Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Carl J. Artman, Seminole Tribe of Florida Vice-Chairman Richard Bowers and Mashantucket Pequot Vice-Chairman Kenneth Reels have signed a partnership agreement that will utilize the tribes' purchasing power to promote Indian Country business development under DOI's intertribal economic consortium initiative. The initiative seeks to match federally recognized producer tribes and Indian-owned businesses with purchaser tribes, helping tribes explore opportunities to collaborate economically and connect participating tribes with Federal procurement opportunities and commercial markets world-wide. The signing took place at a ceremony held on Monday, February 11, at the Interior Department's headquarters.

"This signing ceremony celebrates an historic step in Indian Country's economic development," Artman said. "I applaud the leadership shown by the Mashantucket Pequot and Seminole people in their approach to creating a tribe-to-tribe economic circuit where resource rich, cash poor tribes can be linked to tribal and Indian-owned businesses struggling to find markets for their goods and services. When tribes have the ability to chart their own success, economic prosperity is possible, and that is a goal we can all support."

The agreement establishes a cooperative relationship between the Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) and the Mashantucket and Seminole tribes to foster and promote business transactions, joint ventures, and other economic development initiatives, such as using their significant purchasing power and broad-based commercial dealings to buy goods and services from Indian-owned businesses, as an economic stimulus for Indian Country. Under the agreement, the IEED will initiate and facilitate such commercial dealings between the two tribes and other tribal and Indian-owned enterprises.

Among a gathering of over 50 Federal, tribal and business representatives attending the event was Councilwoman Melinda Danforth of the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, who, along with the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians of Oregon and the Morongo Band of Mission Indians of California, has joined the consortium. A designated free-trade zone, the Oneida

Tribe's holdings include agricultural products and livestock, both buffalo and cattle. Located just a few miles west of the city of Green Bay, the tribe has access to a deep-water port, an airport and major highways (U.S. 41 and I-43). According to Danforth, the Oneida Tribe hopes to explore through the consortium business opportunities with other tribal nations.

Both tribal signatories expressed their interest and support for tribes struggling to bring economic development to their communities. Mashantucket Vice-Chairman Reels spoke of the need for creating more opportunities for tribal members, protecting the environment, and assisting other tribes through the marketplace. Seminole Vice-Chairman Bowers reflected on the possibilities that have resulted from his tribe's success in business. "Today we have the power and the opportunity to fulfill our dreams," he said. "We can help [other] tribes to stimulate their economies. We believe in taking care of our own."