

# 'Our work together is far from over'

CONFERENCE continued  
from front page

President Obama spoke to the conference on Friday, Dec. 2, and other Cabinet level administration representatives, such as Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan and Health & Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, attended.

Speaking at the close of the conference, President Obama spoke about the work he has done to improve communications between Tribal nations and the federal government, as well as his commitment to helping Indian communities realize prosperous futures.

"While our work together is far from over, today we can see what change looks like," Obama said. "It's the Native American-owned business that's opening its doors, or a worker helping a school renovate. It is new roads and houses. It is wind turbines going up on Tribal lands, and crime going down in Tribal communities. That's what change looks like."

At the Dec. 4 General Council meeting, Kennedy said that during her trip to Washington, D.C., which began on Wednesday, Nov. 30, she also testified regarding the Internal Revenue Service's plan to tax general welfare assistance provided by Tribes to Tribal members.

Kennedy said she spoke in opposition to the tax proposal because Tribes are stepping up and providing benefits that the federal government has failed to provide even though they were promised in treaties.

"I was advocating on behalf of our Tribal members," Kennedy said. "I



Photo courtesy of Jack Giffen Jr.

**Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Tribal Council Secretary Jack Giffen Jr., right, pose with Assistant Secretary of the Interior-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk at the third annual White House Tribal Nations Conference held Friday, Dec. 2, in Washington, D.C. Later in the day, President Barack Obama addressed conference attendees and talked about progress being made in improving the government-to-government relationship between the federal government and the 565 recognized Tribes in the country.**

basically said that when we entered into our treaties, there was a legal, binding contract that was made with the ancestors of our Tribe that said that the federal government would provide us with health, education, housing and welfare services, and a homeland. And they have yet to live up to fulfilling those responsibilities. So the Tribe has taken it upon themselves to provide services to our members and to tax our members because of the services we provide is an injustice."

Kennedy said she also attended a

Northwest Leaders Conference at the National Congress of American Indians facility, where Tribal representatives discussed Northwest priorities to communicate to the Obama administration.

Kennedy also testified about public safety issues on Tribal lands, pointing out that restored Tribes, such as the Grand Ronde Tribe, have had to purchase their own public safety either through hiring private security firms or helping to fund local police departments. She said it was another example of

something promised in treaties that the federal government has failed to deliver on.

"We signed a peace treaty, but were not given any funds to protect our lands," Kennedy said. "That is just wrong to ask us to do that."

Kennedy said she and Giffen also met with Oregon Sen. Kurt Schrader and discussed a proposed amendment to the Grand Ronde Reservation Act, which would streamline the process of taking former reservation land back into Tribal ownership.

They also talked with Schrader about a proposal by the other Oregon Tribes to take Chemawa Indian School into trust despite the fact that Chemawa sits in the ceded lands of the Grand Ronde Tribe.

The Grand Ronde Tribe, Kennedy said, continues to point out the "vast difference" between historical lands and ceded lands.

"Not a lot of people understand what that means," she said. "For us, what that means is that all of our grandfathers who were treaty signers, they identified those lands and gave them in exchange for services, and those services are not being provided, and that is why we fight for them."

"We know there are other Tribes who try to take over our lands that we gave up, and that is wrong."

Kennedy said Giffen also attended and spoke at a Government-to-Government Relations meeting before Friday's speech by President Obama.

"Every year, he has signed a major piece of legislation or executive order that has affected Tribes," Kennedy said about Obama. "His parting words were, 'As your president, I have your back.'" ■

## Interior launches new Tribal Consultation Policy

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk announced a Tribal Consultation Policy for the Department of the Interior on Thursday, Dec. 1, launching a new era of communication with American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes.

The new policy emphasizes trust, respect and shared responsibility in providing Tribal governments an expanded role in informing federal policy that affects Indian Country.

"This comprehensive initiative reflects President Obama's commitment to strengthening the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Tribal nations and recognizing their fundamental right to self-governance," Salazar said in signing an order implementing the departmental policy.

"The new framework institutionalizes meaningful consultation so that Tribal leaders are at the table and engaged when it comes to the matters that affect them."

"Under this policy, consultation will be an open, transparent and deliberative process," said Echo

Hawk. "Forging a strong role for American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes at all stages in the government's decision-making process will benefit Indian Country and federal policy for generations to come."

Developed in coordination with Tribal leaders around the nation — including extensive meetings in seven cities with more than 300 Tribal representatives — the new policy sets out detailed requirements and guidelines for Interior officials and managers to follow to ensure they are using the best practices and most innovative methods to achieve meaningful consultation with Tribes.

Salazar's announcement occurred in advance of the third White House Tribal Nations Conference that occurred Friday, Dec. 2, at the Department of the Interior. The conference brought together leaders from the 565 federally recognized Tribes to hear from President Obama and meet with senior federal officials.

Grand Ronde Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Tribal Council Secretary Jack Giffen Jr. attended.

The consultation policy creates a framework for synchronizing Inte-

rior's consultation practices with its bureaus and offices by providing an approach that applies in all circumstances where statutory or administrative opportunities exist to consult with the Tribes — including any regulation, rulemaking, policy, guidance, legislative proposal, grant funding formula change or operational activity that may have a substantial and direct effect on a Tribe.

Interior bureaus and offices, which are required to designate one or more Tribal Liaison Officers, must examine and change their consultation policies within 180 days to ensure they are consistent with the new departmental policy.

Under the policy, Interior officials will identify appropriate Tribal consulting parties early in the planning process, provide the Tribes a meaningful opportunity to participate in the consultation process and participate in a manner that demonstrates a commitment and ensures continuity.

To increase accountability, Interior bureaus and office heads will implement training, performance standards and annual reporting to the Secretary of Interior, through his designated Tribal Governance Officer, on the scope, cost and effective-

ness of their consultation efforts.

Based on information received from the bureaus and offices, the secretary of Interior will provide an annual report to the Tribes on the Tribal Consultation Policy.

In consultation with the Tribes, the secretary also will establish a joint Federal-Tribal Team to make recommendations on implementing and ensuring continued improvement of the policy.

The announcement fulfills President Obama's directive that all federal agencies develop ways to improve communication and consultation with Tribal leaders to generate positive solutions for issues affecting the First Americans.

A Tribal Consultation Team drafted the new policy, informed by input from the seven regional meetings. The team included Tribal representatives from each Bureau of Indian Affairs region, in addition to departmental representatives, ensuring that the draft policy was a direct result of collaboration with Tribal leaders.

The draft policy was submitted to the Tribes and public for review and comment, leading to further refinements reflected in the final policy. ■