Spokane Tribe in Washington State one of two tribes selected nationwide in final round of designations

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SPOKANE, WA – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today joined leaders of the Spokane Tribe of Indians in Washington State to commemorate the tribe's selection as a Promise Zone, which was announced by President Obama on June 6 as part of the third and final round of Promise Zone designations. The competitively-awarded designation provides custom tailored federal support for Spokane tribal leaders to address locally-defined revitalization goals, including creating jobs through investments in renewable energy, housing construction and technology centers, and reducing crime by revising an antiquated law and order code and implementing a community policing strategy, among other strategies.

"By aligning federal programs more efficiently to the priorities set out by tribal leaders, the Promise Zone processes, strategies and innovations can be used to improve how federal agencies engage with tribal and local communities across the country," said Secretary Jewell, who chairs the White House Council on Native American Affairs. "By partnering with the Spokane Tribe of Indians, we are streamlining resources across agencies to deliver comprehensive support that will provide tribal leaders with the tools they need to control their community's future."

Since 2009, the Obama Administration has emphasized evidence-based approaches in assisting high-poverty communities. When the President took office, five federal agencies were working on targeted interagency efforts to address poverty in 38 communities. Today, more than 15 government agencies are executing coordinated efforts in about 1,800 communities nationwide, saving local and federal time and money, improving local capacity and delivering results. The Interior Department is an active participant in many of these programs, including Climate Action Champions, Strong Cities-Strong Communities, My Brother's Keeper and Promise Zones.

President Obama launched the Promise Zones Initiative in 2014 to address the challenges facing rural and tribal communities by providing tailored assistance based on the specific needs of a community and promoting collaboration between private business and federal, state, tribal and local officials; faith-based and non-profit organizations; and kids and parents.

To date, 13 communities, including two tribal nations, have benefited from their Promise Zones, where the federal government works hand-in-hand with tribal leaders, investing in strategies with proven effectiveness, bringing together a wide range of partners around a common vision for expanding opportunity. Agencies are providing Promise Zones preferential access in 42 programs, and these designations have garnered more than $550 million in federal investments to advance locally-defined goals.

The Spokane Tribe of Indians Promise Zone includes the Spokane Indian Reservation (160,000 acres),

and all lands held in trust by the federal government on behalf of the Spokane Tribe. With a commitment to the tribe's 2,874 citizens, the initiative will help to build a stronger community and strengthen tribal sovereignty. The tribe is battling a 33 percent poverty rate and 25 percent unemployment.

"Our engagement with the initiative enabled us to successfully pilot new strategies for working with tribal governments – and those innovations can benefit every tribe as we learn from this experience and use it to scale up best practices throughout Indian country," said Acting Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Larry Roberts.

Key local partners include the Spokane Indian Housing Authority, Spokane Tribal Police Department, Make It Right Foundation (Solar Division), Grid Alternatives, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Minnesota Housing Partnership, Spokane Tribal Enterprises, HUDNwONAP, CATTCOMM, LLC, the Tulalip Tribes, Native Networks, Stevens County, Spokane Tribal College, Salish-Kootenai College, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the Wellpinit School District, the Unico System, and Sovereign Power.

The President's June 6 announcement also designated the Pride of the Great Plains Promise Zone, which includes two reservations, tribal trust lands, and Rolette County, North Dakota. The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians is leading the partnership. The first five rural and tribal designated Promise Zones were announced on Jan. 9, 2014. The second round of Promise Zones, which selected eight designees, was announced on April 28, 2015. The first two rounds included two tribal nations: the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and Pine Ridge Oglala Sioux Tribe, led by the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation.