

# Barack Obama

August 19, 2008

Dear Alaska Native Leader,

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you on the importance of the upcoming election for Alaska Native peoples, and for our nation as a whole. The outcome of this election could determine the course of our nation for decades to come, and I am running for President to put families first and break the stranglehold of the special interests that currently control Washington, D.C.

That's why I'm running my campaign in Alaska, and around the country, from the bottom up – people from local communities are leading our efforts for change, and making sure that every voice is heard. I hope that you will become a leader in our movement, and that Alaska Native peoples around the state will join us as well. Together we can build a foundation for stronger communities.

I began my career working in communities like yours, where government was not standing up for the people. Chicago's South side had been devastated by the disappearance of jobs, and we banded together, and organized to empower the community to demand better. I know what it is like in communities that have little faith in the government, and who have little hope that politics can create change in their lives. But I also know that if we work together, ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things.

Experience has led me to the belief that we must empower communities to determine their own direction. My First Americans policy for American Indians and Alaska Natives reflects this principle in its support for self-determination, a true government-to-government relationship with tribes, and renewed self-determination. I know that tribal consultation is important and that one-size-fits-all policies do not work when it comes to Alaska. That's why Alaska Native peoples will be included in my administration. Every tribe is different, and my administration will respect that.

The federal government must help, but real change in the community must come from the community itself. It is time for the President of the United States to communicate directly with Alaska Native and American Indian leaders and include you in important policy decisions that impact Indian country. I will appoint an Alaska Native or American Indian policy adviser on my senior White House staff so that Indian country has a strong voice at the highest levels of the Obama administration. Furthermore, I will invite Alaska Native and American Indian leaders to meet with me annually to develop an Alaska Native/American Indian policy agenda. This will be a substantive meeting providing me with an opportunity to keep in touch with the issues affecting Indian country.

In my time in the Senate, I have led efforts to pass the Indian Healthcare Improvement Act and have supported amendments that increase funding for IHS. In addition, I have been an advocate for fully funding the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program that provides



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critical aid to many impoverished village communities. As President, I will support full funding of IHS and continued funding of urban Indian health programs. Having been raised by a working single mother who understood the importance of education in her children's future, I understand that dilapidated schools are intolerable, and I will insist on robust funding of school construction in rural Alaska. I also support Native language programs, which have been so successful in Alaska Native communities.

Rural communities must also be empowered to protect their citizens. It is important to provide greater funding for Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) programs. I am committed to addressing the jurisdictional gaps that inhibit your ability to protect your communities. It is also important to provide legal protections for sacred places, traditional cultural properties, and cultural traditions, like ancestral burial grounds and churches.

Protecting the Native ways of life in Alaska also means understanding the ravages of global climate change that are destroying coastal villages in Alaska. As you know, impacted villages must be relocated, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. Climate change is also altering historic wildlife migration patterns and impacting the subsistence lifestyle of Alaska Native communities across the state. I recognize that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our generation and I am committed to implementing a comprehensive plan to fight it.

I encourage you to get involved and help seize this opportunity to create the change we need in our country. Alaska Natives and American Indians are an important part of the movement I'm building, and the unique issues you face are a priority for me. If you would like to find out more about my policies, please visit my website:

Alaska: <http://alaska.barackobama.com>

First Americans: <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/firstamissues>

And if you do not have access to the Internet, you can also write to my Alaska office:

2513 Fairbanks St.  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Quyanaqpak. Ana Baasee'. Gunalcheesh. Mahsi' Cho. Quyana. Haw'aa. Chin'an. Thank You.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama



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