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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY  
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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
UPON SIGNING A PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING  
NATIVE AMERICAN AWARENESS WEEK, 1976

THE MONTEGO BAY HOTEL

8:10 P.M. CDT

Before signing the Proclamation, I would like to make some additional remarks.

I would like to say a few words about a very important issue. No State in the Union has more residents who are native Americans than the great State of Oklahoma. No domestic matter has given me greater pride than my Administration's record of turning about the discrimination and neglect that all Indians faced for so many years.

In January of 1975 I signed the Indian Self-Determination Act, a magna carta for Indian people. Today we recognize Indian tribal Governments, including those in Oklahoma, as vital Government organizations in their own right.

Just a week ago I signed the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which authorized significant improved resources for Indian health delivery care.

I know you are very proud of the fine accredited hospital here in Lawton, but many Indian hospitals are not accredited. We must -- and we will -- bring them up to standards.

In a few minutes I will sign a Presidential Proclamation declaring October 10 to 16 as Native American Awareness Week. The Administration support for Indian programs is not just rhetoric. We back up our words with action.

Eight years ago the Bureau of Indian Affairs -- its budget was \$262 million. Today it is \$777 million. The Indian health budget was \$113 million; today, \$425 million. Our manpower training budget for Indian people is four times bigger than it was only four years ago. The record of support for Indian programs and for the protection of Indian trust rights is clear and precise. America wants those policies to continue, and I can assure you that they will.

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Let me say to the Oklahoma delegation, and Senator Paul Laxalt here from Nevada, as well as the tribal leaders, and I am delighted to have the opportunity of participating with them in the signing of this Proclamation.

There are about one million American Indian citizens, and some may say this is a very small minority. I count American Indian people, however, not in numbers but in the honored place that they hold in our multi-cultured society and in the future of our nation.

The 215 million of us are keenly concerned with the one million. The welfare and the progress of native Americans is high on the agenda of the American conscience.

My Administration is equally determined that history is going to continue to be changed, that the Indian shall no longer be lowest in poverty and slimmest in opportunity, and we are making those changes now.

I sign this Proclamation as a signal of that determination and as an invitation to all of my fellow citizens to reaffirm that our first Americans are among America's most respected and honored citizens.

Thank you all very much.

END (AT 8:10 P.M. CDT)