



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

## Program works to consolidate fractionated lands, strengthen Tribal communities

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**WASHINGTON** - Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney announced today that the Department of the Interior has signed agreements with the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana, and the Santee Sioux Nation of the Santee Sioux Reservation in Nebraska to guide implementation of the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations at each of these reservations.

The Buy-Back Program implements the land consolidation component of the [Cobell Settlement](#), which provided \$1.9 billion to purchase fractional interests in trust or restricted land from willing sellers at fair market value within 10 years. Consolidated interests are immediately restored to tribal trust ownership for uses benefiting the reservation community and tribal members.

“Our partnerships with tribal nations recognize the importance of tribal sovereignty and support tailored implementation of the Buy-Back Program at each unique reservation,” said Assistant Secretary Sweeney. “Each tribe’s input and involvement is critical for outreach to landowners and overall effective implementation of the Program. Landowners and the Buy-Back Program benefit tremendously from the significant contributions of our tribal nation partners.”

To date, the Department has entered into agreements with 49 tribal nations to cooperatively implement the Buy-Back Program. The agreements outline coordinated strategies to facilitate education about the Program to landowners, but are unique in time, scope and responsibilities based on particular circumstances at each location.

These are the second agreements of their kind signed between the Department and the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

“The Oglala Sioux Tribe is pleased to enter into an agreement with the Department,” **said Oglala Sioux Tribe President Troy “Scott” Weston**. “Through this agreement, we look forward to providing outreach to Tribal landowners regarding the Land Buy-Back Program. Our collaboration with the Department will enable landowners to voluntarily sell their fractionated trust land interests in order to benefit our Tribe.”

“This is the second time our Tribe will be involved in the purchase of fractionated trust land from individual Indian landowners. Consolidating our Tribal land base has been a priority for decades as it allows us to make better culturally-based resource management decisions, more opportunities to increase economic development and housing opportunities, strengthen Tribal sovereignty and most of all to preserve the sacredness of the land for the coming generations,” **said Northern Cheyenne President L. Jace Killsback**. “We value Secretary Zinke’s consideration and approval of our Tribe’s

request for the Land Buy-Back to return to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.”

This is the first agreement of its kind signed between the Department and the Santee Sioux Nation. “We are thankful for the opportunity to purchase from those members or stakeholders who wish to sell their interests in allotted lands to the Santee Sioux Nation,” **said Chairman Roger Trudell**. “It provides the Nation the opportunity to strengthen its Land holdings and we are grateful for this opportunity provided to us by the Land Buy-Back Program.”

Since the Program began making offers in December 2013, more than 765,000 interests and the equivalent of nearly 2.2 million acres of land have been transferred to tribal governments. As a result of the Buy-Back Program, tribal ownership now exceeds 50 percent in 14,700 more tracts of land (representing an increase of approximately 120 percent for the locations where implementation has occurred), strengthening tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Returning fractionated lands to tribes in trust has enormous potential to improve tribal community resources by increasing home site locations, improving transportation routes, spurring economic development, easing approval for infrastructure and community projects, and preserving traditional cultural or ceremonial sites.

Landowners can contact the Trust Beneficiary Call Center at **888-678-6836** or visit their local Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians to ask questions about their land or purchase offers. More information and detailed frequently asked questions are available at [Buy Back Program FAQ](#) to help individuals make informed decisions about their lands.

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<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/oglala-sioux-northern-cheyenne-and-santee-sioux-become-latest-tribal>