



2013 White House Tribal Nations Conference Synopsis

Executive Office of the President

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We would like to thank Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell for providing the venue for the 2013 White House Tribal Nations Conference and our diligent note takers.

We would also like to thank all tribal leaders and participants for taking part in this important annual event and look forward to our continued collaboration and dialogue.

Disclaimer: Summaries of the main themes and topics raised by tribal leaders who attended the break-out sessions are included in this report. This synopsis serves as a record of some of the issues raised at each session. It does not necessarily reflect the views of all tribal participants or the policy positions of the Obama Administration.

Executive Summary

November 13, 2013, marked the fifth consecutive White House Tribal Nations Conference, where President Obama reinforced his commitment to strengthen the government-to-government relationship and continue the progress in improving the lives of Native Americans. All 566 federally recognized tribes were invited to send a representative. Cabinet members from the Departments of the Interior, Education, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Labor, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Protection Agency participated along with senior Administration officials from the Department of Treasury, Small Business Administration, Office of Management and Budget, Homeland Security, the Center for Environmental Quality and the Office of National Drug and Control Policy. The success of the Conference is not only the result of the high level of participation from the Administration, but also the participation of the tribal leaders. Quality interaction between tribal leaders and federal officials is critical to advancing progress on the myriad of issues facing tribal governments. The purpose of this synopsis is to reflect the exchange of ideas between tribal leaders and federal officials at the Conference.

The President considers the government-to-government relationship with Indian tribes a lasting covenant that should be nourished and strengthened. To this end, engagement, consultation, and interagency collaboration are critical to support and build stronger tribal communities. The 2013 White House Tribal Nations Conference focused on the newly established White House Council on Native American Affairs. The Council is responsible for coordinating the U.S. government's engagement and partnership with tribes in order to promote more prosperous and resilient Native American communities. The Conference provided tribal leaders the opportunity to directly engage with the Council during the plenary session to not only voice their concerns but also propose solutions to strengthen the Administration's tribal policies.

Over the past 40 years, the policy on tribal consultation and collaboration has helped move tribal communities forward and President Obama continues to build on this approach to make sure that tribal leaders have a seat at the table in finding solutions to the unique challenges facing Indian Country. The Administration's commitment to tribal consultation and collaboration has improved the partnership with tribes, and the significant policy achievements of the past five years are a testament to the power of this approach. Nevertheless, while this Administration has made substantial progress in partnership with tribes, the President recognizes that we have much more work to do. The President and his Administration look forward to working with tribal leaders to continue to advance meaningful and lasting change in Indian Country.

BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

Promoting Healthy Tribal Communities: Improving Access to Healthcare

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Acting Director, Indian Health Service, HHS
Gary Hayes, Former Chairman, Ute Mountain Ute

Gina Capra, Director, Office of Rural Health, VA

Nancy Goetschius, Senior Advisor, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, HHS

Kristin Cunningham, Director, Business Policy Veterans Health Administration Chief Business Office, VA

Julian Harris, Program Associate Director Health Division, OMB

Stacey Ecoffey, Principal Advisor for Tribal Affairs, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Immediate Office of the Secretary, HHS

John O'Brien, Director of Healthcare & Insurance, OPM

Healthcare Services & Coordination

- Tribal leaders shared examples of the benefits of tribal self-governance and consultation in their communities. Tribal leaders encouraged other Federal agencies to learn from IHS and HHS Tribal consultation models.
- Tribal leaders identified a \$27 billion healthcare disparity for American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) and requested greater access to resources and services for health care.
- Tribal leaders explained that clinics are habitually understaffed and underfunded, and despite the construction of new facilities, there are not enough healthcare providers to pay overhead costs and sustain operations. They would like to see more healthcare professionals staff IHS and tribally operated facilities.
- Some Tribal leaders felt IHS management services lacked coordination and requested to work with one central office rather than having separate regional offices. Tribal leaders expressed concern that too much money is being spent on administrative costs rather than healthcare.
- Tribes urged the Administration to settle all Contract Disputes Act claims for unpaid Contract Support Costs (CSC). Tribes are seeking to recover alleged claims from the Federal Judgment Fund.

Automatic Budget Cuts

- Tribal leaders expressed concern over the application of sequestration, believing that IHS should be exempt from the automatic budget cuts, or sequestration similarly to Social Security, Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- Tribes urged OMB to establish a Tribal Affairs office.
- Tribes requested that the IHS budget be restored to pre-sequester levels because the current funding does not match the need for services.
- Tribes stated that they are experiencing difficulties in providing preventative healthcare services due to budget cuts.
- Tribal leaders requested more funding to address mental health issues in Indian Country, citing increasingly high rates of depression and suicide. Tribal leaders would also like to see the Federal government address funding for alcohol and substance abuse.

Affordable Care Act (ACA)

- Some tribal leaders wanted clarification on the course of action Native Americans should take under Medicaid if their state turned down the ACA Medicaid expansion.
- Tribes believed they should have access to Federal funds regardless of State action due to their sovereign status.

Strengthening Tribal Economies: Economic Development in Indian Country

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, DOI
William Micklin, CEO Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians

Rodger Boyd, Deputy Assistant Secretary,
Office of Native American Programs, HUD

Amber Kuchar, Associate Program
Manager, the CDFI Fund, Treasury

Matt Erskine, Deputy Assistant Secretary,
Economic Development Administration,
DOC

Patrice Kunesh, Deputy Under Secretary,
Rural Development, USDA

John Garcia, Director, Deputy Assistant
Secretary, Office of Intergovernmental
Affairs, VA

Linda Lance, Deputy Director for Policy &
Programs, Bureau of Land Management,
DOI

Thomas Guevara, Deputy Assistant
Secretary for Regional Affairs, U.S.
Economic Development Association

Vinai Thummalapally, Executive Director,
SelectUSA, DOC

David Hinson, National Director, Minority
Business Development Agency, DOC

Pilar Thomas, Acting Director, Office of
Indian Energy Policy & Programs, DOE

Christopher James, Assistant
Administrator, Office of Native American
Affairs, SBA

Vassiliki (Vicky) Tsilas, Attorney-Advisor,
Tax Legislation, Office of Tax Policy,
Treasury

Workforce Development

- Tribes requested Federal assistance with job training and job creation for Indian Country. Some tribal leaders suggested a jobs summit that involves major business leaders to provide opportunities, identify and fix obstacles, and create public/private partnerships for AI/AN. Tribal leaders also advocated for a Native Jobs Initiative, which would be a Federal government jobs plan developed for Indian Country.
- Some tribes suggested that career training and workforce funding go exclusively through BIA by way of a direct service contract, rather than through the state.
- Tribes asked for Federal partnerships with businesses to develop long-term plans to address job displacement due to the destruction of fishing habitats.
- Tribes expressed concern over the lack of job creation efforts for AI/AN veterans, citing a recent report issued by the Government Accountability Office. Tribes advocated for the Federal government to establish AI/AN veteran centers throughout tribal communities to help veterans access benefits and services faster and more easily.

Infrastructure

- Alaskan tribes are concerned about the displacement of their tribal member workforce and want to attract younger members of the tribe back home by providing affordable housing and job opportunities. These tribes identified poor infrastructure and inadequate transportation as tremendous barriers to economic development.
- Landless tribes or tribes with a smaller land base explained unique barriers they experience related to economic development and asked for stronger Federal partnerships.
- Tribal leaders experienced difficulty in obtaining funding from HUD under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA).
- Tribes also voiced concern that in some situations, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process can make developing housing projects too difficult.
- Tribes expressed the need for the Federal government to issue leases and right-of-ways without Federal regulatory oversight.

Taxes

- Tribes advocate that they should be treated similarly to states with respect to Federal tax exemptions.
- Tribal leaders would like tribes to receive tax incentives to help stimulate the economy on reservations and within tribal communities.
- Tribes asked for Federal assistance in developing better relationships with state leadership and the National Governors Association.

Tribal Bonds/Bonding/Investment

- Tribal leaders expressed frustration over their inability to access capital.

Promoting Energy Development

- One tribe recently considered entering into a Tribal Energy Resource Agreement (TERA) with BIA to regulate and lease lands for energy development, independently of the Federal government. The tribe encouraged others to participate in the program for the purpose of developing infrastructure. However, the tribe felt that the environmental review required in connection with TERA creates unnecessary burdens that would stifle the program's success. The Tribe felt TERA is overly complicated as demonstrated by the fact that no other tribe has obtained an agreement.
- Tribal leaders expressed interest in expanding alternative energy projects like biofuels, but need details and guidance for how to enter the industry. Tribes would like DOE and BIA to provide more funding and technical assistance in order to develop Indian energy projects.

- Tribal leaders stressed that attempts to diversify tribal economies into new energy markets are met with constant impediments. For example, tribes highlighted their difficulties in gaining energy transmission access and indicated concern about recent Federal Energy Regulatory Commission rulings that limit such access.
- Some tribal leaders noted the need for equal access to existing pipelines so that the energy resource can be transported away from the reservation and into the market. Tribal leaders said that not granting equal access to pipelines used by other energy companies' stymies tribes' ability to sell natural gas resources to a broader market.

Respecting Tribal Sovereignty in Economic Development

- Tribes thanked DOI for its work on the Klamath River Basin Settlement, but noted that some users of the river were not covered by the settlement and the tribes advocated for settlement on those claims as well.
- Tribes that depend on fishing for commercial and cultural purposes want DOI to implement water protection for Indian Country. Tribes also seek continued cooperation on settlement implementation with DOI, including salmon restoration.
- Tribes applauded BIA for its work in evaluating the economics of gaming compacts and for staying true to the meaning of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. Conversely, some tribes felt that states overreach in gaming compact negotiations

Protecting Natural, Cultural, and Sacred Resources: Management of Native Lands and Environments

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Gina McCarthy, Administrator, EPA
Leonard Forsman, Chairman, Suquamish Tribe

Michael Bean, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish & Wildlife & Parks, DOI

Arthur “Butch” Blazer, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment, USDA

JoAnn Chase, Director, American Indian Environmental Office, EPA

Marie Therese Dominguez, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), DOD

Milford Wayne Donaldson, Chairman, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Robert Dreher, Acting Assistant Attorney General, Environment & Natural Resources Division, DOJ

David Geiser, Director & Acting Deputy Director of the Office of Legacy Management, DOE

Sarah Harris, Chief of Staff, Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, DOI

Janet McCabe, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Air & Radiation, EPA

Bradley Moran, Acting Director, National Ocean Council & Assistant Director for Ocean Sciences, Office of Science & Technology Policy, White House

Jane Nishida, Assistant Administrator, Office of International & Tribal Affairs, EPA

Gerald F. Pease Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force/Environment, Safety & Occupational Health, DOD

Samuel Rauch, Acting Assistant Administrator for Fishers, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, DOC

Administration and Consultation

- Tribal leaders discussed the lack of effective consultation to address environmental issues and requested more tribal consultation.
- Some tribes stressed a need for defined roles for regional organizations and Native organizations.
- Tribes requested clarified regulation of 404 permitting and wanted more support from the Federal government. Tribes also wanted to see more preventative pollution measures taken.

- Tribal leaders believed that budget cuts and sequestration erode environmental programs. One tribal leader stated that treaty rights are a budgetary obligation, not a budgetary priority.

Fish and Wildlife

- Tribal leaders want the Federal government to propose policies to address their concerns of overfishing and improve the management of fisheries.
- Tribal leaders fear that tribal fisheries and hatcheries are suffering because of pollution and toxic dumping and advocated for stronger enforcement of regulations to protect waterways.

Sacred and Cultural Sites

- Tribal leaders proposed that future sacred site summits be held over a two-day period on Indian lands.
- Tribal leaders suggested that rules and regulations for economic and energy development need to be amended for sacred sites considerations.
- Some tribes believed their sacred places are being infringed upon by recreationalists.
- Tribes expressed concern that BIA is violating the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) because sacred remains are separated from sacred sites.

Mining

- Tribal leaders reported that mining is causing large-scale devastation to Indian lands and negatively impacting fisheries and waterways.

Environment/Climate Change

- Tribal leaders commented that climate change is adversely impacting Indian Country but are hopeful that the participation of tribal members on the climate change task force will help alleviate some of the problems.
- Tribal leaders suggested the use of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as a potential tool for sustainable development.
- Tribal leaders want stronger enforcement of the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty with Canada to reduce and prevent pollution.
- Tribes identified EPA's region 10 as a problem due to 17 superfund sites surrounding the reservations and creating dead zones.
- Tribal leaders want a longer transition period to move to clean coal.

Advancing Government-to-Government Relationships: Reinforcing Relationships Between the Federal Government and Tribes

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Katherine Archuleta, Director, OPM

Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, Chairwoman, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)

David Conrad, Director,
Intergovernmental & Tribal Affairs,
DOE

Karin Koslow, Deputy, American
Indian Environmental Office, EPA

Laura Davis, Chief of Staff,
Department of the Interior, DOI

Colleen Manaher, Director, Western
Hemisphere Travel Initiative, Office of
Field Operations, Customs & Border
Protection, DHS

Heidi Frechette, Director of
Performance & Planning, Office of
Native American Programs, HUD

Amanda Marshall, U.S. Attorney for
the District of Oregon, DOJ

Juan Garcia, Administrator, Farm
Service Agency, USDA

Administration & Consultation

- Tribal leaders raised two overarching issues: the lack of recognition of tribal sovereignty, and the need for fair and meaningful consultation between the Federal government and tribes.
- Tribal leaders want the Federal government to invest more in tribal consultations to discuss the implications of legislation and policies that may impact tribes prior to implementation.
- Tribal leaders requested more in-person consultations and wanted more resources allocated to ensure meaningful consultation with tribes. Tribes also asked for the Administration to use technology for consultation in order to reduce transportation costs.
- Tribal leaders expressed concern over the development of Resource Management Plans (RMP) in Alaska and the impacts these plans could have on Alaska Native Villages.
- Tribal leaders want Congressional passage of legislation to respond to the *Caricieri* decision.
- Tribes noted the difficulties associated with political turnover in Federal and state government resulting in tribes having to “re-educate” officials on the tenets of tribal sovereignty.

- Some tribal leaders were frustrated that the Federal government does not consult with tribes early enough in the process of developing regulations and legislation, instead meeting with tribes after policy decisions and regulations are made.

Legal Concerns and Legislation

- Tribal leaders noted that the *Michigan v. Bay Mills Indian Community* case could have a detrimental impact on sovereign immunity, with an adverse ruling acting as a catalyst for additional litigation that tribes cannot afford.
- Tribal leaders are frustrated that some Federal and state courts seem to ignore legally binding treaty guarantees of the Federal government.

Supporting Self-Determination and Self-Governance: Honoring Tribal Control over Tribal Land, Water, Energy, and Trust Assets

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Mike Connor, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, DOI

Judy Fink, Tribal Council Chairperson, Northfork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California

Julio Friedmann, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Fossil Energy, DOE

Ethan Shenkman, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Environment & Natural Resources Division, DOJ

Lawrence Roberts, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, DOI

Leslie Wheelock, Director, Office of Tribal Relations, USDA

Administration & Consultation

- Tribes are concerned that the FDA has focused its interest on small scale food production and processing of Indian products without consultation. Tribes argued that FDA regulations are designed for large food processors and the application to tribes could shut down small businesses in Indian Country.
- Tribes are alarmed over the number of non-Indians committing crimes on the reservation and asked DOJ to look into the situation.
- Tribal leaders acknowledged that the White House Council on Native American Affairs is a positive development in strengthening the government-to-government relationship with tribes; however, tribal leaders want the Council to consult tribal leaders on a regular basis.
- Tribes want to be fully reimbursed for Contract Support Costs (CSC), in the aftermath of the *Ramah* Supreme Court decision. Tribes are unhappy that the Administration's FY 2014 budget proposal includes contract-by-contract caps on CSC.

Land-Buy-Back Programs

- Tribes want to have a better understanding of DOI's land-buy-back program appraisal process.
- Tribal leaders would like DOI to establish a program to help educate tribal members on land appraisals with the goal of the tribe conducting land appraisals.

Treaty Rights

- Tribal leaders expressed a desire to manage businesses on their land.

- Tribes want to see the Federal government take a stronger approach in fulfilling its trust responsibilities.
- Tribes requested clarification on the source of appraisal money under the American Fisheries Act (AFA).
- Tribes from California want to meet with DOI to discuss Indian trust settlement issues arising out of California's unique system for Indian lands.
- One tribe expressed an interest in long-term carbon capture and requested greater access to clean coal technology.

Building Safe Tribal Communities: Law Enforcement, Public Safety, and Disaster Response in Tribal Communities

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Tony West, Associate Attorney General, Department of Justice
Juana Majel Dixon, Tribal Legislative Councilwoman, Pauma

Stewart Cedres, Director of Preparedness and Response, Infrastructure Security and Energy Reliability, DOE

Tim Purdon, U.S. Attorney for the District of North Dakota, DOJ

Harold Hurtt, Assistant Director, Office of State, Local & Tribal Coordination, Immigration & Customs Enforcement, DHS

Ben Tucker, Deputy Director, Office of State, Local, & Tribal Affairs, ONDCP

Kevin McGinnis, FirstNet/National Telecommunications & Information Administration, DOC

Ron Vitiello, Deputy Chief, U.S. Border Patrol, Customs & Border Protection, DHS

Venus Prince, Deputy Solicitor, DOI

Elizabeth Zimmerman, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Response & Recovery, DHS/FEMA

Tonya Robinson, Special Assistant to the President for Justice & Regulatory Policy, White House Domestic Policy Council

Deficit Concerns

- Tribes that relied heavily on grants for police and domestic violence expressed concerns over Federal budget deficits and the impact sequestration will have on law enforcement and public safety in Indian Country.
- Tribes believed that public safety funding should be channeled directly to tribes to facilitate long-term, stable, and sufficient support.
- Tribes want to be reimbursed for costs incurred during the lapse in federal funding in 2013, including funds for tribal law enforcement. Some tribes stated that they used supplemental and economic development funds to pay for public safety. One tribal leader noted that the shutdown demonstrated that tribes cannot always depend on U.S. government funding.
- Tribes considered “self-governance tribes” do not receive the same level of funding increases as other tribes and sought more non-competitive funding to pay for public safety.

- Tribes would like more funding to be directed toward alcohol and drug treatment.
- One tribe said it would like better implementation of certain statutes or to receive funding to establish its own tribal justice system, including funds for a court, forensic lab, and prison. Tribes stated there is a need for laboratories on tribal lands so that forensic evidence can be analyzed immediately.
- Tribes wanted funding to better coordinate with the implementation of TLOA and VAWA.

Jurisdiction/Tribal Sovereignty

- Tribes voiced concerns over Public Law 83-280, also known as the “State Jurisdiction Over Offenses Committed by or Against Indians in the Indian Country Act.” They consider the law an affront to tribal sovereignty because it lacks language requiring cooperation and coordination between tribes and state and local authorities.
- Tribal leaders noted that tribes continue to have jurisdictional issues with counties and cities that refuse to recognize tribal court orders and warrants and would like to open better lines of communication with those entities.
- One tribal leader suggested a tribal coalition under VAWA for special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction implementation.

Criminal Activity & Public Safety

- Tribal leaders reported that drug trading continues to plague tribal communities, especially those on international borders. Some tribes experienced significant drug trafficking from Canada.
- Tribes with large land bases discussed problems with marijuana plantations on their reservations. In addition to the illegality involved, tribes noted that the chemicals used to grow marijuana harm crops and wild stock and contaminate surrounding water bodies.
- Tribes in the Bakken region believed that their tribal lands have become havens for criminal activity. Tribes in the area experienced double-digit growth in property crime and drug seizures in the past two years. These tribes also reported increased gang activity and methamphetamine distribution.

Improving Federal Responsiveness

- Tribes expressed concern over the lack of BIA law enforcement officers on their reservations. Tribes also experienced cross-deputization with municipalities but not counties.
- Some tribes applauded DOJ for consultation and said that when DOJ listened it made a difference and conditions in their communities improved.

- Tribal leaders recommended that the Department of State support the establishment of a UN body to monitor implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Tribes suggested a permanent status of indigenous peoples and supported actions by the UN to address violence against indigenous women. They also expressed support for several recommendations from the Alta Outcome Document from the June 2013 Global Indigenous Preparatory Conference held in Alta, Norway. These recommendations included creating a monitoring mechanism for the Declaration, an improved status for indigenous representatives in UN meetings, and convening a UN high-level meeting on violence against indigenous women.
- Tribes requested an amendment to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in order to prioritize Native children because state and Federal justice systems do not properly track incarcerated Native youth.

Investing in the Future: Native American Youth and Education

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Martha Kanter, Under Secretary, ED
David Bean, Tribal Councilman, Puyallup Tribe

Dr. Ann Bartruska, Deputy Under Secretary, Research, Education, & Economics, USDA

Pamela Hyde, Administrator, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, HHS

David Jayo, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, DOI

Dr. Susan Karol, Chief Medical Officer, Indian Health Service, HHS

Karol Mason, Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, DOJ

William Mendoza, Executive Director, White House Initiative on American Indian & Alaska Native Education, ED

Charles “Monty” Roessel, Acting Director, Bureau of Indian Education, ED

Joyce Silverthorne, Director, Office of Indian Education, ED

Janey Thornton, Deputy Under Secretary, Food Nutrition & Consumer Services, USDA

Anthony Wilhelm, PhD., Associate Administrator for Telecommunications & Information Applications & Director of BTOP, Office of Telecommunications, National Telecommunications & Information Administration, DOC

Protecting Cultural Resources and History

- Tribes applauded improvements this year in the field of Indian education, particularly with regards to compiling and exchanging information about language and culture for educators, schools, government agencies, and the public. Tribes requested that the Administration support changes to the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act to allow greater data sharing.
- Due to budget cuts, tribes are experiencing a lack of cultural education programs and language clubs.
- Tribes are concerned over a lack of Native American educators with training or knowledge of Native cultures. One tribal leader stated that non-Native teachers are sometimes unsympathetic to the needs of Native students and stressed the significance of having Native role models and mentors in the classroom.

- Many tribes expressed the need for a core curriculum that includes Native languages, culture, and history. Some tribes felt that because Native languages are taught differently, direction must come from the top levels.
- Tribes requested forward funding for tribal colleges who currently don't receive it.

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Schools and Public Schools

- Tribes consistently voiced concerns over the lack of funding for Indian education programs, as well as the detrimental impacts from sequestration. Tribal leaders are also concerned that the construction budget is zeroed out in the President's FY 2014 budget.
- Tribes want more influence and control in managing schools and educational funding.
- Tribes requested that impact aid and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds be disbursed directly to tribal educational agencies.
- Tribes would like Indian education services to be provided to Native American populations that live outside tribal jurisdictions due to the different types of schools serving Native students. At the same time, tribes believed that local schools place too high of a priority on national benchmarks and standardized testing.
- Tribes reported that Title VII programs are underfunded, particularly in urban areas.
- Tribes credited teacher shortages and low retention rates in BIE schools to low salaries, poor funding, and difficulty obtaining certifications.
- Tribal leaders want the funding processes under the Indian Education Act to be streamlined.
- Tribal leaders suggested that the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) be reauthorized and amended to allow tribes the right to design education for their children. Tribal leaders felt voiceless in the direction funds are allocated and asked that tribal education departments have seats on local educational agencies, committees, and boards.

Native American Youth

- Tribes are increasingly worried about the social and behavioral well-being of AI/AN youth. Tribes are concerned about the high rate of suicides in Indian Country and urge schools to prioritize mental health.
- One tribal leader felt Native students are being misdiagnosed with learning disabilities and getting unnecessary prescriptions for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder medication.

- Another tribal leader felt public schools are too quick to expel junior high and high school AI/AN students, which subsequently leads to heavy reliance on boarding schools. Similarly, tribes stated that many students are lost in foster care or the juvenile justice systems.
- Tribes noted that some strategies have been successful in educating Native children, including cultural programs, peer-to-peer study groups, and tutoring by local college students.
- Tribes identified *Let's Move! In Indian Country* as successfully raising awareness about the seriousness of health issues among Native American youth and credited the program with focusing on Indian youth nutrition and exercise.

Moving Communities Forward: Developing Infrastructure in Indian Country

Designated Breakout Leaders:

Michael Black, Director of BIA, DOI
Jon Greendeer, President Ho-Chunk Nation

Geoffrey Blackwell, Chief, Office of Native Affairs & Policy, FCC

Joel Neimeyer, Federal Co-Chair, Denali Commission

Melanie Kenderdine, Director, Energy Policy & Systems Analysis, DOE

John Padalino, Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, USDA

Elizabeth Klein, Associate Deputy Secretary, DOI

John D. Porcari, Deputy Secretary, DOT

Tracey LeBeau, Director, Western Area Power Administration's Transmission Infrastructure Program, DOE

Nancy Stoner, Acting Assistant Administrator, Office of Water, EPA

Joanna Turner, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Government Affairs, DOT

Housing

- Tribal leaders characterized electricity in Indian Country as unreliable and a barrier to economic development.
- Tribes complained that under the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal - Homeownership (HEARTH) Act, leasing regulations approval from DOI is still taking too long.

Transportation

- Tribes expressed frustration over several statutory and transportation grant requirements. Specifically, tribes supported changing the definition of "rural" for eligibility under the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. Tribes also suggested tribal and rural grants be combined to give tribes greater access to transportation funding.
- Tribal leaders suggested that rules at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) be amended to allow refinancing of rural redevelopment loans when projects are undergoing upgrades and expansions.
- Tribes in rural areas asked for enhanced highway development and technical assistance.

High-Speed Wireless Internet

- Some tribal leaders in rural areas lack access to broadband communication. Such access is needed for both education and small-business marketing.
- Some tribal leaders believed that USDA made strides in expanding broadband access within their reservations, but requested more funding for programs to ensure broadband access in every tribal residence.

Water Infrastructure

- Tribal leaders expressed frustration that the Army Corps of Engineers is controlling some surplus water reserves that belong to the tribes.
- Tribal leaders explained the need for wastewater facilities to support residential growth.
- Tribes noted that they have land acreage they would like to convert to industrial use, but cannot without water delivery or treatment systems. Typically, these acreages of land do not have homes in the area, so they cannot access funding for water facility grants that are available only for residential purposes.

Conclusion

President Obama is proud of the progress made in Indian Country during his first term. Many of the Administration's accomplishments are outlined in the 2013 White House Tribal Nations Conference Progress Report. However, he understands that this progress must continue and remains committed to partnering with tribal communities in expanding opportunities for Native Americans. As in his first term, President Obama approached his work with tribal communities through a strengthened government-to-government relationship built upon meaningful consultation and collaboration. In his address to the Conference this year, the President reaffirmed his goal to maintain this relationship throughout his second term; he stated that the relationship between tribes and the Federal Government requires "constant care, so that it would stay strong." And he's calling on all of us "to keep the covenant between us for this generation and for future generations."