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January 1, 1994

Dear Honorable Chief Mankiller,

Wilma, My best wishes for the New Year. It has been some time since I had the pleasure of speaking with you. I pray that all is well with you and your Nation. For years you and I alongside others have fought to secure a safe and good future for our people, our elders, our children and our grandchildren. We fought a good fight and won many battles together. I can remember those days in the 60's when BIA didn't want us (Native Americans) to administer the antipoverty (OEO) programs because "We were not qualified." We showed not only them, but the entire America that we were capable of doing things for ourselves.

In the 70's, we fought for Indian self-determination, reclaiming of sacred lands, and many other favorable legislations to regain for our people what rightly belonged to us, what we have lost in eighteen and nineteen hundreds. We held off many assaults by those who did not want us to have sovereignty, including states and counties who wanted Indian treaties to be abolished. In spite of all this, we moved forward toward proper recognition of our nationhood, not without some set backs, of course.

Today, certain members of congress including the President of the United States, are saying--tribes are sovereign and that they want to deal with Indian tribes on government to government basis. Yet, out in the west and in Indian country, US Attorneys and federal courts are running rough-shod over our people as if we had no sovereignty. Recently, US attorney in Arizona said Indian tribes didn't have sovereignty, "They are more like a country club or VFW organizations...", she said. Courts in many instances go along with this frontier mentality. States, even though they don't have treaty with the United States, are treated with much more respect than the tribes. Are we sovereign or not? Are we just being lulled to sleep with sweet sounding words in Washington while our sovereignty is systematically being eroded by judicial and legislative fiat? United States honor state's right and so-called home rule. States are allowed to make their own laws and adjudicate them in their own courts from misdemeanor to felony--and they don't have treaties with the United States--**WE DO!** All we are allowed to prosecute in our tribal courts (former BIA courts) are misdemeanors and some civil matters, even these are now in jeopardy--congress is talking about having the federal government review tribal court decisions.

Laws of any society are based on that particular society's values and moral judgment. We, Native Americans, have our own value system, ethical and moral judgment different from the rest of the country. These values have sustained us for centuries without jails, without police, or death penalties. Notwithstanding all these facts, we are being forced to live on our reservations (nations) by laws based on values foreign to us. The world in which we (Native Americans) live--**compassion** for fellow human being is the soul of justice. Many of our