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Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dec. 15, 2010

SWINOMISH CHAIRMAN CLADOOSBY MEETS WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA United States President Upholds Commitments to the First Americans

Washington, D.C.—Brian Cladoosby, Chairman of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, was one of twelve tribal leaders elected to represent all the 565 tribes in the U.S. at a meeting today with President Barak Obama. The focus of the meeting was on improving the trust relationship and federal agreements between Indian tribes and the U.S. government.

President Obama called the second White House Tribal Nations Conference, which will continue through Friday. Chairman Cladoosby and leaders from the 565 federally recognized tribes will have a summit meeting with Obama and numerous Cabinet secretaries on Thursday. They plan to discuss unmet treaty obligations and tribal sovereignty, along with issues of the economy, jobs, health care, natural resources, water rights, public safety, climate change, housing, and education.

This White House conference is the third in U.S. history. The first was hosted by President Bill Clinton 15 years ago, and the second was hosted by President Obama last year. There will be three opportunities this week for Tribes to meet—on a government-to-government basis—with the Obama Administration. The first meeting was with the 12 elected tribal leaders who will meet with the President today. The second is tomorrow's summit where the President will address the leaders of all 565 federally recognized tribes. The third will be the tribal leaders' sessions with top administration officials about how to carry this work forward. These government-to-government meetings reflect the improvements made in the trust relationship between the federal government and the First Americans.

“We need to start talking to one another in a manner that reflects our sovereignty,” Chairman Cladoosby said today, “and this face to face Summit is to allow our governments to address the shared responsibility and obligation to our Native American citizens.”

Chairman Cladoosby is also the President of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians.

He said: "There are many issues to address in Indian Country, but one that brings it together. It is: What can President Obama do in the next two years to uphold the federal trust agreement with Indian Tribes? Let us first understand the meaning of this agreement. Our expectation is simple, hold up your side of the deal with honor and respect.

"Our tribal leaders are grateful for the President's commitment to make necessary changes to the federal tribal programs that reform program policies and correct poor funding. Now it is time for hard changes and we will be seeking our President to call for actions that reform policy and laws so they may provide us the authority to govern our nations with true sovereignty," said Cladoosby. "I'm true to my word and promises, and I am committed to finishing what we have started under the Obama Administration so we may provide the very best life for our tribal members across this great nation.

"We view this Summit as an opportunity to move towards the next chapter in the Era of Sovereignty for Tribes. We are being very realistic about these opportunities under the Obama Administration, and let me be clear, this is a long road ahead of us and we need to use this as a time to build a foundation."

In the past two years President Obama has honored the sovereignty of 565 federally recognized tribes in ways that improve the lives of 4.2 million tribal people and protect the nearly 70 million acres of land in Indian Country.

Cladoosby continued:

"In the past 50 years Tribes have interwoven themselves into agreements with federal, state and local governments. Many of our Tribes are an intricate part of our local economies through jobs, charitable contributions, education and health services. Our very history goes deeper into the roots of American history than any other American citizen. This is why we are the First Americans.

"We often speak about the poverty throughout the world, but let us look at the poverty in Native communities within the United States today. Tribes across the nation face third world conditions on our reservations. No running water, toilets, 80% unemployment, no housing and the list of broken promises from the federal government goes on. Tribes have lived in poverty since we fell under the trust responsibility of the United States government. Tribes have moved through eras of suffering, of growth and success. However, we need the commitment from our U.S. government to move with us into this new Era of Sovereignty. We understand the President's reality that we may not get many of our immediate funding and program needs accomplished under the 111th Congress, but the foundation we lay here in the next two years will help us transition into a new chapter.

"The United States of America has a trust responsibility to Native Americans," Chairman Cladoosby said. "As the First American's of this great country we are asking for nothing more than what you would ask for your family and that is to have a safe home, food on your table, beds for you children and a future."

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