



**Draft Letter to White House Staff
Concerning the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
and the Need for an Executive Order**

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Dear Ms. Teehee *[or other White House Staff]* :

As you know, President Obama declared the support of the United States for the most important rights of Indian and Alaska Native nations and other indigenous peoples of the world in 2010 when he announced support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration is an historic statement of the rights of Native nations and Native individuals in the United States and elsewhere. It is a declaration that Indian leaders in this country proposed and worked to win adoption of for more than 30 years.

Most of the rights contained in the Declaration are already a part of United States law, but in certain important areas, the United States needs to change its laws and policies in order to achieve fairness for the Native peoples and individuals of this country. In several important ways, federal law concerning Native nations is not in compliance with the United States Constitution or with the provisions of the Declaration. For example, the federal government continues to take tribal property, including, especially, aboriginal title lands, without compensation or due process. Congress continues to enact legislation affecting Indians and Alaska Natives practically without regard for the ordinary limitations of the Constitution.

Federal departments and agencies likewise continue to carry out policies and practices that take or interfere with tribal property, that unduly restrict our ability to use and benefit from our Nation's property, that interfere with our self-determination, violate our treaties, and otherwise violate the basic rights that are supposed to be respected for everyone. This discriminates against Native nations. Congress also frequently ignores our inherent rights to exist as distinct peoples, to practice our cultures, and continue our ways of life. These are important human rights that are now recognized and accepted by practically all countries of the world. These on-going practices of the federal government violate the rights that the President pledged to respect in the UN Declaration, and they violate the United States Constitution as well.

We are writing to you now to express our thanks for the President's support for the UN Declaration and to ask for concrete measures to correct the problems that we have just described. We appreciate the role that you have played in the consultations with Native nations and the decision to respect and protect the important rights contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The ___[*your Nation or Tribe*] ___ has adopted a resolution supporting the Declaration, calling for respect for the rights it proclaims, and calling for full implementation of these rights. We are attaching a copy of our Resolution.

We wish to request an important and concrete step that would help to bring real respect for our most important rights: we ask that the President issue an executive order directing all federal departments and agencies to review immediately the laws and policies within their areas of responsibility and to consult with tribes to determine which laws and policies must be changed to comply with the rights in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Such an executive order already exists with respect to the human rights obligations of the United States under various treaties. [Executive Order 13107, Implementation of Human Rights Treaties, 1998] The same kind of formal direction should be given by the President with respect to the rights of Indian and Alaska Native nations and the rights of all indigenous peoples subject to United States jurisdiction.

We look forward to the opportunity to speak with you about the UN Declaration and about the need for an executive order to implement the Declaration.

Add any final points or concerns.