Registration Open for the 2020 National Tribal Broadband Summit

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Washington, D.C. – For the second year in a row, a coalition of federal agencies are working together to address the issue of how to close the digital divide and increase internet access in Indian Country. This year, the Interior Department and the Institute of Museum and Library Services are partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Service and the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA) for the 2020 National Tribal Broadband Summit, taking place September 21-25 as a virtual event due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Tribal Broadband Summit offers a platform for leaders across the broadband development ecosystem to share best practices, new ideas, and lessons learned from their real-world experience of bringing high-speed internet to Native American tribes, homes and businesses.

"Broadband access is critical to the health, safety, education and economic well-being of tribal communities," said **Interior Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Tara Katuk Sweeney**. "The Department of the Interior is committed to working across sectors to close the digital divide in Indian Country. This Summit is a key opportunity to identify and share best practices for extending broadband deployment in tribal communities and developing a roadmap for success. I encourage those interested in the advantages and opportunities that broadband access can bring to their communities to register for this highly informative event."

"Tribal libraries and museums continue to provide essential resources and services that the community relies on now more than ever," said **Crosby Kemper, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services**. "These institutions facilitate connectivity, digital literacy, and digital inclusion that help support education and access to vital information, such as health and job resources. IMLS is proud to support initiatives and opportunities that empower rural and tribal communities to expand their digital infrastructure and strengthen partnerships to continue building on existing resources."

"Access to a high-speed internet connection is a cornerstone of prosperity, and, unfortunately, America's rural communities, including Indian Country and much of Alaska, vastly lack access to this critical infrastructure," said **USDA's Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Bette Brand**. "Under the leadership of President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is committed to leveraging all available resources and being a strong partner to rural communities, tribes, and tribal enterprises in deploying high-speed broadband e-Connectivity to the people, businesses, and community facilities that don't have access yet. Connecting our rural and tribal communities to this essential infrastructure is one of USDA's top priorities because we believe that when rural America thrives, all of America thrives."

Registration is open to tribal leaders; representatives of tribal organizations, tribal colleges and universities, and schools and school districts serving under-connected Native students; tribal libraries, museums, and cultural centers; private sector stakeholder organizations; and federal program managers and policymakers. Participants will leave with tools to help them bridge the connectivity gap in Indian Country and unlock doors to opportunities that broadband access can provide.

As the pandemic has forced students to shift their learning on-line and numerous people into telework, the need for home broadband access has become increasingly apparent and critical. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) estimates that 18 million Americans still have no home access to high-speed, defined as a download speed of 25 megabits per second, internet service. And, according to a 2020 report by the Commission, approximately 28 percent of those living on tribal lands lack broadband access.

Two years ago, Interior submitted a report on rural broadband to the White House in response to President Trump's Executive Order 13821, "Streamlining and Expediting Requests to Locate Broadband Facilities in Rural America," and his Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of the Interior entitled "Supporting Broadband Tower Facilities in Rural America on Federal Properties Managed by the Department of Interior," which were both signed on signed January 8, 2018. The National Tribal Broadband Summit is a continuation of these efforts, with a specific focus on bringing broadband to Indian Country.

For more information about this year's event, including how to register, please visit the 2020 National Tribal Broadband Summit website. To follow updates visit our social sites here and here, and participate using the hashtags #NTBS, #NTBS2020, and #tribalbroadband.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes, and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter-departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is an independent federal agency whose mission is to advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov. To subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit USDA's GovDelivery subscriber page.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), located within the Department of Commerce, is the Executive Branch agency that is principally responsible by law for advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues. NTIA's programs and policymaking focus largely on expanding broadband Internet access and adoption in America, expanding the use of spectrum by all users, and ensuring that the Internet remains an engine for continued innovation and economic growth. These goals are critical to America's competitiveness in the 21st century global economy and to addressing many of the nation's most pressing needs, such as improving education, health care, and public safety.

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