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Page last updated at 16:53 GMT, Thursday, 5 November 2009

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## Obama pledge to Native Americans

**US President Barack Obama has vowed not to forget American Indian tribes, as representatives gathered for a White House conference on native issues.**

The first annual White House Tribal Nations Conference brings together one delegate from each of the 564 federally recognised American Indian tribes.

It is the first time in US history that they will all meet a sitting president.

The event is part of Mr Obama's efforts to build bridges with American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

In opening remarks, which received a standing ovation, Mr Obama said: "You will not be forgotten as long as I'm in this White House."

The event's agenda covers a variety of issues, from centuries old broken treaty promises to more modern issues such as healthcare, crime and poverty.

Mr Obama said he had asked every cabinet agency to provide him with a plan on how to improve relations between the government and tribes.

"We're not going to go through the motions and pay tribute to each other, then furl up the flags and go our separate ways," he was quoted as saying by Associated Press.

The president acknowledged the US federal government's history of ignoring the needs and rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

### Election pledges

Mr Obama also said the widespread social and economic struggles faced by the communities were not acceptable and would change while he remained in office.

The historic summit is the first time such a large number of tribal leaders have attended a single gathering with the federal government.

Since taking office a year ago, the Obama administration has allocated \$3bn (£1.8bn) in stimulus funding to American Indian programmes.

The president also appointed a member of the Cherokee Nation to his White House team as senior policy adviser for Native American affairs - fulfilling an election campaign pledge.

He also appointed an American Indian as director of the Indian Health Service within the Department of Health and Human Services - the first such appointment.



President Obama fulfilled his campaign pledge regarding Native Americans

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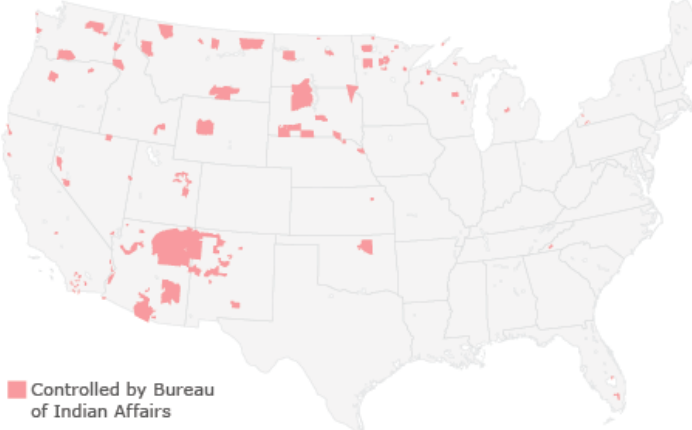
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There are about two million Native Americans in the United States and one million in Canada.

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**Native American land in the United States**



■ Controlled by Bureau of Indian Affairs

Source: US Dept of the Interior; US Geological Survey

There are 564 federally recognised tribes, the largest being the Cherokee with a population of nearly 730,000

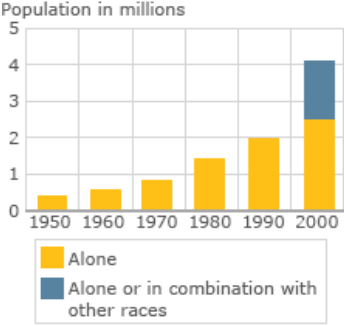
Other major tribes include the Navajo, Choctaw, Sioux, Chippewa and Apache

There are about 150 different Native American languages

Those living on reservations must obey federal laws, can vote in national elections and can serve in the armed forces, but they are also subject to tribal laws and elect tribal leaders

Synonyms: American Indians, First Nations people

**Population in millions**



Source: US Census Bureau

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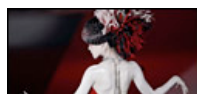
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