

AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBAL OUTREACH

Development and transportation projects are both symbols of today's society, however, prior to our society, there was another human presence in Kentucky. The Commonwealth's lands were at one time inhabited by several American Indian tribes. As highway projects are developed, archaeological investigations are conducted to ascertain whether the project could impact sites previously occupied and of religious or cultural significance to these tribes. Federal laws require that these tribes be consulted during the project development process. Since recognized tribes are considered nations, these communications are completed through the FHWA on a nation-to-nation basis.

In order to convey their interest in consulting in an agreed-upon and effective manner, and to establish a rapport with the tribes, representatives of the FHWA and KYTC have twice traveled to Oklahoma to meet with tribal representatives. Meetings were conducted with each of the resident tribes to discuss how to best communicate and the preferred manner for conducting consultation.

The visits have paid dividends for all parties involved. Tribes which do not have an interest in large reports are no longer burdened with them during consultation. Others which only required summaries of findings are similarly benefiting from a reduction in paperwork. In addition, the tribal representatives, FHWA and KYTC are now able to communicate on a more personal basis since there is recognition of purpose and respect for mission among the parties.