



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 5, 2012

Dear Tribal Leader:

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2012 White House Tribal Nations Conference.

Over the past four years, we have made great strides in fortifying our government-to-government relationship and bolstering tribes' ability to strengthen and develop their economies. Through these White House Tribal Nations Conferences, I have worked to ensure that tribal leaders are directly involved in setting policy priorities. And to keep our dialogue running throughout the year, I directed all Cabinet agencies to fully implement President Clinton's tribal consultation Executive Order.

By working together over the past four years, we have made significant advances throughout Indian Country. A key principle in our ongoing work is tribal control of land and resources, and I was proud to sign the HEARTH Act into law earlier this year. This law restores tribes' authority to govern the leasing and management of their own lands if they choose. The Tribal Law and Order Act enhances tribal justice systems and improves coordination with Federal law enforcement partners. The Indian Health Care Improvement Act—which I permanently reauthorized as part of the Affordable Care Act—makes quality health care more accessible to Native Americans. And because all young people deserve the chance to realize their full potential, I signed an Executive Order to expand educational opportunities for all Native Americans and Alaska Native students. This policy emphasizes respect for cultural identities while offering a competitive education that prepares young Native Americans to succeed in college and careers.

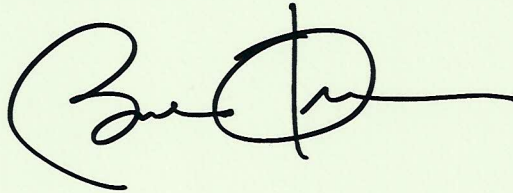
In order to write a new chapter in our shared history, we must also acknowledge that the past has been marred with failed policies, mistreatment, and tragedy. In 2009, I signed a bipartisan resolution that finally acknowledged the cruelty, injustice, and broken promises Native Americans faced for centuries.

To break with the past, we have worked to resolve many long-standing legal claims that have strained our nation-to-nation relationship for too long. The Keepseagle and Cobell settlements ended decades of litigation, and along with settlements in tribal trust funds and resources management cases, have brought resolution to more than 50 tribes and hundreds of thousands of Native American people. These historic agreements mark an important step toward building a foundation of mutual respect and mutual trust. But there is still much more work to do.

In the years ahead, I will remain committed to growing our relationship and advancing tribal sovereignty. I will continue to press Congress to provide an option for Federally-recognized tribes to make direct Stafford Act declaration requests in a manner similar to states; and I will push them to provide a Carcieri fix, reaffirming the Secretary of the Interior's authority to take land into trust for all Federally-recognized Indian tribes.

During my first term as President, I have seen tribal communities grow healthier and stronger when the Federal Government honors cultural identities, practices, and languages. Rich and invaluable traditions are rooted in every tribe, and to build a brighter future for Indian Country, we must respect tribal customs and heritage. I am proud of what we have accomplished together and look forward to continuing to work alongside you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", with a large, stylized "B" and a circular flourish.