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Expanding Consultation Practices Between the U.S. Air Force and Associated Native American Nations

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Abstract

Over the past 25 years strides have been made in relations between the United States (U.S.) federal government and federally recognized tribes. However, due to the numerous federal agencies increasingly consulting with tribal leaders, there is still a great amount of work to be done. The University of Montana (UM), through a contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), has been tasked with the creation and development of a meeting facilitation program and accompanying manual for United States Air Force (USAF) base commanders. The manual is intended to provide base commanders with a better understanding of how associated tribal nations are affected, as well as to help educate commanders in better facilitating consultations between the USAF and Native American Nations. This manual will serve to provide every Air Force base within a given region a unified and comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The manual will also contain detailed information to support the individual needs of each USAF base involved in the project. The nature of Native American political history and legal standing greatly adds to the complexities facing this project. The UM-ACE contract provides an opportunity for engaging such complexities and also provides both parties the ability to learn from one another via the biannual consultation meetings, belaboring the importance for constructing a sound yet flexible framework to be utilized in the years to come. This presentation is intended to provide a preliminary analysis of the complexities faced by the project and the creation of the accompanying manual.