



NORTH STAR GROUP

Millennium Agreement Review

Following the recommendations by the 1999 Rural Governance and Empowerment Commission, Governor Knowles and tribal leaders signed the Millennium Agreement—dated April 11, 2001—to recognize tribes in Alaska and provide a framework for cooperation between federally recognized tribes and the State of Alaska.

This agreement was left idle by subsequent administrations. Below is a summary of what the agreement does.

What the Millennium Agreement was established to do:

1. The agreement provides mutual recognition of sovereignty and creates a framework for establishing and implementing a government-to-government relationship between the state and the 229 federally recognized tribes.
2. The state government and the tribal governments agree to inform one another at the earliest opportunity about actions that may significantly affect the other.
3. Objectives: of the Millennium Agreement
 - To Improve communication and facilitate resolution of issues.
 - Increase public recognition, respect, and support for tribal self-governance and self-determination.
4. Each party will develop a process to allow the other to offer "meaningful and timely input on matters that significantly or uniquely affect that government."
5. The Governor has designated his Chief of Staff to be "responsible and accountable" for the State of Alaska's implementation; each tribe will designate an official person to work on implementation.
6. The parties will review and evaluate implementation at the annual meeting of the State-Tribal Forum in order to institutionalize an ongoing dialogue.
 - The forum will be held at least once per year.
 - The Governor will include appropriate cabinet officials and invite participation from the legislative and judicial branches of government.
 - The tribes will be represented by their government leaders or designees.
 - The first forum will establish working groups that will meet at least two times per year and will report back at the annual forum.
 - The forum will develop and offer a dispute resolution mechanism.
7. The parties will create a centralized office, council or commission to oversee tribal-state relations with the following responsibilities:
 - Review, monitor, and recommend policies.
 - Work towards greater understanding and tolerance.

- Compile and disseminate information.
 - Make known tribal needs and concerns to the state, and provide information on available services to the tribes.
 - Encourage public and private agencies to expand and improve services for tribal members.
 - Assess the effects of state programs on tribes and make recommendations.
 - Recommendations were to be completed within 90 days of April 11, 2001.
 - The oversight entity will be comprised of at least four representatives of the state and four representatives of the tribes.
8. Each party shall identify key contacts to promote continuing dialogue.
 9. The Alaska Inter-Tribal Council (AITC) will provide logistical support, coordination, and facilitation of meetings of the parties.

What the agreement doesn't do (a partial list):

- Address any issues of substance or deal with any specific policies or mechanisms and methods of establishing and implementing shared governance.
- Enshrine tribal recognition and a government-to-government relationship in state statute.
- Address subsistence rights and Alaska Native preference/rural preference.
- Create a framework for fish and game/subsistence co-management (such as the Ahtna or Yukon River Fish proposals).

What has not happened?

- Any of the plans for implementation.
- AITC is inactive and so the state will need to take steps to revive or designate a new partner.

After almost 15 years of state inaction, more than 50 committed Alaskans reconvened in December 2013 as the Rural Governance Commission (RGC) to address issues of vital concern to Alaska Native people and rural communities. The reconvened RGC report along with the original agreement and information relating to state-tribal relations in Alaska is available on line at www.ruralgov.org.

Contact Veronica Slajer at (907) 360-2288 or vaslajer@northstargrp.com with additional questions.