



Department of Justice

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE HOLDS FINAL PUBLIC HEARING

ANCHORAGE, Alaska –The Advisory Committee of the Attorney General’s Task Force on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence convenes its final public hearing in Anchorage, Alaska, today and tomorrow. The hearing will examine the wide-ranging impact of violence on children in Alaska Native communities and consider programs to effectively support these children and promote healing.

"I am honored to be here in Alaska to have the opportunity to meet leaders and representatives of Alaska's Native villages here today," said Associate Attorney General Tony West. "Despite heroic efforts on the part of law enforcement officers and service providers, the safety and welfare of Alaska Native people are precarious at best. And the ones who are at greatest risk - and who suffer the most - are their children. At the Department of Justice, we believe we have a role in changing the present circumstances - and the future prospects - of native youth."

This public hearing will gather expert testimony from Alaska Native leaders and tribal judges through panel discussions on the prevalence of violence, recommendations in the Indian Law and Order Commission Report specific to Alaska Native youth and the impact of the court system on these youth. Additional panels will discuss specific ways Alaska Native children are affected by violence in their homes and communities and consider recommendations to improve how these children are identified, assessed and treated.

The Attorney General’s Task Force on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence is composed of a federal working group that includes U.S. Attorneys and officials from the Interior and Justice Departments and a federal advisory committee of experts on American Indian studies, child health and trauma, victim services and child welfare. Former U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan and Iroquois composer and singer Joanne Shenandoah co-chair the 13-member committee.

The advisory committee will draw upon research and information gathered through this hearing and three previous public hearings to draft a final report of policy recommendations to present to Attorney General Eric Holder by late 2014. Previous hearings addressed domestic and community violence in Indian Country; the pathway from victimization to the juvenile justice system; the roles of juvenile courts, detention facilities and the child welfare system; gang violence; and child sex trafficking. The first public hearing was held Dec. 9, 2013, in Bismarck, North Dakota, the second Feb. 11, 2014, in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community in Scottsdale, Arizona, and the third April 16-17, 2014, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Attorney General Holder created the task force in 2013 as part of his Defending Childhood initiative to prevent and reduce children's exposure to violence as victims and witnesses. The task force is also a component of the Justice Department's ongoing collaboration with leaders in American Indian and Alaska Native communities to improve public safety. For more information about the advisory committee and public hearings, please visit www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/.

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