



# Top Things to Know

## About the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations

***Our Purpose:*** Putting Indian lands back in the hands of tribes.

The Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations was established as a result of the Cobell Settlement Agreement and the Claims Resolution Act of 2010, which provided for a \$1.9 billion Trust Land Consolidation Fund (“Fund”) to consolidate fractional land interests across Indian Country. The Program must abide by the terms of the Settlement.

### **Reducing Fractionation**

As tracts (or “allotments”) of tribal lands are passed down through generations, they gain more and more individual owners – in fact, many allotments now have hundreds and even thousands of individual owners. Many tracts have more owners than acres. Because it is difficult to gain landowner consensus for how to use the land, these allotments often lie idle and can’t be used for any beneficial purpose for the landowner or community.

The Buy-Back Program will work with tribes to consolidate fractionated lands, which will be transferred directly to the tribe that has jurisdiction over the fractionated tracts and held in trust, preventing further fractionation. The tribe can then use this land to benefit its community – for example, to build homes, community centers or businesses, or for cultural or environmental preservation.

***Your Choice:*** Participation in the Program is strictly voluntary.

Although selling one’s land through the Buy-Back Program has the potential to greatly benefit tribal communities, landowners who receive offers can choose to sell all, some, or none of their fractionated interests.

### **Compensation for willing sellers**

Those who choose to sell their land will be offered fair market value for their land interests, plus \$75 per offer packet to compensate sellers for their time and effort. Funds will be deposited into the seller’s Individual Indian Money (IIM) account.

### **Purchasing Mineral Rights**

Mineral rights are included as part of the land appraisal. Because mineral rights are not severed from the whole sale of the land, owners who choose to sell their interests are also selling the mineral rights associated with the land. Even if the subsurface rights have little or no economic value, the Program will pay \$7.50 per acre for those rights.

***Moving Forward:*** As the Program and tribes work together to address the issue of fractionation across Indian country, there are several factors which will guide the Program's strategy.

### **Maximizing Time**

As set forth in the terms in the Cobell Settlement Agreement, the Department must implement the Program within a 10-year period (by 2022). Because of this, we must work together – government-to-government – to ensure that the Program is carried out as efficiently as possible at each location.

### **Conserving Resources**

Although the Program may use up to 15% of the Fund to administer the Program by performing tribal outreach, land research, appraisals, and land acquisition, the Department of the Interior is committed to keeping administrative costs to a minimum. This is to ensure the maximum amount of dollars is used to purchase fractionated interests.

***Helping the Next Generation:*** By selling land, individuals have the opportunity to give back to their communities and help American Indian students attend college.

Each purchase of a fractionated interest will add funds to the Indian Education Scholarship Fund for American Indians and Alaska Natives, up to \$60 million. This funding is in addition to purchase amounts being paid to individual sellers, so it will not reduce the amount landowners will receive for his/her interests. This fund, which will provide financial assistance for Native American students attending post-secondary vocational and college institutions, will be the largest scholarship fund ever established on behalf American Indian and Alaska Native students.

Funds placed into the Scholarship Fund will not reduce the amount that an owner will receive on a purchase.

### ***Contact Information:***

The Trust Beneficiary Call Center (1-888-678-6836) is available 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Mountain Time) Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. to Noon (Mountain Time) on Saturday to answer questions. The Call Center has access to various trust systems and operations staff in order to provide comprehensive account information to beneficiaries.

Additional information is available to landowners on the Land Buy-Back Program website:

[www.doi.gov/buybackprogram](http://www.doi.gov/buybackprogram)