



Highlights “march of progress,” including results of pilot program that reduced violent crime on four reservations by a combined 35 percent

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152

For Immediate Release: December 2, 2011

[Print PDF](#)

WASHINGTON - Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar kicked off the White House Tribal Nations Conference today at the Interior Department, emphasizing President Obama's commitment to reform, restructure and rebuild federal relations with Indian Country and underscoring initiatives that are building safer and stronger American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The President is hosting the day-long conference - the third he has convened since taking office - and will deliver keynote remarks this afternoon to leaders from the 565 federally-recognized tribes. Members of the President's cabinet and other federal officials also participated in the conference and breakout discussions focused on addressing the needs and aspirations of Indian communities.

“Today is about continuing a meaningful nation-to-nation dialogue that furthers the march of progress happening in Indian Country,” Secretary Salazar said. “President Obama is committed to making government work better to fulfill our trust management duties, support tribal self-determination and empower American Indian and Alaska Natives to unlock the economic potential of Indian communities.”

During his opening remarks, Salazar announced the promising results of a pilot program to reduce the high incidence of violent crime on four Indian reservations. The Safe Indian Communities initiative, a two-year program that included targeted community policing, achieved a 35 percent overall decrease in violent crime across the four communities.

“We know that safer Indian communities mean stronger Indian communities,” said Salazar. “The positive results from the pilot program are extremely encouraging and far surpassed our goals. We are committed to building on that progress and will be expanding the Safe Indian Communities initiative to other reservations that are experiencing high levels of violent crime.”

With an initial target of reducing violent crime by at least five percent, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Justice Service-led effort far exceeded this goal, achieving a 68 percent decrease in violent crime at the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico, a 40 percent reduction at Rocky Boys in Montana, and a 27 percent reduction in violent crime at Standing Rock in North and South Dakota. The successful program is now being expanded to two additional reservations: the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota and the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona.

The Wind River Reservation in Wyoming saw a seven percent increase in reported violent crime over the same period - in part attributable to more frequent reporting of crimes as a result of the rapidly growing law enforcement presence on the reservation and increased public trust of law enforcement. Although the two-year period reflected a total seven percent increase, the Wind River Reservation saw a

30 percent decrease in violent crime between the first and second years of this 24-month initiative, showing that once the spike in reported crimes occurred, the ongoing work of law enforcement in the community began to make a real impact on reducing actual violent crime.

Earlier in the week, Salazar announced several other initiatives - developed in consultation with tribal leaders - that strengthen consultations, restore greater control to individual American Indians and Alaska Natives and tribes over their lands, reform trust asset management and resolve water rights disputes:

- [The comprehensive and transparent consultation policy](#) will provide a strong, meaningful role for tribal governments at all stages of federal decision-making on Indian policy. The draft policy embodies the best consultation practices and most innovative methods available, contains detailed accountability requirements for Interior managers, responds to the needs of tribal leaders to be more engaged in policy development and promotes more responsible decision-making on issues affecting Indian Country.
- [The sweeping reform of antiquated, “one-size-fits-all” federal leasing regulations](#) for the 56 million surface acres the federal government holds in trust for tribes and individual Indians will provide landowners certainty and flexibility on the use of their land. The revised regulations, the most comprehensive reform of Indian land leasing rules in more than 50 years, will streamline the approval process for home ownership, expedite business leases and spur renewable energy development in Indian Country.
- [The Secretarial Commission on Indian Trust Administration and Reform](#) was activated by naming five prominent tribal leaders to this national commission to undertake a forward-looking, comprehensive evaluation of how Interior manages nearly \$4 billion in American Indian trust funds. The goal is to make the trust administration system more transparent, responsive, customer-friendly and accountable.
- [The release of \\$21 million under the Soboba of Luiseño Indians Settlement Act](#) marks the final step in an historic water rights settlement and fulfills promises made to the Soboba Band and southern California communities when Congress approved the Act in 2008. The settlement will stabilize water supplies in the San Jacinto River Basin and enhance economic development opportunities for the Soboba Band and its neighbors.

These initiatives build on other Administration achievements during the past three years, including the historic \$3.4 billion Cobell Settlement that addresses long-standing injustices; \$1 billion in settlements to meet the critical water needs of Native American communities; the Tribal Law and Order Act, which allowed federal agencies to accelerate their focus on safe tribal communities; and acquiring more than 157,000 acres of land in trust on behalf of tribal nations.
