



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson Signs Historic Executive Orders and Enters MOU with Navajo Nation

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson and President Joe Shirley Jr., of the Navajo Nation today came together today to celebrate American Indian Day at the Capitol. Governor Richardson signed two executive orders to direct state agencies to adopt a statewide tribal consultation policy on the protection of sacred sites and repatriation, and another directing state agencies to adopt a pilot tribal consultation plan.

Governor Richardson and President Shirley also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a partnership between the New Mexico State Parks Division and the Navajo Nation Parks & Recreation Department. The MOU is the first of its kind in New Mexico and expresses the agreement of State Parks and the Navajo Nation to collaborate on planning and design of parks and recreation projects, marketing and tourism, public education and other areas of park management.

Governor Richardson's Prepared Remarks:

Thank you for being here today to celebrate American Indian Day. It is important that we do not forget the first citizens of this state. As you know, my administration has made it a top priority to recognize and respect the sovereignty of the Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos in New Mexico.

I want to recognize the Native American legislators here. Thank you for your great work. I am committed to working with you to improve the quality of life for Native Americans in this state.

Since taking office, I have strived to change state policy on Indian affairs for the better. I am proud that we were able to establish the first-ever cabinet-level Department of Indian Affairs. Secretary Benny Shendo is leading the charge with a strong team.

This year, we've proposed legislation that will improve educational opportunities for Native Americans by expanding access to Lottery Scholarships. I also strongly support legislation that will give native students resident status at our state universities even if they have left New Mexico for education or work.

Our biggest goal this session is to establish a tribal infrastructure fund. It will be a separate fund to make sure native communities are treated fairly and get badly needed infrastructure investment. This fund will be solely devoted to improving your quality of life, from better roads to power lines and water systems.

This session, I requested input from the Nations, Tribes and Pueblos for their top three capital outlay priorities. And I'm proud to say that my administration will recommend funding for many of these priorities in each community.

We've also appointed a record number of Native Americans to my cabinet, to positions in government, and boards and commissions. Currently, we have over 65 Native Americans in these positions. It is critical that there be a native voice in state government and these individuals have served that mission honorably.

Today, I am happy to announce two more initiatives that put will New Mexico at the forefront of improving tribal-state relations in this country. Today I will be signing two executive orders.

The first order directs state agencies to adopt a STATEWIDE TRIBAL CONSULTATION POLICY ON THE PROTECTION OF SACRED SITES AND REPATRIATION within 30 days. This policy is long overdue and will require the state to consult with Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos to ensure the protection of your scared places. I want to thank members of the tribal-state working group that worked tirelessly on developing this policy for over a year's time. If any of you are here in the audience please stand up and be recognized.

In the second order, I direct state agencies to adopt a PILOT TRIBAL CONSULTATION PLAN no later than July 1st. I am committed to achieving government-to-government relations with all of you. But frankly, I have yet to see a model that works well for all of us. The goal of this executive order is to explore various models together to see what works. That is why I am directing that a status report be given to me on October 1st to review all the pilot plans and see which ones are working well. I ask for your support and to work with my cabinet secretaries to make this project a success.

I also am pleased to announce that one of my state agencies is well ahead of the curve and has already finalized their pilot plan. I want to commend Secretary Joanna Prukop for her leadership on this issue. I understand she has State Park's pilot consultation plan here today that she will sign. I also want to recognize the members of the tribal-state working group and the State Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for your commitment and hard work on this pilot plan - if you are here please stand up.

Today I will also sign a unique Memorandum of Understanding with the Navajo Nation. It's the first of its kind that will establish a direct partnership between the State Parks and the Navajo Nation Parks Department. These two organizations share strong beliefs in the preservation, protection, and conservation of our natural and cultural resources.

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