



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2012
WWW.JUSTICE.GOV

OJP
(202) 514-2007
TTY (866) 544-5309

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SUPPORTS WEEK OF PUBLIC SAFETY EVENTS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

AGUA CALIENTE, Calif. – U.S. Department of Justice Acting Associate Attorney General Tony West today addressed tribal leaders, law enforcement officers, lawyers and judges, policy experts and health and social services providers, and representatives from federal, state, local and tribal governments following a week of public safety events at the 13th National Indian Nations Conference in Agua Caliente, Calif. The conference is focused on bringing together Native American victims, victim advocates, as well as federal and state agency representatives, to share their knowledge, experiences and ideas for developing programs that serve the unique needs of crime victims in Indian Country.

Acting Associate Attorney General West told the audience about Justice Department efforts to strengthen tribal sovereignty and public safety in Indian Nations, such as increasing the number of federal personnel to investigate and prosecute cases on Indian lands, including a dozen FBI Indian country victim specialists, the launch of the National Indian Country Training Initiative, which has trained more than 2,000 criminal-justice professionals, and the institution of a streamlined and coordinated Justice Department grant program for tribes. The department has also established the Office of Tribal Justice as a permanent component within the Justice Department and created the Tribal Nations Leadership Council to facilitate consultation and advise the attorney general on issues critical to tribal governments.

“I am proud that over the last four years we have developed strong and vital partnerships with tribal nations. We've made some excellent progress, but our work in Indian country is far from over,” said Associate Attorney General West. “Tribal communities still face uniquely difficult challenges, from crime rates that remain far above the national average to the alarming levels of violence against native women. We won't rest until we've met those challenges.”

Organized by the Justice Department's Office for Victims of Crimes (OVC) the conference began Thursday and continues through Saturday, Dec. 8. Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Acting Assistant Attorney General Mary Lou Leary addressed participants at Thursday's opening plenary session.

“OJP, through OVC, has been proud to support tribes and tribal victim services for almost 25 years,” said Assistant Attorney General Leary. “We have come a long way, but many challenges remain. Even while we are still confronted with familiar crimes like child abuse and sexual assault, new crimes – some of them enabled by technology – present new obstacles. We are committed to addressing these enduring and emerging challenges.”

Events began earlier this week with the first meeting of the National Coordination Committee on the American Indian/Alaska Native Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner-Sexual Assault Response Team (AI/AN SANE-SART) Initiative on Tuesday and Wednesday. The AI/AN SANE-SART initiative is an OVC, FBI and Indian Health Service partnership focusing on enhancing and improving the federal, state, local and tribal responses to adult and child victims of sexual violence in Indian Country.

Activities at the Agua Caliente reservation also included training and technical assistance workshops for grant recipients through the Justice Department's 2012 Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS), the primary funding source for department funded public safety programs and initiatives in Indian Country. The CTAS orientation workshops provided instruction and guidance necessary for recipients to successfully implement and operate programs funded through CTAS. The training workshops were focused on topics such as reporting and grant management; grant compliance; and training and technical assistance resources.

The 13th National Indian Nations Conference is part of the Justice Department's ongoing efforts to create better communication and coordination to fight crime and promote justice in tribal communities. The roots of the conference stretch back more than two decades, with OVC organizing the very first in 1988. It was held on the reservation of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, with the theme, "Strength from Within: Rekindling Tribal Traditions to assist Victims of Crime" and coordinated by the Tribal Law and Policy Institute through a grant from OVC.

For more information on the 13th National Indian Nations Conference, please visit: www.ovcinc.org/agenda

For more information on the AI/AN SANE-SART initiative, please visit: www.ovc.gov/AIANSane-Sart/index.html

For more information on the CTAS, please visit: www.justice.gov/tribal/ctas2012/ctas-factsheet.pdf

###