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March 14, 2011

The Honorable Kenneth Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Cook Inlet Tribal Council offers the following comments in response to the Draft Tribal Consultation Policy issued by the Department of Interior on January 14, 2011.

Currently, there are over 40 statutes based on the language of the Indian Self -Determination and Education Act (PL 93-638), which encompasses both Alaska Native villages and corporations in the definition of a tribe, thus assuring eligibility for funding and services. As a result, tribes and tribal organizations in Alaska have implemented federal Indian programs for over thirty years.

In the Cook Inlet Region, including Anchorage, three tribal non-profit organizations (social services, housing and health) serve the 40,000 eligible Alaska Native people. These services are provided without regard to the recipient's home region, tribe or village. Intrastate mobility is a key factor in this inclusive approach, as individuals and families move frequently between Anchorage and the village for education and job opportunities, to escape interpersonal violence, or find relief from high rural fuel and food costs.

Because of the unique Alaska landscape, federal programming and funding operates via several channels: tribes at the village and hub level, regional non-profit tribal organizations, and often through federal pass-through state contracts with tribes or regional tribal organizations. In the areas of workforce development and social services, legal and legislative history has led to a patchwork of service provision. For example, in workforce development, tribes and regional tribal organizations operate TANF programs, career development, child care, and other community programs along a continuum to bring opportunity to Alaska Native people as well economic development opportunities.

The Honorable Kenneth Salazar
March 14, 2011
Page 2 of 3

Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) is one of the three Anchorage area tribal non-profit organizations, providing educational, employment, family preservation, and addiction recovery services. CITC's governance consists of representatives of both the regional corporation and the tribes of the region. CITC leverages resources between federal formula funding, competitive grant funding, private sector donors (foundations, corporations, individuals), and earned income derived from social enterprise.

In this unique Alaska context, the federally recognized tribes are first and foremost in the government to government relationship between tribes and the federal government. At the same time, in order to adequately address Alaska Native issues, the Department of Health and Human Services needs to recognize that tribes are not the only Native organizations intersecting and contracting with federal agencies to provide services to Alaska Native and American Indian people in Alaska.

Alaska Native tribes and tribal organizations recognized under the Self-Determination Act, partner to serve Alaska Native people throughout the state. At both the local, tribal level and regionally, tribes and tribal organizations fulfill the functions of economic development, social services, medical services and housing for Alaska Native people. It is critical for everyone to have a voice in the decisions that affect what programs and how they will be administered to our people. Alaska offers a prime example of how ownership and control of resources promotes self-determination for Alaska Native people, and the complex interweaving of tribes and tribal organizations, as recognized by PL 93-638 is an essential component of that self-determination.

The success and importance of the 477 Program cannot be overstated as a workforce development initiative linked to self-determination. During the past fiscal year, 264 tribes and tribal organizations operated 62 separate 477 Plans, as single-tribe and tribal organization plans. Notably, the Office of Management and Budget has given the 477 Program the highest rating of all DOI programs. In FY09, close to \$112 million was funded to 477 Plans through the ISDEAA. Since its inception in 1992, 477 Program funds have been transferred to participating tribes either through agreements authorized under Title I (self-determination contracts) or Title IV (self-governance compacts) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), 25 U.S.C. §§ 450 et seq. Streamlined funding for 477 Plans through transfers under the provisions of ISDEAA is an essential element of the success of the 477 Program, and fulfills the President's goals of increasing sovereignty, decreasing administrative burden and increasing cooperation across agencies that affect Indian Country. See Executive Order 13563, dated January 18, 2011.

The Honorable Kenneth Salazar

March 14, 2011

Page 3 of 3

The Tribal Consultation process is an essential component of ensuring respect for the government to government relationship between the tribes. The Executive Order makes great strides in moving this important opportunity for dialogue forward, but different federal agencies have implemented it in different ways with resulting inconsistencies. Of paramount importance is tribal opportunity to provide input into the work of federal agencies as it affects tribes and tribal organizations. In reaffirming the government to government relationship, it is not sufficient to receive comments from tribes and tribal organizations without subsequent consideration and adjustments in policy or implementation based on those communications. For example, decisions made by DOI, without consultation, such as the method of funding and OMB cross-cutting regulations, have drastically diminished the effectiveness and efficiency of PL 102-477 Tribal TANF programs.

- 1) Recognizing that the government to government relationship is between the federally recognized tribes and the federal government, it is important to include all relevant voices in the consultation process: federally recognized tribes as well as tribal organizations at the national, regional and local level, and to utilize the definition of tribe in 25 USC 450b to be inclusive in the process. The current definition in the Draft Tribal Consultation Policy includes only the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994. The Tribal Consultation Policy when finalized should add the definition of Indian Tribe in 25 U.S.C. 450b.
- 2) The Department of Interior's Strategic Plan must support tribal self-determination by promoting both the letter and the spirit of the PL 102-477 program amongst the Department's bureaus and other agencies. Full comments related to the March 9, 2011 DOI/HHS Consultation in Anchorage, Alaska will also be forwarded to the Department.
- 3) The Department of Interior must ensure that the program needs of Small and Needy Tribes, who lack other resources to fund tribal programs necessary to their survival, is an integral part of the Strategic Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



Gloria O'Neill
President and CEO