# First meeting of Council advances Administration's commitment to Tribes through federal coordination

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today convened the inaugural meeting of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, launching President Obama's national policy initiative to make federal agencies work more collaboratively and effectively with federally recognized tribes to advance their vital economic and social priorities. "Today's meeting underscores President Obama's commitment to build effective partnerships with American Indian and Alaska Native communities and make the federal government work more efficiently to find solutions to the challenges facing Indian Country," said Jewell. "I am honored to play a role in the President's initiative to maximize federal efforts to support the tribes as they tackle pressing issues, such as educational achievement and economic development. The federal government's unique trust relationship with tribes as well as the Nation's legal and treaty obligations call for a priority effort to promote prosperous and resilient communities." Today's discussions focused on initial efforts to implement President Obama's executive order that established the White House Council on Native American Affairs. Joining Secretary Jewell at the White House meeting were Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett, White House Domestic Policy Director Cecilia Muñoz, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Labor Secretary Thomas Perez, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, and Education Secretary Arne Duncan. The Council, which includes more than 30 federal departments and agencies, coordinates the Administration's engagement with tribal governments and works across executive departments, agencies and offices to develop policy recommendations and expand efforts to leverage federal programs and resources available to tribal communities.

The Council, which will meet at least three times a year, will focus its efforts on advancing five priorities that mirror the issues tribal leaders have raised during previous White House Tribal Nations Conferences:

1. Promoting sustainable economic development;
2. Supporting greater access to and control over healthcare;
3. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of tribal justice systems;
4. Expanding and improving educational opportunities for Native American youth; and
5. Protecting and supporting the sustainable management of Native lands, environments, and natural resources.

The Executive Order that established the Council also institutionalized the White House Tribal Nation Conference as an annual event. Held each year since the President came into office, the conferences have brought together leaders from all federally recognized tribes with Cabinet members and senior Administration officials. President Obama has hosted the conference four times since 2009. The President's national policy initiative advances his Administration's concerted efforts to restore and heal relations with Native Americans and strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship between the United

States and tribal governments, bolstering the federal policies of self-determination and self-governance that will help American Indian and Alaska Native leaders build and sustain their own communities. Pictures from today's meeting are available here.