

For Immediate Release

December 15, 2010

Contact: Thom Wallace, 202.630.1094
Communications Director, NCAI

President Obama Holds Direct Talks with American Indian Leaders at the White House

On eve of the White House Tribal Nations Summit, National Congress of American Indians hails the historic nature of direct meetings

WASHINGTON, D.C. – December 15, 2010 – President Obama met directly with 12 tribal leaders at the White House this afternoon. The meeting with the tribal leaders from 12 regions of the United States, comes the day before the President will host leaders from the 565 federally-recognized tribes during the White House Tribal Nations Summit, the second in as many years. The National Congress of American Indians is hailing the meeting as a substantial step in establishing a nation-to-nation relationship for the 21st Century.

“These meetings are summit level meetings between leaders of tribal nations and the President of the United States. They are both symbolic and substantive” said Jefferson Keel, President of the National Congress of American Indians, the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the country. “Last year’s summit was historic in size and ambition. We anticipate the results of the meetings with the President today and tomorrow will change the future of Indian Country for generations to come.”

The meeting comes on the eve of the second White House Tribal Nations Summit, in which the leaders of all 565 federally-recognized tribes were invited to meet with President Obama and members of his Administration throughout the day.

Tribal leaders and President Obama enter these meetings following one of the most significant years of bi-partisan accomplishments for Indian Country. Since the first Tribal Nations Summit, held by the Obama Administration in November of 2009, the United States government has taken historic steps, including: making permanent the Indian Health Care Improvement Act; signing into law the Tribal Law & Order Act; reaching agreement on USDA’s settlement of the long standing *Keepseagle* case; and, signing into law the *Cobell* Settlement, closing the chapter on over a century of government mismanagement of Indian assets.

Names of Leaders Who Met With The President

- Earl J. Barbry, Sr., Chairman, Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana
- Cedric Black Eagle, Chairman, Crow Nation

- Brian Cladoosby, Chairman, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
- Karen Diver, Chairwoman, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Brenda Edwards, Chairperson, Caddo Nation
- Tex G. Hall, Chairman, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation: Three Affiliated Tribes
- Gary Hayes, Chairman, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
- John Red Eagle, Principal Chief, Osage Nation
- Joe Shirley, Jr. , President, Navajo Nation
- Robert H. Smith, Chairman, Pala Band of Mission Indians
- Edward K. Thomas, President, Tlingit Haida Central Council
- Mervin Wright, Jr., Chairman, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe of Nevada

Resources:

[KEY MESSAGES FOR THE TRIBAL NATIONS SUMMIT WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA \(.pdf\)](#)
gathered from tribal leader input at the Tribal Leaders Preparatory Meeting on December 14, **2010**

You can read a previous release about the White House Tribal Nations Summit announcement here: <http://tinyurl.com/28vecyn> .

You can find issue papers on topics that will be covered at the Tribal Nations Summit here: <http://www.ncai.org/Issue-Papers.531.0.html>

About The National Congress of American Indians:

Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the country. NCAI advocates on behalf of tribal governments and communities, promoting strong tribal-federal government-to-government policies, and promoting a better understanding among the general public regarding American Indian and Alaska Native governments, people and rights. For more information visit www.ncai.org