



2015 State-Tribal Leaders Summit

Summary Report

A new chapter has begun for State-Tribal relations within New Mexico. Prior to the 2015 State-Tribal Leaders Summit, a restructuring occurred, which has enabled the state and tribes to effectively address topics of high concern among the tribes, nations and pueblos of New Mexico and to develop resolutions through collaborative efforts. This collaborative relationship between the State of New Mexico and Tribal Nations will not only benefit tribal communities, but benefit the state as a whole.

The Summit featured joint presentations from state and tribal speakers in the following four topic areas: Health, Education (emphasis on language curriculum), Economic Development (emphasis on sustainability), and Natural Resources (emphasis on water rights). The dialogue that proceeded these joint presentations promised measures would be taken to achieve the proposed goals through collaboration between state and tribal entities.

Topic 1 – Health

Co-Presenters – Cabinet Secretary Brent Earnest, Human Services Department and 2nd Lt. Governor Kurt Riley, Pueblo of Acoma

During the presentation, the state and tribal entities acknowledged that the health care system in New Mexico requires improvement. There was also a call for improved methods of informing constituents of the health-related services available, to empower constituents to engage in their own health care.

Next Steps: Create a health task force to develop collaboratively a plan of action with clear, attainable goals. The plan of action is to address health-related issues that affect the state and tribal communities and will enable tribal communities to build on existing health care infrastructure within their community.

Suggested Short-Term Goals: Assess the health-related programs and services that are currently available within the state, in order to inform the taskforce of gaps in health areas (e.g. behavioral and mental health) that require improvement. Presenters suggested the need to increase holistic health care options available within the state as well as an increase in medical transportation services in rural areas. The task force, in collaboration with the Higher Education Department, will also develop a plan of action to encourage medical graduates to remain in the state.

Suggested Long-Term Goals: Improve the Health Care Infrastructure within the state for both tribal and non-tribal members. Survey professional medical service providers to determine those providers' reasons for leaving rural areas. Develop methods to acquire quality professional medical service providers in tribal health facilities. Coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services and the Veterans Administration (VA) to create ways for the VA's health care facilities to become more accessible to Native American Veterans within New Mexico.

Topic 2. Education (Language Curriculum)

Co-Presenters – Cabinet Secretary Hanna Skandera, Public Education Department and Governor Val Panteah, Pueblo of Zuni

In a single year, Native American students have doubled their improvement in both reading and graduation rates. There has also been an increased participation of Native American students in STEM programs. Despite improvement there is yet much work to do. Presenters emphasized that bilingual education was of critical importance among the New Mexico tribes, nations, and pueblos. Tribal

languages are key to the vital preservation of culture and traditions for future generations. The State of New Mexico has been proactive in funding language and culture programs.

Next Steps: Presenters proposed the establishment of a work group to address educational priorities that include a partnership with the Indian Education Advisory Council and parental involvement.

Suggested Short-Term Goals: Develop a plan of action for data sharing between the state and tribal entities. Facilitate tribal entities in devising methods to encourage retention of educated tribal members within their communities. Research methods of enhancing the exchange of information between the state and the school systems/classrooms.

Suggested Long-Term Goals: Require school districts to participate in cultural competency training, particularly those school districts that are located adjacent to the tribes, nations and pueblos. Develop a plan to retain teachers within the state. Develop and support legislation promoting the establishment of an endowment for Indian Education. Conduct a careful analysis of New Mexico's educational programs for the purpose of weeding out programs that are ineffective

Topic 3. Natural Resources (Water Rights and Land)

Co-Presenters – State Engineer Tom Blaine, Office of the State Engineer, and Terry Aguilar, Former Governor, San Ildefonso Pueblo

With water being a finite resource in the State of New Mexico, and its availability subject to the competing needs of tribes, the conversations that surround water rights and usage are critical. When analyzing the concerns about water, it is important to (1) identify the core values used to prioritize water; (2) understand the threats to water quantity and quality; and (3) clearly define the roles of leadership in advancing the preservation and use of water. The impairment of Indian water rights is a concern for the Office of the State Engineer. With surface rights of the Rio Grande completely appropriated, there will be no new appropriations in the future. There are currently 23 Indian water right settlements that need to be finalized in the state; six have been addressed.

Next Steps: Create a state-tribal task force to work directly on the water issues discussed.

Suggested Short Term Goals: Respect water planning efforts among the tribes. Address the concern with upstream users diverting water in contravention of the settlement. Encourage the state to work with corporations and municipalities regarding water conservation and protection.

Suggested Long Term Goals: Propose developing water compacts with the tribes, nations and pueblos. Ensure long-term existence and protection of the Indian Water Rights Settlement Fund.

Topic 4. Economic Development (Sustainability)

Co-Presenters – Cabinet Secretary John Barela, Economic Development Department, and President Russell Begaye, Navajo Nation

A strong economy provides the financial resources needed for the perpetuation of cultures and communities. By providing basic infrastructure (i.e. sewer systems, water access, roads) within New Mexico, a community and the lives of its citizens improve. There are many areas of concern that need to be addressed in order to strengthen tribal communities collectively.

Next Steps: Using a solution-based approach, presenters proposed the creation of an economic taskforce to address the issues discussed at the summit. Once the challenges in diversifying the volatile economic base (e.g. coal, oil, natural gas, and gaming) in tribal nations are identified, potential future revenue sources can be forecasted.

Possible Short Term Goals: Invest in and promote future economic development initiatives. Inform tribal youth about potential future employment opportunities within their communities, so youth may complete the necessary education or training. Ensure sustainable growth in communities by developing business model plans for each of the tribes, nations and pueblos.

Possible Long Term Goals: Determine ways to include Native American exports into New Mexico trade-supported jobs. Identify what can be done to keep money circulating within tribal economies. Develop public policy that will promote sustainable community and economic development. Create the “best” environments for business start-ups (i.e. business zones, tax systems, leasing rates, collateral, building codes, police and fire). Develop a dispute resolution process with businesses of non-tribal entities. Encourage strong financial institutions with sufficient assets that Tribes may use for their numerous needs. Address proposed goals through a root-cause analysis, identifying points of leverage to create long-lasting solutions.

At the conclusion of the Summit, the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department was identified as the entity tasked with developing and defining the work groups needed to address the items raised throughout the Summit. A letter was sent out to nominate individuals from the 23 respected tribes, nations and pueblos to sit on the work groups. The individuals chosen will then design collaborative outcomes and present at the next State-Tribal Leaders Summit in 2016.