

# **Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments**

The following memorandum was sent to all heads of executive departments and agencies and appeared in the May 4, 1994 issue of the Federal Register. It was signed and released in conjunction with the historic meeting between the President and representatives of Tribal governments held at the White House on April 29, 1995.

The White House

Washington, DC

April 29, 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments

The United States government has a unique legal relationship with Native American Tribal governments as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, statutes, and court decisions. As executive departments and agencies undertake activities affecting Native American Tribal rights or trust resources, such activities should be implemented in a knowledgeable, sensitive manner respectful of Tribal sovereignty.

Today, as part of an historic meeting, I am outlining principles that executive departments and agencies, including every component bureau and office, are to follow in their interactions with Native American Tribal governments. The purpose of these principles is to clarify our responsibility to ensure that the Federal government operates within a government-to-government relationship with Federally-recognized Native American Tribes. I am strongly committed to building a more effective day-to-day working relationship reflecting respect for the rights of self-government due the sovereign Tribal governments.

In order to ensure that the rights of sovereign Tribal governments are fully respected, executive branch activities shall be guided by the following:

- a. The head of each executive department and agency shall be responsible for ensuring that the department or agency operates within a government-to-government relationship with Federally-recognized Tribal governments.
- b. Each executive department and agency shall consult, to the greatest extent practicable and to the extent permitted by law, with Tribal governments prior to taking actions that affect Federally recognized Tribal governments. All such consultations are to be open and candid so that all interested parties may evaluate for themselves the potential impact of relevant proposals.
- c. Each executive department and agency shall assess the impact of Federal government plans, projects, programs, and activities on Tribal trust resources and assure that Tribal government rights and concerns are considered during the development of such plans, projects, programs and activities.
- d. Each executive department and agency shall take appropriate steps to remove any procedural impediments to working directly and effectively with Tribal governments on activities that affect the trust property and/or governmental rights of the Tribes.
- e. Each executive department and agency shall work cooperatively with other Federal departments and agencies to enlist their interest and support in cooperative efforts, where appropriate, to accomplish the goals of this memorandum.
- f. Each executive department and agency shall apply the requirements of Executive Orders Nos. 12875 ("Enhancing the Intergovernmental Partnership") and 12866 ("Regulatory Planning and Review") to design solutions and tailor Federal programs, in appropriate circumstances, to address specific or unique needs of Tribal communities. The head of each executive department and agency shall ensure that the department or agency's bureaus and components are fully aware of this memorandum, through publication or other means, and that they are in compliance with its requirements.

This memorandum is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to, and does not, create any right to administrative or judicial review, or any other right or benefit or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable by a party against the United States, its agencies or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON