

President Bennett, members of the Indian Affairs Council, tribal representatives, honored guests.

Thank you for hosting us today and thank you for the lovely gifts.

This is a proud day for the state's native people and Minnesota state government as well.

Incredibly, since Minnesota became a state in 1858 there has never been an official affirmation of a government-to-government relationship between Minnesota and the Indian tribal governments.

As Governor of the State of Minnesota I am proud that today we will begin a new era by the signing of an executive order that recognizes the unique legal relationship between our great state and the Indian tribes.

Like a lot of our citizens, when I was first elected governor I didn't know a lot about our government's relationship with tribes.

However, over the past four years I have had many opportunities to interact with tribal members and to visit some reservations.

While we haven't always agreed on solutions to our problems, I want you to know that I appreciate the fact that you have always treated me with great respect. My visits to reservations, and your visits to the governor's residence in St. Paul, have been some of the most enjoyable experiences of my time in office.

I always tell people that it is never too late to learn about something - -and indeed-learning about the special relationship between the tribes and our state government has been a real eye opener for me.

I hope that today we have done something that will help to build an even stronger foundation for respect, trust and cooperation between our respective governments.

There is a great deal of hope found in what we have done here today, but as a Stephen King character once observed, "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies."

So be it for our hopes and the executive order that I have signed today. May its spirit live on with our descendants so that someday 150 years from now the story is told of this day around a circle of friends.