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CROW TRIBE ENTERS AGREEMENT WITH BIA
TO SOLVE FISCAL, ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

Interior Assistant Secretary Ken Smith today announced a major step toward solving administrative problems of the Crow Indian Tribe of Montana.

According to a report issued by the Interior Department's Inspector General, these problems had brought the tribe to a state of "technical insolvency."

"I believe the agreement being signed today will go a long way in restoring a strong, stable tribal government to the Crow Reservation from which effective administration of tribal business affairs will emanate," Smith said.

Following the inauguration of the tribe's newly elected officers, Smith's Deputy for Policy, Roy Sampsel, and the tribe signed an agreement to provide a trained, experienced person to serve on an intergovernmental assignment to the tribe as its manager for fiscal, personnel and property management systems.

The agreement also provides that:

1. There will be a comprehensive study by the tribe, with assistance from the Department, to identify strengths and weaknesses in the tribal government and to consider constitutional reforms. The tribe is now governed by a General Council made up of all adult members of the tribe, a process that is at times unwieldy and inefficient form of government.

2. The tribe will develop a plan for the retirement of its outstanding indebtedness not later than August 30, 1982. An Inspector General's audit report issued this spring indicated the tribe had current debts of more than \$1.8 million and long-term debt of about \$6 million.

3. The tribe will use a consolidated Letter-of-Credit administered through the Bureau of Indian Affairs as the principal financial management tool for channeling federal funding into its local operating accounts. The BIA with the support and assistance of the tribe will be responsible for seeking the cooperation and participation of all other Federal agencies.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Sampsel told tribal members, before the signing of the agreement, that the Federal government would not allow the tribe to destroy itself by mismanagement of financial and administrative affairs, but added, "I want to assure you that the Federal government will not, as has been rumored, 'take over' your government and your business affairs. We intend nothing that might in any way lend credibility to such ideas. Our purpose is and will remain firmly supportive of assisting your tribal government . . ."

In his talk, Sampsel asked the Crow tribal members to recognize that the tribe was at a critical crossroads in its history, that problems caused by disregard of the system of government and divisions within the Crow community had to be solved.

"Our purpose here today," Sampsel said, "is to start a process that will lead to correction of these problems, to bring the people together, and I call upon each and every one of you to join with us in the important work ahead." Sampsel noted that the Secretary of the Interior has an awesome responsibility in his role as trustee and protector of the interests of tribal governments and their members.

Sampsel said the Crows had the opportunity to provide leadership for other tribal groups. "It is not only the Crows who are threatened from within by the complexities of the contemporary, computerized, accountable fiscal world. What we shall do here today is what we in the Bureau of Indian Affairs will be working on with other tribes on other days providing they, like you, are willing to stand with us to fashion the opportunity for the welfare of their people, to survive, to grow and to prosper."

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