

# FEMA 2022-2026 National Tribal Strategy

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FEMA developed this comprehensive “2022-2026 National Tribal Strategy” to address its responsibilities to federally recognized Tribal Nations and to identify unified agency actions to build, enhance, and sustain its relationships with tribes.

A priority of the Biden-Harris Administration is for federal departments and agencies to work more inclusively with Tribal Nations, as demonstrated by Presidential memoranda, executive orders, and placement of tribal members at the highest levels of the federal government. This “2022-2026 National Tribal Strategy” represents a strategic roadmap to better support Tribal Nations. It incorporates tribal comments and recommendations of federally recognized Indian tribes (“Tribal Nations”) provided to FEMA in recent years.

## Background

The FEMA core values of compassion, fairness, integrity, and respect are at the heart of what FEMA and its employees stand for and represent. These values form the solid foundation of who FEMA is, what the agency believes, and how it approaches serving its partners. These core values apply to FEMA interactions with survivors, colleagues, and stakeholders every single day.

## Tribal Policy and Consultation

In December 2020, FEMA updated its “FEMA Tribal Policy (Rev.2) ([FEMA Policy #305-111-1](#)) reaffirming a commitment by the Agency to enhance its nation-to-nation relationships, and to ensure that FEMA works with Tribal Nations to build, sustain, and improve capacity to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from all hazards. FEMA recognizes tribal sovereignty, self-governance, and its trust responsibility.

Additionally, in 2019, FEMA updated its “Tribal Consultation Policy” (FEMA Policy #101-002-02) providing specific guidance regarding how the Agency engages with Tribal Nations in regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration actions that have tribal implications.

For context, the FEMA relationship with its tribal partners evolved significantly following the enactment of the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA) in 2013. As a result of this act, Tribal Nations now have explicit opportunity to make direct requests for presidential disaster declarations. Prior to that date, federal statute required Tribal Nations to apply through states as subrecipients for disaster assistance.

## Headquarters and Regional Tribal Capabilities

Within FEMA headquarters, the Office of External Affairs Intergovernmental Affairs Division (IGA) is the Tribal Affairs Team, to include the National Tribal Affairs Advisor, responsible for advising FEMA leadership on issues related to American Indians and Alaska Natives. This team fulfills the Agency’s commitment to consult with Tribal Nations, in



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collaboration with FEMA Regional Tribal Liaisons (RTLs) located in each of the ten (10) FEMA Regions. These liaisons prioritize regular outreach and collaboration with the individual tribal communities located within their respective regions and help inform the National Tribal Affairs Advisor of on-the-ground feedback. The Tribal liaisons serve as the primary contact for Tribal governments and play important inter-agency roles, before, during, and after disasters.

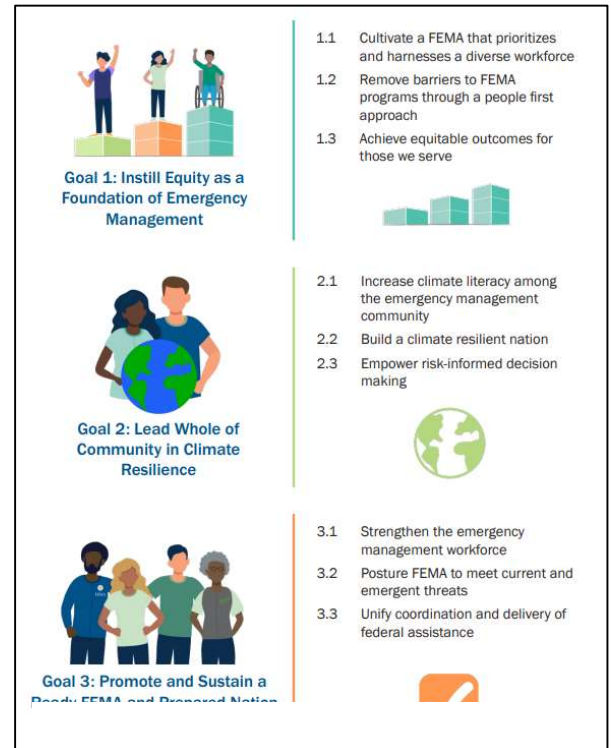
## FEMA 2022-2026 Strategic Plan

Released in December 2021, the “[2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan](#)” (FEMA Strategic Plan) positions the agency to respond to a changing landscape in which the emergency management community must embrace its expanding role. This draft National Tribal Strategy follows the main constructs of the Agency’s recently adopted Strategic Plan for continuity for 2022-2026.

## Goals and Objectives

The FEMA Strategic Plan outlines a bold vision and three ambitious goals designed to address key challenges the agency faces during a pivotal moment in time for the field of emergency management:

- Goal1: Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management
- Goal 2: Lead the whole of community in climate resilience
- Goal 3: Promote and sustain a ready FEMA and prepared nation



Wide-ranging and long-term, these goals respond to the changing landscape in which we find ourselves. While some activities in this plan can be quickly realized, some will require sustained efforts to and through 2026.

These three goals position FEMA to address the increased frequency and complexity of disasters, support the diversity of communities we serve, and complement the nation’s growing expectations of the emergency management community.

## Emergency Management Landscape

To ensure the FEMA Strategic Plan postures FEMA to meet immediate and future needs of the nation, it is critical to understand the challenges and opportunities the emergency management community may face in the decade to come. October 2022 will mark one decade since Hurricane Sandy, which resulted in legislative reforms that spurred FEMA to drastically improve the efficiency and quality of disaster assistance. As the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and changing climate reshape society, FEMA looks beyond disasters for lessons learned to assess future risks as catalysts for change. FEMA conducted an environmental review of internal and external evidence to assess its operating environment, identify key issues, and determine capability gaps that could impact the future of both FEMA and the nation.

## 67 Stakeholder Engagement

68 Starting in the summer of 2021, the agency initiated significant engagement from a diverse range of stakeholders.  
69 These viewpoints helped to articulate the most critical challenges facing the agency and the broader emergency  
70 management community, as well as to inform the goals and objectives they will pursue together over the next five  
71 years. Input was collected from the public through a Climate and Equity Request for Information as well as at various  
72 FEMA events designed to discuss FEMA’s efforts and elicit feedback. Through a series of conversations and  
73 workshops, FEMA connected with over 100 external partners, including 50 Tribal Nations, spanning all sectors, all  
74 levels of government, and a wide range of disciplines, private and nonprofit partners, and the academic community.

## 75 Tribal Strategic Objectives

76 The following section outlines critical Agency activities in support of Tribal Nations, and associated intended  
77 outcomes, consistent with FEMA Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

### 78 Goal 1: Instill Equity as a Foundation of Emergency Management

79 Evaluate and identify methodologies and strategies to increase regular engagement with Tribal Nations at FEMA  
80 regional and headquarters levels in a manner that underscores tribal sovereignty and ensures accessibility to FEMA  
81 resources. This goal addresses diverse methods of engagements, such as program-specific webinars, national tribal  
82 consultation meetings, program briefings, and regular meetings with FEMA regional and headquarters leadership  
83 and staff.

#### 84 1. Develop Tribal-Specific Technical Assistance Resources

- 85 ■ Develop tribal case studies to share tribal-specific experience working with FEMA.
  - 86 ○ **Outcome:** Tribal Nations see how other Tribal Nations work with FEMA to achieve outcomes related to
  - 87 preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.
- 88 ■ Develop and offer proactive technical assistance webinars and virtual opportunities for Tribal Nations to learn
- 89 more about FEMA programs.
  - 90 ○ **Outcome:** Tribal Nations are aware of FEMA programs that support tribal readiness, response, and recovery.
- 91 ■ Develop and distribute a comprehensive FEMA program inventory and guide that describes the program, tribal
- 92 eligibility, points of contact, and available auxiliary materials.
  - 93 ○ **Outcome:** Tribal Nations have a better understanding of the variety of pre- and post-disaster programs
  - 94 available resulting in enhanced engagement with FEMA.

#### 95 2. Convene Tribal Liaisons

- 96 ■ Convene an annual meeting of national and regional tribal liaisons and tribal FEMA Integration Team (FIT) staff
- 97 and other subject matter experts to discuss program work underway and develop recommendations on how
- 98 FEMA (directed to regions and HQ) could better serve Tribal Nations.

- **Outcome:** Sharing firsthand knowledge of tribal issues and success stories leads to better FEMA policies and resources that may benefit Tribal Nations.
- Create an annual report summarizing tribal liaison experiences and observations that will be shared with FEMA leadership in the regions and headquarters.
  - **Outcome:** FEMA leadership can better allocate resources based on tribal preparedness, mitigation, and disaster response and recovery.

### 3. Connect Tribal and FEMA Leadership

- The FEMA Administrator provides Tribal Nation leadership with an annual update on priorities and status updates on policies, initiatives, and programmatic changes impacting Tribal Nations.
  - **Outcome:** Tribal Nations are aware of the FEMA Administrator’s priorities and the status of policy and programmatic changes.
- FEMA Administrator engages Tribal Nations in person during national and regional tribal events and other scheduled travel.
  - **Outcome:** FEMA builds and strengthens relationships with individual Tribal Nations and provides further opportunities to receive feedback.
- FEMA Leadership, led by the Administrator, meets with the leadership of the national and regional tribal associations on a quarterly basis.
  - **Outcome:** Tribal Nations engage with FEMA leadership to share tribal perspectives on FEMA policies and actions.
- Organize an internal lecture series highlighting current issues, opportunities, and best practices in Indian country that includes tribal representatives.
  - **Outcome:** FEMA workforce is more aware of the living history that contemporary Tribal Nations and tribal citizens bring to their work.

### 4. Support Equitable Opportunities for Tribes to Access FEMA Programs and Resources

- Include Tribal Nations in national and regional external meetings and briefings, including standing meetings with emergency management associations, and webinars on new or modified programs.

**Outcome:** Tribal Nations know FEMA programs and can access FEMA resources for disaster readiness, hazard mitigation, response, and recovery.
- Internally, design Tribal-specific national and regional engagements to provide a forum to hear from tribes directly to empower tribal readiness to support tribal objectives.

129 **Outcome:** Tribal Nations participate in culturally competent engagements to share priorities with each other and  
130 the Agency.

- 131 ■ Prioritize inclusion of FEMA tribal liaisons in internal and external national meetings and briefings. FEMA tribal  
132 liaisons, responsible for establishing and maintaining primary relationships with Tribal Nations, provide updates  
133 on tribal issues and situations with FEMA leadership for Agency awareness and action.

134 **Outcomes**

- 135 ○ Create a reporting system for the regional tribal liaisons to work with Tribal headquarters to prepare regular  
136 updates on their work to be shared within the agency.
- 137 ○ Tribal liaisons provide visibility on local, tribal issues, at the regional and national levels.
- 138 ■ Conduct an internal review of programs and policies that may inhibit equitable Tribal Nation access to FEMA  
139 programs and resources and commit to affecting legislative, regulatory, and policy changes that will enhance  
140 tribal access.

141 **Outcome:** When combined with other initiatives stated above to support equitable access for Tribal Nations to  
142 FEMA programs and resources, FEMA will develop and approve tribal-specific legislative, regulatory, and policy  
143 priorities designed to enhance equitable access.

144 **Goal 2: Lead Whole of Community in Climate Resilience**

145 **1. Build Tribal Capacities and Capabilities to Improve Readiness and Resiliency**

146 FEMA will seek input from Tribal Nations on their needs and emergency management challenges. As a result, FEMA  
147 will identify actions and resources to meet documented needs. These actions and resources may fall into the areas  
148 of legislative proposals, rulemaking, policy changes, technical assistance, training, and grants. FEMA short-term and  
149 long-term goals will be determined following feedback from Tribal Nations on their capacity and capability needs.

- 150 ■ Conduct needs analysis with Tribal Nations to identify gaps in capabilities. Develop a report of current tribal  
151 needs and capabilities in the field of emergency management so that FEMA can better tailor training and  
152 technical assistance. This task should include tribal consultation and include tribal histories of disasters, when  
153 appropriate. As part of the tribal outreach for this task, the FEMA Administrator and National Tribal Affairs  
154 Advisor will visit FEMA regions to meet with regional staff. These regional meetings will also extend to Tribal  
155 Nations in that region with an emphasis on interacting with those tribes FEMA has not worked with in the past.  
156 Visits will be coordinated with regional tribal liaisons.

157 **Outcomes:**

- 158 ○ Tribal Nations meet with FEMA representatives, in person or virtually, to inform FEMA of any unmet needs  
159 and challenges.

- A baseline study of where Tribal Nations are today in the field of emergency management allows for better training, programming, and resource allocation.

- Draft report of recommended FEMA legislative, regulatory, and policy changes for issues – not part of a specific consultation meeting – that Tribal Nations identify and further FEMA nation-to-nation relationship with Tribal Nations.

**Outcome:** Tribal Nations identify topics for FEMA consideration that are in addition to topics covered by a specific tribal consultation and are not related to a state or territorial issue, and which may enhance the government-to-government relationship.

- Collaborate with the White House and interagency partners to ensure tribal issues are prioritized and relevant federal programs are readily accessible to Tribal Nations.

**Outcome:** FEMA coordinates federal interagency collaboration on tribal resilience and ensures the agency’s priorities are in line with the Biden-Harris Administration’s climate and tribal affairs goals.

- Participate in regular meetings and conferences coordinated by the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) and serve on at least one working committee, with priority on the WHCNA committee, “Climate Change, Tribal Homelands, Treaties.”

**Outcome:** The Administration and Tribal Nations are informed of FEMA efforts and resources to battle climate change and other issues that may be discussed during the council meetings.

## 2. Offer Training for the FEMA Workforce on Unique Status of Tribal Nations

- Develop a standardized training course guided by the FEMA Tribal Policy. The course will provide an historic and legal overview of Tribal Nations, describe Tribal Nations today, and explain concepts including inherent tribal sovereignty, tribal self-governance, and the federal government’s trust responsibility.

**Outcome:** FEMA workforce is knowledgeable on special status and governance structures of Tribal Nations and how these impact FEMA’s engagement with Tribal Nations.

- Develop standardized tribal consultation training to provide an overview of FEMA process guided by FEMA Tribal Consultation Policy and Instruction.

**Outcome:** FEMA programs have a working knowledge of, and adhere to, the FEMA tribal consultation process and will plan and schedule tribal consultation, as required, for new or revised policies and programs.

## 3. Offer Training Opportunities to Tribal Nations

- Review and revise FEMA training opportunities for Tribal Nations and develop and/or update resources to address the specific tribal training needs identified in the needs analysis conducted with Tribal Nations.

**Outcome:** FEMA offers current and comprehensive training opportunities to Tribal Nations.

- 191 ▪ Include Tribal Nations and tribal associations in the National Exercise Program.

192 **Outcome:** FEMA and exercise participants have regular opportunities to examine and validate capabilities and  
193 explore any need for further engagement and preparedness in a low-risk exercise environment.

- 194 ▪ Provide technical assistance to Tribal Nations on competitive FEMA grant programs and opportunities.

195 **Outcome:** Tribal Nations are aware of all grant programs for which they are eligible recipients or sub-recipients  
196 resulting in an increased application rate for those programs.

## 197 **Goal 3: Promote and Sustain a Ready FEMA and Prepared Nation**

### 198 **1. Increase FEMA cultural competency**

- 199 ▪ Enhance FEMA capacity to work with Tribal Nations more effectively to ensure tribal equities are addressed by a  
200 trained and culturally sensitive workforce at the headquarters, regional, and field levels in all FEMA programs,

201 **Outcome:** FEMA employees provide culturally competent services to Tribal Nations.

- 202 ▪ Collaborate with Tribal Nations before, during, and after disasters and provide financial assistance based on  
203 their identified needs to improve disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery, including  
204 coordination with interagency partners where and when applicable.

205 **Outcome:** Effective coordination, communication, and information sharing between tribes and FEMA personnel  
206 in the field, regional, and headquarters levels. This goal recognizes the need to review and update FEMA  
207 systems, policies, and procedures to meet the unique, and diverse nature of disaster operations in Indian  
208 Country.

### 209 **2. Enhance federal incident support capability**

- 210 ▪ The National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) “tribal desk” will collaborate with Regional Response  
211 Coordination Centers (RRCCs), Office of Response and Recovery, and relevant interagency partners to ensure  
212 there are no unmet tribal needs or challenges.

213 **Outcome:** FEMA leadership, agency workforce, and interagency partners are aware of tribal needs and  
214 challenges in case of a disaster, specifically in the NRCC.

- 215 ▪ Coordinate briefings between FEMA leadership and Tribal leaders to discuss challenges and progress in the  
216 response and recovery process.

217 **Outcome:** FEMA leadership understands the ongoing needs and concerns of impacted Tribes and offers an  
218 opportunity for Tribal leaders to voice concerns to leadership.

### 3. Seek Agency-wide input on working with Tribal Nations

- Create and convene a Tribal Affairs Council, within FEMA, composed of a cross-section of representatives from FEMA programs at the headquarters and regional levels. The Council will meet regularly and discuss recommendations on how FEMA could better serve Tribal Nations and leverage tribal feedback to ensure equitable outcomes.

**Outcome:** Internal awareness of tribal issues across the agency allows for better program planning, as well as ensuring unique tribal issues are considered across agency components in the delivery of programs and services. FEMA recognizes tribal sovereignty and self-governance and unique considerations when supporting Tribal Nations that must be considered beyond those of other non-tribal, underserved communities.

### 4. Improve tribal awareness of federal resource availability

- FEMA leadership will meet with leaders of other federal agencies that serve Tribal Nations to share information on what resources are available, review legal authorities, and develop products to clarify available assistance.

**Outcome:** Tribal Nations benefit from FEMA collaboration with other federal agencies and collaborate to increase tribal resiliency by harnessing a whole-of-federal government effort.

FEMA recognizes that this National Tribal Strategy affords the Agency tremendous opportunities to enhance its relationships and services to Tribal Nations. In close collaboration with tribal leadership, and expertise at both the regional and headquarters level, FEMA will continue to leverage experience, best practices, and tribal feedback to acknowledge and plan for change that benefits its tribal partners and enhances our collective emergency management responsibilities.

## Authorities

- **Homeland Security Act of 2002**, as amended (6 U.S.C. 101 et seq.). Signed into law in November 2002, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 created the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, consolidating 22 diverse agencies and bureaus, to include FEMA, with a mandate of preventing and responding to natural and man-made disasters.
- **Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act**, as amended (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.). The Stafford Act constitutes the statutory authority for most Federal disaster response activities especially as they pertain to FEMA and FEMA programs.
- **Sandy Recovery Improvement Act**. On January 29, 2013, President Barack Obama signed into law the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA) of 2013 and the accompanying Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013. In many ways, the passage of SRIA represents the most significant legislative change to FEMA substantive authorities since the enactment of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. The law authorizes several significant changes to the way FEMA may deliver federal disaster assistance to survivors. SRIA provides Tribal Nations authority to directly request presidential disaster declarations. FEMA implements this authority through our Tribal Declarations Pilot Guidance.



- 254 ▪ **Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments (2000)** establishes  
255 regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of Federal policies  
256 that have tribal implications, to strengthen the United States government-to-government relationships with  
257 Indian tribes, and to reduce the imposition of unfunded mandates upon Indian tribes.
  
- 258 ▪ Executive Order 13647, Establishing the White House Council on Native American Affairs (2013). President  
259 Obama established the WHCNAA to improve the coordination of federal programs and use of available federal  
260 resources for the benefit of Tribes and Tribal communities.
  
- 261 ▪ FEMA Policy 101-002-02, [FEMA Tribal Consultation Policy](#), updated in July 2019 with input from tribes, outlines  
262 the process that FEMA uses to conduct consultation with tribal governments. FEMA’s Tribal Consultation Policy  
263 Instruction provides guidance and direction for FEMA implementation of the Tribal Consultation Policy
  
- 264 ▪ FEMA Policy 305-111-1 (Rev. 2), FEMA Tribal Policy (December 2020) outlines a commitment by the Agency to  
265 enhance its nation-to-nation relationship with federally recognized Indian tribal governments ("Tribal Nations")  
266 and to ensure FEMA works with Tribal Nations to build, sustain, and improve their capacity to prevent, protect  
267 against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from all hazards.

## 268 References

- 269 ▪ **Presidential Memoranda: “Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation**  
270 **Relationships,”** January 26, 2021. Declares priority of Biden Administration to make respect for Tribal  
271 sovereignty and self-governance, commitment to fulfilling Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal  
272 Nations, and regular, meaningful, and robust consultation with Tribal Nations cornerstones of Federal Indian  
273 policy.
  
- 274 ▪ **Presidential Memoranda: “Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments,”**  
275 April 29, 1994; “Government-to-Government Relationship with Tribal Governments,” September 23, 2004.  
276 Issued to reaffirm the Federal government’s commitment with federally recognized Native American Tribes that  
277 respects their rights of self-governance. Among other requirements, it directs each executive department and  
278 agency to consult, to the greatest extent possible, with tribal governments prior to taking actions that affect  
279 federally recognized tribal governments.
  
- 280 ▪ **Presidential Memorandum of November 5, 2009,** Tribal Consultation. in support of Executive Order 13175 and  
281 directed each agency to develop a detailed plan to implement the guidance of Executive Order 13175.

## 282 Definitions

- 283 ▪ **Federally Recognized Indian Tribe:** Any American Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or  
284 community that is recognized in the most recent list of “Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive  
285 Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs.” See Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of  
286 1994, Public Law 103-454, codified at 25 U.S.C. 5130-5131.

- 287   ▪ **Government-to-Government:** The concept that the relationship between the United States and each Tribal Nation  
288 is one between sovereign nations. Also known as “nation-to-nation.” See also the definition for “Tribal  
289 Sovereignty” below.
- 290   ▪ **Indian Tribal Government (Tribal Nation):** The governing body of any Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation,  
291 pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe under  
292 the federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994. See also Stafford Act § 102(6) [42 U.S.C. 5122(6)]. For  
293 the purposes of tribal consultation, the term “Indian tribal government” includes Alaska Native Corporations.
- 294   ▪ **Tribal Sovereignty:** The concept that each Tribal Nation possesses a nationhood status and inherent powers of  
295 self-government.<sup>1</sup>
- 296   ▪ **Trust Responsibility:** A legal obligation of the United States to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and  
297 resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to Tribal Nations, described as  
298 “domestic dependent nations.”<sup>2</sup>

## 299 For More Information

300 Direct questions to the Office of External Affairs, Intergovernmental Affairs Division at [FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov).

301 Please submit tribal comments on this draft National Tribal Strategy to [tribalconsultation@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:tribalconsultation@fema.dhs.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> See U.S. Const. Art. I § 8 (“Congress shall have the right to regulate Commerce with foreign nations and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes.”); *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. (6 Pet.) 515, 8 L. Ed. 483 (1832).

<sup>2</sup> *Cherokee Nation*, supra n. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** See also Bureau of Indian Affairs, Frequently Asked Questions, <https://www.bia.gov/frequently-asked-questions> (citing *Cherokee Nation* and *Seminole Nation v. United States*, 316 U.S. 286, 62 S. Ct. 1049, 86 L. Ed. 1480 (1942)).