

REMARKS  
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

OF

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36<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ALASKA TRIBAL COURT CONFERENCE

ON

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FAIRBANKS, AK

Thank you. I'm very pleased to be here, and honored to be asked to say a few words. I'd like to thank the Tanana Chiefs Conference for finding time for me to speak. I know you have a full agenda, so I won't abuse the privilege.

I'm here in Fairbanks today with my colleagues Darlene Hutchinson, the Director of our Office for Victims of Crime; Allison Turkel, OVC's Deputy Director; and my Director of Special Projects, Eileen Garry. Eileen and I are a few days into a two-week trip to Alaska. We are taking advantage of our time here to visit tribal villages and towns across the state. Our goal is to hear from village leaders, criminal justice officials, victim service providers, law enforcement, and tribal members and elders about the challenges they face in keeping their communities safe and healing victims when violence does strike. And we want to know how we, in the Department of Justice, can support your efforts.

I'm a former U.S. Attorney, where I served the Northern District of Iowa. I had some exposure to the challenges faced by tribes, though not nearly on the scale of need here in Alaska. What I bring from my experience is a commitment to maximizing federal resources to support you.

This is my first trip to Alaska, but I remember, as a boy, hearing stories from relatives who had lived, worked and visited here. My uncle was stationed at King Salmon Air Force base before it was closed. My brother-in-law worked for an Iowa-based company that helped build roads and other infrastructure in the state. And as a kid, I remember my parents returning from a trip to Alaska and telling me about all the wonderful things they saw—the mountains, the glaciers, the bears and other wildlife—things an Iowa farm boy could hardly imagine. I'm glad to finally be able to see with my own eyes some of the incredible things they described, and to go even farther, to the places that the original inhabitants of the state call home.

But this isn't a recreational visit on the government's dime. This is a working trip to find out how my agency, the Office of Justice Programs, can be of service to Alaska's native villages. OJP is the Justice Department's primary component charged with helping tribal, state, and local governments improve public safety and victim services. We do this through funding important local organizations, through a wide range of training and technical assistance, through research and by collecting data and improving criminal justice record-keeping.

Some of our biggest investments are in Alaska Native villages and American Indian communities. In fiscal year 2018, we devoted historic levels of funding to fighting crime and helping victims in tribal jurisdictions. Between my office and the Department's COPS Office and Office on Violence Against Women, the Department of Justice awarded 225 grants totaling more than \$113 million to 125 separate tribes under what we call our Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation.

CTAS, as we refer to it, enables tribes and native villages to apply for grants based on their own public safety and victim services needs, not on some generic criteria.

They can search grant opportunities by purpose area—say, serving sexual assault survivors or helping tribal youth—and then submit an application that outlines their public safety and victim services goals.

In addition to CTAS, in fiscal year 2018, Congress created the first tribal set-aside from the Crime Victims Fund, which makes \$133 million available to meet the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native crime victims. This, too, is unprecedented. Those awards have just been finalized, and OVC has funded 35 Alaska Native villages and organizations, totaling more than \$20 million.

I'm looking forward to seeing some of the communities we support and to hearing from the men and women responsible for keeping the peace and supporting victims in Alaska's native villages. I know the need is great and the challenges are significant, but I also know there's a strong commitment to meeting these challenges on the part of tribal leaders, victim service providers and public safety professionals in the villages and across the state. You can also be assured that there's a strong commitment from the Department of Justice.

I'm also eager to be part of the consultation this afternoon, where we hope to hear ideas from tribal leaders about how we can best allocate our tribal resources to meet the most pressing needs of Alaska Native villages. And before I yield my time, I'd like to stress that our Attorney General is committed to helping to secure the resources that Alaska's villages need to protect their communities. Plans are under way for him to come to Alaska and visit with tribal leaders. I will be sharing with him all the information I gather during my trip, so I encourage you to regard me as your messenger.

I hope that, in the time I'm here, we can have a frank and open dialogue about the challenges you're facing. We want to do our part to help you protect your communities, serve your victims and establish effective justice systems.

On behalf of all of us at the Office of Justice Programs and the Department of Justice, I want to thank you for your time today, and for all you do for the people of your communities and for the safety of our country. We are grateful.

Thank you.

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