



Administrative Office of the Courts

Chief Justice Matthew B. Durrant
Utah Supreme Court
Chair, Utah Judicial Council

February 1, 2023

Ronald B. Gordon, Jr.
State Court Administrator
Neira Siaperas
Deputy State Court Administrator

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Michael Drechsel, Assistant State Court Administrator, Legislative Liaison

RE: Utah State Courts Government to Government Relationship with Utah's Eight Sovereign Tribal Nations

For many years, the Utah State Courts has had an ongoing and improving relationship with the eight federally recognized tribes that share borders with Utah. In 2019, the courts hired a Tribal Outreach Program Coordinator with the goal of providing one voice for the courts when communicating with the tribes. Since 2019, extensive efforts and improvements have been made to enhance communication between the courts and the tribes. The courts' goals are to build confidence, engage in productive conversations on enhancing our operational relationship, collaborate on training, and to find common grounds to enable transparency, and improve relationships for the good of all of Utah's citizens.

A few ways in which the two governments are working together are as follows: yearly, the Court Improvement Program has partnered with the Utah Bar's Indian Law Section to host Utah's Indian Child Welfare Conference. This conference brings together both state and tribal leaders, legal professionals, social workers, health professionals, and provides an opportunity to listen and learn and discuss best ways to work together on ICWA cases. The Court Improvement Program Committee continually assesses the Indian Child Welfare Act to ensure that the courts are in compliance. The Committee is comprised of state juvenile court judges, tribal leaders, and multiple state agencies. Within the past two years, the courts have partnered with the tribes and its membership to make available cultural awareness events and cultural humility training to all individuals working within the judiciary. ICWA procedural training for judges and staff is also provided yearly to better ensure up-to-date understanding of the unique requirements of ICWA.

It is the commitment of the Utah State Courts to continue to work together with our neighbors and friends in the eight sovereign tribal nations on all court-related issues that impact our respective governments.

The mission of the Utah judiciary is to provide the people an open, fair, efficient, and independent system for the advancement of justice under the law.

