



APR 16 2012

Dear Tribal Leader:

We want to thank you for your work on behalf of our Nation's tribal students, schools, and communities. Your efforts are making a difference across Indian Country, and we are grateful for your dedication and leadership.

The third annual White House Tribal Nations Conference on December 2, 2011, marked a historic day for education in Indian Country. President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13592, which established the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education (Initiative). The President's Initiative committed the Federal Government to working closely with tribal governments to close the achievement gap between Indian students and non-Indian students, decrease the alarmingly high dropout rates of all American Indian and Alaska Native students, and help preserve and revitalize Native languages.

The Secretaries of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) serve as co-chairs of the Initiative. The Initiative is led by Executive Director William Mendoza (Oglala and Sicangu Lakota), who serves as a senior policy advisor on Federal policies affecting American Indian and Alaska Native education. Mr. Mendoza works closely with Bureau of Indian Education Director Keith Moore (Rosebud Sioux) and ED's Office of Indian Education Director Joyce Silverthorne (Confederated Salish and Kootenai), to provide periodic reports to the Secretaries regarding progress achieved. He also coordinates tribal consultations with the mission of expanding educational opportunities and improving educational outcomes for all American Indian and Alaska Native students for pathways to college and beyond. A special emphasis of the Initiative is on tribal colleges and universities, and Native languages, cultures, and histories.

The Bureau of Indian Education, the Office of Indian Education, and the Executive Director have engaged tribal leaders and Indian educators in four roundtable discussions on best practices to improve Indian education. The invaluable perspectives from tribal communities offered during the roundtables served to focus and build upon the ongoing collaboration between the Departments to address Indian education with tribally generated input.

The Executive Order also requires a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOI and ED to facilitate a new partnership to improve American Indian and Alaska Native education utilizing both Departments' expertise, resources, and facilities. We have enclosed a draft of the MOU for your review prior to consultation. The draft MOU intends to provide a framework from which DOI and ED will work together to reach the goals of the Executive Order, as well as to provide the continuing framework for the transferring of grant funds from ED to DOI under certain ED statutes. The MOU is subject to tribal consultation and any appropriate revisions that result from such consultation.

In furtherance of the goals set forth by President Obama, we recognize that, to do our best for Native students, the Departments of the Interior and Education must collaborate with those who know their students and communities the best – tribal leaders like yourselves. We would like to consult on the following objectives: (1) the development and content of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Education and (2) the strategic implementation of the Initiative.

To review copies of our respective Departments' tribal consultation policies, please visit <http://www.doi.gov/tribes/Tribal-Consultation-Policy.cfm> and www.edtribalconsultations.org for more information.

Please join Mr. Mendoza, Mr. Moore, and Ms. Silverthorne at one of these important consultation sessions, which are scheduled as follows:

May 18, 2012

Thunder Valley Casino Resort
1200 Athens Avenue
Lincoln, California 95648
(877) 468-8777

May 24, 2012

Northern Arizona University
Ashurst Hall Auditorium, Building 11
321 McMullen Circle
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001
(928) 523-4120

May 31, 2012

BLN Office Park
Conference Room 3
2001 Killebrew Drive
Bloomington, Minnesota 55425
(952) 851-5427

June 5, 2012

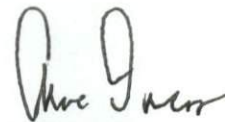
Renaissance Inn
611 Commerce Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 255-8400

Should you have any questions regarding this event, please contact Ms. Lizzie Marsters with the Department of the Interior (lizzie_marsters@ios.doi.gov) or Mr. Donald Yu with the Department of Education (Donald.Yu@ed.gov).

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior



Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education

Enclosure