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Registration open for the National Tribal Broadband Summit in DC

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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WASHINGTON – According to the Federal Communications Commission, only 46.6 percent of rural, Tribal locations currently have broadband access in comparison to 73.3 percent of the other rural parts of the country. The Department of the Interior, in collaboration with the Department of Education, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services are working together to change that narrative, announcing that online registration is open for the two-day National Tribal Broadband Summit (Summit) on September 23 and 24, 2019, in Washington, D.C.

The Summit is a landmark event that will equip participants with the tools needed to bridge the connectivity gap in Indian Country and unlock the opportunities that broadband access can provide.

"There are communities across the United States that are still waiting to catch up with 21st century technology," **said Tara Katuk MacLean Sweeney, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior.** "The Department of the Interior is committed to improving economic opportunity and quality of life for American Indians and Alaska Natives. This Summit is a key opportunity to engage the private sector and make the business case for investing in Indian Country."

"All students need affordable broadband, at school and at home, if we are going to seriously address the achievement gaps in America. The issue is especially important in rural and Tribal communities where the growing digital divide could exacerbate persistent achievement gaps," **said Jim Blew, Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Department of Education.** "The Department remains committed to working with our Federal, State, Tribal, and local colleagues to ensure that all students, including American Indian and Alaska Native students, have access to the tools that will enable them to find their pathway to success."

"Tribal libraries and museums continue to serve as essential community anchors and resources for community cohesion," **said Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew, Director, Institute of Museum and Library Sciences.** "These institutions are essential hubs for connectivity, digital literacy, and digital inclusion that help support lifelong learning and accessing vital information, such as health and job resources."

The Summit is another demonstration of the Trump Administration's commitment to advance shared priorities with Tribal governments and Tribal leaders. Registration is open to Tribal leaders, representatives of Tribal organizations, representatives of schools and school districts serving under-connected Native students, Tribal libraries, museums, and cultural centers, private sector, and federal program managers and policymakers. One of its primary goals is to lay a foundation for building capacity among Tribal communities to support broadband deployment and adoption, and identify new opportunities for private sector investment in broadband.

Last July, the Department of the Interior submitted a report on rural broadband to the White House, in response to the EO 13821, Streamlining and Expediting Requests to Locate Broadband Facilities in Rural America, and a Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of the Interior issued on January 8, 2018, Supporting Broadband Tower Facilities in Rural America on Federal Properties Managed by the Department of Interior. The Summit is a continuation of these overall broadband efforts with a specific focus on Indian Country.

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