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It is a great honor to be invited to participate in the annual ceremonies of the Ponca tribe and be the guest of the respected leaders of the tribe, chairman John William and councilman Dana Knight.

He's also distinct pleasure to appear before the Ponca City Chamber of Commerce forum and renew my acquaintance with so many of my longtime friends.

I thank you for the privilege and high honor of speaking to you and you want to express my gratitude for this hearty reception and the opportunity to discuss both problems and accomplishments I have experienced as head of Indian Affairs of our federal government.

Ponca City is one of the many cities in the United States that has the honor of being the namesake of the Great American Indian tribe. It has a large Indian population has shared the Heritage culture and economy of many tribes and yet, I wonder if it is like other communities in our society or indeed the nation itself understands the first responsibility, to the Indian citizen.

For this reason, I want very much to use this opportunity to speak to you as Community leaders and through you to others of the nation.

I was asked by the secretary to come to Washington in February of this year to assist him with the Bureau of Indian Affairs I had suffered an unprecedented amount of disarray.

Commissioner had been dismissed in the top election of management had resigned the Washington office had fallen victim to your militant takeover with records stolen and destroyed. Field offices and Indian schools had come upon an easy times and tribal governments had the eerie experience of being threatened. The general public, and to some extent, the federal government, was not only confused but demanded affirmative action. The incident at Wounded Knee had its roots in the fall of last year and bloomed into a confrontation at about the same time I arrived on the Washington scene.

Having been the head of an Indian tribe for many years and knowing firsthand the frustrations of the American Indian it was not difficult to have a feeling of compassion and understanding for all factions the Indians, Government and the General Public. Although many inequities have befallen the American Indians, all tribes, individuals and organizations seek the same things equality, opportunity and justice none can afford the luxury of division of thought or purpose.

The federal government assumed an obligation by treaty or agreement to a limited portion of the total Indian population. Many tribal groups are not federally recognized and are not extended the services of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. For the most part, those served by government or those tribes having a land based in which government has a trust responsibility.

From this responsibility came the obligation for education and eventually ability of services. When we measure Indian achievement, we note a remarkable Improvement in the past 20 years. This Improvement is attributable to many things the public and private sectors, local communities and individuals but most of all, the initiative of the Indian himself.

The American Indian has a basket of mixed blessings in his relationship to the federal government. On the other hand, he has the resources of government to sustain him and provide some degree of self-development. On the other hand, he's the victim of our political process. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is his only exclusive agency in government and while we hear a great deal about its omissions as expressed by the Indian Community, seldom do we hear of the ill-treatment it gets from the many agencies government as it carries out the role of being an advocate for the Indian in government.

At the outset I started there are four things I deem important to the protection of the American Indian and have laid the groundwork for their future development.

First, an amendment to the United States Constitution that lays to rest once and forever the matter of termination of federal Services by the unilateral action of any branch of government.

Second, a better opportunity for participation in the financial resources of our country. this can be done in three ways, an improved budget process the use of Revenue Bond financing physical improvements national banking system for the Indian Community.

Third, A massive Indian Reservation renewal act that would provide 250 million each year for 10 years to bring not only needed improvements in the reservation properties, but simultaneously eliminate unemployment and within the 10-year develop a “gross national product” each reservation area. Today the federal dollar merely passes through the reservation without the benefit of being “turned over” to generate a local economy.

Fourth, a complete study of all laws, rules, regulations, codes and manuals that affect the federal relationship to the American Indian.

All of these girls are in direct support of the policy announced by President Nixon in a message to Congress in July 1970, a policy of Greater self-determination for the Indian tribes and their people. The president reaffirmed the policy in his message of last March 1st, when he said:

“What are Indian people the policy of this Administration will continue to be one of advancing opportunities for self-determination, without termination of the special Federal relationship with recognized Indian tribes.

In keeping with that policy, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is structured to reflect the thinking and the feelings of the majority of Indian people. These include:

1. Encouraging tribes to participate in the redirection of existing programs in order to insure private priorities.
2. Increase resistance to the Indian people for employment of tribal members in their own communities.
3. Prediction of Indian Resources, with the highest priority given to Land Titles, boundaries, and water rights.
4. Increase in the number of quality of roads on Indian reservations to accelerate their economic potential.
5. Increasing tribal control over Indian education.

Each of these major items is intended to move government toward Indian orientation rather than a controlled environment at the federal level. And each is succeeding in its purpose.

Now let's look at some of the accomplishments and see if we have made any progress in the past 6 months.

To the credit of all, there is nobody greater cohesiveness of purpose in the Indian Community hostility among Indians has substantially that subsided and unity of purpose is now more evident.

The governmental agencies, and particularly the Bureau of Indian Affairs, are recovering from management deficiencies and operating more normally. In turn, they will become more responsive to the needs of tribes and individuals.

Progress is being made in the Congress and legislation that will provide many opportunities for advancement on Indian reservations and protect the rights of the tribes and the individuals.

An American Indian national bank, owned by the Indian Community has been formed and will become operative this fall. It will be headquartered in Washington with access to the financial Circles of the dominant Society.

The justice department has activated a civil rights division for the exclusive protection of the American Indian in his constitutional and tribal privileges.

A bill has been introduced into the Senate to establish commission to study and recommend revision of the last governing the relationship of the federal government to the Indian.

Tribal governments are now more active in exercising the prerogative of a sovereignty and revising their constitutions to become responsive to the needs of their constituents.

Indian schools are now supervisors to buy school boards with Indian parents serving as members to assure responsive education for the Indian youth. Some schools are being contracted to Indian Organization for total operation of educational system.

Needless to say we have a long way to go, but compared to the State of Affairs a few months ago, the probability of success looks much brighter today.

American flute by coding hearty agreement, the words of Secretary of the Indian Affairs Rogers C.B. Morton:

“My great hope for the Indian that the feelings he has about himself. My prayer is that soon he will sit at his table and in truth be thankful for the bounties of this land his land our land. I want his heart to swell with pride that he is an American, and that's for him there is an American Dream. He must be comfortable in his Heritage and proud of his ancestry. I pray that he will kill himself a part of the speed and strength of America.”

In that sentiment, I know you will join with me.