

February 12, 2026

**Statement from the Secretary of Homeland Security to the Leaders, Citizens, and Members of Federally Recognized Tribal Nations**

Dear Tribal Leaders, Enrolled Members, and Citizens of our Federally Recognized Tribes,

As the United States Secretary of Homeland Security, I am grateful for the tribal leaders and community members who have directly shared their concerns with me and my Department, particularly regarding the recognition of tribal identification cards and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations in areas with significant urban Native populations.

Let me be unequivocal, ICE's mission is singular and clear: to apprehend and remove individuals who are unlawfully present in the United States. ICE does not target, and will not target, Native Americans or any U.S. citizens based on appearance, ethnicity, or community affiliation.

To date, there have not been any ICE operations in tribal lands.

We recognize tribal jurisdiction and federal jurisdiction and as we strive to work with tribal leaders and their tribal law enforcement agencies, it is encouraging to see many tribal nations acknowledge and respect our federal authority and requests for ICE to partner with tribal law enforcement agencies should there be illegal aliens on tribal lands.

ICE agents recognize tribal identification cards and continue to acknowledge tribal IDs as proper and accepted identification to verify citizenship status. I encourage all native people who have a valid state driver's license, passport, state identification card to also use those forms of identification if approached by federal law enforcement and asked for identification.

I want to thank the tribal nations that have taken a proactive approach and shared their own fact sheets with their tribal citizens, encouraging them to comply with ICE federal law enforcement, answer their questions, and recognize these men and women are simply doing their jobs. I am also grateful to tribal leaders for informing their citizens to be cautious of misinformation about tribal citizens being detained or other lies about ICE.

I have reviewed the Congressional Record from during the Biden Administration where tribal leaders testified to cartel and cartel affiliates operating in your tribal lands and your request for federal government assistance to get them off your tribal lands.

I was disappointed when some of those same leaders took tribal council action to ban ICE from your reservations, making false claims that tribal members have been detained by ICE, misrepresenting facts and spreading misinformation. Please don't turn away the very help you asked for from your testimony to different Congressional Committees just a few years ago. Under President Trump, we simply want to do what the last administration failed to do and that is to enforce the law and get violent criminals and illegal aliens out of your tribal nations.

My senior advisor on Indian affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs teams is always available to take your call and answer your questions.

I look forward to your continued partnership.

Sincerely,

Kristi Noem

Secretary of Homeland Security