

REMARKS

OF

THE HONORABLE KAROL V. MASON  
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

AFFILIATED TRIBES OF NORTHWEST INDIANS  
ANNUAL CONVENTION

ON

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2014  
PENDLETON, OR

Thank you, President [Fawn] Sharp. I'm very pleased to be back in Oregon to join the leaders of the Indian nations of the northwest. I had the opportunity last year to meet with many of you in conjunction with the Attorney General's Native American Subcommittee. I'm delighted to be back and pleased to be joined this time by my colleagues, Bea Hanson and Ron Davis. Bea and Ron lead the other two-thirds of the Justice Department's grant-making triumvirate, the Office on Violence Against Women and the COPS Office. I'm thrilled to be with them today.

And I am grateful for the invitation to speak with all of you about the work we are doing at the Department to support our tribal partners, here in the northwest and across the country. This work covers every area of public safety in Indian country, from supporting children and youth and protecting native women to the hiring of tribal police officers and the strengthening of tribal criminal and juvenile justice systems.

The programs we administer, the training we deliver, the information we develop and share, support every facet of tribal crime and safety, whether it be prevention, enforcement, prosecution, courts and corrections, research and statistics, or victim services. I'm proud that our resources are addressing the full range of public safety challenges faced by tribes.

I'm also proud that we are making it easier for tribes to gain access to those resources. For too long, Indian nations were at a distinct disadvantage when it came to applying for federal justice grants. Too often, grant programs failed to consider the unique needs of tribes. In too many cases, applying for grants was a cumbersome process that made it difficult for tribes to participate. The result was that tribal communities were limited in receiving much-needed federal assistance to support worthy programs.

That began to change in 2009, when the Department of Justice, under Attorney General Holder, made a renewed commitment to its tribal partners. We met with tribal leaders, held consultations with tribal justice professionals, and listened to their concerns. We heard that our grant programs weren't always suited to the needs of tribes and that the grant process was unnecessarily burdensome.

So we took action and developed the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation, or CTAS as we call it. At the time, I was working in the Associate Attorney General's Office, and I had the privilege of leading the development of that solicitation. A team from my office, the Office of Justice Programs, the Office on Violence Against Women, and the COPS Office worked long and hard to design a grant mechanism that would respond to tribal concerns and put Indian nations on a level playing field when it came to applying for Department of Justice resources.

CTAS remains a work in progress, but the feedback we've received from tribes has been positive. And we continue to hear your suggestions for improvement – about CTAS, and about all our tribal programs. The Department of Justice and the President, through his most recent budget request to Congress, continue to ask for a set-aside for tribal programs that will make a portion of our funding – seven percent, to be exact –

available exclusively to tribes. While our call for the set-aside has yet to be answered, we remain hopeful that Congress will support our request.

One thing is certain: Since CTAS went into effect, tribes have benefitted from far greater access to OJP, OVW, and COPS funding resources than ever before. And today I'm pleased to join Director Hanson and Director Davis in announcing more awards under the CTAS banner. As we speak, the Department of Justice is awarding 169 new CTAS awards totaling more than \$87 million. These awards bring the number of CTAS grants over the last five years to more than 1,100, totaling almost \$525 million.

These grants address an array of tribal justice system issues, from at-risk youth and violence against women to community policing and corrections alternatives, and they give tribes the support they need to keep their communities safe and ensure a just, fair, and effective system for fighting crime. I'm especially pleased that 22 tribes represented by the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians received at least one CTAS award this year. I recognize that that's not every tribe, but I hope it demonstrates that the Department of Justice is making a concerted effort – one that we are building on every year – to expand our reach to tribes and make our resources more widely available to our partners in Indian country.

I'm also excited that this new round of grants will fund some promising and innovative efforts. Under an award from our Office for Victims of Crime, the Tulalip Tribes are developing a community wellness center where crime victims can access intensive intervention services focused on prevention, crisis response, community education, and trauma and healing. And a grant from our Bureau of Justice Assistance to the Kaw Nation of Oklahoma will help pay for renovations to establish a multi-purpose justice center that will coordinate law enforcement, tribal court, emergency management, child welfare, and domestic violence services.

These and scores of other awards this year will build on programs funded in previous years, like the Kalispel Tribal Youth Program supported by our Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This effort provides culturally-specific training for new Court Appointed Special Advocates so that they are equipped to address both tribal and state court dependency issues.

Our CTAS funding has become a cornerstone of our support for tribes, and it complements work the Department is doing on other fronts – enhancing tribal prosecution authority, for instance, and expanding Indian country reentry programming. Another area of particular focus is violence experienced by native children. As part of the Department's Defending Childhood Initiative, the Attorney General established a national task force to examine these problems and recommend ways to address them. An advisory committee that forms one of two parts of the task force will present its final report to the Attorney General in November. Ultimately, we hope that its findings will help us develop a national strategy to reduce and mitigate the impact of violence on American Indian and Alaska Native children.

Through this task force, through Defending Childhood, through CTAS, and through all our efforts to support tribes, we believe that we have made good progress in improving our response to tribal needs, and we hope that our progress is evident to you. At the same time, we know there is still room for improvement, and we are working hard at OJP, at OVW, and at COPs to coordinate our efforts.

In fact, next month – October 14<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> – we will hold another of our consultation, listening, and training sessions in Rapid City, South Dakota. Bea may have more to say about this, but we will be soliciting feedback from tribal leaders and representatives on issues such as the CTAS solicitation, tribal judicial systems and corrections, and concerns of young adults. Our partners at the Departments of Interior and Health and Human Services will join us, and I encourage all of you – or as many of you as possible – to attend.

I know I speak for both Bea and Ron when I say that we welcome your input on how we can continue to improve. Our goal is to be in the best position possible to give you the resources you need.

Thank you for your time, and for all you do to keep your communities safe.

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