



SPIRIT LAKE TRIBE

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April 16, 2026

Deputy Undersecretary Patrick Penn,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Deputy Undersecretary Penn,

On behalf of the Spirit Lake Tribe, I am formally requesting a Tribal Consultation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), regarding matters impacting the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

As a vital federal nutrition program serving Tribal communities, FDPIR plays a critical role in ensuring food access, supporting health outcomes, and upholding the federal government's trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations. Given the evolving landscape of federal policy, program administration, procurement challenges, and operational demands, it is essential that Tribal leaders and program administrators are meaningfully engaged in decision-making processes that directly affect our communities.

We respectfully request consultation to address the following key areas:

- Program administration and policy updates impacting FDPIR operations
- Food package availability, procurement challenges, and vendor stability
- Funding levels, administrative cost considerations, and program sustainability
- Integration of local and Indigenous food systems, including support for Tribal producers
- Technology systems, reporting requirements, and operational efficiencies
- Any proposed changes or restructuring within FNS that may impact FDPIR delivery
- Veterans disability payment exclusion

Tribal Consultation is not only a federal obligation but a necessary mechanism to ensure that Tribal voices guide the development and implementation of programs that serve our people. Meaningful consultation allows for collaboration, transparency, and culturally informed solutions that strengthen FDPIR and improve outcomes for participants.

We request that this consultation be scheduled at the earliest opportunity and conducted in a manner that allows for full Tribal participation, including both elected leadership and FDPIR program representatives.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued partnership in serving Tribal communities. We look forward to your response and to working together to strengthen FDPIR for the future.

As part of this year's conference, a Tribal Leaders Consultation will be convened to provide an opportunity for Tribal leadership to engage in meaningful dialogue on the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), share priorities, and help guide future policy and program direction.

Conference Details:

Location: Niagara Falls, New York

Host Hotel: Sheraton Niagara Falls

Room Rate: \$110.00 + Destination Fee \$7.70 + Room Tax \$15.40 + Destination

Amenity Fee \$16.15 = \$149.25 per night

Overflow Hotel: Wyndham Garden at Niagara Falls

Address (Overflow Hotel): 300 Third Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14303

<https://book.passkey.comevent/51218235/owner/50977275/home>

The conference will bring together Tribal leaders, program directors, and staff, federal partners, and stakeholders to discuss key issues impacting food sovereignty, nutrition access, and program operations in Indian Country.

If you have any questions or need assistance with travel or lodging arrangements, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We look forward to welcoming you to Niagara Falls.

Respectfully,



ReNa Lohnes,

Tribal Leaders Workgroup Chairperson