

Native American Nations

The Department of the Interior has a solemn responsibility to uphold the federal government's unique government-to-government relationship with federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, as provided for by the Constitution of the United States, U.S. treaties and court decisions, presidential executive orders and federal policies and administrative actions.

We recognize that a legacy of injustice and broken promises shapes the history of the federal government's relationship with the American Indian and Alaska Native people. We are therefore working to turn the page on the federal government's pattern of neglect of this community and, instead, build a strategy for empowerment that helps the tribal nations forge futures of their own choosing.

To chart this new path, we are restoring the government-to-government relationship between the federal government and these tribal nations because "self-determination," "sovereignty," "self-government," "empowerment," and "self-reliance" are not abstract concepts. Rather, they are the tools that will enable tribal nations to shape their collective destiny. This is why Interior is committed to partnering with American Indian and Alaska Native communities to help them prosper by expanding education and employment opportunities for youth and adults, protecting lives and property by strengthening law enforcement, and building strong, sustainable tribal economies.

Resolving Long-Standing Injustices

In December 2009, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice reached a settlement with plaintiffs in the long-standing Cobell v. Salazar class-action lawsuit regarding the mismanagement of federal Indian trust assets. The proposed settlement – which requires approval by the U.S District Court for the District of Columbia and Congressional legislation to authorize its implementation – will distribute \$1.4 billion among class members to compensate them for historical accounting claims. It also establishes a \$2 billion fund for the voluntary buy-back and consolidation of fractionated land interests.

The Interior Department also is working to reach settlements in long standing American Indian Water Rights cases. In March 2009, President Obama signed the Omnibus Public Lands Act authorizing the settlement of longtime water rights claims of the Navajo Nation in New Mexico's San Juan Basin.

Economic Development

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Interior is investing \$500 million in improvements to American Indian and Alaska Native communities that will enhance long-term economic development potential and promote near-term economic recovery. These investments will make a real difference by providing funds to fix schools, upgrade housing, build new roads and create new jobs.

[Learn more](#)

Education

To improve the learning environment of American Indian and Alaska Native children, Interior is using ARRA funds to replace and upgrade its Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools. Its investments of \$134.6 million on school-replacement construction and \$143.1 million in school improvement and repairs will benefit many of the approximately 42,000 students served by these schools.

Health - *Let's Move! in Indian Country*

Let's Move! is a comprehensive initiative, launched by the First Lady, dedicated to solving the problem of obesity within a generation. *Let's Move! in Indian Country* directs our efforts to Native American Nations, so that children born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams. Sure, this is an ambitious goal. But with your help, we can do it.

[Learn More](#)

Law Enforcement

Interior is committed to strengthening law enforcement in Indian country by putting more officers on the streets, bolstering tribal courts and helping fight violent crime and drug abuse. Its Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Justice Services manages about one-third of law-enforcement programs in Indian country, implementing community-based programs to reduce and prevent crime.

[Learn more](#)

Other Issues of Concern

On March 17, Interior Secretary Salazar testified before the Senate Indian Affairs Committee on his priorities to address issues that concern to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. He pledged to work with Congress to help strengthen law enforcement on tribal lands, help tribes cut through the red tape of the energy-permitting process and work on resolving outstanding federal Indian trust issues.

[Learn more](#)

Indian Arts and Crafts Board

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB) promotes the economic development of American Indians and Alaska Natives of federally recognized Tribes through the expansion of the Indian arts and crafts market. The IACB provides promotional opportunities, general business advice, and information on the Indian Arts and Crafts Act to Native American artists, craftspeople, businesses, museums, and cultural centers of federally recognized Tribes. Additionally, the IACB operates three regional museums, conducts a promotional museum exhibition program, produces a "Source Directory of American Indian and Alaska Native Owned and Operated Arts and Crafts Businesses," and oversees the implementation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (Act). The implementation and enforcement of the Act is a top priority of the IACB. The Act is a truth-in-advertising law that provides criminal and civil penalties for marketing products as "Indian-made" when such products are not made by Indians, as defined by the Act.

[Learn more](#)