

**STATEMENT
OF
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and distinguished Committee Members. Thank you for inviting me to address your concerns regarding unemployment in Indian Country. My name is Donald Laverdure and I serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior. Addressing the dire need for employment in Indian Country is one of Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk's and Secretary Salazar's priorities, in addition to law enforcement and education, so we very much appreciate the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

While the nationwide unemployment rate hovers around a distressing 10 percent, some reservation face unemployment rates of up to 80 percent. Chronic joblessness often seems endemic to many parts of Indian Country, resisting all antidotes, and plaguing one generation to the next.

The need for jobs in Indian country is great, and more work must be done. The Department is grateful for the leadership members of this Committee have provided. In particular, we appreciate Senator Dorgan's communication with Secretary Salazar and Secretary Chu in an effort to spur a collaborative and comprehensive federal effort to support energy development in Indian country.

We look forward to working with tribes, other federal agencies, and this Committee to address unemployment in Indian country. The President has stressed the importance of interagency cooperation, and moving beyond longstanding bureaucratic barriers. It is our hope that this effort will finally develop long-term solutions that break the generational history of unemployment in Indian Country.

In the meantime, the Department of the Interior will continue to be proactive with its resources. We have initiated many programs, projects, technical conferences and training programs to

address the lack of employment, and intend to continue these efforts. Our economic development efforts are two-pronged, with an effort to address broad issues that are common across Indian country, combined with a focused approach to provide individual tribes with support needed to facilitate job creation.

It is unacceptable for many tribal communities in the United States to experience third-world living conditions, and this Administration is unwilling to accept these conditions as the status quo in Indian Country.

Background

American Indians want to honor tribal traditions and culture while achieving better lives for their families. Where provided opportunities, they are willing to work hard to accomplish that goal. Some tribal nations, due to a multitude of factors, have been successful in launching various business enterprises and fostering Indian entrepreneurship. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (“Harvard Project”) at the John F. Kennedy School of Government honors many of these tribes each year.

Despite the success of some tribes, the 2000 Census tells us that real per capita income of Indians is about half of the U.S. level. Many tribes must overcome the sheer remoteness or isolation of their reservations to attract private and public capital to their communities. There is no doubt that this is certainly a factor for tribes that are trying to build a strong on-reservation economic foundation that encourages small business development, establishes markets for goods and services, and develops a skilled workforce.

Although the remoteness of many reservations from markets and services is a partial explanation, it does not explain why Indian joblessness lingers for generations, despite better economic situations in some adjoining non-Indian communities.

While success in improving the economies of Indian communities has been uneven, we believe that we have a clearer, albeit preliminary, understanding of how many have fallen behind the rest of America.

One thing we know for certain is that a “one size fits all” approach does not adequately address unemployment and under-employment on reservations. That is why we are also taking a focused, approach to provide individual tribes with the support needed to identify and nurture economic development opportunities that best fit their resources, workforce, markets, and culture. The soundness of this approach is supported by the work of the Harvard Project.

While each tribal economy is unique, there are a number of common factors that have inhibited tribal job creation. Primary job-development roadblocks include: (1) lack of collateral with which tribes and reservation businesses can obtain capital; (2) lack of a business development environment; (3) lack of physical and legal infrastructure; (4) difficulty in developing natural resources due to multiple governments have regulatory and taxing jurisdiction over development; (5) lack of educational and training opportunities to develop a skilled work force; and (6) lack of access to modern technology. Many of these roadblocks are products of the history of federal-state-tribal relations, and have tribe-specific nuances that must be addressed on a tribe-by-tribe basis.

As history has shown, poverty and joblessness in Indian Country is not predisposed to a “quick fix.” It cannot be solved by simply investing dollars and then counting the number of jobs spawned. Many communities need assistance to create a foundation, with economies and jobs from the ground up. Indian reservations often lack the legal and physical infrastructure that are common in non-Indian communities. Until these underlying and pervasive issues are addressed, reservation unemployment will likely remain intractable.

One of the lessons we have learned is that job development policies imposed on tribes never succeed. Therefore, tribes must be the driving force behind federal policies targeted toward job creation in Indian Country, which is consistent with the policy of Indian self-determination.

The Department recently participated in a national roundtable discussion on job creation in Indian Country. This discussion included representatives across various agencies in the federal government, reflecting the President's priority of interagency collaboration to address problems in Indian country. More importantly, the discussion included tribal leaders, representatives from intertribal organizations, Indian business developers, and labor organizations. These leaders presented us with their vision and ideas for creating jobs in Indian country.

This administration is seeking guidance and a buy-in from tribal leaders for our job creation and economic development programs; soliciting their counsel regarding which policies are working, and which are foundering. The Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, through its Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED), is working diligently to mitigate roadblocks that stifle business development and job creation in Indian Country. We have put in place many approaches to provide tribes and Indian entrepreneurs with the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to create sustainable businesses and good-paying jobs.

Measuring the Problem and Documenting Success

For the United States to adequately identify and focus on unemployment in Indian country, we must first collect reliable data that will allow us to track progress over time. The Department needs a dedicated Indian Affairs economist who can work with tribal leaders and academics to assess, document, and address unemployment in Indian country. At present, the only tool available to us to measure unemployment on reservations is the national Indian Labor Force Report (LFR), which is intended to be published every other year.

In FY 2009, the Assistant Secretary asked IEED to evaluate, restructure, and publish the LFR in a form that is more accurate and relevant to employment conditions in Indian country. A committee composed of tribal representatives and federal program staff was formed to design a web-based data collection tool to improve the quality of the report. For the first time, the report will collect information on part-time, seasonal, and temporary workers. Previous reports only identified tribal members as employed or unemployed, resulting in incomplete data. The data can now be reported

electronically and on-line, and we plan to provide immediate technical assistance by telephone to assist tribal officials in completing the report.

We have provided training for tribes to familiarize them with the new reporting tool and to explain how local data should be collected. The revamped report will be published in a timely manner, will reflect seasonal employment, and will require all tribes to provide current information. As a result of our work to restructure the LFR, we will be able to publish accurate Indian country employment data on an annual basis, which will offer better resolution of employment trends in Indian country. We expect to publish the improved LFR this summer.

In addition to the need for accurate Indian country employment data, there is also a need for adequate information on the underlying causes of unemployment in Indian Country, so we can devise appropriate mitigation strategies.

In May 2007, the Department of the Interior, in partnership with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), sought the input of tribal leaders to ascertain employment conditions in Indian country and provide recommendations on economic development at the first-ever National Summit on American Indian Economic Development. This event attracted over 500 tribal and federal leaders, who developed an economic development report that contained 100 policy reform recommendations.

These recommendations have served as a roadmap for developing new programs, providing training, and conducting conferences and workshops. However, we believe that it is time to revisit the report to assess our progress and reaffirm the findings. Therefore, on July 20-22 of this year, we will again join with NCAI to conduct Economic Summit II in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to update tribes on our progress in carrying out their prescriptions for economic progress and job creation. We will also use this event to evaluate progress on Indian country economic development, determine if our approaches remain valid, and develop additional recommendations.

Attracting Private Investment to Indian Country

A critical component of job creation in Indian Country is improving tribal access to capital. Ready access to capital markets facilitates business development – both large and small – in virtually all other sectors of the American economy. Access to capital in Indian Country, however, is difficult to obtain because of certain factors related to tribal land and the status of Indian tribes as governments.

Historically, it has been difficult for American Indians to obtain financing. Much of tribally-owned and individual Indian-owned land is held in trust by the United States. While trust land preserves a tribal land base and is essential to Indian economic development, it creates difficulties for using the land as collateral for capital transactions. Moreover, lenders are reluctant to enter into financing agreements with tribes and tribal corporations because of both real and perceived concerns over the status of Indian tribes as sovereigns. Financing options for tribes and their members are often limited by lack of financial expertise, credit, and financial resources sufficient to support business dealings.

The Department of the Treasury (Treasury) conducted a series of workshops, surveys and roundtables to examine Indian access to capital and financial services. Twenty-four percent of American Indians interviewed told the government that business loans were “impossible” to obtain. Treasury’s report estimated that the “investment gap” between American Indian economies and the U.S. overall totaled \$44 billion. The report also found that, despite the fact that 85% of financial institutions on or near Indian lands offer deposit accounts to American Indian residents, half of those institutions provide only ATMs and personal consumer loans.

The Department’s Indian Loan Guaranty, Insurance and Interest Subsidy Program seeks to narrow this gap by providing federal guaranties and loan insurance for Indian-owned businesses. It has been in existence since 1974 to help Indian businesses secure financing for economic development. In FY 2009, IEED received subsidy appropriations of \$7 million to support guaranties and insurance covering approximately \$85 million of Indian loans. This program is the

single greatest Federal resource used by tribes and Indian-owned businesses to secure lender financing, despite the availability of other, larger Federal programs.

The Loan Guaranty Program accomplishes a lot with a modest amount. For every \$1 million in appropriation it allows approximately \$13 million in loan guarantees to be issued. One of the requirements of the program is that the loan guarantee must positively impact reservations or tribal service areas. Therefore, any Indian-owned enterprises obtaining a loan guarantee creates job opportunities in areas of high unemployment. Based upon past performance, each additional \$80 million that the program has offered for guaranteed loans can be expected to generate 50 new businesses and create or sustain 1,500 jobs to benefit reservations.

Over the course of 36 years under the Indian Financing Act, the Loan Guaranty Program has administered more than \$1.3 billion in loans and loan guarantees. Jobs are sustained when existing businesses have access to capital.

The Loan Guaranty Program has been targeted to reach those Indian borrowers showing the greatest potential for spurring their local economies, whether those borrowers are tribes, Indian individuals, or Indian-owned businesses.

The historic mix of program uses has included many important elements of tribal community development, such as starting or expanding businesses that provide goods and services. They have also included helping borrowers construct and renovate buildings, develop recreational and resort facilities, refinance debt, obtain permanent working capital, and purchase everything from manufacturing facilities to key equipment, real estate, and inventory.

The Loan Guaranty Program helps Indian businesses whether they are starting new businesses, expanding operations at an existing business, revitalizing operations in a changing industry, or rebounding from business troubles. The payoff for all this activity is the creation and retention of jobs with decent wages, and opportunities for advancement in communities not often accustomed to growth and expansion.

By strengthening the economic base of tribal communities, tribal governments located near these businesses tend to progress towards greater independence and self determination. Economic growth on the reservation benefits neighboring non-Indian communities as well.

Indian Energy as an Economic Development Engine

Perhaps the largest opportunity for economic development and job creation in Indian Country today is through development of tribal energy resources. As the members of this Committee are well-aware, Indian Country offers some of the highest renewable and conventional resource potential in the nation. The Department is working with members of this Committee and their staff, as well as officials from the Departments of Energy and Agriculture, to address structural barriers to Indian energy development posed by federal policies.

This Committee has provided great leadership on this issue, and we appreciate Sen. Dorgan's outreach to the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy to identify points of contact to lead a collaborative effort to address barriers to tribal energy development.

Access to transmission facilities and capital markets are the lynchpins of successful tribal energy development. Historically, tribes have often been relegated to being merely landlords in business projects involving natural resources on tribal lands, as tax and financial regulations provided disincentives to tribal ownership. Many tribes want to share as a partner in sustainable natural resource development.

The Department values the input of tribal leaders. Through many different forums, tribal leaders have communicated to the Department that it is difficult for renewable energy projects in Indian Country to realize the full value of tax incentives Congress put in place to promote their development. Tribal leaders say that because tribal nations, like states, are not taxable entities under the federal tax code, their presence as an equity partner in renewable energy development projects means that fewer tax incentives are available to attract other partners and investors. And, because renewable energy projects rely on tax incentives to be competitive, tribal assumption of an equity stake in renewable projects on their land actually discourages development. The

Department continues to listen to tribal leaders and will collaborate with other federal agency partners to address issues related to energy development projects. The Administration would like to find a solution that would allow tribes to monetize these tax incentives, and become full partners on renewable energy projects developed on tribal land. A solution in this area would spur immediate and significant development of renewable energy resources for the entire nation, and quickly increase job growth in Indian country. The Administration is exploring ideas for how to address these issues.

In addition to lacking access to capital for energy investments, many tribes also lack ready access to energy transmission facilities. Again, this dearth of transmission infrastructure in Indian Country impedes job growth, as well as development of rich energy resources.

The Administration has made building a cleaner, safer, and more efficient national energy grid a top priority. This effort will directly generate countless jobs and facilitate the growth of private businesses, including Indian-owned businesses. Tribal nations will and should play an integral role in improving our energy system.

On January 11th, Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk announced a series of tribal energy transmission system planning workshops over the next several months in Albuquerque, NM; Portland, OR; Bismarck, ND; and Phoenix, AZ. These workshops will be conducted by IEED and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Trust Services, working in partnership with the Argonne National Laboratory.

These workshops will help tribal leaders and tribal resource managers develop energy transmission corridors, so that tribes can be a major player in building a 21st Century power transmission grid. These two-day workshops will provide information and guidance on planning and developing corridors for energy transmission system projects on tribal lands, including both electricity transmission and pipeline projects.

IEED has also joined with the Inter-Tribal Council on Utility Policy (ICOUP) to provide training and assistance on the installation of wind machine towers and turbines. And we have collaborated with ICOUP to provide tribal members with training on building affordable, green, energy-

efficient housing using straw-bales - an agricultural waste product readily available in the Great Plains. One of our objectives with these initiatives is to spur the development of Indian-owned “green” businesses.

Tribal Development of Natural Resources

In addition to energy development, sustainable development of other natural resources on tribal lands is another bright prospect in the Indian economic development landscape. Development of these natural resources can provide good, long-term jobs in tribal communities.

Indian Affairs manages 18.5 million acres of forests on Indian trust land, of which 5.7 million acres is being developed for commercial purposes. In FY 2008, 485 million board feet of timber was harvested which resulted in \$50 million in Tribal and individual Indian income. Eighty percent of this work was performed via P.L. 93-638 contracts and self-governance compacts with tribes.

The Indian Forestry Program is renowned for its sustainable operations. In addition, this program serves as the driving economic force in many communities. Some tribes own their own sawmill operations. When a sawmill component is added to the forestry preparation work, logging, trucking and follow-up forestry activities, tribal forestry and related activities can be the largest employers of some regions. However, like other forestry efforts, tribal forest programs have suffered from a dampened demand for raw wood products. The Department is looking for ways to sustain these job skills until the market rebounds.

In addition, some tribes have developed additional forest products companies, such as plywood plants, that allow tribes to climb higher on the value chain and generate more jobs. Also, if a tribe builds an associated biomass cogeneration facility for wood waste, it can enhance the economics of the project by producing some or all of the energy it will require.

Supporting Indian Entrepreneurship on Reservations

Tribal leaders say that fostering Indian entrepreneurship is a critical component to successful economic development. Small businesses are the nation's leading generator of jobs. But this has not been the case for American Indians. Unfortunately American Indians have not been able to establish a significant number of small businesses. According to a 2003 report by the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, "Native American owned and started the fewest small businesses of all minority groups in the U.S.

The Assistant Secretary's Office, through IEED, is developing reservation entrepreneurship on several fronts by: 1) Assisting tribes to improve legal infrastructure that will foster business creation; 2) Educating Indian youth in entrepreneurship and financial literacy; and 3) Providing training and other technical assistance to Indian business owners.

To facilitate tribal business formation, IEED sponsors workshops to inform BIA tribal operations personnel, and tribal managers and attorneys how Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) Section 17 corporate charters are prepared and approved. These charters enable tribal businesses to preserve tribal assets while maintaining tax immunity. In addition, we are working with tribes to develop long-term, comprehensive community plans to pave the way for business start-ups. Last fiscal year, we collaborated with the NCAI to hold a series of conferences throughout Indian country on reservation planning that will provide us information to develop technical assistance programs for tribes. We anticipate publication of a report on the findings of these conferences in the next few months.

As described above, myriad factors impede the success of Indian entrepreneurs. The report from the 2007 Economic Summit recommended that all American Indian youth learn basic financial and business concepts, beginning as early as kindergarten. In response to these recommendations, IEED has funded a Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to develop a financial literacy and entrepreneurship training curriculum for American Indian K-12 students in South Dakota.

To date, the program has established teacher training institutes at five reservation schools. Forty-seven South Dakota American Indian students have completed financial literacy internships. More

than 1,000 Native American students took part in the Program's Youth Entrepreneurship Fair, where they learned hands-on business start-up skills.

IEED also sponsored entrepreneurial training projects at seven Native American high schools and funded students from the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Sioux reservations to attend the Native American Youth Entrepreneurship Camp, conducted by the Udall Center's Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona. This camp teaches students how to build private-sector enterprises in Indian country, while conducting student visits to Indian-owned businesses and arranging meetings between students and business owners.

We have been working one-on-one with Indian business owners to open their doors – and keep them open. For example, the Native American Natural Foods (NANF), manufactures the Tanka Bar and other bison-meat-based products on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Kyle, South Dakota. IEED provided an Indian Affairs Loan Guaranty that helped NANF launch a national brand. In addition, we provided funding for 16 tribal members to receive management and marketing training. Twelve of these trainees have since obtained jobs with NANF, while the others were hired by a non-profit organization. All of these jobs are located on the Pine Ridge Reservation, one of the poorest areas in America.

NANF is just one example out of hundreds, where IEED has provided Indian CEOs and entrepreneurs an opportunity to attend an intensive, three-day executive education courses offered by the top-rated Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College. These courses focus on helping Indian CEOs recognize and overcome common operational and financial pitfalls encountered by small business owners. This fiscal year, 2010, we are offering these training sessions in Boston, Dallas, and Anchorage and expect to reach from 100 to 150 Indian CEOs and entrepreneurs.

IEED has also conducted workshops in Indian country on how to form Small Business Administration 8(a) businesses and capitalize on federal procurement and Buy-Indian opportunities.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary has worked with the CDFI Fund within the Treasury Department to promote the establishment of CDFIs in tribal communities. CDFIs are an effective means to provide seed money to entrepreneurs in tribal communities. They also allow tribes the flexibility to meet business lending needs that are unique to their communities. Through our own programs, we are able to provide support to tribes seeking to establish these lending institutions, in addition to providing direct support to the CDFIs themselves.

Lastly, we have delivered some of these job development programs by way of what we call “Indian economic development incubators,” focusing all of our job training and development initiatives on a particular state or region for a specific period of time. We have launched these “incubators” in South Dakota, Montana, and Maine. We have found this to be an effective means of jump-starting entrepreneurs in finite geographic areas. In FY 2011, we will be selecting another area of Indian Country in which to launch these incubators, and hope to continue to expand this program throughout Indian country as resources become available.

Supporting Tribal Business Development

The Department is also helping tribes develop market and feasibility studies to determine which kinds of reservation business start-ups are likely to prosper in their respective environments. To that end, we initiated the Native American Business Development Institute (NABDI) to link tribes with distinguished business and engineering graduate schools to study proposed projects before tribal members invest time and money in them, and work with tribal leaders to identify legitimate business opportunities. To date, we have worked with 14 graduate schools to perform 24 separate marketing and feasibility studies. These studies have assisted tribal leaders in making sound decisions on start-ups, and avoiding mistakes that might otherwise lead to marketplace failure. We are exploring the possibility of expanding this program by integrating tribal colleges and universities, which have a ground-level understanding of the economic conditions in Indian Country.

Improving Information Infrastructure and Legal Infrastructure in Indian Country

The Department recognizes as well, that reservation entrepreneurs are hard-pressed to succeed without access to information technology and the skills to take advantage of that technology that will allow them to compete on a global playing field. Information technology is critical to mitigate the geographic isolation of many tribes. Nevertheless, many remote tribes do not enjoy access to high speed broadband internet use.

The Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture and Federal Communications Commission have several current initiatives to provide broadband access in rural America. The Department of the Interior supports these efforts for Indian Country and we will work to assure that rights-of-way for broadband facilities are quickly evaluated and approved on trust land administered by our offices.

We have also teamed with IBM, Wal-Mart, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to develop computer technology centers at seven reservations. At each of these locations, IEED-sponsored trainers use computer hardware and software donated by corporate sponsors to provide tribal members with training that will help them take advantage of information technology and compete in a global marketplace. These centers have become valuable assets for these tribes and we are continuing to look for other partners in the private sector to continue this effort.

With respect to legal infrastructure, many potential investors in Indian Country are deterred by real and perceived concerns about tribal political systems. Attracting private business investment in Indian Country requires a continuous process of educating developers and investors about basic legal principles applicable to tribal nations and their lands. Many tribal leaders and Indian business developers have successfully worked with private companies, from large investment firms to smaller businesses, to allay their concerns and attract business development – and jobs, to Indian Country.

Nevertheless, sound legal systems are critical to establishing a climate in which job growth is possible. IEED has provided funding for a dozen tribes to explore adopting the model tribal secured transactions code developed by the Committee on Liaison with Native American Tribes of the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, which is an association that

encourages uniformity of certain laws. Tribes can adopt and amend this code to fit their own needs and values, while providing commercial legal systems familiar to many job-creators.

As a result of this funding, the Oglala Sioux Tribe signed a ground-breaking agreement with the State of South Dakota for administration of commercial transaction filings under the tribe's new code. This was the first such tribal agreement in the history of the state. We believe that other tribes will follow the Oglala Sioux Tribe's example by adopting their own commercial codes.

We will continue to use small grants to enable tribes to evaluate, modify and, ultimately, adopt uniform commercial codes into tribal law, smoothing the flow of commerce on reservations.

Training Skilled Work Forces

We are developing partnerships with tribes—through the Pub. L. 102-477 initiative—on a nation-to-nation basis to develop creative and innovative training programs that provide participants with work skills that lead to well-paying careers. The “477” initiative allows tribes to develop their own employment, training, education, job creation, and related services programs for their own communities. Tribal Nations develop their own programs based upon their own needs. In addition, U.S. Department of Labor provides funding to the 53 tribal grantees administered by the U.S. DOI's PL 102-477 to develop tribal employment and training programs on Indian reservations and Alaska Native communities. The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, under Section 166 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, funds and administers more than 178 employment and training grants to Indian Tribes, Tribal Consortiums, and Tribal Non-profits.

Rebuilding America's infrastructure will require the skills of thousands of working men and women. To address this opportunity, IEED and the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters entered into a partnership agreement to initiate a pilot project to train tribal members to become certified welders, plumbers and pipefitters. This project is a demonstrated success.

Chicago's Local 597 and Phoenix's Local 469 were the first to provide hybrid welding training for Indian apprentices. The payoff has been enormous. Graduates of these programs are rated as two-year apprentices. They have a 100% job placement rate, earning about \$20 per hour to start. One of the recent graduates of the construction training went from being on general assistance to a job that paid him \$27 per hour.

IEED has also been part of a long-term collaboration with the National Indian Iron Workers Training Program to conduct training in four, 12-week long sessions, graduating about 100 Native Americans annually who are qualified for skilled employment. Since 1972, this program has trained, graduated and placed 2,084 individuals in well-paying jobs that currently rebuild our Nation's infrastructure. As with the plumbers and pipefitters program, placement is 100%.

IEED estimates that it can train and place about 450 American Indians and Alaska Natives per year for the next four years to fill these jobs in the skilled trades. IEED's data indicates that it costs between \$5,000 to \$10,000, depending on location, to supply the job skills necessary to move an individual from general assistance to a well-paying job.

The Department is working to expand this pilot project into the other 13 building trades, in partnership with the National Association of Building Construction Trades. This agreement encourages work with all of the 13 building construction trades to train and place American Indians and Alaskan Natives in life-long careers – not just short-term jobs. Billions of dollars of work on and near Indian reservations are pending and tribal representatives want their tribal members to be prepared to take on those jobs.

As a result of our work with the National Association of Building Construction Trades, we have developed a formal agreement with the United Association of Plumbers, Pipe Fitters, Sprinkler Fitters and allied trades, (UA).

Now that we have demonstrated its value and have gained some experience, we are beginning to work in cooperation with tribal colleges and provide training on reservations. Our Energy Auditor Training program, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act started on January 4,

2010, and is located at the United Sioux Tribes Technical College, attracting students from across the country. Upon successful completion of the training, graduates will be placed to work on Indian reservations on residential and commercial projects to reduce reliance on nonrenewable energy sources. Another example is our project on the Lummi Nation Reservation -- a tribally-owned welding training company.

Our work with tribes and the skilled trades has expanded to the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. We are currently meeting with other skilled trades in hopes of creating training opportunities for Native American commercially licensed drivers and heavy equipment operators.

The skilled trades provide real wages for real work with benefits such as annual and sick leave, medical insurance, on-going training and life insurance. These projects provide services to the community that lack careers with nationally certified skills.

Our job-training efforts are being done in partnership with the Council for Tribal Employment Rights and the Native Construction Careers Institute, both of which have been active leaders in supporting job creation throughout Indian country. The U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are also active leaders in supporting job creation in Indian Country.

We are also planning to include additional advanced training programs to include other occupations, such as Advanced Certified Nursing Assistance. We know that there is a vast shortage of medical professionals in Indian country, which is continuously confirmed by Tribal leaders.

Conclusion

Once again, the Department looks forward to working with other federal agencies, this Committee, tribal leaders, and the academic community to address chronic joblessness in Indian country. This

collaborative effort will allow us to implement solutions at the national, regional, tribal, and community level. It is only through this type of collaboration, and a nation-to-nation relationship with Indian tribes, that we can succeed in spurring economic development and job growth in Indian country.

This concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.