Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Jodi Gillette today provided opening remarks at the Action Summit for Suicide Prevention/2nd Annual Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Initiative Conference running from August 1- 4, 2011, in Scottsdale, Ariz. The Summit is sponsored in part by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Indian Health Service (IHS), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

"The federal government must be a better partner in addressing this critical issue that afflicts Indian Country," Gillette said. "This week's summit is an important step toward positive engagement and collaboration with other government agencies and tribes as we work together to build healthier, stronger communities."

One of the administration's top priorities has been to ensure that Indian Affairs is an active partner in preventing and responding to suicide emergencies. During President Obama's first tribal listening conference in November 2009, a number of tribal leaders asked that the federal government engage more fully on the issue of suicide prevention, especially among youth. Several tribes suggested that a summit would be an important step. The Action Summit in Scottsdale, is the fulfillment of that request. The Second Annual Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Initiative (MSPI) Conference has been incorporated into the Action Summit for Suicide Prevention programs and includes suicide and methamphetamine prevention learning labs from MSPI.

The Action Summit is intended to bring together mental health professionals with tribal leaders, teachers, law enforcement and other community leaders to provide information and training for those who work most closely with those at risk in Native communities.

In preparation for the Action Summit, Indian Affairs has worked closely with the IHS Office of Behavioral Health and with SAMHSA. In order to make the Summit most responsive to the interests and needs of the tribes, Indian Affairs held a series of 10 Listening Sessions throughout Indian Country from November 2010 through January 2011.

The Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs has responsibility for helping the Secretary of the Interior to fulfill his trust responsibilities to tribal and individual trust beneficiaries and promoting self-determination and self-governance for the nation's 565 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. The Assistant Secretary oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), which administers one of two federal school systems and funding to tribal colleges and universities.