developing a tribal law enforcement training program focused on enforcement of wildlife and other environmental laws, and the Department of the Interior, through the FWS, has begun efforts to facilitate eagle feather possession for cultural and traditional use and promote coordination in wildlife investigations and enforcement efforts to protect golden and bald eagles.

***Support the Preservation of Native Languages***

The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) held its first Language Symposium in September 2011, for all 63 ANA Language grantees to build and share best practices, discuss challenges and barriers, and identify necessary resources to support language and culture in Native communities. The information gathered at this symposium will be used to strengthen ANA policies and technical assistance, and where indicated, shared with other federal agencies to foster improved coordination and improve language sustainability.







## Conclusion

President Obama believes that tribal leaders must be part of the solution and have a seat at the table, which is why he is honored to host the third White House Tribal Nations Conference on December 2, 2011. The conference will continue the important dialogue between tribal leaders and senior members of his Administration: the President believes that we have made significant strides and continue to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with tribal governments and improve the quality of life in Indian Country, but understands that our work is far from done. The President is committed to achieving a brighter future for Tribal Nations and looks forward to the continued partnership with tribal governments on solutions that address the challenges facing tribal communities.





