

**The original documents are located in Box 36, “7/16/76 - Remarks at a Reception of American Indian Leaders” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS TO AMERICAN INDIAN LEADERS  
JULY 16, 1976

LET ME WELCOME YOU TO THE WHITE HOUSE THIS

AFTERNOON. I AM HAPPY TO HAVE THIS CHANCE TO MEET WITH

YOU, THE DISTINGUISHED LEADERS AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

OF AMERICA'S INDIAN TRIBES.

I HOPE YOU HAVE HAD INFORMATIVE BRIEFING SESSIONS

WITH SECRETARY KLEPPE AND OTHER MEMBERS OF MY ADMINISTRATION

RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INDIAN PROGRAMS•

IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU TELL US YOUR PROBLEMS AND

YOUR NEEDS, ~~AND~~ THAT WE KEEP YOU FULLY INFORMED OF OUR

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS•

I WANTED TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO TALK WITH YOU  
PERSONALLY - TO LET YOU KNOW OF MY PERSONAL CONCERN  
FOR THE NEEDS OF INDIANS AND NATIVE AMERICANS.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS A UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP WITH  
YOUR PEOPLE. IT IS A RELATIONSHIP OF LEGAL TRUST -  
AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY.

THAT RELATIONSHIP IS ROOTED IN HISTORY -- BUT IT IS  
FED TODAY BY OUR CONCERN THAT THE INDIAN PEOPLE SHOULD ENJOY  
THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES AS OTHER AMERICANS -- WHILE  
MAINTAINING THE CULTURE AND TRADITIONS THAT YOU RIGHTLY  
PRIZE AS YOUR HERITAGE•

THAT HERITAGE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE AMERICAN  
CULTURE WE ARE CELEBRATING IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR.

YOUR CONTRIBUTION HAS BEEN BOTH MATERIAL AND  
SPIRITUAL. YOUR ANCESTORS INTRODUCED SETTLERS, NOT ONLY  
TO NEW FOODS AND PLANTS, BUT TO INDIAN WAYS OF LIFE AND  
INDIAN VALUES WHICH THEY ABSORBED.

THIS IS A YEAR FOR ALL OF US TO REALIZE WHAT A GREAT DEBT  
WE OWE TO THE AMERICAN INDIANS.

TODAY YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SUCH SERIOUS PROBLEMS  
AS POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT, CRIME, POOR HEALTH AND  
UNSUITABLE HOUSING ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS.

~~I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT~~ I SHARE YOUR CONCERN.

~~BUT I ALSO WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT~~ I AM HOPEFUL ABOUT THE

FUTURE, AND ABOUT WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE BY CONTINUING

TO WORK TOGETHER.

THE 1970s HAVE BROUGHT A NEW ERA IN INDIAN AFFAIRS.

IN THE LAST CENTURY FEDERAL POLICY HAS VACILLATED BETWEEN

PATERNALISM AND THE THREAT OF TERMINATING FEDERAL

RESPONSIBILITY. I AM OPPOSED TO BOTH EXTREMES.

I BELIEVE IN MAINTAINING A STABLE POLICY SO THAT

INDIANS AND INDIAN LEADERS CAN PLAN AND WORK CONFIDENTLY

FOR THE FUTURE.

WE CAN BUILD ON THAT FOUNDATION TO IMPROVE THE  
OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO AMERICAN INDIANS -- AND AT THE  
SAME TIME, MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO LIVE AS YOU CHOOSE  
WITHIN YOUR TRIBAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES, AND IN  
BROTHERHOOD WITH YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS.

WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO BUILD. MY ADMINISTRATION

IS SUPPORTING THE CONCEPT OF ALLOWING INDIAN TRIBES TO

DETERMINE WHETHER THEY AND THEIR MEMBERS, IN ADDITION TO

BEING UNDER TRIBAL JURISDICTION, SHOULD BE UNDER STATE

OR FEDERAL CIVIL AND CRIMINAL JURISDICTION.

I HAVE DIRECTED THE DEPARTMENTS OF JUSTICE AND INTERIOR

TO DRAFT LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL

EFFICIENTLY, EFFECTIVELY, AND WITHIN ADEQUATE GUIDELINES.

THEY HAVE SOLICITED THE VIEWS OF THE INDIAN COMMUNITY IN

PREPARING THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH I WILL SOON SEND

TO THE CONGRESS.

I AM COMMITTED TO FURTHERING THE SELF DETERMINATION OF  
INDIAN COMMUNITIES -- BUT WITHOUT TERMINATING THE SPECIAL  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE INDIAN  
PEOPLE. I AM STRONGLY OPPOSED TO TERMINATION.

SELF-DETERMINATION MEANS THAT YOU CAN DECIDE THE NATURE OF  
YOUR TRIBE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WITHIN  
THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SELF-DETERMINATION ACT WHICH I SIGNED  
IN JANUARY OF 1975. INDIAN TRIBES, IF THEY DESIRE, NOW  
HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADMINISTER FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR  
THEMSELVES. WE CAN THEN WORK TOGETHER AS PARTNERS.

ON YOUR PART, THIS REQUIRES INITIATIVE AND  
RESPONSIBILITY AS YOU DEFINE YOUR TRIBAL GOALS AND DETERMINE  
HOW YOU WANT TO USE FEDERAL RESOURCES.

ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PART, SELF-DETERMINATION  
FOR INDIAN TRIBES REQUIRES THAT FEDERAL PROGRAMS MUST BE  
FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH THE DIFFERENT NEEDS AND DESIRES  
OF INDIVIDUAL TRIBES.

IN THE PAST, OUR FLEXIBILITY HAS BEEN LIMITED BY THE  
LACK OF EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AMONG DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES  
OFFERING A WIDE VARIETY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO THE  
INDIAN PEOPLE.

PROGRAMS SERVING BOTH RESERVATION AND NON-RESERVATION

INDIANS ARE SPREAD ACROSS HALF A DOZEN DIFFERENT CABINET

DEPARTMENTS -- INVOLVING AGENCIES RANGING FROM THE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION TO THE FEDERAL AVIATION

ADMINISTRATION.

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, THIS IS TED MARRS' LAST DAY  
ON THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF. TED'S SERVICE AS WHITE HOUSE  
LIAISON FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS HAS BEEN INVALUABLE TO ME AS  
PRESIDENT, / TO THE CABINET DEPARTMENTS, / AND, I AM CONFIDENT,  
TO THE INDIAN COMMUNITY.

WITH HIS DEPARTURE,

*will*  
~~I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT~~

*Shortly*

*a person who*

~~BRAD PATTERSON~~ WILL ASSUME TED MARRS' DUTIES IN THE OFFICE

OF PUBLIC LIAISON IN THE AREA OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, IN ADDITION

TO HIS PRESENT DUTIES.

*His appointment*

~~BRAD HAS HAD EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE~~

~~WITH INDIAN PROGRAMS AND IS A GOOD FRIEND OF THE INDIAN~~

COMMUNITY.

*That individuals responsibility will be*

~~IT WILL BE BRAD'S RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK WITH~~

CABINET MEMBERS, WITH THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET,

WITH THE DOMESTIC COUNCIL, AND WITH MY LEGAL OFFICE TO

ENCOURAGE THE IMPROVED COORDINATION OF THE VARIOUS FEDERAL

PROGRAMS THAT SERVE THE INDIAN POPULATION.

AS AN ADDITIONAL NEW STEP IN THIS DIRECTION,

I AM ALSO SENDING A MEMORANDUM TO THE HEADS OF ALL CABINET  
DEPARTMENTS WITH INDIAN PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES, DIRECTING  
THEM TO GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO THE COORDINATION OF THEIR  
INDIAN PROGRAMS•

THESE TWO ACTIONS WILL HELP ENSURE THAT THE  
ONE AND A HALF BILLION DOLLARS SPENT ANNUALLY ON INDIAN  
PROGRAMS AND SERVICES WILL BE SPENT EFFICIENTLY --  
WITH COOPERATION AND WITHOUT DUPLICATION•

AN IMPORTANT TASK WE CAN HELP YOU WITH IS THE  
CHALLENGE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON YOUR LANDS.

I CONGRATULATE YOU ON THE INITIATIVE YOU HAVE SHOWN.

I PLEDGE ENCOURAGEMENT AND HELP IN YOUR EFFORTS TO CREATE  
LONG-TERM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

MANY INDIAN RESERVATIONS CONTAIN VALUABLE NATURAL  
RESOURCES. THESE MUST BE TREATED WITH THE RESPECT FOR NATURE  
WHICH IS A TRADITIONAL INDIAN VALUE. MY ATTORNEY GENERAL  
HAS ESTABLISHED AN INDIAN RESOURCES SECTION, WHOSE SOLE  
RESPONSIBILITY IS LITIGATION ON BEHALF OF INDIAN TRIBES,  
TO PROTECT YOUR NATURAL RESOURCES AND YOUR JURISDICTIONAL  
RIGHTS.

INDIAN LEADERS AND THE INDIAN PEOPLE HAVE GAINED  
INCREASING SKILL IN MANAGING THESE RESOURCES SO THEY BENEFIT  
YOUR TRIBES AND OUR NATION AS A WHOLE.

I PLEDGE OUR COOPERATION IN WORKING WITH YOU TO  
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF INDIAN LIFE, BY PROVIDING SOUNDLY  
MANAGED PROGRAMS AND A STABLE POLICY.

WE CAN MAKE THE REST OF THE 1970s DECISIVE YEARS

IN THE LIVES OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE. TOGETHER, WE CAN WRITE

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THIS LAND WE SHARE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

NOW LET ME INVITE YOU TO SHARE SOME REFRESHMENTS

IN THE STATE DINING ROOM.

END OF TEXT