

Box 1153
Wagner, SD 57380



(605) 384-3804 / 384-3641
FAX (605) 384-5687

OFFICERS:

Robert Flying Hawk, Chairman
Jason Cooke, Vice Chairman
Glenford "Sam" Sully, Secretary
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Greg Cournoyer Jr.
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May 30, 2018

United States Department of Interior
Office of the Secretary
John Tahsuda
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs
Washington DC 20240

RE: Meeting May 31, 2008

Mr. Tahsuda:

By this letter, the Yankton Sioux Tribe ("Tribe") is writing to confirm that the meeting scheduled for May 31, 2018, is not consultation. Pursuant to the *Ihanktonwan* Consultation *Wo'ope*. Consultation only occurs with the Tribe's General Council and any informational meeting leading up to consultation, is not consultation. The tribe considers the meeting scheduled for May 31, 2018, to be a preliminary informational session with consultation to occur at a later date.

The tribes Reality director, Sasheen Thin Elk will stand as proxy to this meeting on May 31, 2018 for myself, Chairman, Robert Flying Hawk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Flying Hawk".

Robert Flying Hawk
Chairman, Yankton Sioux Tribe
Business and Claims Committee



Ihanktonwan Consultation Wo'ope

Protocols for Consultation with the Yankton Sioux Tribe

I. Purpose

The purpose of these protocols is to provide federal agencies with standards with which they must comply when engaging in consultation with the Yankton Sioux Tribe in order to ensure that consultation is meaningful and will fulfill the purpose and intent of Executive Order 13175 as well as applicable federal statutes, regulations, and agency policies, manuals, and Secretarial Orders. Consultation shall create understanding, commitment, and trust between the parties, and should be used to identify opportunities and solve problems.

II. Scope

These consultation protocols apply to any effort by a federal agency to consult with the Yankton Sioux Tribe pursuant to federal law(s), including but not limited to the National Environmental Policy Act implementing regulations (40 C.F.R. Part 1500), the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. § 470 et seq.) and implementing regulations (36 C.F.R. Part 800), the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (25 U.S.C. § 3001 et seq.) and implementing regulations (43 C.F.R. Part 10), the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 1996 & 1996a), the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (16 U.S.C. §§ 470aa-mm), Executive Order 13175, and Executive Order 12989.

III. Protocols

A. Cultural Protocols

1. Relationship-building should be at the center of any consultation, as this is a primary cultural protocol for the Ihanktonwan. Relationship building cannot occur through just one meeting, or by telephone or email. It requires time, trust, and respect for the relationship.
2. Agencies must recognize that water is viewed as the first medicine, and it must be honored and protected. Water is vital to the spiritual practices, culture, and health of the Ihanktonwan.
3. Agencies shall respect the fact that Yankton Sioux Tribal members have experience and knowledge that makes them uniquely qualified to identify Ihanktonwan cultural resources, and shall weigh their views accordingly.



4. Agencies must recognize that certain members of the Tribe possess inherent abilities and historical knowledge passed down through generations that make those tribal members uniquely equipped and able to identify sites of spiritual, cultural, and historical interest. These skills and knowledge should be utilized through tribal surveys of areas that may be impacted by a proposed action.
5. Agencies must recognize and respect the cultural practice of speaking in a “circular” manner, which may mean that it takes time for a speaker to arrive at the ultimate point but which conveys relevant information necessary to a proper understanding of that point.
6. Elders must be respected.
7. Agencies must recognize the Ihanktonwan practice reciprocity, which means that if remains are unearthed, something must be given back in return to restore balance. There are consequences dictated by the universe for disturbing graves and remains, and this should be avoided.
8. Agencies must respect the practice of making offerings.
9. Sharing a meal at the conclusion of a meeting is customary and expected.

B. Behavioral Protocols

1. Parties shall respect each participant and respect each other’s diversity.
2. Parties shall speak with respect, courtesy, dignity, care, and moderation to maintain an amicable atmosphere.
3. Parties shall avoid the use of language of dominance and/or oppression.
4. Parties shall refrain from disruptive gestures or actions.
5. Parties shall avoid tactics to induce intimidation. This includes manner of dress. Parties should dress in traditional or civilian clothing.
6. Parties shall treat everyone involved in a consultation meeting, particularly elders, with respect.
7. When an individual is speaking, all parties must refrain from interrupting that individual.
8. Parties shall not be dismissive of any statement made, but rather, shall acknowledge and value all contributions and bring them into consideration in any decision.
9. Parties shall refrain from reaching any decision until consultation has concluded and sufficient information has been exchanged.



10. Parties shall contribute and express opinions with complete freedom.
11. Parties shall carefully examine the views of others and accept valid points when made by others.
12. Parties shall focus on the subject of the consultation and avoid extraneous conversation.

C. Procedural Protocols

1. Consultation shall only include government-to-government, in-person meetings with the Tribe's General Council. Consultation shall not be conducted via telephone or written correspondence unless expressly agreed to by the Chairman of the Yankton Sioux Tribe ("Tribe") in writing.
2. A meeting shall not be considered consultation unless the relevant federal agency is represented at the meeting by an individual with decision-making authority over the proposed federal action at issue.
3. Multi-tribal or public meetings shall not be considered consultation unless expressly agreed to by the Chairman of the Tribe in writing unless the meeting is comprised exclusively of the federal agency and the Oceti Sakowin.
4. The consultation process shall commence as early as possible. Initial notification by a federal agency to the Tribe of a proposed action shall occur within two weeks of the federal agency becoming aware of the proposed action.
5. A federal agency shall contact the Chairman of the Tribe and the Ihanktonwan Treaty Steering Committee for the Tribe to notify the Tribe of a proposed federal action and initiate the consultation process. If the proposed federal action is expected to impact tribal cultural, spiritual, or historical resources, the federal agency shall also contact the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. Notification pursuant to this protocol does not constitute consultation, but merely initiates the consultation process.
6. The consultation process shall include a pre-consultation meeting at which preliminary information shall be exchanged and an overview of the proposed federal action shall be provided, to be scheduled by the Chairman of the Tribe and/or his staff.
7. During or prior to the pre-consultation meeting, the relevant federal agency shall inform the Tribe of the potential impacts on the Tribe of the proposed federal action.
8. During or prior to the pre-consultation meeting, the relevant federal agency shall inform the Tribe of which federal officials will make the final decision with respect to the proposed federal action.



9. Each consultation meeting shall be scheduled by the Chairman of the Tribe and his staff.
10. The pre-consultation meeting and consultation meetings shall be held at a time and location convenient for the Tribe.
11. Consultation meetings shall be scheduled a least thirty-five (35) days in advance to allow for adequate notice to the General Council, which is comprised of tribal members age 18 years and older and which is the governing body of the Tribe.
12. All meetings shall be opened with a prayer.
13. All meetings shall be closed with a prayer.
14. All meetings shall be followed by a meal or include a meal as part of the necessary relationship-building.
15. Consultation meetings shall not designate an end time, but shall continue until all have had an opportunity to speak.
16. The federal agency shall provide the services of a court reporter to record each consultation meeting. A transcription of each meeting shall be provided to the Tribe within ten (10) days following said consultation meeting.
17. Prior to the final consultation meeting, the parties shall mutually agree that the following consultation shall be the final consultation meeting. If agreement cannot be reached to terminate consultation after the subsequent meeting, the subsequent meeting shall not be deemed the final meeting. No party shall unreasonably withhold consent to terminate consultation, but consultation shall continue until each party is satisfied that meaningful consultation has been achieved.
18. While there is no set number of meetings required for consultation to be deemed sufficient, consultation shall consist of no less than two meetings and shall not be considered complete until the parties are satisfied that all necessary information has been adequately exchanged.



Summary of Consultation Steps:

1. Federal agency learns of proposed federal action that may affect the Yankton Sioux Tribe.
2. Federal agency promptly (within two weeks) notifies the Chairman of the Tribe and the Ihanktonwan Treaty Steering Committee (and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Tribe if the proposed action is expected to impact tribal cultural, spiritual, or historic resources) of the proposed action. The consultation process is thus initiated.
3. The Chairman and/or his staff schedules a pre-consultation meeting.
4. A pre-consultation meeting is held.
 - a. Opening Prayer
 - b. Meeting
 - c. Closing Prayer
 - d. Meal (may also occur during the midpoint of the meeting)
5. The Chairman or his staff schedules a consultation meeting.
6. A consultation meeting is held.
 - a. Opening Prayer
 - b. Meeting
 - c. Closing Prayer
 - d. Meal (may also occur during the midpoint of the meeting)
7. Federal agency provides the Chairman of the Tribe with a transcript of the consultation meeting within 10 days.
8. Repeat steps 5-7 until meaningful consultation has been fully achieved, mutually agreeing prior to the final meeting that it will be the final consultation meeting.

D. Governmental Protocols

1. Federal agencies shall respect the unique legal and political relationship between the United States and the Yankton Sioux Tribe.
2. Consultation shall be conducted in accordance with Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which requires the "free, prior and informed consent" of an Indian tribe prior to adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect it.
3. Consultation shall be meaningful and shall include collaboration with tribal officials.



4. The Yankton Sioux Tribe's views shall be incorporated into a federal agency's decision-making process.
5. Consultation shall be conducted and resulting agency decisions shall be made in such a way that the government-to-government relationship between the Tribe and the United States is strengthened. The Yankton Sioux Tribe shall be considered as a collaborative partner with the federal agency.
6. Federal agencies shall recognize the Yankton Sioux Tribe's right to self-government and its inherent sovereign powers. Federal agencies shall be respectful of the Tribe's sovereignty.
7. Federal agencies shall acknowledge and abide by the treaties between the United States and the Yankton Sioux Tribe.
8. Federal agency actions during and after consultation shall reflect the trust responsibility of the United States to the Yankton Sioux Tribe.

IV. Compliance

All parties shall comply with the protocols contained herein when engaging in the consultation process. Should a party fail to comply with one or more protocols, the other party shall notify the non-compliant party of the violation and the parties shall mutually agree upon a time and location for a meeting between the parties to resolve the matter. The goal of this meeting shall be to restore balance and reduce or eliminate discord by talking through the violation and reaching a mutual understanding to move forward in compliance with the protocols. Should the non-compliant party fail to participate in this meeting or fail to correct its non-compliant behavior in subsequent meetings, the other party may pursue legal remedies through enforcement of these protocols in Yankton Sioux Tribal Court.

800 Main Ave SW
PO Box 1153
Wagner, SD 57380

(605)384-3641/384-5979
(605)384-5687 fax
www.yanktonsiouxtribe.net

Business & Claims Committee:

Robert Flying Hawk, **CHAIRMAN**
Jason Cooke, **VICE CHAIRMAN**
Kenneth Cook, **TREASURER**
Glenford "Sam" Sully, **SECRETARY**



B&CC Members:

Greg Courmoyer Jr.
Darrell Drapeau
Robert Kazena
Perry Little
Greg Zephier

YANKTON SIOUX TRIBE

**COMMENTS ON THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR'S PROPOSED REVISIONS
TO THE FEE-TO-TRUST REGULATIONS CONTAINED AT 25 CFR PART 151**

JANUARY 12, 2018

The Yankton Sioux Tribe ("Tribe") appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Department of Interior's ("DOI") proposed revisions to the regulations at 25 CFR Part 151 dealing with the process of placing fee lands into trust. The Tribe is greatly concerned with the proposed regulatory changes and the effects those changes might have in regards to tribal autonomy, security, and self-governance, among other things. With that in mind, the Tribe submits the following comments.

1. Federal Trust Responsibility and Tribal Self-Determination

The trust doctrine is one of the cornerstones of Indian law. F. Cohen, Handbook of Federal Indian Law 419 (2005). The federal government owes a trust responsibility to tribes, not to state or local governments. The trust obligation owed to the Yankton Sioux Tribe is derived from the Treaties of 1851 and 1858. Treaty of Fort Laramie with Sioux, Etc., Sept. 17, 1851, 11 Stat. 749, II KAPP 594, IV KAPP 1065 ("1851 Treaty"); Treaty with the Yankton Sioux, Apr. 19, 1858, 11 Stat. 743, II KAPP 776 ("1858 Treaty"). Under its trust responsibility, the federal government "has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust" in regards to tribal nations. *Seminole Nation v. United States*, 316 U.S. 286 (1942). The trust responsibility is a legally enforceable obligation requiring the federal government to act in the best interest of tribes and to ensure the survival and welfare of Indian tribes and individuals. This includes supporting tribal self-determination and economic prosperity, both duties that stem from general treaty guarantees to protect Indian tribes and respect their sovereignty.

The proposed revisions to the fee-to-trust regulations undermine tribal self-determination and limit tribal economic opportunity. By giving deference within the decision-making process to states and local governments, the DOI is proposing to put the interest of those states and local governments before the interest of tribes. As mentioned above, there is no trust responsibility owed to state or local governments, and the trust responsibility owed to tribes is a sacred promise that must be given priority over other interests. Likewise, by providing for more state and local government involvement, the proposed revised regulations have the potential to delay or even halt tribal opportunities in the areas of economic development that would lead to tribal prosperity.

In that same vein, the proposed regulations go against the current federal policy of tribal self-determination by adding a land use approval process in the fee-to-trust process, whereby the federal government can withhold placing land acquisitions into trust unless the federal government agrees with the tribes proposed use of the land to be placed into trust. So long as the purpose of the fee-to-trust acquisition is legal, the federal government should allow tribes to explore economic development options within their right to determine the interests and future of the tribe and tribal members.

The fee-to-trust regulations, as currently drafted, already afford state and local governments plenty of deference in the land acquisition process. The current regulations implement a rigorous fee to trust process that already requires consideration of state and local government interests. For on-reservation and off-reservation land acquisitions, the Secretary is required to consider, the impact that an acquisition of unrestricted fee land would have on the State and its political subdivisions resulting from the removal of the land from tax rolls and consider any jurisdictional problems and potential conflicts of land use that may arise. 25 CFR § 151.10(e) and (f). Furthermore, 25 CFR § 151.10 already provides states and local governments thirty (3) days in which to provide written comments on land acquisitions. The process as it currently stands is already so demanding and cumbersome that it takes years for the process to be successfully completed. Mark Trahan, *Would that it be True: Bureau of Indian Affairs' Extreme Rubber Stamping for Land to Trust Applications*, INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY (May 27, 2015). The proposed revisions to those regulations only stand to add dissension to the already strained relations between states, local governments, and tribes. It has even been recognized by the Supreme Court that states and the non-Indians that reside within them are "often their deadliest enemies." *United States v. Kagama*, 118 U.S. 375, 384 (1886). These proposed revisions are merely another inexplicable attempt of the Trump administration to divide this country.

Lastly, it is a violation of the trust responsibility for the federal government to treat tribes effectively as political guinea pigs for their experiments on changing policies. Tribal nations have had to deal with changing policies towards dealing with native peoples since the beginning of colonization. These policies have included allotment, assimilation, termination, and finally self-determination. There has been stability in the policy era of self-determination and tribes are thankful for that. However, to implement the proposed regulations as revised would subject tribes to further continuing and uncertain changing policies, not to mention the regulations would undermine fundamental goals of tribal self-determination.

2. The Fee-to-Trust Process is Necessary for Reservation Restoration

Due to the disastrous federal government policies of allotment, assimilation, and termination, as well as the sale of reservation lands to non-Indians, the federal government is directly responsible for taking more than 90 million acres of land from Indians, totaling nearly 2/3 of all lands that were once tribal reservations. The Yankton Sioux Reservation is now a checkerboard reservation due to the history of these failed policies as applied to the Tribe. Specifically, prior to 1858 the Yankton Sioux people had a land-base totaling nearly 11,000,000 acres. *Yankton Sioux Tribe v. Podhradsky*, 606 F.3d 994, 1002 (8th 2010). That land-base was later reduced to 430,400 acres by an 1858 treaty and, after allotment occurred and surplus lands were sold off, the Tribe was left with only 37,600 acres of trust land. The remaining 392,800 acres

that were part of the 1858 Reservation are no longer considered “reservation” lands by the United States. Although today the Tribe owns approximately 38,299.80 acres of reservation land, some of this remains in fee simple status due, in large part, to the ongoing challenges by state and local governments against land into trust acquisitions.

The fee-to-trust process is afforded under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (“IRA”). The IRA was enacted for the purpose of halting the loss of tribal land base across the country and remedying the negative effects that loss of tribal land has had on the economic, cultural, governmental, and social well-being of tribes. Acquiring off-reservation trust lands is vitally important to tribes due to diminishment of reservations and for tribes’ economic security. Many reservations are of small size, some are located in subprime areas of the country, and others have no reservation boundary. Whatever the issue may be, the point is that many reservations are insufficient to constitute a “homeland” or viable land base for long term economic security and success of the tribe and its members. Tribes need to acquire more lands in order to provide a suitable homeland and government to their citizens.

Moreover, trust land is essential to strong tribal governments and tribal economies. This is especially true for many large, land-based tribes, such as Yankton, whose reservations were typically opened for settlement, causing the checkerboard reservations dealt with on a daily basis by Yankton and other tribes. *See* Act of Aug. 15, 1894, 28 Stat. 286. For these tribes, it is of critical importance that they be able to consolidate fee lands within their reservations back into trust for both jurisdictional purposes and maintaining peaceful relations between tribal members and non-members on and off the reservation. The proposed revisions punish these larger land-based tribes, presumably for the past actions of small, urban-based tribes in regards to trust land acquisitions.

The IRA is well known as a vital correction to disastrous federal Indian policy and the issues the IRA is working to resolve still exist today. However, only ten percent (10%) of the 90 million acres of tribal lands lost under allotment laws and policies have been restored as tribal trust lands under the IRA. *Frequently Asked Questions*, Bureau of Indian Affairs, <http://www.bia.gov/FAQs/> (last updated June 6, 2017). As noted by the Supreme Court, “[t]he intent and purpose of the [Indian Reorganization Act] was to rehabilitate the Indian’s economic life and to give him a chance to develop the initiative destroyed by a century of oppression and paternalism.” *Mescalero Apache Tribe v. Jones*, 411 U.S. 145, 152 (1973). In order for tribes to make a homeland out of their reservations, there needs to be jurisdictional certainty and uniformity within reservations, both of which the fee-to-trust land process is currently able to provide. The proposed revisions would only stand to delay and further undermine any tribal attempts at creating a homeland in order to further goals of tribal self-determination.

3. Do Not Increase the Role of State and Local Governments

The proposed revisions to the fee-to-trust regulations give substantial deference to state and local governments at the expense of tribal members and tribal nations. Under the proposed revisions, if the land acquisition sought is for gaming purposes, tribes would be required to produce all evidence of cooperative efforts to mitigate impacts of the proposed gaming facility to the local community. 25 CFR § 151.11(a)(1)(xi) *as proposed*. Such evidence includes copies of intergovernmental agreements between tribes and state and local governments, and, if no such

agreements or evidence of cooperation exists, an explanation of why that is. *Id.* Additionally, if land is in unrestricted fee status, the Secretary must notify the state and local governments with regulatory jurisdiction over the land to be acquired and give them 30 days after receipt of the notice to provide written comments as to the acquisitions potential impacts on regulatory jurisdiction, land use, real property taxes, and special assessments. 25 CFR § 151.11(b)(1) *as proposed*. The proposed regulations as revised would also force the DOI to take land placed into trust out of trust if a court rules that the DOI erred in taking the land into trust and orders that the land to be taken out of trust. 25 CFR § 151.12(e) *as proposed*.

These proposed revisions, along with others, give substantial deference to state and local governments when deciding to approve or deny applications to get fee land placed into trust. The Tribe is concerned that giving such an amount of deference to state and local governments will make the fee-to-trust process even more difficult, time-consuming, and costly. This amount of deference, if given to certain states, will make the fee-to-trust process nearly impossible to implement. Some states, such as South Dakota where the Tribe is located, consistently challenge any and all fee-to-trust land acquisitions under the current regulations, which afford the state substantially less input and deference in the process than would the proposed regulations. The case of *South Dakota v. United States Department of the Interior*, 423 F.3d 790 (8th Cir. 2005) is exemplary as to this point. Even the counties of states like South Dakota routinely challenge acquisitions of land into trust for tribes. *See County of Charles Mix v. United States Department of Interior*, 674 F.3d 898 (8th Cir. 2012). If a state such as South Dakota and a county such as Charles Mix are given the deference afforded under the proposed revisions, then the fee-to-trust process would be effectively unusable for tribes. The process would be delayed for a significant amount of time, if not indefinitely, and tribes would have to continue paying taxes on land that would otherwise be untaxable if placed under trust status.

The federal government has offered no reasoned explanation as to why states and local government should be afforded so much deference in the fee-to-trust process and the Tribe sees no legitimate reason why states and local government should have so much power in this context. The fee-to-trust process is a legal mechanism afforded to tribal nations and tribal individuals for the benefit of tribal nations and individuals under the federal government's trust responsibility. As discussed above, the federal government owes this trust responsibility to tribes, not to state and local governments. State and local government input should be limited significantly more than would be the case under the proposed revisions because states and local governments have little at stake compared to the tribes that apply for fee land to be placed into trust.

4. Potential Illegality of the Proposed Regulations

The proposed revisions to the regulations would violate both the IRA and the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act ("IGRA").

As briefly discussed above, the power for the fee-to-trust land acquisition process comes directly from the IRA. Specifically, Section 5 of the IRA provides the power and reads, "The Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized, in his discretion, to acquire through purchase, relinquishment, gift, exchange, or assignment, any interest in lands, water rights or surface rights to lands, within or without existing reservations, including trust or otherwise restricted allotments

whether the allottee be living or deceased, *for the purpose of providing lands for Indians.*” The current criteria set forth in 25 CFR Part 151 are derived from the DOI’s interpretation of the IRA and its purposes. However, “Congress, as the trust settlor for all Indian Affairs matters, has the sole authority to evaluate and amend existing statutes, including the Indian Reorganization Act, to determine if the existing Fee-to-Trust statutes need to be constrained or expanded.” Statement of James Cason, Acting Deputy Secretary United States Department of Interior, Before the United States House Subcommittee on Indian, Insular, and Alaska Native Affairs, Comparing 21st Century Trust Land Acquisition with the Intent of the 73rd Congress in Section 5 of the Indian Reorganization Act, July 13, 2017. Therefore, the DOI should not attempt to constrain the ability of tribes to utilize the fee-to-trust land acquisition process by itself through regulation, and should instead defer to Congress.

Turning to the potential violations of IGRA, under the proposed regulations, fee-to-trust acquisitions for gaming-related purposes would be subject to a host of considerations that would not apply to a fee-to-trust acquisition for other purposes. For example, a gaming-related fee-to-trust acquisition identification of the on-reservation unemployment rate and an analysis of the gaming project’s effect on that unemployment rate, identification of the on-reservation benefits of the proposed gaming project, and evidence of cooperative efforts to mitigate impacts of the proposed gaming facility to the local community would be required under the proposed regulations. 25 CFR § 151.11(a)(1) *as proposed*. However, the inclusion of these additional gaming-related considerations are prohibited under the terms of IGRA. Section 2719(c) of IGRA states “Nothing in this section shall affect or diminish the authority and responsibility of the Secretary to take land into trust.” The proposed revisions certainly “affect” and “diminish the authority and responsibility of the Secretary to take land into trust” by adding additional considerations that are specific to taking fee land into trust for gaming purposes.

The DOI invites litigation on the proposed regulations by trying to limit tribal utilization of the fee-to-trust process and by making the process more difficult due to enhanced deference to be afforded to state and local governments. Effectively, the DOI is attempting to change an Act of Congress and statutory law through regulation. Instead of attempting to revise the fee-to-trust regulations, the DOI should leave the regulations as they currently are and allow Congress to exercise its authority over Indian affairs when and how it sees fit. Otherwise the DOI would be usurping Congress’ power and subjecting itself to litigation for its actions.