

# THE WHITE HOUSE TRIBAL NATIONS SUMMIT PROGRESS REPORT

DECEMBER 9, 2024

PREPARED BY THE DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

December 9, 2024

I send my warmest greetings to all the Tribal leaders gathered for the 2024 Tribal Nations Summit in Washington, D.C.

When I became President, I promised that my Administration would prioritize respect for Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. To make this new era of self-determination a reality, we committed to honoring the solemn promises the United States made to fulfill our trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations and work together to rebuild Tribal economies and institutions. At the core of my Administration's relationship with Tribes is the principle of respect—respect for Tribal governments as the best arbiter of their people's needs. We've made progress, but we know Indigenous communities still live in the shadows of the failed policies of the past.

I have always believed that we must know the good, the bad, and the truth of our past so that we can begin to remember and heal. That is why I became the first President to issue a formal apology for the Federal Indian Boarding School era, one of our Nation's most horrific periods. My Administration remains committed to working with you to write a new and better chapter in American history for Tribal Nations and Native communities.

At the same time, we have made record investments in Tribal Nations. We secured the first-ever advanced funding for Indian Health Services. Through the Inflation Reduction Act, Tribal communities are helping lead the transition to clean energy and ease the impact of climate change. Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we have made the single biggest investment in Tribal roads, bridges, water, high-speed internet, electricity, and irrigation. And we were proud to restore protections for Tribal lands and waters. All of this was made possible in part because of the partnership and tireless efforts of Tribal leaders across America.

As you gather for the Tribal Nations Summit, may you take pride in how far we have come in establishing a new era of Tribal sovereignty and Indigenous self-determination—one grounded in dignity, respect, and friendship.

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**We owe all of you here and across Indian Country.  
The truth must be told.  
And the truth must be heard –  
all across America.  
But this official apology –  
is only one step forward –  
from the shadows of failed policies  
of the past.**

**That’s why –  
I’ve been committed  
to working with –  
Indigenous communities across the country –  
to write a new and better chapter in our history.**

**To honor the solemn promises  
the United States made to Tribal Nations –  
and to fulfill our federal trust and treaty obligations.**

**It’s long overdue.**

**- President Biden**  
*Presidential Apology for the Federal Indian Boarding School Era*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>STRENGTHENING THE NATION-TO-NATION RELATIONSHIP.....</b>	<b>9</b>
EXECUTIVE ORDER 14112.....	9
TRIBAL CONSULTATION.....	9
SELF-DETERMINATION.....	12
<b>PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATIONS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
AGENCY GUIDANCE ON WORKING WITH TRIBAL NATIONS.....	13
NEW TRIBAL LEADER AND NATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEES .....	14
ADMINISTRATION VISITS TO INDIAN COUNTRY.....	14
<b>RESTORING AND PROTECTING TRIBAL HOMELANDS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
TRIBAL CO-STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS.....	16
TRIBAL LANDS PROTECTION AND EXPANSION.....	18
SACRED SITES .....	20
GRAZING AND LAND USE.....	21
TREATY RIGHTS.....	21
REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT .....	22
CONTAMINATION CLEANUP .....	22
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE .....	24
AFFIRMATIVE LITIGATION AND PROMOTING JUSTICE FOR TRIBES AND NATIVE COMMUNITIES.....	26
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY .....	32
WATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE.....	33
FISH RESTORATION AND SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT .....	36
CONSERVATION.....	38
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>40</b>
TRIBAL AND NATIVE OWNED BUSINESS SUPPORT.....	40
IMPROVING FEDERAL FUNDING ACCESSIBILITY .....	40
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	42
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND ENTITLEMENT POLICIES .....	43
<b>FOOD AND AGRICULTURE .....</b>	<b>44</b>
BISON RESTORATION INITIATIVE.....	46

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY .....	46
<b>HEALTHCARE .....</b>	<b>49</b>
MENTAL HEALTH/ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH .....	49
PUBLIC HEALTH.....	51
INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS .....	51
SUBSTANCE USE .....	52
INDIGENOUS CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES .....	52
PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING.....	53
<b>NATIVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES .....</b>	<b>53</b>
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE.....	53
CHILD CARE/ FAMILY WELFARE.....	54
ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE .....	56
MATERNAL HEALTH.....	57
<b>VETERANS.....</b>	<b>58</b>
VETERANS HEALTH AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY .....	58
VETERANS BENEFITS .....	58
CANCER CARE.....	59
REVISED VA HEALTHCARE ENROLLMENT FORM .....	59
PREVENTING SUICIDE AMONG SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES .....	59
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE VETERAN COPAYMENT EXEMPTION .....	60
TRADITIONAL HEALING SUMMIT .....	60
TRIBAL CLAIMS CLINICS / PACT ACT EVENTS IN INDIAN COUNTRY .....	60
VA CLINIC ON THE CHEROKEE NATION IN VINITA, OKLAHOMA .....	61
VA-IHS OPEN CLINIC-IN-A-CLINIC .....	61
VHA-IHS REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT.....	61
LOWER 48 REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT FOR TRIBAL HEALTH PROGRAMS AND URBAN INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS .....	61
NATIVE VETERAN HOMELESSNESS .....	62
NATIVE VETERAN NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTATION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGY .....	62
<b>HOUSING.....</b>	<b>62</b>

<b>PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE .....</b>	<b>64</b>
MISSING OR MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE & VIOLENCE AGAINST NATIVE WOMEN .....	64
LAW ENFORCEMENT .....	72
CRIMINAL JURISDICTION .....	74
HOLISTIC PUBLIC SAFETY WORK .....	75
DRUG TRAFFICKING .....	77
YOUTH AND JUVENILE JUSTICE.....	77
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS .....	78
<b>EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>80</b>
INTERNSHIP, APPRENTICESHIP, AND SERVICE PROGRAMS .....	82
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT .....	84
<b>HEALING FROM DESTRUCTIVE PAST POLICIES .....</b>	<b>85</b>
INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS .....	85
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APOLOGY .....	85
<b>VOTING AND CIVIL RIGHTS.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, KNOWLEDGE, AND CULTURE .....</b>	<b>87</b>
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION.....	87
GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION .....	89
NATIVE LANGUAGES.....	89
<b>TECHNOLOGY, BROADBAND, SPECTRUM, AND CYBERSECURITY.....</b>	<b>90</b>
INTERNET AND BROADBAND .....	91
CYBERSECURITY .....	91
<b>INTERNATIONAL AND BORDER ISSUES.....</b>	<b>91</b>
BORDER ISSUES .....	91
INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND PARTNERSHIPS .....	93
<b>APPENDIX A. - LIST OF ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>95</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last four years, the Biden-Harris Administration has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to Indian Country, cementing its legacy as one of the most supportive Administrations in modern history for Tribal Nations and Native communities. This legacy is reflected in the actions of President Biden and Vice President Harris, as well as in the leadership of historic Native appointees across the government. Together, they have delivered unprecedented investments, championed Tribal sovereignty, honored the federal trust responsibility, and strengthened the Federal-Tribal nation-to-nation relationship.

The Biden-Harris Administration has invested more than \$45 billion in Indian Country, transforming infrastructure, expanding healthcare, advancing education, and addressing systemic injustices. Landmark policies and federal action, such as elevating Tribal consultation and implementing government-wide training on Tribal treaty rights and the trust responsibility, have centered Native voices in federal decision-making.

Respect for Tribal Nations has been the core of the Biden-Harris Administration's relationship with Tribes. From the protection of sacred lands through National Monument designations and the conservation of over 45 million acres of lands and waters to the historic Presidential apology for federal Indian boarding schools, the Administration has affirmed its deep dedication to Native communities. These legacy-defining actions include:

## **Executive Orders:**

- Reforming federal funding to uphold Tribal self-determination.
- Improving public safety and criminal justice, addressing missing and murdered Indigenous people.
- Enhancing educational outcomes for Native students by tackling systemic barriers.

## **Presidential Memoranda on Tribal Consultation:**

- 2021 Memorandum: Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships.
- 2022 Memorandum: Establishing Uniform Tribal Consultation Standards.

## **Historic Investments in Indian Country:**

- \$32 billion (American Rescue Plan): Largest federal investment in Tribes and Native communities ever.
- \$13 billion (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law): Supporting infrastructure in Tribal communities.
- \$700 million (Inflation Reduction Act): Climate resilience, clean energy, and drought mitigation for Tribes and Native communities.

**Buy Indian Act:**

- Billions in contracts to Native-owned businesses.

**Conservation Leadership:**

- Restored sacred lands, designated new national monuments, and signed over 200 co-stewardship agreements.

**Representation and Commitment:**

- Over 80 Native appointees, including historic positions like Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland.
- Reinstated the White House Tribal Nations Summit and the White House Council on Native American Affairs.

**Historic Apology for Federal Indian Boarding Schools:**

- For the first time ever, acknowledged the systemic abuses and deaths of Native children in federally-run boarding schools.
- Affirmed the need to remember painful history to prevent its repetition.

**2024 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This 2024 Progress Report showcases new announcements and highlights key accomplishments from the past year, and the Biden-Harris Administration takes immense pride in these achievements, such as the 10-Year Plan on Native Language Revitalization and the release of government-wide trainings on Tribal Consultation and Tribal Treaty Rights. For President Biden and Vice President Harris, it has been the honor of a lifetime to build lasting partnerships with Tribal Nations and to usher in a new era of respect and progress for Indian Country.



# STRENGTHENING THE NATION-TO-NATION RELATIONSHIP

## EXECUTIVE ORDER 14112

President Biden signed Executive Order 14112 at the 2023 White House Tribal Nations to usher in the next era of Tribal self-determination, ensuring that Tribal Nations have greater autonomy over how they invest federal funding. Since the President signed the Executive Order, federal Departments and Agencies have moved forward in reforming federal funding programs, making the programs more accessible and flexible and in line with Tribal self-determination. The Executive Order 14112 [addendum](#) outlines hundreds of reforms that Departments have taken. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has released its guidance to Federal agencies on how to assess unmet federal obligations to support Tribal Nations, which Federal agencies are to respond to in the spring of 2025.

## TRIBAL CONSULTATION

**Trainings on Tribal Consultation.** In accordance with the 2022 Presidential Memorandum on Uniform Standards for Tribal Consultation, the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA), the Department of the Interior, and the Office of Personnel Management developed a Tribal Consultations training course. The Memorandum emphasizes the significance of Tribal consultations and establishes uniform standards to reinforce the U.S. government's treaty and trust responsibilities to Tribes. This course will help agencies fulfill the annual training requirements outlined in Section 8 of the Memorandum for all federal employees who work with Tribal Nations or on policies with Tribal implications.

**Presidential Memorandum on Uniform Standards for Tribal Consultation U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) worked to comply with the Presidential Memorandum on Uniform Standards for Tribal Consultation, including implementing annual training to comply with Section 8(a) of the Memorandum and to further employees' understanding of the federal trust responsibility and treaty rights.

**Implementation of the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act (TGWEA).** The Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act was passed in 2014 and addresses the tax status of Tribal payments to Tribal members. Tribes have sought guidance for ten years and during this Administration Treasury has focused on being responsive to Tribal requests to conduct Tribal consultation and issue guidance. On September 2024, Treasury announced publication of draft guidance on the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion and has conducted Tribal consultations on the draft guidance.

**VA Tribal Consultation Policy Revision.** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is implementing uniform standards on how VA's Tribal consultations are conducted, to include an update on the new required annual training. On January 23, 2024, VA published a revised Tribal Consultation Policy based on consultation and input with Tribal leaders. The VA Tribal

Consultation Policy was addressed in a Federal Register Notice on March 22, 2024, and received Tribal Leader input. The policy is in the process of being updated.

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Tribal Affairs developed and provided quarterly training to all DHS components and offices on the policy and instruction regarding consultation.** This achievement complies with Section 8(a) of the “Presidential Memorandum on Uniform Standards for Tribal Consultation.” This training will continue to be offered on a quarterly basis until the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in consultation with Tribal Nations, establish training modules. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Tribal Affairs is actively seeking opportunities to incorporate lessons learned from other contributing agencies to remove barriers to supporting Tribal Nations.

**AmeriCorps Native Nations Convening.** AmeriCorps hosted our second annual three-day convening and training for Tribal Nations, Indigenous grantees, and partners in Las Vegas, Nevada which included remarks and a listening session with AmeriCorps CEO Michael Smith. The convening featured resources, trainings, collaboration, and networking activities, with meaningful conversations amongst Tribal partners leading programs in areas such as natural resources; developing pathways to college and the workforce for Tribal youth; and fighting the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and opioid epidemics. The convening focused on building stronger partnerships, addressing barriers, and Indigenizing service.

**DOE Order & Policy 144.1.** The Department of Energy (DOE) updated its internal directives on Tribal consultation and engagement DOE Policy 144.1: *U.S. Department of Energy Policy on Consultation and Engagement with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Corporations* (Policy) and DOE Order 144.1: *Department of Energy (DOE) Requirements for Consultation and Engagement with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Corporations Pursuant to DOE Policy 144.1* (Order). The Policy establishes federal Indian policy direction in the conduct of the Department’s mission. The Order establishes management objectives, requirements, and assignment of responsibilities consistent with applicable requirements and policies. The Order also contains a contractor requirements document (CRD). These revisions clarify DOE roles, responsibilities, and requirements, and strengthens DOE’s capacity to better meet the agency’s Tribal trust responsibilities through enhanced Tribal consultation and engagement practices.

**New requirements for Tribal Letters of Support and Tribal awareness on the Department of Energy (DOE) funded projects.** In April 2024, the Department of Energy (DOE) finalized new guidance for when DOE funded projects potentially impact Indian Tribes. Under this guidance, referred to as [FAL 2024-03](#), applicants are required to make Tribes aware of projects that potentially impact them and required to obtain Tribal letters of support, at the time of application, when projects are proposed on Tribal land. This policy complements DOE’s updated Order & Policy ensures that applicants for DOE funding are assisting DOE in Tribal consultation, if needed.

**Social Security Administration Tribal Action Plan Reaffirmed its Commitment to Consultation.** In January 2024, Social Security Administration (SSA) released its FY 2024 Tribal Consultation and Call to Action plan, providing six objectives the Agency will take to facilitate robust engagement regarding policies with Tribal implications. For accountability for the promises made in the prior year, the Agency published the FY23 Tribal Program Report and released a January 2024 Dear Tribal Leader Letter to share both resources.

**Deepening Employee Knowledge of Tribal Affairs.** In 2024, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated its Departmental regulation on Tribal consultation and signed a contract with a Tribal corporation to enhance its cross-agency training modules. The training will create foundational curriculum for topics critical to USDA programs, such as Indian land tenure, Tribal corporation structures, and Alaska Native Corporations. USDA expects to deploy the curriculum on a rolling basis to all employees in 2025 and 2026. The new training will build on agency-specific efforts, such as USDA's Rural Development's two-day annual *Working in Harmony with Tribes and Tribal Communities* and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's four-day annual *Working Effectively with American Indians*.

**Department of Justice Policies and Programs.** DOJ components held formal consultations with Tribes throughout the year. Issues and topics included the following:

- DOJ held consultations in June and July 2024 on a proposed policy relating to the Department's Tribal environmental justice work. More information may be found at <https://www.justice.gov/otj/media/1352401/dl?inline>.
- DOJ's Drug Enforcement Administration held consultations in June 2024 to discuss regulations impacting the provision of telehealth services to persons in opioid addiction recovery.
- DOJ held consultations in October and November 2024 on legislative proposals to improve the Department's funding mechanisms and better meet the public safety and criminal justice needs of Tribes. Additional information about this consultation may be found here: <https://www.justice.gov/tribal/tribal-consultations-advisory-groups>.
- The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) hosted a virtual Tribal Consultation on the Tribal Set-Aside from the Crime Victims Fund for FY 2025 in October 2024. An informational [Framing Paper](#) on the FY 2025 Tribal Set-Aside and [FY 2024 Tribal Set-Aside annual report](#) provided relevant background and questions for participants at the consultation to consider.
- DOJ held the Annual Tribal Consultation on Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women required by the Violence Against Women Act, as amended, at the Pueblo of Pojoaque in New Mexico on November 19-21, 2024. Every year, Tribal leaders travel from all over the United States to provide recommendations to DOJ, DOI, and HHS on the statutorily mandated topics of administering Tribal funds and programs, enhancing the safety of Indian women, strengthening the federal response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, homicide, and stalking in Tribal communities,

and improving access to crime information databases and systems. Over 450 Tribal and federal representatives attended the three-day event, at which senior officials from all three federal agencies heard testimony from nearly 50 Tribal leaders and designees describing how the federal government can support them in preventing and responding to gender-based violence in their communities. **On November 18, 2024, the Bureau of Justice Assistance held a consultation about improving Bureau of Justice Assistance grant processes.**

## **SELF-DETERMINATION**

**Practical Reforms and Other Goals to Reinforce the Effectiveness of Self-Governance and Self-Determination for Indian Tribes Act of 2019 (PROGRESS Act).** In July 2024, the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs published in the Federal Register a proposed rule implementing DOI’s Tribal Self-Governance program, in response to amendments to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), 25 U.S.C. 5301 § et seq. contained in the Practical Reforms & Other Goals to Reinforce the Effectiveness of Self Governance & Self Determination for Indian Tribes Act, known as the PROGRESS Act. DOI convened four consultation sessions in mid-July and accepted comment until mid-August. DOI is issuing a final rule by December 2024, as required by the authorization of the PROGRESS Act.

## **PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATIONS**

**Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day Proclamation 2024.** President Biden signed a proclamation commemorating Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day on May 3, 2024, to honor the individuals missing and lives lost. By signing this proclamation, President Biden recommits to working with Tribal Nations to end the violence and inequities that drive this crisis.

**Indigenous People’s Day Proclamation 2024.** President Biden signed a proclamation commemorating Indigenous People’s Day on October 11, 2024, to honor and celebrate the vast contribution of indigenous communities. By signing this proclamation, President Biden recommits to respecting and honoring Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

**National Native American Heritage Month Proclamation 2024.** President Biden signed a proclamation establishing the month of November as Native American Heritage Month as a way to honor and respect Native contributions to our Nation but also to accept and apologize for the Nation’s failed and harmful policies subjected to generations of Native peoples. From protecting and conserving more than 45 million acres of lands and water including the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary to becoming the first and only President to visit Indian Country in 10 years and formally apologize for the unspeakable harms cause to Native peoples at Federal Indian Boarding Schools, President Biden has remained committed to working in Nation-to-Nation partnership with Tribal Nations.

## AGENCY GUIDANCE ON WORKING WITH TRIBAL NATIONS

**New ICWA Interagency Webinar Series Hosted by DOJ’s National Advocacy Center.** In July 2024, DOJ, DOI, and HHS collaboratively launched a new ICWA webinar series, in direct response to feedback received during Tribal consultation on the need for additional training on the application of ICWA in state child-custody proceedings. The six-part webinar series took place between July and December 2024 and covered the following topics: ICWA and its historical context, applicable federal regulations and guidance, and federal funding opportunities and other programs available at DOI, HHS, and DOJ; the roles of Tribal and State social workers, attorneys, and judges in ICWA proceedings; and the roles of attorneys representing parents and children.

**Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).** The Administration for Children and Families Office of Community Services (ACF) completed the approval process through OMB for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program, CSBG Tribal Annual Reports and Tribal Model Plan. The Tribal Annual Report and Tribal Annual Report (Short Form) are due each year on March 31 by CSBG direct-funded Tribes and Tribal organizations as required performance reporting in the CSBG Act. The CSBG Tribal Model Plan is due each year on September 1 as required in the CSBG Act.

**Collaborated with contractor Tribal Tech, LLC to deliver the cultural humility training.** AmeriCorps conducted a cultural humility training for staff and grantees called the *Fundamentals for Working with Indigenous Peoples*. AmeriCorps was able to deliver the training to 453 participants.

**Examining Flexibilities Under Executive Order (EO) 14112 to Meet Tribal Needs.** On December 6, 2023, President Biden signed the EO 14112, Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations to Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination, which ushered in the next era of Tribal Self-Determination. The Social Security Administration’s Office of Native American Programs (ONAP) works with internal stakeholders to examine our policies and approaches and identify flexibilities to better support and partner with Tribal communities. By streamlining SSA’s internal business processes based on a critical review of agency policies and funding opportunities, we identified potential changes in policy which require legislative or regulatory change to reduce barriers. There is additional work to accomplish under EO 14112 for SSA to improve service delivery and equitable access to our programs. Our work in FY 2024 included engagements with Tribal Organizations, Tribal Leaders and with peers in Federal Agencies to learn of their expectations and plans to meet these expectations. In addition, we invited experts in Indian Country to speak directly with SSA’s national Tribal Self-Determination workgroup. The workgroup consists of legal, policy, and budget experts, among others, tasked with implementing EO 14112. With the consolidated feedback, we are learning best practices and policies which can be modified to eliminate barriers.

## NEW TRIBAL LEADER AND NATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

**In February 2024, USDA held the inaugural meeting of its Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC), along with its first in-person meeting in May 2024.** The USDA TAC will meet quarterly before presenting its annual report to Congress and the Secretary of Agriculture, carrying out its statutory authority to provide advice and guidance to the Secretary on matters relating to Tribal and Indian affairs.

**DOJ Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Tribal Leaders Council.** In response to recommendations from Tribal leaders, OVW established the Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women Tribal Leaders Council (OVW TLC) to facilitate the exchange of views, information, and advice concerning the management or implementation of federal programs established pursuant to statute. The OVW TLC will provide a forum for discussion between OVW and federally-recognized Tribal Government leaders, acting in their official capacities, further upholding Tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Tribal Nations. In fall 2024, OVW sought nominations for the Council and selected Tribal leaders representing each of the 12 BIA regions. The OVW TLC will focus on the implementation of federal programs designed to enhance the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking.

**Sacred Site Laliik at Hanford Site to Have Intertribal Commission's Guidance.** An intertribal commission was formed to help guide stewardship of a sacred site known as Rattlesnake Mountain, or "Laliik" to Tribal people, which is within federal lands managed by DOE in Washington State. The Patanaknuwit Commission (meaning "to care for together") is made up of leaders from the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Nez Perce Tribe and Wanapum Band of Priest Rapids. These Tribes have spiritual interconnectedness to Laliik and the cultural and natural resources there that have existed since time immemorial. Through these discussions, Tribes are experiencing more access, with controls in place, including a ceremonial elk hunt by the Yakama Nation last year. The DOE and DOI have been meeting with the Tribes since 2022 to discuss the potential for co-stewardship, and Secretaries Granholm and Haaland signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2023 for the two agencies to work collaboratively with the Tribes to improve management of Laliik as sacred.

## ADMINISTRATION VISITS TO INDIAN COUNTRY

**President Biden visited Indian Country as the first President to do so in 10 years.** At the Gila River Indian Community, President Biden formally apologized for the federal government's involvement and policies in federal Native American boarding schools causing generational trauma and family separations.

**Secretary Haaland makes Tribal visits a cornerstone of her efforts.** In 2024 alone, Secretary Haaland traveled to or held meetings with 140 Tribal communities to highlight the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to invest in Indian Country. Visits included every corner of the United States

**Department of Labor (DOL) Acting Secretary Julie Su visited Navajo Nation on August 7.** Acting Secretary Su met with President Nygren and other Navajo leadership. On August 8, Acting Secretary Su delivered remarks at the Council for Tribal Employment Rights (CTER) National Conference at the Gila River Resorts & Casino in Chandler, AZ.

**World Water Week IHS Field Visits.** As of summer 2024, over 800 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)-funded Sanitation Facilities Construction (SFC) projects were implemented, ranging from procurement and construction to final report. These projects, funded with over \$1.8 billion from the BIL, have made a major dent in the legacy list of Sanitation Deficiency System projects. Due to the historic nature of the BIL, the Indian Health Service (IHS) has undergone internal process improvements in the SFC program. The agency also is continuing to work closely with HHS partners. The IHS also strengthened current and established new partnerships across the federal government outside of HHS.

**USDA Agricultural Trade Attaché Mexico Visit.** On July 11, 2024, the Intertribal Agriculture Council hosted an agricultural tour of Arizona to New Mexico. The tour welcomed USDA Locally Employed (LE) Staff to develop a better understanding of U.S. agriculture. The agricultural tour benefitted the Native producers by educating LE staff from around the world enhanced on promoting Native grown products.

**DOJ Principal Travel to Indian Country.** Since the 2023 Tribal Nations Summit, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland has conducted several visits to Tribes across the country to address public safety and justice concerns, including support for Tribal law enforcement, combating drug trafficking, addressing the crisis of missing or murdered Indigenous people, public safety funding, and services for victims of crime. In March 2024, the Attorney General visited the Crow Nation in Montana. In August 2024, he, along with Interior Secretary Haaland, met with Tribal leaders from the eight Northern Pueblos at Tesuque Pueblo in New Mexico. And in August 2024, the Attorney General met with Tribal leaders from all nine Tribal Nations in South Dakota on the Yankton Sioux Tribe's Reservation, where he was joined by Senator Rounds. In May 2024, the Acting Associate Attorney General visited the Navajo Nation and the Pueblo of Acoma, and met with the All-Pueblo Council of Governors to discuss a range of public safety, environmental, and resource issues.

**On March 28, 2024, DOI and the Department of Labor (DOL) hosted a Tribal offshore wind roundtable in Eureka, CA.** The roundtable was with California Tribal leaders to discuss the importance and benefits of advancing offshore wind while maintaining Federal trust and treaty responsibilities, conducting meaningful consultations and engagements, and avoiding and minimizing potential impacts to Tribal interests.

**Secretary Cardona visited Oneida Elementary School during the 2024 Back to School Bus Tour.** Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona visited Oneida Elementary School on Oneida Nation to promote multilingualism programs that preserve Native American languages and promote tribal culture. The Secretary was welcomed by the students singing traditional songs and he learned Oneida from students in early learning programs.

## **RESTORING AND PROTECTING TRIBAL HOMELANDS**

### **TRIBAL CO-STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS**

**Increasing Tribal Co-Stewardship of Lands and Waters.** The Department of the Interior (DOI) will release its third annual report on Tribal co-stewardship, which outlines implementation of Joint Secretary's Order 3403 and highlights agreements entered into in the past year. During the last year of the Biden-Harris Administration, DOI has entered into 69 stewardship agreements with Indian Tribes, bringing the total agreements to nearly 150 since the Secretary's order was signed. Throughout 2024, DOI hosted seven co-stewardship and Indian Law trainings across the country for Senior Executive Service and land managers. Nearly 400 leadership and staff participated in the workshops, which included presentations by Tribal leaders and nationally recognized experts in the fields of Indian law and natural resources management.

**USDA has invested about \$47 million through 40 agreements to date in FY 2024 through Tribal co-stewardship agreements and land management/forestry grants to Tribes.** USDA expects to award another \$23 million in 35 additional agreements within the next several months. These investments include \$18 million in Tribal Forest Protection Act work supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Projects support hazardous fuels risk reduction, including prescribed use of fire, to help make reservations and communities safer and watershed restoration to provide clean drinking water. All projects will incorporate Indigenous knowledge to support long-term sustainable land use.

**Tribal Co-Stewardship and Other Tribal Investments.** In FY 2024, the USDA Forest Service invested approximately \$113 million in 121 agreements with Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, with more than half of these focused on co-stewardship of the National Forest System. This work spans a range of Tribal and Forest Service priorities, honors treaty rights, and protects and maintains resources important to Tribes and cultural lifeways. Co-stewardship investments include 14 Tribal Forest Protection Act 638 demonstration project agreements in the amount of \$15 million, 21 Good Neighbor agreements that have invested more than \$28 million in restoration, and \$18 million in other instruments such as Participating, Stewardship, and Challenge Cost Share agreements. Co-stewardship includes integration of Indigenous Knowledge in land management decisions, reducing wildfire and other risks to Tribal lands and communities through reduction of hazardous fuels, invasive species management, and other



actions, support of traditional food systems through habitat improvements for fish and wildlife, and capacity building through youth and other workforce development.

**Standing Rock Sioux Tribe USDA Forest Service Dakota Prairie National Grassland Co-Stewardship Agreement (Northern Region).** In August 2024, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and USDA Forest Service signed a co-stewardship agreement for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands focused on bison restoration that includes transitioning a grazing allotment from cattle to a bison operation, reconstructing or new construction of critical allotment infrastructure, restoring previously cultivated lands within the allotment to native grasslands species, planting native woody species, and integrating a youth engagement component to this work.

**Great Sioux Nation Tribes and USDA Forest Service Memorandum of Understanding to Co-Steward the Black Hills National Forest (Rocky Mountain Region/R2).** In August 2024, the Rocky Mountain Region and eight Tribes from the Great Sioux Nation — Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, Flandreau Santee, Lower Brule, Oglala Lakota, Rosebud, Sisseton-Wahpeton, Spirit Lake, and Standing Rock — signed a historic MOU to outline the co-stewardship of portions of the Black Hills National Forest. The MOU establishes an ambitious framework for consultation, land and water conservation, sustainable forest stewardship, landscape scale restoration, cultural resource and sacred site protection, fuel reduction, wildfire management, youth programs, workforce development and enhanced visitor relations. This is one of the first MOUs with the Tribes and the Forest over the Black Hills where the Tribes hold ancestral and cultural ties to the land.

**Pueblo of Tesuque, USDA Forest Service, and DOI Bureau of Land Management Memorandum of Understanding to Co-Steward the Caja del Rio Plateau (Southwest Region/R3).** Through a Memorandum of Understanding signed on November 1, 2024, the Pueblo of Tesuque, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management seek to: develop a collaborative program to address illegal dumping, looting, and desecration of sacred places within the Caja del Rio Plateau; conduct a landscape-wide ethnographic study; secure access to and the protection of places of cultural importance; and include Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Federal land management decisions. Through this framework, the Pueblo and its Federal partners will collaborate in natural resource management that maintains Pueblo cultural lifeways and works to ensure protection, preservation, and access to culturally significant Pueblo sites within the boundaries of land managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

**The Shoshone Paiute Tribes Firewood Banks (Intermountain Region/R4).** The Shoshone Paiute Tribes received funding under the Infrastructure and Investments and Jobs Act Firewood Banks program. This direct Tribal investment contributes to a broader Wood for Life/Wood Project team which has grown in the past three years to become an integral service to the community of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, focusing on Tribal elders, single parent homes, and needy families. Burning firewood on the reservation is a way of life that has been

going on for generations. Most homes on the reservation have a wood stove and families burn wood to stay warm during the winter. Burning firewood also helps to offset the cost of their electric bills in colder months. This work will process and deliver an estimated 1000 cords of firewood to families and members of the community this year and next.

**The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (Pacific Northwest Region/R6).** This agreement initiates Phase 2 of work to improve critical habitat for threatened Steelhead and Bull Trout in the Granite Creek ‘Priority Watershed’ and in support of the Mid-Columbia Steelhead Recovery Plan. This mine reclamation and habitat restoration contributes to CTUIR’s commitment to “to protect, restore, and enhance the First Foods – water, salmon, deer, cous, and huckleberry – for the perpetual cultural, economic, and sovereign benefit of the CTUIR.” Long-standing restoration efforts to benefit Tribal reserved rights to fish, hunt and gather foods and medicines enables CTUIR to be a strong partner of the Forest Service to restore the health of these unique special habitats and ecosystem functions

**Leasing of Osage Reservation Lands for Oil and Gas Mining Regulations.** Since 2012, DOI has worked with the Osage Nation and Osage Minerals Council to revise the regulations in 25 C.F.R. Part 226 that govern the administration of the Osage Mineral Estate. The current regulations are outdated, do not account for technological advancements, do not reflect modern operations within the Osage Mineral Estate, and are inconsistent with both industry standards and the Department’s regulations governing oil and gas development throughout the rest of Indian country. The final rule plans to address these deficiencies, strengthen Interior Department management of the Osage Mineral Estate, and improve production accountability to work towards ensuring the Osage Nation receives the full value of its oil and gas resources while promoting safe and environmentally sound development. The royalty rate (floor) of no less than 16 2/3 percent for oil and gas is not planned to change in the final rule and hopes to ensure the Osage Nation and Headright holders benefit from their resources.

**Co-Land Management and Co-Stewardship Opportunities with Tribal Nations.** USACE developed uniform approach for co-land management and co-stewardship opportunities between USACE and Tribal partners.

**Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Capacity Building and Collaboration Agreement.** In April 2023, BOEM signed a Cooperative Agreement with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to help the Tribe manage and analyze environmental information provided by offshore wind developers, develop best practices for management of data and information concerning cultural and archaeological places important to the Tribe, and facilitate the nomination of Nantucket Sound as a National Historic Landmark.

FY

## **TRIBAL LANDS PROTECTION AND EXPANSION**

**Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Section 17(d)(1) Withdrawals.** The Department of the Interior finalized the decision to retain protections for 28 million acres of public lands across

Alaska, which many Alaska Native Tribes, Native Corporations and Tribal entities have noted are vital to protecting important natural, cultural and subsistence resources. The action came in response to the previous Administration's unlawful decision in its final days to end longstanding protections (known as withdrawals) without sufficient analysis of the potential impacts of such a decision on subsistence and other important resources, appropriate Tribal consultation, and without compliance with other legal requirements. This sweeping action would have opened millions of acres of public lands to extractive development activities, such as mining and oil and gas drilling, and removed the federal subsistence priority from millions of acres.

**GSA Federal Excess Real Property Transfer to Tribes.** GSA is responsible for promoting effective use of federal real property assets, as well as the disposal of real property that is no longer mission-critical to federal agencies. GSA, while working together with partner federal agencies, state and local governments, non-profit organizations, business groups, and citizens, leaves a lasting positive impact on communities by making valuable government real estate available for numerous public purposes. In FY24, GSA supported the transfer of excess property to Tribes: 5 properties in Oklahoma, 2 properties in Alaska, 1 in South Dakota, and 1 in Utah.

**Stockmore Ranger Station to the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation.** A National Forest Administrative Site for the Ashley National Forest in Utah that is within the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation's historic exterior boundaries was determined to be excess to the agency's needs by USDA and the General Services Administration. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and Ute Tribe are taking final steps needed to accept the transfer of 31.4 acres to be taken into trust for the Ute Indian Tribe.

**Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.** In June 2024, the USDA transferred administrative jurisdiction to 11,778 acres of land (Federal land), located on the Chippewa National Forest in Cass County, Minnesota, to the Secretary of the Interior to be held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Leech Lake Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe and to be considered part of the Leech Lake Reservation. This transfer implemented Public Law 116-255, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation Restoration Act. The restored lands will enable the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe to invest in future generations with economic and residential development. Lands subject to transfer hold historical and cultural significance to the Band.

**Yavapai-Apache Nation Land Exchange.** In November 2024, the Yavapai-Apache Nation and the U.S. Forest Service finalized a land exchange allowing the Nation to reclaim a portion of its ancestral homelands. These restored lands will open the door to new economic development opportunities for the Nation as well as provide much-needed space for new housing for its people. The exchange includes 11 parcels of National Forest System land totaling approximately 3,207 acres within the Prescott and Coconino National Forests for 6 parcels of non-Federal land totaling approximately 4,782 acres, within the Prescott, Coconino, Apache-Sitgreaves, and Kaibab National Forests. Nearly all of the 3,207 acres the Nation will acquire are contiguous to the Nation's existing Reservation lands near Camp Verde, Arizona.

**Interagency Working Group on Tribal Agricultural Lands.** USDA and DOI are working together to build a permanent Interagency Working Group on Tribal Agricultural Lands to ensure we successfully change the way both agencies support agriculture throughout Indian Country. USDA participated in a Bureau of Indian Affairs training in June 2024 to deepen understanding of Tribal land tenure, and USDA will coordinate DOI-BIA in-person and online joint trainings in 2025. The Working Group expects to have a joint agreement in 2024 addressing the coordination of cultural resource protection under NHPA Section 106 to streamline project implementation actions that use federal dollars.

**New Tribal Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities.** USDA’s Farm Service Agency awarded funding to projects that will deliver important climate-smart impacts for farmers, ranchers, foresters, and communities nationwide, including to over 20 Tribal Nation, Tribal group-led, and Tribal partner projects. For example, USDA funded the “Recognizing the Role of Buffalo Production as a Climate-Smart Commodity” project, in which the Intertribal Buffalo Council and other partners plan to work with 76 Tribes to incentivize their use of climate-smart practices related to buffalo herds. The project’s Tribal Buffalo Market Initiative plans will assist Tribes in marketing their buffalo as a climate-smart commodity, develop sustainable programs for historically underserved Tribal buffalo producers, and create a Tribally led national strategy for education and outreach of buffalo as a climate-smart agricultural product.

## SACRED SITES

**Sacred Sites Best Practices Training.** Under the coordination of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, federal agencies that signed the 2021 Sacred Sites Memorandum of Understanding developed a Best Practices Guide (BPG) for the management and protection of sacred sites on federal lands and waters, informed by consultations with Tribal and Native Hawaiian leaders. In line with their commitment from the 2023 Tribal Nations Summit, WHCNA and the signatory agencies initiated a training program for leadership and key staff to effectively implement the BPG. Since July 2024, this training has been actively deployed across agencies, garnering positive feedback from participants and enhancing the safeguarding of sacred sites.

**Hanford National Monument Sacred Sites Memorandum of Understanding.** The DOI and DOE entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a collaborative framework to improve protection of/access to Rattlesnake Mountain, or “Laliik” located within the Hanford nuclear site in Benton County, Washington. This effort will increase access to conduct traditional harvesting and enable cultural and ceremonial activities for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe, Yakama Tribes, and the Wanapum Band. Since the announcement of the MOU at the Tribal Nations Summit in 2023, the Tribes have entered into an intergovernmental agreement to create an intertribal commission to work with the DOI and DOE.

**Protecting Molok Luyuk.** In May 2024, President Biden used his authority under the Antiquities Act to expand the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in northern California. The addition of nearly 14,000 acres to the national monument, which is jointly

managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S Forest Service, honors the requests of Tribal Nations to more fully protect an area sacred to the Patwin people. The President also renamed the ridgeline at the heart of the expansion, previously known as “Walker Ridge,” to Molok Loyuk, which means Condor Ridge in the language of the Patwin people.

## GRAZING AND LAND USE

**HEARTH Act Ordinance Approvals.** Under the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Home Ownership Act, or HEARTH Act, Tribes with Secretary of the Interior-approved Tribal leasing regulations are authorized to negotiate and enter into leases without further approvals by the Federal Government. To date, 112 Tribal leasing regulations have been approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

**Federal Subsistence Board Rule.** A final rule was published in February 2024 to add three Alaska Native seats to the Federal Subsistence Board. This proposed rule would revise the regulations concerning the composition of the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) by adding three public members nominated or recommended by federally recognized Tribal governments, requiring that those nominees have personal knowledge of and direct experience with subsistence uses in rural Alaska including Alaska Native subsistence uses, defining requirements used for the selection of the Board Chair, affirming the Secretaries' authority to replace members from the Board, and affirming the Secretaries' responsibility and oversight regarding Board decisions while incorporating a ratification requirement.

**Moving the Office of Subsistence Management.** In July of 2024, the Department of the Interior completed the transfer of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Office of the Secretary. This move is one of many that the Department is making to strengthen federal subsistence policies and structure and ensure that federally qualified subsistence users and Alaska Native peoples have an opportunity for meaningful engagement in its implementation.

**National Petroleum Reserve.** Following engagement with the public, Alaska Native Tribes, and Alaska Native Corporations, DOI's BLM finalized the Management and Protection of the National Protection Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) rule that will ensure maximum protection for significant resource values on the more than 13 million acres of Special Areas in the western Arctic, while supporting subsistence uses and needs for Alaska Native communities.

## TREATY RIGHTS

**Trainings on Tribal Treaty Rights.** As part of the WHCNAA's Tribal Treaty Rights MOU, the Council's multi-agency membership has developed the Tribal Treaty Rights Training course for federal employees working with Tribal Nations or policies that impact them. This training, designed with input from Tribal leadership, provides a foundational understanding of treaty-protected rights, reserved rights, and the trust relationship with federally recognized Tribes. It is based on WHCNAA's Tribal Treaty Rights Best Practices Guide, ensuring that federal employees are well-equipped to engage respectfully and effectively with Tribal Nations.

**Procedures for Federal Acknowledgment of Indian Tribes (25 CFR Part 83).** On July 12, 2024, DOI Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs announced a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on 25 CFR Part 83, Procedure for Federal Acknowledgement of Indian Tribes. The scope of the rulemaking is limited to whether DOI should move forward with a limited re-petitioning option to allow previously unsuccessful petitioners to petition DOI for federal acknowledgement once again. Previously unsuccessful petitioners would be required to make a threshold showing that either (1) new evidence; or (2) a change in the regulations (from a previous version of Part 83 to the current version) justifies reconsideration of their petition. § 83.48(a). The comment period for the NPRM closed on September 13, 2024, and DOI is now reviewing comments in preparation for a Final Rule.

## REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT

**Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD).** The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) operated aerosol bio-detection equipment in partnership with state and local entities across the nation. CWMD's BioWatch program has strengthened preparedness of Tribal Nations by establishing a relationship with Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Emergency Management (BIA OEM). This relationship ensures any bio incident detected by the BioWatch program will include necessary notification and response support to any affected Tribal Nations via the BIA OEM Tribal Assistance Coordination Group (TAC-G). DHS also provided radiological and nuclear threat detection equipment and technical support to the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina in cooperation with the North Carolina State Highway Patrol (NCSHP) and FBI Weapons of Mass Destruction coordinator during their homecoming celebration events held in Lumberton, North Carolina.

**Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers.** Established in 2023 and continuing into 2024 the EPA created a national network of technical assistance providers to help gain access to federal funds for grassroots Tribal members, Tribal organizations, and Tribal governments. The Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers (TCTAC's) are working with other federal agencies within the Thriving Communities Network that include the Grantmaker program that allows 11 organizations across the country to provide easy-to-access sub awards to all Tribes and their communities as well. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights partnered with EPA's Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) to host several roadshows in venues with Tribal connections in year one and the lead national TCTAC for Tribes, the National Indian Health Board, is working in partnership with regional TCTAC's and EPA staff to provide national outreach to grassroots Tribal communities in year two of the five-year TCTAC program.

## CONTAMINATION CLEANUP

**Solid Waste Training for Tribal Employees.** Beginning the end of August 2024, Tribal solid waste staff will be able to take pre-recorded online courses such as Collection & Transfer, Landfill Operations, and Safety Training, with live training opportunities potentially available in the

future. The courses include individual classes as well as certifications (e.g., Manager of Landfill Operations). This opportunity stems through an Interagency Agreement that EPA's American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO) has with the Indian Health Service (IHS) to provide solid waste training to Tribes. AIEO provides funding to cover half of the costs of the cooperative work done under two contracts that IHS has with the Institute of Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP) and the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). This opportunity leverages EPA's Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP) funding and IHS solid waste funding.

**Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Contaminated Lands Initiative.** EPA launched the Contaminated Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Lands Grant Program in 2023, which provides funding for assessment and remediation of legacy contaminated sites on conveyed Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) lands. The program has received a total of \$40 million in appropriations over the last two FYs. In September 2023, EPA awarded three Alaska Native Corporations to receive over \$2.5 million in an initial round of funding. Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation received funding to assess lands impacted by a fuel spill and conduct lead and asbestos testing and abatement at the former Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL) in Utqiagvik, AK. Tyonek Native Corporation conducted their initial field efforts in the summer of 2024 with the funding they received for the characterization and removal of abandoned drums and soil contamination on the Iniskin Peninsula. Ounalashka Corporation began field work, under their cooperative agreement in May 2024, and removed over 500 tons of polychlorinated biphenyls PCB contaminated soil adjacent to a WWII-era Navy mess-hall in Unalaska, AK. Two additional projects were funded in October 2024 by the EPA for a total of \$3.7 million. The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council received funding to address legacy contamination from railroad fueling operations near the Tanana Community Hall in Tanana, AK, and the Aleut Corporation received funding to address asbestos contamination from a former U.S. Navy warehouse in Adak, AK.

**EPA launches Tribal Waste Management Operations and Maintenance Quantification Initiative.** EPA is working to address the lack of solid waste services for Tribal communities. Lack of service often leads to open dumping, which is harmful to the environment and subsistence lifeways. Key to developing a sustainable waste program is to understand the costs of operation and maintenance services and to develop a proactive funding strategy. With this goal in mind, EPA initiated a Solid Waste Operating and Maintenance Cost-Of-Service Quantification Study and completed six Tribal site visits at locations with diversity in terms of population, geography, and economic conditions. For each site, EPA developed a report that includes the baseline funding level needed to provide waste services. Each report also includes demographic information, infrastructure, and waste market challenges. All six reports will be used in the next phase of the initiative which will involve cost-modeling applicable to all federally recognized Tribes. Tribal consultation for the final report is anticipated to occur in March 2025.

**IHS Sanitation Facilities Program.** In 2024, the IHS Division of Sanitation Facilities (SFC) continued to maximize opportunities created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL), which provides \$3.5 billion over five years to the IHS to develop critical infrastructure, including a safe supply of drinking water, reliable sewage systems, and solid waste disposal facilities. Currently, over 800 BIL-funded SFC projects are in some state of implementation, ranging from procurement to construction to final report.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

**Supporting Tribes and Other Communities Considering Voluntary Relocation.** The Community-Driven Relocation Subcommittee of the National Climate Task Force released *The Opportunities for Federal Support of Community-Driven Relocation* report, which provides background on voluntary community-driven relocation to avoid climate and pollution-related hazards, an overview of the current Federal legal and programmatic landscape, and next steps that Federal agencies can take to support Tribes and other communities contemplating relocation.

**Tribal Climate Resilience.** The Department of the Interior announced \$120 million in 2024, supported by President Biden’s Investing in America agenda, to fund climate resilience projects for 102 Tribes and nine Tribal organizations. The program is part of a nearly \$560 million investment for Tribal climate resilience programs through the Department’s Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and annual appropriations. In addition to Tribal Climate Resilience, the Biden-Harris administration has also launched a Voluntary Community-Driven Relocation Program with \$115 million of funds plus \$17 million from FEMA and \$2 million from the Denali Commission. This funding is part of more than a collective \$50 billion invested by the President’s Investing in America agenda to advance climate adaptation and resilience across the nation, including in communities that are most vulnerable to climate impacts.

**Environmental Mitigation under the Department of Defense (DoD) Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program.** DoD administered the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program at \$16.5M in FY 2024 to address environmental effects of past DoD actions on Indian lands and on other locations where DoD, an Indian tribe, and the landowner agree that such mitigation is appropriate. Clean-up projects enable Tribes to resume traditional and cultural subsistence activities and remediate threats to human health and the environment.

**Tribal Provisions of the Bipartisan Permitting Reform Implementation (BPRI) Rule.** As part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s all-of-government effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal permitting processes, the White House Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) finalized the Bipartisan Permitting Reform Implementation (BPRI) rule, codified at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508. The BPRI rule improves federal agencies’ engagement with Tribal Nations in the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and encourages agencies to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into environmental



reviews. It also directs agencies to consider under NEPA any effects of their actions on the reserved rights of Tribal Nations. In response to concerns from Tribes that project schedules could be too short to allow Nation-to-Nation consultation to occur, the final rule added time needed for Tribal consultation as a factor that agencies may consider in setting project schedules.

**Carbon Sequestration and Soil Health.** In 2024, the Departments of the Treasury, Agriculture and Energy, alongside the White House, published a Joint Statement on Voluntary Carbon Markets. Voluntary Carbon Markets available to Indian Country continue to build equity within large landscapes, that include usual and accustomed Tribal territories. Soil carbon sequestration represents a growing opportunity in these markets, and DOI's Office of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs continues to uplift soil health through policy integration and enactment through co-stewardship within the Office of Strategic Partnership. These efforts include Departmental, non-Government organizations, Bureau and Tribal inclusion for ecosystem restoration. The promotion of soil health coincides with the large landscape actions and implementation of BIL projects in 2025.

**New Tribal Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities.** USDA's Farm Service Agency awarded funding to projects that will deliver important climate-smart impacts for farmers, ranchers, foresters, and communities nationwide, including to over 20 Tribal Nation, Tribal group-led, and Tribal partner projects. For example, USDA funded the "Recognizing the Role of Buffalo Production as a Climate-Smart Commodity" project, in which the Intertribal Buffalo Council and other partners plan to work with 76 Tribes to incentivize their use of climate-smart practices related to buffalo herds. The project's Tribal Buffalo Market Initiative plans will assist Tribes in marketing their buffalo as a climate-smart commodity, develop sustainable programs for historically underserved Tribal buffalo producers, and create a Tribally-led national strategy for education and outreach of buffalo as a climate-smart agricultural product.

**DOJ Environmental Justice.** Following last year's Tribal Nations Summit, the DOJ has held four regional summits to help further identify, refine, and develop ways for the federal government and Tribal governments to obtain litigation outcomes that will better address localized environmental challenges. The Summits deliver on the promise in the DOJ's Comprehensive Environmental Justice Enforcement Strategy to work with Tribal governments and other federal agencies to "address and incorporate Tribal concerns into the Department's enforcement work." Between July 2023 and July 2024, a total of four regional summits were conducted in the following locations across the United States: Spokane, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and San Bernardino, California.

Between May and August 2024, the Department's Offices of Tribal Justice (OTJ) and Environmental Justice (OEJ) hosted Tribal consultation on environmental justice efforts under consideration that have Tribal implications. The focus of the consultation was the Department's environmental justice work in Tribal communities broadly, to seek feedback and input on a draft Tribal Environmental Justice Policy, and in furtherance of the Department's efforts to develop an

Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, as required by Executive Order 14096, Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All (2023).

**EPA’s Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Program.** EPA’s \$5 billion Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program supports states, local governments, Tribes, and territories to establish and implement climate action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution and to assist with the transition to a clean energy economy. In fall 2023, under phase 1 of the program, EPA awarded \$25 million to fund 90 planning grants serving over 200 Tribes and Tribal consortia. In spring 2024, Tribal planning grant recipients submitted their first deliverables due under the planning grants: Priority Climate Action Plans. Additionally, in spring 2024, under phase 2 of the CPRG program, EPA closed two grant competitions for implementation grants with funding totaling approximately \$4.6 billion, including a \$300 million competition for Tribal and territorial applicants only. EPA anticipates announcing selected applicants under both competitions this summer, with funding expected to be awarded by the end of 2024.

**Justice40 Initiative.** For the first time in our nation’s history, the Federal Government has made it a goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution, including federally-recognized Tribes. President Biden made this historic commitment, launching the Justice40 Initiative, when he signed Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, within days of taking office. Through the President’s Investing in America agenda, federal agencies are making historic levels of investment to advance the Justice40 goal, including in Indian Country.

## **AFFIRMATIVE LITIGATION AND PROMOTING JUSTICE FOR TRIBES AND NATIVE COMMUNITIES**

**DOJ Affirmative Trespass Cases.** DOJ filed a series of complaints in 2023 and 2024 to address trespass on the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation. DOJ has now filed 20 complaints in this Administration, and plans to file more in the coming months. Of the cases filed, DOJ obtained default judgment against one trespasser, secured favorable rulings in several cases, and has reached tentative settlements in multiple cases.

*United States v. Town of Lac du Flambeau, (W.D. Wis.).* The United States filed this affirmative litigation against the Town of Lac du Flambeau for trespass and ejection on lands of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians and individual Indian landowners. DOJ continued to litigate this case in 2024.

*United States v. Leroy & Katherine Howell (D. Idaho).* The United States filed suit against the defendants for trespass, ejection, nuisance, and conversion in connection with their illegal use and occupation of land and resources owned by the United States in trust for the Nez Perce Tribe and a group of Indian allottees. As part of a 2020 settlement, the defendants agreed to clean up and remediate, under the supervision of the United States, the damage their activities had caused

to trust lands, allotted land, and their own property, which they would sell to the Tribe. In 2024, DOJ/Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) and the Tribe are jointly seeking to compel defendants to comply with the settlement agreement.

*United States v. Union Pacific Railroad (D. Idaho)*. DOJ filed this affirmative litigation against the Union Pacific Railroad to quiet title to certain lands within the City of Pocatello for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. Our complaint explains that the Tribes agreed in 1881 to cede a portion of their reservation to the United States to allow the federal government to transfer the land to Union Pacific’s predecessor for railroad-related uses and that, as early as 1936, the railroad began leasing a portion of the land in Pocatello, Idaho, for non-railroad uses (and that such non-railroad uses continue today).

**Tribal Trespass Toolkit, Resources for U.S. Attorneys’ Offices.** DOJ/ENRD, working with experienced practitioners, assembled legal resources on how to address trespass on Tribal lands, which have been publicized and posted on training sites for U.S. Attorneys’ Offices. DOJ/ENRD, working with the National Advocacy Center, the Department of the Interior’s Solicitor’s Office and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Mexico, also held a virtual webinar in October, “Protecting Tribal Lands from Trespass: Furthering Environmental Justice and Supporting Tribal Self-Determination,” attended by approximately 170 federal participants.

**DOJ Civil Enforcement of Federal Environmental Laws.** *United States v. Holly Energy Partners-Operating, L.P. (W.D. Okla.)*. In March 2024, the district court entered a consent decree resolving the United States’ claims against Holly Energy Partners-Operating, L.P. (HEP), and Osage Pipe Line Company, LLC under the Clean Water Act for discharges of 7,110 barrels of crude oil from the Osage pipeline on allotted Tribal land owned by members of the Sac and Fox Nation. Under the settlement, the defendants will pay \$7.4 million in civil penalties. The settlement also requires the companies to complete the cleanup and remediation of the impacted area, improve their pipeline integrity program, provide additional training, and expand their spill notification efforts for Tribal governments. The United States closely engaged with Sac and Fox Nation’s environmental, cultural resources, and realty offices, as well as impacted Tribal members, throughout the case.

**Early Settlements Concerning Lower Duwamish River.** DOJ continued its work in securing a series of early settlements with polluting parties to address natural resource damages in the Lower Duwamish River. The Elliott Bay Trustee Council, which includes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the State of Washington, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and the Suquamish Indian Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation (collectively, “Trustees”), has been working closely together since 1990 on damage assessment and restoration in the Lower Duwamish River. This year, two settlements have been reached with Defendants Crowley Marine Services, Inc., 8th Avenue Terminals, Inc., the Washington State Department of Transportation, and General Recycling of Washington (these have been lodged in the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington). The settlements require the creation of channel habitat and funding of restoration credits, as well as payments to the Trustees for additional restoration and to provide compensation for past and

future natural resource damage assessment costs. In recent years, DOJ also reached settlements with the Boeing Company (2010); the City of Seattle (2021); Vigor Industrial and Exxon Mobil Corp. (2021); and Lynden parties (2023).

*United States v. PotlatchDeltic Land & Lumber, LLC (D. Idaho).* In May 2024, the United States District Court for the District of Idaho entered a consent decree that DOJ negotiated with PotlatchDeltic Land & Lumber, LLC, to resolve alleged Clean Water Act violations related to stormwater discharges from the company's sawmill and lumberyard facility in St. Maries, Idaho. The settlement requires the defendant to pay a \$225,000 civil penalty. The settlement also requires the defendant to implement injunctive relief designed to ensure it will meet the compliance schedule in its current Clean Water Act permit. The settlement requires the company to implement mitigation actions to offset the environmental harms of its discharges, including replacing four culverts on its property to provide fish passage and improve fish habitat. The company also will record a conservation easement that prohibits timber harvesting along several streams on its properties for 100 years to provide stream buffers and protect habitat. The mitigation actions were developed in coordination with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and the Tribe will be the holder of the conservation easement.

*United States v. Pope Resources (W.D. Wash).* In June 2024, DOJ lodged a proposed consent decree with the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington to resolve the United States' claims (asserted on behalf of various trustees for natural resource damages) against Pope Resources, OPG Properties LLC, and OPG Port Gamble LLC. The trustees are the Department of the Interior, the State of Washington (through the Washington Department of Ecology), the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, the Skokomish Indian Tribe, and the Suquamish Indian Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation. The settlement will require the defendants to perform two habitat restoration projects (worth nearly \$10 million) developed by the trustees. These projects will restore 15 acres of critical habitat and protect about 10 more acres within Port Gamble Bay on the Kitsap Peninsula, restoring shoreline processes and enhancing habitat for benthic invertebrates, forage fish, shellfish, and juvenile salmonids in the Bay. The settlement also requires the defendants to fund future long-term maintenance, monitoring, and stewardship of the project, and pay the trustees' past and estimated future costs for natural resource damages assessment and restoration implementation and oversight.

- *United States v. Marathon Oil (D.N.D.).* In September 2024, the court entered a settlement reached by the Department of Justice and Environmental Protection Agency with Marathon Oil Company to resolve Clean Air Act violations at the company's oil and gas production operations on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota. The settlement requires that Marathon pay a civil penalty of \$64.5 million, the largest ever for violations of the Clean Air Act at stationary sources, invest in extensive compliance measures estimated to cost \$177 million, and obtain permits with innovative facility-wide volatile organic compound (VOC) emission limits at production facilities. These actions will eliminate nearly 110,000 tons of VOC emissions over five years. The same measures will also reduce the equivalent of over

2.25 million tons of carbon-dioxide emissions over the next five years, or approximately the reductions achieved by taking 487,000 cars off the road for one year.

**DOJ Litigation Arising in Alaska.** *United States v. Alaska (D. Alaska & 9th Cir.)*. DOJ filed this civil action to challenge the State of Alaska's orders that interfere with federal management of subsistence salmon fishing on the 180-mile segment of the Kuskokwim River within the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. The State orders purport to open the river for subsistence gillnet fishing by all Alaskans during periods of time when the Federal Subsistence (FSB) determined that fishing should be limited to qualified federal subsistence users. In March 2024, the district court granted summary judgment in the United States' favor. Alaska appealed, and DOJ is now defending the FSB's decision in the Ninth Circuit.

*State of Alaska v. Newland (D. Alaska)*. The United States defended a November 2022 DOI decision to acquire for non-gaming purposes a parcel of land in downtown Juneau for the benefit of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. The State of Alaska challenged Interior's decision, alleging that the decision violates the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. DOJ achieved a partial victory in the case in 2024, successfully arguing that the Secretary of the Interior does have the authority to take land into trust and that authority was not altered by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

**Other DOJ Affirmative Litigation.** As a general matter, DOJ brings affirmative litigation to protect the almost 60 million acres of lands held in trust by the United States for Indian Tribes and their members as well as the rights and resources associated with those lands. These cases are central to preserving sustainable Tribal homelands, assuring cultural and economic hunting, fishing, and gathering, and defending Tribal sovereignty as manifested through governance over resource management and land use. This litigation includes important categories of cases that are not described above. For example, DOJ is protecting hunting and fishing rights in *United States v. Michigan (W.D. Mich.)*. DOJ filed this action on behalf of the United States to assert the off-reservation treaty fishing and hunting rights of the Tribal successors to the signatories of the 1836 Treaty of Washington. Through consent decrees entered in 1985 and 2000, the litigation secured the rights of these five Tribes (the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians) to fish certain waters of the Great Lakes, to regulate Tribal fishing, and to allocate the resource between the Tribes and the State of Michigan. The parties, with the exception of the Sault Tribe, filed a proposed decree with the court on December 11, 2022. In 2022, the Division worked with the Tribes and the State of Michigan to negotiate a new consent decree concerning the Great Lakes fisheries. On August 24, 2023, the district court overruled all objections to the Proposed Decree and approved the Decree in favor of the United States and the other stipulating parties. DOJ is defending the district court's decision in the Sixth Circuit.

**DOJ Defensive Litigation.** DOJ handles a large docket of defensive cases of interest to Tribes, including cases in which DOJ defends DOI decisions that benefit Tribes. New cases in the past year include the following:

Historic Agreement Addressing Long-Running Litigation Concerning Operation of Dams in the Columbia River Basin. Following over two and half years of mediation, the United States, environmental organizations, the States of Washington and Oregon, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Nez Perce Tribe reached a landmark agreement to address long-running litigation related to the operation of 14 dams in the Pacific Northwest. In the underlying litigation, *National Wildlife Federation v. National Marine Fisheries Service* (D. Or.), DOJ/ENRD is defending challenges to the compliance of five federal agencies (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) with the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and/or the Northwest Power Act. In February 2024, in light of the agreement, the court granted a stay of the litigation through December 13, 2028, so that the federal government can undertake commitments to restore the Columbia River Basin’s fish and wildlife resources. This agreement follows an historic settlement announced in September 2023 addressing the Columbia River Treaty Tribes’ fishing rights in the Upper Columbia River Basin. That prior agreement secured hundreds of millions of dollars to fund Tribally led pilot projects and ultimately reintroduce salmon in blocked habitats in the Upper Basin of the Columbia River.

*Legend Lake Property Owners Ass’n v. U.S. Dep’t of Interior* (E.D. Wisc.). DOJ successfully defended final Interior decisions to acquire certain property in trust for the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin pursuant to the Menominee Restoration Act. In February 2024, the district court adopted the United States’ arguments that Plaintiff’s restrictive covenants—purporting to block DOI’s acquisition of the land into trust—were preempted by federal law.

*West Flagler, LLC v. Haaland* (D.C. Cir.). On June 30, 2023, the D.C. Circuit reversed the district court’s decision that the Secretary of the Interior violated the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) by taking no action (and thus allowing to go into effect by operation of statute) a gaming compact between the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the State of Florida. The compact contemplates that the Tribe may accept wagers placed by users outside Indian lands through its online sportsbook. On the central question of whether the Seminole-Florida compact violates IGRA, the court adopted the United States’ argument that while IGRA only *authorizes* gaming on Indian land, it permits discussion of gaming outside Indian land, and the compact therefore appropriately authorizes the Tribe’s actions on Indian land, while leaving for state law to decide whether the placement of bets from outside Indian land is legal. On June 17, 2024, the Supreme Court denied West Flagler’s petition for a writ of certiorari in this matter, bringing the litigation to a close.

*Littlefield et al. v. U.S. Dep’t of Interior* (1st Cir.). The case concerned a challenge to DOI’s decision to acquire certain lands in trust for the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe in Massachusetts. The trust lands established the initial reservation for the Tribe and provide a homeland upon which they can govern and engage in economic development. DOI first approved the acquisition in 2015, which plaintiffs successfully challenged in 2016 on the grounds that the Secretary of Interior misinterpreted a portion of the Indian Reorganization Act. On remand, DOI reevaluated

its authority to acquire the land in trust under the statute and concluded in 2018 that it did not have authority. The Tribe successfully challenged that determination, resulting in another remand to the agency. In 2021, following further review, Interior issued a new decision concluding it did have the requisite authority under the Indian Reorganization Act to acquire the land in trust. Plaintiffs challenged the decision, and DOJ/ENRD successfully defended the decision in both the district and appellate courts. On April 1, 2024, the Supreme Court denied David Littlefield et al.'s petition for writ of certiorari in the matter, bringing this long-running litigation to a close.

*Village of Hobart v. U.S. Dep't of Interior (E.D. Wisc.)*. DOJ/ENRD is defending Interior's decision to acquire certain lands in trust for the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin. Among other things, the suit seeks declaratory relief that the Indian Reorganization Act, enacted ninety years ago this year, is unconstitutional on various grounds, and seeks to invalidate the agency decision on that basis. DOJ continues to litigate this case in 2024.

*Morrison County v. U.S. Dep't of Interior (D. Minn.)*. DOJ/ENRD is defending Interior's decision to acquire certain lands in trust for the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians in Minnesota. Similar to the *Village of Hobart* case, the suit also seeks a ruling that the Indian Reorganization Act is unconstitutional, and that the agency decision should be invalidated on that basis. DOJ continues to litigate this case in 2024.

*Arizona State Legislature v. Biden & Heaton v. Biden (D. Ariz.)*. DOJ/ENRD is defending lawsuits filed by several plaintiffs to challenge President Biden's Proclamation 10,606 establishing the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni-Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument. The plaintiffs claim that President Biden lacked statutory authority under the Antiquities Act to create the Monument, that his exercise of authority to establish the Monument violated other federal laws, and that the Antiquities Act is unconstitutional. The Havasupai Tribe, Hopi Tribe, and the Navajo Nation have moved to intervene as defendants, citing (among other things) the importance of the lands within the Monument, which are "sacred components" of the Tribes' origin and history.

**DOJ Amicus Participation.** *Metlakatla Indian Community v. Dunleavy (D. Alaska)*. On June 10, 2024, the Court granted summary judgment in favor of the Metlakatla Indian Community, upholding its reserved fishing right, and rejecting all of the arguments by the State seeking to defeat that right on remand. The parties had filed cross motions for summary judgment on whether the Metlakatla Indian Community holds reserved fishing rights. DOJ/ENRD filed an amicus brief in support of the Community and, at the Community's request, participated in an oral argument in February 2024. The DOJ amicus brief put forth new arguments based on the rule of mandate and law of the case. The court recited this law favorably and rejected State arguments as inconsistent with the Ninth Circuit's mandate. It also adopted the United States' distinction between reserved rights and aboriginal rights, holding that the Community need not prove the legal elements of an aboriginal right to establish its reserved fishing rights claim. The case will now proceed to trial on the narrow issue properly before the court on remand (whether the Community's traditional off-reservation fishing grounds include the waters within Alaska Districts 1 and 2).

## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

**WHCNA Offshore Wind Resource Page.** The White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) Offshore Wind Working Group and Offshore Wind Resource Page aims to improve coordination and communication across the government to support Tribal governments' participation in the planning and permitting of offshore wind projects. Our goal is to centralize information and resources related to offshore wind to enhance efficient and transparent communication.

**Tribal Electrification Program.** Through a \$150 million investment from the Inflation Reduction Act, the Department of the Interior launched a first-of-its-kind Tribal Electrification Program, which was launched with a \$150 million investment from the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest ever investment in climate. In only its second year, the program is providing financial and technical assistance to 23 Tribes to connect homes in Tribal communities to transmission and distribution that is powered by clean energy; provide electricity to unelectrified homes through zero-emissions energy systems; transition electrified homes to zero-emissions energy systems; and support associated home repairs and retrofitting necessary to install these systems. In addition, the program supports clean energy workforce development opportunities in Indian Country and is a critical step toward the goal of electrifying all homes in the United States with clean energy sources.

**Historic funding to Tribal communities to date, and more to come.** Over the last four years, DOE committed more than half a billion dollars in Tribal energy investments for clean energy generation and deployment, electrification and grid resilience, and more. These investments, largely from the BIL and Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA), will bring equity to those communities, energy sovereignty, and strengthen the national energy security of the United States.

**Implementation of the Indian Energy Purchase Preference at Federal Facilities.** In August 2024, the Biden-Harris Administration announced the government's first-ever purchase of carbon pollution-free electricity from a Tribal majority-owned business under the Indian Energy Purchase Preference provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The General Services Administration (GSA) purchased unbundled Energy Attribute Certificates (EACs). As a result, the net annual usage for 185 buildings in 12 states has been matched with 100% carbon pollution-free electricity. Collectively, the total electricity load for these federal buildings is 349,108 megawatt-hours, which is equivalent to the power that 32,780 typical homes consume in a year. The purchase also represents a savings of nearly \$800,000 compared to the average price that GSA paid for unbundled Carbon Pollution-Free (CFE) EACs last year. The procurement was supported through interagency collaboration with the DOE.

**Support for Tribes on Offshore Wind.** The White House Council on Native American Affairs established a new interagency working group focused on offshore wind issues, to facilitate an



all-of-government approach to support transparency in the offshore wind planning and development and to enhance coordination between agencies and Tribal Nations.

**Loan Programs Office (LPO) administers first Tribal energy loan guarantee.** On Sept 13, 2024 the Department of Energy's Loan Program Office (LPO) closed on a partial guarantee of a \$100 million loan to finance the development of a solar-plus-long-duration-energy-storage microgrid. The microgrid will be located on the Tribal lands of the Viejas (Baron Long) Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians of the Viejas Reservation near Alpine, California.

**Supporting Tribal Capacity with Clean Energy Innovator Fellows.** When Tribal Nations are in the lead, energy projects are more likely to respect sacred sites and the environment while the benefits are more likely to reach Native communities. To support Tribal capacity, and sovereignty, on energy development, the DOE piloted a Tribal cohort of Clean Energy Innovator Fellows. Fourteen Clean Energy Innovator Fellows were placed in Tribes and Intertribal Organizations in 2023 and 2024. These Fellows are recent graduates and energy professionals who support critical Tribal energy organizations in advancing clean energy solutions that will help decarbonize the power system, electrify transportation and industry, and make community power system more resilient, equitable and inclusive. The program is strengthening the next generation of Tribal energy professionals in Indian Country. The Fellows are supported through the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, the DOE Grid Deployment Office, and the DOE Office of Indian Energy.

## WATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Clean Drinking Water for Tribal Nations.** In April 2024, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and Indian Health Service (IHS) announced a new MOU to further develop safe drinking water and community sanitation infrastructure projects across Indian Country. The Administration has targeted to ensure water infrastructure improvements across Indian Country, investments that are crucial to ensuring the health, safety, and economic prosperity of Indigenous communities.

**IHS and BOR Infrastructure projects.** On July 24, 2024, representatives from the IHS and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) met with Yakama Nation leadership to announce the very first pilot project under the historic MOU between the two agencies aimed at leveraging expertise and resources to speed completion of infrastructure projects. Combined, the IHS and BOR will invest \$1 billion in such projects this year. In April, the IHS participated in the White House Water Summit, announcing the partnership with BOR and the latest round of BIL funding.

**Indian Water Rights Settlements.** The Department of the Interior allocated the entire \$2.5 billion in funding appropriated in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for Indian Water Rights Settlements. The settlements that have received funding include: Ak-Chin Indian Community Water Settlement, Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement (specifically the Animas La-Plata Project) (Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Indian Tribes), Snake River Water Rights

Act (Nez Perce Tribe), Navajo-Utah Water Rights Settlement, Northwestern New Mexico Rural Water Projects (Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project), Montana Water Rights Protection Act (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes), Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement, Crow Tribe Water Rights Settlement, White Mountain Apache Water Rights Quantification Act, San Carlos Apache Tribe Water Rights Settlement, and the Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act, which includes Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement and Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement (Tohono O'odham Nation).

**DOJ Water Rights Adjudications.** DOJ attorneys are involved in water rights adjudications throughout the arid West, asserting federal reserved water rights held by the United States for the benefit of Tribes to ensure that Tribal reservations provide viable permanent homelands. DOJ has dozens of these cases (in Oregon, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, and California) and more coming in the near future. A few notable examples of DOJ work during this Administration are provided below, including one example of DOJ's work in assisting the Department of the Interior in connection with the negotiation of comprehensive water rights settlements and securing necessary congressional ratification.

*Little Colorado River Water Rights Adjudication (Super. Ct., Apache County, Ariz.).* This adjudication involves water rights claims in the Little Colorado River Basin, including claims asserted by the United States as trustee for the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Tribe. In 2024, the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, and local parties finalized a water rights settlement agreement. Tribal councils for all three Tribes, the State of Arizona, and other local parties have approved the agreement. Federal legislation to ratify the agreement was introduced into Congress by Senator Kelly from Arizona.

*New Mexico ex rel. State Engineer v. Kerr-McGee Corporation (D.C. Cibola County, N.M.).* This is a waters rights adjudication for the Rio San José River system. In 2022, the non-federal parties reached a settlement addressing the rights of the Acoma and Laguna Pueblos. In 2024, the non-federal parties then reached a settlement addressing the rights of the Navajo Nation. Bills that would provide congressional approval of both settlements are pending in Congress.

*Water Rights of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.* In September 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland signed a compact that confirmed the reserved water rights of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in northwestern Montana. The historic settlement followed decades of litigation and resolved a century-long series of intractable disputes, including over ownership of water rights and jurisdiction over water use on the Flathead Reservation. The settlement also authorized funding of more than \$1.9 billion for infrastructure and to modernize one of the largest Indian irrigation projects in the nation, while also providing for significant increases in stream flows and the reestablishment of fish habitat. After the parties moved the adjudication court for entry of a decree reflecting the congressional ratified settlement, the court set a briefing schedule for roughly 700 objections. In 2024, DOJ/ENRD successfully moved to dismiss some of these objections, and in July, filed a merits brief defending the settlement and asking the Court to deny the remaining objections. Briefing on these dispositive issues continued for several months, before argument was held in September.

*In Re: The General Adjudication of All Rights of Water Use in the Coeur d'Alene-Spokane River Basin (District Ct., Idaho).* DOJ/ENRD has filed water rights claims for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe in the adjudication. Discovery is ongoing, and a trial on the claims is scheduled for 2026.

**DOJ Affirmative Water Rights Cases.** In addition to water rights adjudications, DOJ files affirmative lawsuits to assert water rights. Examples in the past year include *United States v. Gila Valley Irrigation District (D. Ariz.)*. This litigation seeks to enjoin unauthorized diversions from the Gila River. This case is part of an ongoing effort by the United States and the San Carlos Apache Tribe to enforce a consent decree, the Gila Decree, Globe Equity No. 59.

**Final EPA Regulation to Protect Tribal Reserved Rights.** In May 2024, EPA issued a final rule that revises the water quality standards regulation at 40 CFR part 131 to explicitly address how EPA and states must consider Tribal reserved rights – defined in this rule as rights to Clean Water Act-protected aquatic and/or aquatic-dependent resources reserved to Tribes through treaties, statutes, or executive orders – in establishing water quality standards, where Tribes assert these rights for consideration. This rule creates a regulatory framework that will be applied consistently while accounting for local conditions and factors to inform the development of water quality standards to protect applicable Tribal reserved rights.

**Final PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Regulation.** In April 2024, EPA finalized the first-ever national drinking water standard to protect communities from Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) exposure. The final rule will reduce PFAS exposure for approximately 100 million people, prevent thousands of deaths, and reduce tens of thousands of serious illnesses. The new limits in this rule are achievable using a range of available technologies and approaches and EPA will be working closely to support states, Tribes, water systems, and local officials to implement the final rule. At the same time, EPA continues to support Tribal drinking water systems with funding to address PFAS and other emerging contaminants, including funding allocations announced in May 2024 for an additional \$35 million in FY 2024 to address these contaminants in Tribal drinking water.

**ACF funding for Rural Community Development.** Through the Administration for Children and Families, the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. and the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona each received \$1.38 million in Rural Community Development (RCD) program Non-Competing Continuation (NCC) funding to implement the fifth year of their program. The RCD Program works with regional and tribal organizations to manage safe water systems in rural communities. The NCC period will begin October 1, 2024 and extend through September 30, 2025.

**IHS and U.S. Public Health Service seven-year plan.** In May 2024, the IHS and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Headquarters launched a seven-year strategic plan to improve safe drinking water access and sanitation in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In August as part of World Water Week, the IHS hosted much-publicized events in five IHS areas highlighting successful projects funded by the BIL and recognizing the importance of improving water and sanitation infrastructure. These events also celebrated the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IHS SFC Program and its unique and successful history.

**America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge.** In April 2024, the Biden-Harris Administration announced a new national goal and partnership to conserve and restore freshwater resources. The America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge: A Partnership to Conserve and Restore America’s Rivers, Lakes, Streams, and Wetlands sets a bold, new national goals to protect, restore, and reconnect 8 million acres of wetlands and 100,000 miles of our nation’s rivers and streams by 2030. To achieve these goals, the Freshwater Challenge calls on all other governments and entities, including Tribal Nations, to advance their own policies and strategies for conserving and restoring America’s freshwater systems. Working together to advance these shared freshwater goals, the 33 Tribes of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and the National Congress of American Indians passed resolutions in support of the Freshwater Challenge and joined in partnership with the Administration.

## **FISH RESTORATION AND SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT**

**Columbia River Basin Salmon Restoration.** The Biden-Harris Administration reached a historic agreement to work in partnership with Pacific Northwest Tribes and States to restore wild salmon populations, expand Tribally sponsored clean energy production, and provide stability for communities that depend on the Columbia River System. Building on President Biden’s direction to Federal agencies, the agreement, when combined with other funding that the Administration is anticipated to deliver to the region, will bring more than \$1 billion in new Federal investments to wild fish restoration over the next decade and enable an unprecedented 10-year break from decades-long litigation against the Federal government’s operation of its dams in the Pacific Northwest.

**Reintroduction of Salmon in the Upper Columbia.** The Biden-Harris administration reached a historic agreement to support Tribally led efforts to restore healthy and abundant salmon populations in the Upper Columbia River Basin. The agreement between the United States, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, and the Spokane Tribe of Indians will fund efforts to test the feasibility of, and ultimately to reintroduce salmon in blocked habitats in the Upper Basin. The agreement includes \$200 million over 20 years from the Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power marketing administration under the Department of Energy, to advance the Tribally led implementation plan. The Department of the Interior also announced it is providing \$8 million over two years through the Bureau of Reclamation to support these efforts.

**Fish Passage and Reintroduction with the Yakama Nation.** The Biden-Harris Administration’s Investing in America agenda includes over \$3 billion for aquatic ecosystem restoration. The DOI’s Bureau of Reclamation partnered with the Yakama Nation, Washington State, local farmers, and conservationists to provide fish passage and reopen 30 miles of the Cle Elum River to rebuild the historic sockeye salmon population that once graced these waters – once the largest population of sockeye salmon in the Columbia River Basin. For generations, Tribal communities in the Basin have gone without these sacred fish. When the project is completed in 2027 and the river is reopened, it will provide spawning access to Cle Elum Lake for several fish species in the Basin and is expected to benefit sockeye, coho, and spring Chinook

salmon, and Pacific lamprey. This project is the largest reintroduction of sockeye salmon in the continental United States to date.

**Restoring Salmon and Steelhead and Supporting Tribal Cultures in the Klamath River Basin.** As part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to honor the United States’ obligation to Tribal Nations, restore culturally important fish and wildlife, and protect and restore our nation’s rivers, the Administration has been a strong partner in restoring the Klamath River to a free-flowing state, allowing salmon and steelhead to make their long journey from the sea to the inland rivers and streams in the Basin. As part of the Administration’s whole-of-government approach to restoring this Basin and honoring our commitments to Tribal Nations in the region, in February 2024, the DOI announced a landmark agreement between the Klamath Tribes, Yurok Tribe, Karuk Tribe, and Klamath Water Users Association to advance collaborative efforts to restore the Klamath Basin ecosystem and improve water supply reliability for Klamath Project agriculture. Administration funding will support 24 restoration projects developed by signers of this agreement, as well as other Tribes and other conservation partners. Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Administration is investing over \$200 million over five years to restore the Klamath region’s ecosystem and repair local economies. These investments will secure reliable water for the national wildlife refuges, advance the restoration of salmon post dam removal, address water quality and conveyance issues, and support co-developed restoration projects with Tribes, farmers and ranchers, and conservation partners. The fourth and last large dam on the Klamath river was removed in August 2024. Just weeks later, on October 16, 2024, the Tribe witnessed the first returning salmon to their homelands in over 100 years.

**The Federal Bering Sea Task Force and Tribal Advisory Committee.** The Federal Bering Sea Task Force and Tribal Advisory Council established by EO 13754 has committed to establishing an interagency salmon rehabilitation plan to address the dire salmon crisis facing communities of the Yukon, Kuskokwim and Norton Sound regions of Alaska. This plan will be co-developed between federal partners and Tribal leaders.

**NOAA to BIA Interagency Agreement (IAA).** In 2024, the Department of Commerce, National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration finalized an historic Inter Agency Agreement (IAA) with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for \$240 million to support Tribal Fish Hatcheries in the Northwest (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho). BIA will manage these Inflation Reduction Act funds to support Pacific Salmon restoration efforts.

**Subsistence Management Board Curriculum.** USDA partnered with an Alaskan non-profit organization to develop curriculum for engaging in Federal Subsistence Management Board, focusing on rural citizens and Alaskan youth. The curriculum teaches the history of federal subsistence policy and increases the ability of Alaskans to engage in the process by introducing the components of federal subsistence management and the agencies and stakeholders involved in it. In 2024, this program brought students to the Federal Subsistence Board meeting in April and supported the delivery of workshops in two Southeast Alaskan communities and at three statewide gatherings.

**Native Fish Initiative Partnership.** The USDA has received Tribal comments regarding the agency’s fish procurement policies and practices, as well as requests for support from communities that have historically and currently depend on healthy fish populations for cultural, nutritional, ecological, and economic health. In 2024, USDA entered into a cooperative agreement with an Alaskan non-profit organization to analyze barriers and identify opportunities to increase food sovereignty and economic opportunities for Tribal nations and Alaska Natives who depend on Indigenous fish and seafood. The agreement will examine opportunities for USDA food procurement, incorporation of new fish and seafood species into nutrition programs and elevating wild food harvesting benefits from forest lands.

- Infrastructure and Investment in Jobs Act (BIL) funds supported the USDA Forest Service’s Collaborative Aquatic Landscape Restoration Program and enabled the award of \$28 million in support of 11 watershed restoration projects. Nine of these projects (~90% of funding) will provide benefits to Tribal fisheries and water quality.
- Continuing a long-standing partnership with the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society (NAFWS), the USDA Forest Service invested \$45,000 in program funding in FY 2024 to support technical training, youth professional development, Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge transfer, and annual conferences. Forest Service investment in this partnership has continued to grow over the past 10 years and demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to implementing the Forest Service Tribal Action Plan.
- For the past 3-years, the Forest Service has supported the Rocky Mountain Region Indigenous Internship program, which annually hires 2 indigenous interns to support a variety of fisheries, wildlife, watershed positions on National Forests and Grasslands in the Rocky Mountain Region (R2). In FY 2024, the Forest Service fisheries program provided \$102,000 to support the Rocky Mountain Region Indigenous Internship program.

## CONSERVATION

**National Monument Creation, Expansion, and Restoration.** As part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s unprecedented commitment to protect America’s natural wonders for future generations, honor areas of cultural significance to Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples, and expand access to nature, President Biden has designed and restored several national monuments. These include expanding the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in California, designating Avi Kwa Ame National Monument in Nevada, designating the Baaj Nwaavjo I’tah Kukveni – Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument in Arizona, and restoring protections for the Bears Ears National Monument and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah.

**Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.** Following nearly a decade of work by Tribes, Indigenous Peoples, community leaders, organizations, businesses, state and local officials, and members of Congress, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration designated the

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. Off the coast of California, this is the third largest sanctuary in the National Marine Sanctuary System.

**Appendix C Rulemaking Effort.** In February 2024, USACE published a proposed rule to rescind Appendix C. USACE would instead rely on ACHP’s regulations and joint USACE/ACHP guidance for implementation of Section 106. The Army intends to coordinate closely with Tribal Nations and ACHP throughout this rulemaking effort.

**DHS Office of Health Security (OHS).** OHS worked in partnership with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe to develop and pilot a catastrophic reference scenario tabletop investigating questions surrounding degradation of Tribal lands and Native foods.

**Regional Conservation Partnership Program announcements.** The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) created a Tribal set-aside in its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding to support conservation and climate-smart agriculture, awarding nearly \$111 million to 8 Tribal-led Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects – above the \$110 million originally set aside for Tribes. As part of USDA’s bison efforts, RCPP provided \$63.75 million to the InterTribal Buffalo Council to restore cultural and spiritual practices, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse emissions in Southwest, Northeast and Northern Great Plains Regions.

**Keystone Initiatives (KI).** In 2024, several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Keystone Initiatives promoted ecosystem restoration across America. Tribal projects were included in the nine (9) Initiatives (Salt Marsh, Appalachia, Grasslands, Sage, Klamath, Gravel to Gravel, Hawaiian Forest\_Birds, Seeds Initiative, and Early Detection Rapid Response). Approximately \$70 million (30% of currently allocated funds for Keystone Initiatives) was invested throughout Indian Country, representing keystone species such as salmon and bison, with the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in native seed preservation. Pollinator promotion, soil rehabilitation, research support and cultural preservation by investing in native youth, were a few of the important parts of this initiative.

**Memo on Conserving and Restoring Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat Connectivity and Corridors in the United States.** In October 2024, USDA released a memo directing coordination and action within the Department to improve terrestrial wildlife habitat connectivity and corridors. With respect to Tribes, this memo calls for, among other things, the improvement of inter-jurisdictional coordination, including identifying priorities for wildlife habitat connectivity and corridors; focusing resources to help achieve goals consistent with identified priorities; engaging in Tribal co-stewardship of wildlife and wildlife habitat; incorporating Indigenous Knowledge regarding wildlife connectivity and related stewardship needs whenever possible; providing technical and other assistance to Tribes as available; and collaborating directly with Tribes to build on and identify opportunities to conserve wildlife habitat connectivity and corridors.

**America the Beautiful Challenge Grants.** The Biden-Harris administration launched a \$1 billion America the Beautiful Challenge to leverage federal conservation and restoration investments with private and philanthropic contributions to accelerate land, water, and wildlife conservation efforts across the country. To date more than \$232 million in grants have been awarded leveraging more than \$62 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of \$294 million. In 2024, approximately 50% of allocated funds were dedicated to Tribal projects. Overall, from 2022 through 2024, approximately \$120 million will directly support Tribal projects with an additional \$21 million that will indirectly support Tribes or Tribal projects.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### TRIBAL AND NATIVE OWNED BUSINESS SUPPORT

**Implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act [Access to Capital Initiative].** Treasury leads economic recovery for Tribes through the administration of \$30 billion in direct set-asides. Treasury continues to approve Tribal applications for our last fund which is the largest Tribal small business set-aside through the State Small Business Credit Initiative (\$500 million Tribal set aside). In October 2024, Dept. of Treasury announced \$520 million in SSBCI Tribal capital & Technical Assistance allocation awards.

### IMPROVING FEDERAL FUNDING ACCESSIBILITY

**Implementation of P.L. 117-169, aka the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).** Treasury administers the bulk of available IRA funds through tax credits. For the first time in history, Tribes can access a series of IRA clean energy tax credits using the new elective pay credit monetization. To increase Tribal access Treasury has focused on consultations, customization of guidance and opening of filing for 2023 tax year allocations. In October 2024 Tribal Nations Summit, Treasury announced a proposed rule opening up direct pay to Tribal entities. In November 2024, Treasury announced a Final Rule that enables Tribes to access direct pay through joint arrangements with non-Tribal entities,

**Increased Tribal Access and Financial Investments from USDA.** In addition to Forest Service/Tribal co-stewardship of the National Forest System, USDA increased investments to Tribes in FY 24 through competitive grants with a focus on removing barriers to access and increasing capacity and funding opportunities directly to Tribes. This included structuring competitive grant opportunities to support Tribal access (e.g., funding set aside for Tribes, extended application windows, and dedicated support capacity) and leveraging non-competitive funds to build Tribal capacity. This work directly meets the intent of Executive Order 14112, *Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations to Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination*.



- **Wood Innovation Grants:** The Wood Innovations Program which administers three separate grant opportunities—Wood Innovations Grants, Community Wood Grants, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance, allocated \$6.4 million dollars to 9 Tribes in FY 2024. USDA Forest Service staff conducted focus outreach to Tribes and Tribal partners to increase awareness for funding opportunities. Through partnership with the Alliance for Green Heat, Wood for Life, and Firewood Banks, another \$688,000 was awarded to Tribes to support firewood programs.
- **Urban and Community Forestry Grants:** Inflation Reduction Act funding for urban and community forestry work was awarded directly to 4 Tribes, totaling \$4 million dollars. In addition, the Arbor Day Foundation awarded \$8 million in grants to support community forestry on Tribal lands. This funding went to 16 sub awardees that were selected out of more than 50 applicants, and the selected projects will benefit a total of 26 individual Tribes. The grants awarded will be used to plant trees and grow green spaces on or near Indigenous lands and projects range in focus from food sovereignty to workforce development. Two additional national pass-through organizations will be announcing direct awards to Tribes shortly.
- **Climate Smart Forestry:** In 2024, the Forest Service announced an award of \$13 million to the Denali Commission to help Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations access emerging climate markets and implement climate informed forest management practices that will improve forest health and resilience. The agency also partnered with National Indian Carbon Coalition providing \$2 million dollars for technical assistance to Tribes interested in exploring voluntary carbon market opportunities. A Tribal-specific Notice of Funding Opportunity of \$20 million for market access was announced in 2024. All this funding will go directly to Federally recognized Tribes, and final awards are expected soon.
- **Tribal Nurseries:** Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Forest Service is working closely with Tribes to provide technical assistance and award financial assistance to Tribal nurseries to improve operations. In FY 2024, the Forest Service hired a full time Tribal Nursery Specialist to support and provide technical assistance to Tribal nurseries. In FY 2024, \$1 million dollars directly supported 4 Tribal nurseries.
- **Landscape Scale Restoration:** The Landscape Scale Restoration Program provides direct grants to Tribes to perform work on Tribal lands. In FY 2024, \$1.5 million dollars directly supported 5 Tribal projects.
- **Community Wildfire Defense Grants:** In FY 2024, the Forest Service awarded \$19.2 million to a total of 11 Tribes under the Community Wildfire Defense Program (CWDG). These grants assist at-risk local Tribal communities in planning for and reducing wildfire risk, including development and revision of Community Wildfire Protection Plans and implementing the goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.
- **Community Navigators to Improve Financial Access.** In 2024, the Forest Service signed agreements with the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association and the First Nations Development Institute to improve Tribal and Indigenous communities' access to funding opportunities from the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These partner organizations are in the process of building their

community navigator capacity to assist Tribes through webinars, trainings, and conference presentations. Both organizations are outreaching and preparing to assist Tribes with the upcoming Community Wildfire Defense Grant funding opportunity.

**Clarification of Tax Status of Tribally Chartered Corporations [Access to Capital Initiative]** For 30 years, Tribes have requested that the Department of the Treasury issue guidance addressing the tax status of Tribally chartered corporations. In response to these requests and to increase access to IRA tax credits, Treasury conducted two Tribal consultations and issued proposed guidance confirming that wholly owned Tribal corporations are tax exempt. In October 2024, Treasury announced publication of a draft guidance on the tax status of Tribally chartered corporations and has Tribal consultations scheduled on the draft guidance.

## COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Public/Private Partnerships.** Earlier this year, DOI Secretary Haaland convened a historic roundtable through the DOI's Office of Strategic Partnerships in collaboration with the Departments of Commerce, Treasury, and Agriculture; the Small Business Administration; and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency to support public-private leveraging of available funding and increase access to capital in Indian Country. The agencies continue to work together to strengthen partnerships that support access to capital, including the Tribal Community Vision Partnership - a national, multi-sector initiative dedicated to advancing Tribal self-determination and fostering sustainable economic development. Led by Native Americans in Philanthropy, the Vision Partnership is looking to generate \$1.2 billion in impact for Indian Country over the next seven years to spearhead projects that will spur community development, clean energy, and Native small businesses - and provide replicable models for future projects. The Vision Partnership will consolidate private and philanthropic investments - in the form of grants, equity, and debt capital -to leverage unprecedented levels of federal funding and increase the flow of capital into Tribal communities.

**Clarified Eligibility in Keystone USDA Market Development Program.** USDA Rural Development responded to years of Tribal leader feedback by clarifying that Tribal corporations and other arms and instrumentalities are eligible under the Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG). This intermediary program provides competitive grant funds for market feasibility studies, job training, business incubation, and other related activities, which are often cornerstones to Tribal economic priorities. Recently, the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS) codified changes to policy through the rewriting of RBDG regulation providing Tribes and Tribal corporations with greater flexibility to support the economic well-being of their nations. The new regulatory changes provide flexibility in the structure of applicants, allowing better use of regular RBDG funding and set asides.

**Access to Capital Clearinghouse WHCNA.** The White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) is enhancing the Access to Capital (AtC) Clearinghouse by incorporating data automation and AI. These improvements will increase the number of opportunities available and make them easier to search. With input from Tribal Leaders, the WHCNA has upgraded

the Clearinghouse's search and filter functions, helping Tribal communities access pertinent federal resources more effectively. The AtC Clearinghouse serves as a centralized resource, assisting Tribal nations in finding essential financial resources such as grants, loans, and technical support to promote economic development and community prosperity.

**USDA Invests in Tribal Infrastructure.** USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service invested over \$141 million in Tribal Broadband, Energy, and Water projects. Here are a few recent examples:

- **Standing Rock Telecommunications Inc. - ReConnect Broadband Program - \$22.2 million.** This Rural Development grant will be used to deploy a fiber-to-the premises network to provide high-speed internet. This network will benefit 426 people, 16 businesses, 104 farms and three educational facilities across the Standing Rock Reservation.
- **Navajo Tribal Utility Authority - Electric Infrastructure Loan and Loan Guarantee Program - \$76.5 million** Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) will use this \$76.5 million loan to finance the construction of a 93.7 MWdc/72MWac ground-mounted, single-axis tracking solar photovoltaic farm. NTUA is a wholly owned enterprise of the Navajo Nation headquartered in Fort Defiance, Arizona, that provides electricity, natural gas, water, sewer, and broadband services to the residents of the Navajo Nation. This project will be constructed within the Red Mesa Chapter of the Navajo Nation, located in San Juan County, Utah. This project is expected to create 220 local construction jobs, power approximately 36,000 rural households, and provide permanent employment for 2 to 3 people.
- **The Yomba Shoshone Tribe – Water and Environmental Program - \$772,000-** The Yomba Shoshone Tribe in Nevada, a participant of USDA's Rural Partners Network (RPN), will use a \$772,000 grant to make water infrastructure improvements. The funding will be used to replace a water tank, install water lines and fire hydrants, and make other improvements to increase efficiency and resiliency of the Tribe's water system. These improvements will enable homes and buildings throughout the Tribe's community to have access to safer water. The project is an example of how the RPN alliance of Federal partners is helping communities access government resources to build critical infrastructure and support long-term economic growth where it's needed most.

## **GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND ENTITLEMENT POLICIES**

**Social Security Expanded Remote Service Near Tribal Communities.** Based on feedback and discussions during Tribal listening sessions, advocate sessions, and Tribal consultations with Tribal leaders, the Tribal Consultation Official directed improvements necessary to expand service in critical remote areas of the country where customers cannot access Social Security Administration (SSA) services without enduring extensive and costly travel to an SSA field office. In FY 2023, SSA flew staff to Tribal health centers in remote locations of Alaska to

provide direct service in-person and to increase awareness for eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. In addition, we conducted testing to gather necessary information to build a fully remote service design that met data driven workload goals and cost estimates for a sustainable service model. In FY 2024, SSA expanded this effort to provide continued outreach to underserved zip codes, provide improved service delivery, and sought to improve Tribal relationships; SSA coordinated with local partners in another three key areas to establish one day, in-person service where we do not have field offices.

**SSA outreach to unincorporated areas.** In FY 2024 SSA expanded this effort to provide continued outreach to underserved zip codes, provide improved service delivery, and to improve upon Tribal relationships; SSA coordinated with local partners in another three key areas to establish one day, in-person service in August 2024. The selected locations identified in Alaska for FY 2024 were Dillingham, Nome, and Sitka. While at these locations, SSA partnered with local Tribal and village health providers, provided SSA services to include benefit eligibility, established appointments, claims, enumeration actions, and addressed other SSA related topics. Additionally, SSA conducted recruitment for SSA jobs and lay the groundwork for future remote collaborations with Tribal communities and health centers. By identifying local community partners and government agencies with available space and willingness and capacity to host SSA personnel, we will be able to build a network of future locations to provide similar in-person services. In order to measure success and improve upon our process that meets Tribal needs, SSA will continue to engage in follow-up Tribal Listening Sessions. During the Listening Sessions, we will gather feedback, concerns, and successes in addition to recommended future locations for service for FY 2025.

## FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**USDA Increasing Land, Market and Capital Access Program.** This \$300 million program helps underserved producers by increasing land, capital, and market access through cooperative agreements or grants for projects, including projects on tribal lands. Nearly \$17 million was awarded to Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, and Lower Brule Sioux Tribe to purchase approximately 2,500 acres of grazing land, 160 acres of grazing land for the fall season, and 320 acres of dryland crop. The Tribal organizations also will be providing micro-grants for Tribal producers to purchase land, equipment, and operational needs. The tribal organizations also plan to provide training to professional support staff and direct assistance to Tribal producers in developing comprehensive farm and food business plans, including conservation plans to support expanded production and access to the full suite of USDA and other support resources. The ILA program awarded funding to eight organizations that will partner with Tribal organizations and Indigenous-led organizations. These organizations plan to provide outreach and technical assistance, purchase land, provide micro-grants, and provide low interest loans to Tribal farmers and producers: Piikani Lodge Health Institute, NDN Collective, Inc., Intertribal Agriculture Council Inc., Indian Land Tenure Foundation, Southwest Indian Agricultural Association, Inc., Four Bands Community Fund Inc., American Indian Mothers, Inc., and Trust for Public Land. [JH1]

**USDA Enhanced Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans.** Effective September 2024, USDA’s updated regulations for Enhancing Program Access and Delivery for Farm Loans revised the definition of “Family farm” in 7 CFR 761.2(b) to include commercial foraging operations as an eligible family farm for the purposes of operating loans where commodities such as wild rice are commercially foraged on Indian land. Commercially foraged means the harvesting of naturally occurring plants, or plantlike material, including fungi, that develop with limited management of the resource. The rule also addressed key barriers to program access related to applicant farm experience and loan collateral requirements. Additionally, this rule provides for the development of farm operating plans and repayment terms that emphasize the accumulation of working capital reserves and savings necessary to ensure farm resiliency and promote operational growth. As a result, more Tribal lands and operations will be eligible for Farm Service Agency loans.

**Increasing Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs) to empower Tribes and better fund Tribal conservation.** Since USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service’s 2022 publication of an Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) policy to allow for greater Tribal self-governance, multiple Tribal nations have entered into AFAs for participation in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). In 2024, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe of Colorado, agreed to enroll all 125,000 rangeland acres managed by its Department of Natural Resources into the Conservation Stewardship Program through an AFA. Conservation practices implemented will help improve and favor deep rooted, native perennial plants that can help sequester more carbon and build soil health. Also in 2024, USDA entered into an Alternative Funding Arrangement with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation in Connecticut to address resource concerns associated with agricultural production while assisting the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation in working toward their goal of food sovereignty on Meechooôk Farm, which the Tribe established in 2016 to provide a variety of farm-to-table produce for Tribal Members. Five other states are currently in negotiations with Tribes for Alternative Funding Arrangements in coming years.

**Tribal Ambassadors: Educating Farmers and Ranchers on Federal Crop Insurance.** In 2024, USDA funded a cooperative agreement to strengthen Risk Management Agency's (RMA) outreach, engagement, and impact within Indian country. A Tribal Ambassador was selected from the Pueblo of Acoma Tribe, bringing their lived experience to USDA's risk management work. The Tribal Ambassador entered a one-year RMA-funded partnership to meet with farmers and ranchers in the western United States to help them build agricultural risk management work. The Tribal Ambassador entered a one-year RMA-funded partnership to meet with farmers and ranchers in the western United States to help them build agricultural risk management strategies. In this role, they engage with Tribal producers at major national and regional events, providing valuable presentations and one-on-one consultations.

**Hemp Tribal Engagements.** On February 16, 2024, the Hemp Plan for the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe was approved, granting the Tribe jurisdiction over hemp production within its territory. The adoption of this plan marks the 54th Tribal Hemp Plan to be approved by USDA's Domestic Hemp Production Program (DHPP).

## BISON RESTORATION INITIATIVE

**Partnership with InterTribal Buffalo Council.** As part of the DOI's effort to restore healthy and wild bison and grasslands initiative, Interior partnered with the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) to restore bison herds, and USDA entered into a formal MOU with ITBC to support Tribal bison conservation. In the Fall of 2024, the Bison Management Apprenticeship Program was launched with ITBC hiring a program coordinator and by December 2024, the Program selected ten to twelve apprentices as the inaugural cohort. The coursework and practicums will include working with federal, Tribal, and NGO bison herds to offer a wide variety of hands-on experience in herd management. Students will graduate from the program and receive a Department of Labor bison herd management certificate. The certificate for bison herd management will enable preferential hiring for federal positions and tuition credits for the university/college of their choice.

**Tribal-Led Bison Restoration.** The DOI and USDA worked with Native Americans in Philanthropy, World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and InterTribal Buffalo Council to develop a public-private partnership to increase and leverage funding for Tribal-led bison restoration called the Tribal Buffalo Lifeways Collaboration. In July 2024, the philanthropic and non-profit partners officially signed a charter and launched the bison fund to support Tribal-led bison restoration. This new, historic alliance was created to stabilize, establish, and expand Tribal-led buffalo (bison) restoration, and foster cultural, spiritual, ecological, and economic revitalization within Native communities. Together, the partners have committed to build on the momentum created by Indigenous leaders to bring lasting structural change and return buffalo to Tribal lands at an unprecedented scale. In November 2024, the Interior Department's BIA announced the availability of \$5 million from the Inflation Reduction Act for Habitat Restoration, to support the restoration of bison populations and grassland ecosystems in Tribal communities. The funding will support Tribally led initiatives to strengthen bison conservation and expansion, improved management of existing herds, and ecosystem restoration efforts for bison habitats.

## FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

**Indigenous Meat Processing Grants Awarded.** In FY 2024, USDA awarded \$42.5 million in additional grants to eight Tribal Nations through Indigenous Animals Harvesting and Meat Processing Grants, to build on the first four that were announced at the 2023 Tribal Nations Summit. The funding will help expand processing opportunities using modern and traditional harvesting methods for animals that are native to North America like bison, reindeer, and salmon, and benefit Tribes in Alaska, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington. USDA designed the program to support priorities voiced by Tribal Nations over two years of consultations. This program marks the first joint collaboration supporting Tribal

economic and food sovereignty interests through three USDA agencies: the Rural Business Cooperative Service, the Agricultural Marketing Service, and the Office of Tribal Relations.

**Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA).** Through the MPPTA, USDA invested nearly \$25 million to establish cooperative agreements with seven organizations to provide technical assistance on the development and expansion of independent meat and poultry processors at no cost to the beneficiary. Both the lead partner, the Flower Hill Institute, and the Intertribal Agriculture Council collaborate with USDA on these efforts and represent significant knowledge of coordinating across Indian Country. Technical assistance will continue to be available until December 2026.

**Bison Fee Reimbursement Program:** In 2024, USDA is partnering with the Flower Hill Institute to stand up a \$700,000 program reimbursing federally inspected meat processing establishments for voluntary bison inspection fees incurred by Native American owned meat processing facilities or facilities operating on Tribal lands.

**Expanding Traditional Indigenous Foods in School Meals.** On June 5, 2024, USDA awarded \$2.3 million in grants to five organizations to support Child Nutrition Programs serving more traditional Indigenous foods to Tribal and Native Hawaiian communities. As part of USDA's commitment to expanding the use of traditional Indigenous foods in school meals and other child nutrition programs, these grants were awarded across the country to maximize the number of Tribal communities being served.

**Final Rules for Traditional Indigenous Foods in School Meals.** In April 2024, USDA published final regulations to allow schools serving primarily American Indian or Alaska Native children to offer vegetables, including traditional starchy vegetables such as tumpsila (also known as or prairie turnip), in place of grains in reimbursable school meals. The final regulations also encourage schools to offer traditional Indigenous foods in school meals. These changes will support serving traditional Indigenous foods in school meals, supporting Indigenous food systems and local economies.

**BIE and Native American Agriculture Fund Partnership.** In June 2024, the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Education and the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) announced a new partnership through which NAAF will invest \$50,000 to develop high school agricultural lessons. The partnership launched in Fort Wingate, New Mexico and has expanded to include a pilot program at Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon, where supplemental education materials will enhance existing curricula with hands-on learning experiences. The Pilot Program aims to provide traditional Indigenous foods and adopt Indigenous-based land and agricultural management practices for BIE-operated schools and BIA-operated detention centers.

**FDPIR Enhancements Implemented.** In October 2024, USDA published final regulations to make access and parity improvements within several food distribution programs, including the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). FDPIR Tribal leaders have often expressed concern in Nation-to-Nation consultations about the lack of parity between FDPIR and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with respect to the Food and Nutrition

Services' (FNS) ability to waive or modify specific regulatory requirements in certain situations. Previously, USDA could only waive FDPIR administrative requirements during Presidentially declared disasters or emergencies, where SNAP waiver authorities are much broader. The final regulations are expected to create more equitable flexibilities for FDPIR in parity with SNAP.

**FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Project.** In June 2024, USDA participated in a Nation-to-Nation consultation on FDPIR self-determination, which was authorized and funded by the 2018 Farm Bill. During the consultation, Tribal leaders expressed their approval of the project, and their desire for its expansion and permanency. A total of sixteen Tribes received nearly \$9 million in funding from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to participate in the self-determination demonstration project. Foods offered include fresh produce, meats, fish, wild rice, and beans mainly sourced from Tribal vendors.

**Encouraging Expansion of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in Tribal Lands.** The USDA Food and Nutrition Service finalized regulations to encourage more emergency food assistance (food banks) to be provided to Tribal areas in October 2024. The Food Distribution Programs: Increasing Access and Parity rule encouraged TEFAP State agencies and eligible recipient agencies to implement or expand TEFAP distributions in rural, remote, and Tribal areas. Previously, State agencies and ERAs were only encouraged to implement or expand the program within rural areas.

**Child Nutrition Pilot Project.** In June 2024, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) engaged in Nation-to-Nation consultation with Tribal leaders on how USDA can best deliver the pilot project authorized by Sec. 758(a) of Division B of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2024 (P.L. 118-42), which appropriated \$2 million for pilot projects to Tribal organizations to operate Child Nutrition Programs as a State agency. Tribal leaders and child nutrition program operators provided thoughtful input to FNS on project options, potential resource needs, and related matters that will help FNS and the USDA pilot project workgroup deliver the pilot project in partnership with Tribal Nations.

**Summer EBT Partnerships with Tribal Nations:** In May 2024, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service launched SUN Bucks, or the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program (Summer EBT), and two Tribal Nations participated in the first year: the Cherokee Nation and the Chickasaw Nation. This program extended critical summer food access for children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, providing them with up to \$120 per child for the summer months. Starting in May 2024, both Tribal Nations increased food and nutrition security for thousands of children. Cherokee Nation and Chickasaw Nation estimated serving over 148,000 and 110,000 eligible children in summer 2024, respectively. This partnership is a powerful recognition of Tribal sovereignty and Tribes' ability to increase food and nutrition security for children in Tribal communities. FNS also provided technical assistance to several other Tribal Nations that are interested in implementing the Program in a future year.

**Security Backup Seed Protections:** The USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is increasing Tribal partnerships and data sovereignty in its "Seed Bank" at its National Laboratory



by Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, Colorado, where security backup seed collections are maintained by the National Plant Germplasm System as well as other eligible entities. New language has been added to provide clarification on seed storage agreements that allow Tribal seed bank deposits to remain private, allowing them to be stored safely with them to be stored safely without entering the public domain. USDA is developing templates and outreach strategies to extend these agreements to more Tribes for seed storage and food security.

**Food Purchases from Tribal Nations – Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA).**

Continuing in 2024, USDA provided nearly \$112 million through the Local Food Purchase Assistance Plus program for Tribal Nations to purchase minimally processed food from underserved and tribal producers and distribute that food through their communities. LFPA provided noncompetitive cooperative agreements with tribal governments to procure and distribute local and regional foods that are unique to their geographic area. The indigenous foods meet the needs of the population, and serve feeding programs, including food banks, schools and organizations that reach underserved communities. Nearly 100 Tribal nations submitted partnership proposals under this program.

**USDA Launches National InterTribal Food Business Center to Support Resilient Tribal Food Systems.**

The National Intertribal Food Business Center will open its first funding opportunity by the end of 2024 for Business Builder awards. These awards of up to \$100,000 will be offered to small and medium-sized food producers and businesses over the next 4 years, for a total of more than \$20 million. The Center has engaged partners to develop collaborative strategies for identifying and meeting needs of Tribal food producers and businesses, as well as identify national and regional needs and opportunities.

**Agricultural Leasing Regulations.** Agriculture continues to play an important role in Tribal cultures and economic systems. Following consultation and public listening sessions with Indian Tribes, farmers, ranchers, and intertribal organizations, the Interior Department revised the Indian Agricultural Leasing regulations with a proposed rule that it is seeking to publish before year-end 2024. Modernizing the regulations will better enable Tribes and producers to manage their lands, implement sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices, and continue Tribal traditions of self-sufficiency.

## HEALTHCARE

### MENTAL HEALTH/ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

**Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda:** SAMHSA created a website to increase accessibility and awareness of the National Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda (TBHA). The website includes relevant and updated links to a variety of resources and trainings that are aligned with Tribally developed foundational elements, priorities, and strategies. The website also allows for improved navigation of the Cultural Wisdom Declaration, a repository of agency strategies and Tribal data information, as well as a training that has been developed to educate on the contents and how to navigate the TBHA. SAMHSA is working to continually maintain and update the website, which

will help support a collaborative focus on aligning Federal and Tribal priorities around behavioral health.

**Suicide Prevention:** On April 23, 2024, the Biden Harris Administration, through HHS, released the final 2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (National Strategy) and accompanying Federal Action Plan. SAMHSA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in partnership with the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance), led the development of these critical deliverables which support the Biden-Harris Administration's priorities to address the overdose and mental health crises, key pillars of the Biden-Harris Unity Agenda. An Interagency Work Group (IWG) comprised of over 20 agencies in 10 federal departments across the government contributed to the development of the National Strategy.

**SAMHSA Tribal Prevention Summit:** The SAMHSA Tribal Prevention Summit, held on August 6-7 in St. Louis, Missouri, provided an opportunity to gather innovative, holistic, and urgently needed prevention programming across AI/AN communities. Summit participants discussed best practices and shared practical knowledge and experiences related to expanding AI/AN prevention programs and opportunities in Suicide Prevention, Substance Use Disorder Prevention, Overdose Prevention, Alcohol Use Disorder Prevention, and Behavioral Health Support. Tribes and Tribal organizations convened to provide evidence of successful service to AI/AN communities, identification of emerging and innovative areas that require focus to guide prevention work and increase shared knowledge about effective prevention in AI/AN communities nationwide. SAMHSA supports prevention work as an inclusive continuum of care, from harm reduction to recovery support, across the lifespan. The summit is a continuation of SAMHSA's ongoing Tribal summit series.

**The National Center for Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health (NCDVTMH):** The Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS) at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) under the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides funding under the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) to a Special Issue Resource Center, called the (NCDVTMH). The NCDVTMH provides an array of training and technical assistance support to the domestic violence (DV) field and out to FVPSA's recipients nationally offering specific expertise on trauma, substance use and mental/behavioral health (MH/BH). The NCDVTMH has traveled to several tribes and sovereign nations to provide activities related to addressing mental and behavioral health that include: Accessible, Culturally Responsive, and Trauma-Informed (ACRTI) Café (an opportunity for colleagues in the domestic violence and sexual violence fields to discuss strategies to integrate ACRTI values into work and organizational culture); creating a Mind-Body-Spirit Toolkit to support holistic approaches to healing and wellness; developing an array of resources supporting collaboration between the DV and mental health fields as part of the [Survivor Health Consortium](#), focused on increasing safe access for survivors across DV, MH, and BH services.

**Demonstration Grants to Strengthen the Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Native Communities: The Administration for Children and Families, Office on Trafficking in Persons:** In 2024, OTIP continued funding direct services, assistance, and referrals, including

healthcare and behavioral health services, to Native American (i.e., American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and/or Pacific Islanders) victims of human trafficking through the Demonstration Grants to Strengthen the Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Native Communities Program.

**Bureau of Indian Education Behavioral Health and Wellness Program.** Over the past year, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) has successfully grown its Behavioral Health and Wellness Program (BHWP). The BHWP provides students and staff at all Bureau-funded schools and programs with Indigenous focused, evidence-based and trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness supports. Services are tailored to meet the unique and diverse mental, cultural, spiritual, emotional, and social needs of Indigenous communities served by BIE. Services include tele-behavioral health counseling focused on providing short-term, solution-focused, and culturally sensitive virtual counseling, a BIE-specific 24/7 call line, and crisis support. BHWP’s clinical team is primarily staffed with Indigenous clinicians, who have direct experience serving Native communities.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**American Indian and Alaska Native Workshops on Syphilis.** HHS is leading a workshop series to gather community input on how best to improve syphilis and congenital syphilis outcomes, including how to better support community efforts to improve health equity and support related syndemic, sexual, and reproductive health services. In January 2024, the series began with two workshops - one with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes on January 23 and the other with providers who represent people disproportionately affected by syphilis and congenital syphilis on January 30. In February, additional workshops were held on syphilis prevention, treatment, and other related issues.

## INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

**Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Calendar Year (CY) 2-25 Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) final rule,** CMS-1809-F was issued on November 1, 2024. The CY 2025 OPPS final rule contains three tribal provisions. CMS amended the Medicaid clinic services regulation to authorize Medicaid coverage for clinic services furnished by IHS and Tribal clinics outside the “four walls” of their facilities. In addition, states implementing the Medicaid clinic services benefit can opt to cover clinic services furnished outside the “four walls” of behavioral health clinics or clinics located in rural areas. To improve Medicare payments to IHS and tribal hospitals, and better account for the costs of high-cost drugs furnished to people with Medicare seeking care at these facilities, the rule also finalized a proposal to pay an add on payment for high-cost drugs and biologics that significantly exceed the IHS Medicare Outpatient All Inclusive Rate (AIR). Finally, CMS discussed comments received in response to a Request for Information—Paying all IHS and Tribally Operated Clinics the IHS Medicare Outpatient AIR.

**Traditional Health Care Practices 1115 Demonstration Proposals.** On October 16, 2024, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), approved section 1115 demonstration amendments that allow, for the first time ever, Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage of traditional health care practices provided by Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities, Tribal facilities, and urban Indian organizations (UIO). Approval of the demonstrations are expected to improve access to culturally appropriate health care and improve the quality of care and health outcomes for tribal communities in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Oregon, and will support IHS, Tribal, and UIO facilities in serving their patients

**HHS announced publication of brand new Tribal and Tribal Epidemiology Center Data Access Policies.** The HHS-wide policies included guidance on data available to Tribes and Tribal Epidemiology Centers and establishes protocols for responding to Tribal epidemiology data requests. By improving and clarifying how the Department will provide data to Tribes and Tribal Epidemiology Centers, HHS seeks to advance health equity for AI/ANs and eliminate data disparities facing Tribes. These policies will help ensure that HHS is sharing data with Tribes to the maximum extent permissible under federal laws, regulations, and existing agreements, and enhance the social, physical, spiritual, economic, and health status of AI/ANs.

## **SUBSTANCE USE**

**Tribal Opioid Response Grants.** In September 2024, HHS, through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), awarded \$63 million in funding for its Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) grant program, an increase in \$8 million from FY 2022. Based on feedback received at Tribal Consultation, the TOR program has been extended from a 2-year program to a 5-year program. For FY 2024, TOR funding includes supplemental funding for Tribes with the highest OUD-related mortality rates. This program reflects HHS’s commitment to addressing opioid use disorder in and outside of Tribal communities—one of the four Unity Agenda priorities of the Biden-Harris Administration.

**Substance Use harm mitigation.** The IHS National Supply Service Center also now stocks fentanyl test strips to support sites’ efforts to create access to drug checking equipment used to mitigate harm and save lives.

## **INDIGENOUS CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Disabilities within Indian Country.** The Administration for Community Living (ACL) collaborated with ACL Administration of Disabilities (AoD) with their work on the Native American Action Plan which will serve American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Indigenous populations and communities. ACL also assisted with providing culturally appropriate support toward their efforts for indigenous citizens with disabilities and their communities.

## PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING

**Quality Improvement Award Funding.** In June 2024, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) awarded \$55 million in one-time FY 2024 funding to all health center grantees. This funding is supporting HRSA-funded health centers to prepare for and implement programs and technologies to modernize the Uniform Data System for submitting health center data. A total of \$1,161,508 was awarded to the 35 tribal and Urban Indian health centers. Funding was allocated on a formula including a base amount and a per patient amount based on 2023 patient data.

**Behavioral Health Service Expansion to Health Centers.** On September 19, 2024, HRSA announced \$240 million in awards to launch and expand mental health and substance use disorder services in more than 400 community health centers across the country that care for more than 10 million people. These grants will help expand access to needed care to help tackle the nation’s mental health and opioid crises – two pillars of the Biden-Harris Administration’s Unity Agenda for the nation. Four Tribal facilities from Arizona, Utah, and Arizona were awarded over \$2.2 million to support their health services.

**Elder Justice.** Through the Administration for Community Living, the Tribal Elder Justice Innovation Grant (TEJIG) in collaboration with Administration for Community Living (ACL) Office of Elder Justice awarded six new cooperative agreement to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Oneida Nation, the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, and the Nisqually Indian Tribe. The six awardees will focus on identifying the needs of their communities related to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, facilitating multidisciplinary elder justice activities, and to prevent/respond to, or address abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

**Caregivers and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.** The Native American Caregiver Support Program will initiate strategies with the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers.

**Behavioral Health Grant Awards.** In FY 2024, SAMHSA released 19 Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) available to Tribes and Tribal organizations. These NOFOs provide grants to Tribal communities aimed at improving behavioral health by preventing and reducing suicidal behavior and substance use/misuse, reducing the impact of trauma, and promoting health among Native youth. SAMHSA anticipates funding over 150 grants to Tribes and/or Tribal organizations in FY 2024.

## NATIVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE

**Tribal Personal Responsibility Education Program.** The Family Youth Service Bureau’s Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program through the ACF continues to fund seven Tribal PREP grantees that target services to Alaskan Native/American Indian (AI) youth most at risk for teen pregnancy and contracting sexually transmitted infections. Tribal PREP efforts are dedicated to developing, delivering, and evaluating culturally appropriate interventions and services that rely on the best available research to inform and guide practice.

## **CHILD CARE/ FAMILY WELFARE**

**Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Final Rule.** On December 5, 2024, ACYF published a final rule that amends the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) regulations to require state title IV-E agencies to collect and report additional data related to the procedural requirements related to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA). ACYF heard from Tribes directly and agrees that gathering more ICWA-related data will help ACF, researchers, and other policymakers better understand the status and experiences of American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) children and families interacting with the state child welfare systems and better address the continuing overrepresentation in foster care and other outcomes that Native children experience. While the information that is currently required to be reported in AFCARS is helpful, it does not provide sufficient information about the unique factors particular to Native children to meaningfully inform policymaking. More complete data collection will provide a foundation for improved policy development, targeted technical assistance, and focused resources. Collecting more data elements related to ICWA’s procedural requirements would enable HHS, other Federal agencies, and the states to target policy development, training, and technical assistance to specific areas of need. This could assist in efforts to mitigate disproportionality for children and families, support pathways to timely permanency for these children, and help maintain the integrity of tribal communities, and may provide insight into potential areas for technical assistance and supports to help improve child welfare outcomes.

**National Tribal Child Welfare Center for Innovation and Advancement.** On September 30, 2024, the Children’s Bureau (CB) in ACF awarded the following grants to strengthen Tribal child welfare programs, Tribal courts, and State-Tribal partnerships to improve outcomes for Tribal children and families. CB awarded a 5-year cooperative agreement for the National Tribal Child Welfare Center for Innovation and Advancement. The first-year award will total approximately \$4,370,000. The Center will serve as CB’s primary vehicle for delivering effective, high-quality technical assistance (TA) to American Indian and Alaska Native Nations (AI/AN) participating in the Title IV-B and Title IV-E programs. TA provided will enhance organizational and system performance, and improve outcomes for Tribal children, youth, and families by honoring Indigenous Ways of Knowing and working collaboratively to ensure the preservation of Tribal cultures.

**Tribal Court Improvement Program grants.** CB will award up to four (4) new Tribal Court Improvement Program grants. Each grant recipient will receive an award of up to \$150,000 per year for four years. Projects will help Tribal courts assess and improve how they handle American Indian and Alaska Native child welfare cases.

**State-Tribal Partnerships to Implement Best Practices in Indian Child Welfare.** CB will award up to six (6) new grants for State-Tribal Partnerships to Implement Best Practices in Indian Child Welfare. Each grant recipient will receive an award of up to \$500,000 per year for four years. The grants will help create and implement intergovernmental partnership models to improve existing and develop new best practices in family preservation and reunification efforts for Indian children. Recipients will serve as demonstration sites to design and implement projects to effectively develop and implement child welfare best practices to prevent the placement of Indian children outside their Tribal communities and improve equity in cases involving Indian families.

**Improved Process for Tribal Early Childhood Facilities Construction and Major Renovation Projects.** At the 2024 Tribal Nations Summit, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Child Care (OCC), Office of Head Start (OHS), and Office of Early Childhood Development (ECD) announced the release of a combined application and streamlined process for Tribes to use Head Start and Tribal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) resources for early childhood facilities construction and major renovation projects. This will significantly reduce burden for jointly funded projects.

**Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program.** In an effort to support Native families and children, the ACF Office of Early Childhood Development continues to implement a significant expansion of the Tribal MIECHV program. In late 2022, President Biden signed legislation doubling the MIECHV Tribal set-aside from 3 to 6 percent, and the total amount of funds made available for the Tribal MIECHV grants increased from \$12 million in FY 2022 to \$33 million in FY 2024. This expansion in grant funding for Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) led to awarding 47 grants in FY 2024 (including 6 new grants to communities without existing Tribal MIECHV programs), compared to 23 grants in FY 2022. Grant recipients will serve 68 Tribal Nations and 17 urban Indian communities. At the 2024 Tribal Nations Summit, HHS will announce its plan to issue an additional Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in FY 2024 for the Tribal MIECHV Program.

**Elimination of the Tribal Non-Federal Share Requirement in the Child Support Program.** The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) published the final rule on February 12, 2024, which eliminates the requirement for Tribal child support program expenditures. This rule will be in effect for FY 2025 funding and beyond. By eliminating the non-federal share, we aim to promote equity and honor Tribal sovereignty, recognizing the trust relationship between the federal government and Tribal Nations. Under the new rule, the federal government will fully fund both new and existing Tribal child support programs. This change is designed to enhance efficiency, alleviate financial burdens, and ensure equitable access to essential services for Tribal families and children. Removing the non-federal share requirement will have significant implications for Tribal child support programs, including:

- **Enhanced Services:** With full federal funding, Tribal programs can expand their services, including paternity establishment, child support enforcement, and family-centered support.
- **Equitable Access:** Removing financial burdens ensures that Tribal families have equal access to essential services.
- **Cultural Alignment:** By aligning with Tribal values and cultures, programs can better serve their communities, respecting traditions, and local context.

**New Eligibility Provisions for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Head Start Programs.** On March 23, 2024, President Biden signed into law the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (Public Law 118-47), which provides FY (FY) 2024 appropriations for several federal departments and agencies. Section 238 of Division D of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 included a new provision that gives Tribes increased flexibility in determining which children are eligible for Tribal Head Start programs. This provision clarifies that Tribes have the discretion, using their selection criteria, to enroll any child in their service area who would benefit from Head Start programs regardless of income, including children in families for which a child, a family member, or a member of the same household, is a member of an Indian tribe. The purpose of this provision is to provide Tribes with the autonomy to determine which children to prioritize for the Head Start program. This policy could increase the number of children in Tribal communities who have an opportunity to participate in Head Start, including learning their Native language and experiencing their culture while enrolled in Head Start programs.

**Increased Flexibility for Tribes in Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Eligibility.** In November, 2024, this final rule allowed all Tribes and Tribal Organizations operating CCDF programs, at their discretion, to establish and use eligibility criteria regardless of family income. This final rule facilitates better alignment between Tribal CCDF and Tribal Head Start so that Tribes can look more holistically at their early childhood funds to best serve the families in their communities and honors Tribal sovereignty by creating flexibility so that Tribes can determine which children to serve in their communities.

## ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE

**PRC Expansion.** The Purchased/Referred Care (PRC) Program purchases services from private health care providers for eligible American Indian and Alaska Natives when (1) no IHS or Tribal direct care facility exists, (2) a facility cannot provide required emergency and/or specialty care, (3) a facility's capacity is exceeded, and (4) supplementing alternate resources is necessary for comprehensive care. In June 2023, IHS updated the PRC Program's medical priorities to integrate all aspects of the care continuum, in a balanced way that is evidence-based, outcome-oriented, and consistent.

**IHS Indian Health Care Improvement Act.** The IHS has prioritized taking every measure to lessen burdens to patients caused by delays in the claims process and to clarify patient financial liability. As a result, pended claims have been reduced by 44%, with the goal of being current by



December 2024. The agency has also added clarity to No Patient Liability Language from Section 222 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, clarifying patients are not financially liable for services. Finally, the Catastrophic Health Emergency Fund reimbursement threshold has been lowered from \$25,000 to \$19,000.

**Expansion of PRC delivery areas.** In 2024, expansion of five PRC delivery areas (PRCDAs) covered Tribal nations such as the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, Chickahominy Indian Tribe-Eastern Division, Monacan Indian Nation, Nansemond Indian Tribe, Pamunkey Indian Tribe, Rappahannock Tribe, and Upper Mattaponi Tribe, and the Spokane Tribe. These redesignations make more people eligible for the PRC Program. PRCA expansion is expected to increase even further by December 2024.

**New Facilities Construction.** IHS is responsible for providing comprehensive primary health care and disease prevention services to approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in 574 federally recognized Tribes, through a network of over 605 hospitals, clinics, and health stations on or near Indian reservations. Many service recipients reside in reservations or rural communities and lack reliable means of transportation, making access to facilities that offer affordable health care a significant barrier to some. To increase access to affordable health care, IHS has supported the planning and construction of new facilities across Indian Country.

## MATERNAL HEALTH

### **Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality**

**(ACIMM).** Administered by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), the ACIMM advises the Secretary of Health and Human Services on department activities, partnerships, policies, and programs directed at reducing infant mortality, maternal mortality, and severe maternal morbidity, and improving the health status of infants and women before, during, and after pregnancy. The ACIMM continues to regularly discuss during meetings efforts to disseminate and promote the “Making Amends: Recommended Strategies and Actions to Improve the Health and Safety of American Indian and Alaska Native Mothers and Infants” report with recommendations to improve birth outcomes of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) mothers and infants.

**HRSA’s National Maternal Mental Health Hotline (NMMHH).** (1-833-TLC-MAMA) is a 24/7, 365 day, free, and confidential service that provides direct connections to qualified and professional counselors who are licensed and certified in supporting pregnant and postpartum individuals facing mental health challenges. These services of emotional support, resources, and referrals are provided in English, Spanish, and 60-on-demand languages including Hopi, Choctaw, Yupik, and Navajo via voice and text. HRSA partnered with IHS to help promote the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline.

**Increasing Indigenous Foods in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Food Package.** In 2024, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service published updates to revise the WIC food packages with the intent of providing a wider variety of foods that align with the latest nutritional science, allowing WIC state agencies greater flexibility to prescribe and tailor food packages that

accommodate participants' personal and cultural food preferences, and supporting equitable access to supplemental foods. The enhancements in the final rule include expanding whole grain options to include foods like quinoa, blue cornmeal, and teff to reflect dietary guidance and accommodate individual or cultural preferences; providing more convenience and options within the dairy category, including flexibility on package sizes and non-dairy substitution options such as plant-based yogurts and cheeses and requiring lactose-free milk to be available; and including canned fish in more food packages, creating more equitable access to this under-consumed food.

## VETERANS

### VETERANS HEALTH AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

**VA Indian Health Service/Tribal Health Programs/Urban Indian Organization (I/T/U) Reimbursement Agreements Program.** The VA Indian Health Service/Tribal Health Programs/Urban Indian Organization (I/T/U) Reimbursement Agreements Program (RAP) provides VA reimbursement to IHS, Tribal Health Program (THP) and Urban Indian Organization (UIO) health facilities for services provided to eligible Native Veterans. The RAP works directly with I/T/U facilities and is seamless to the Veterans accessing their Native health care.

**No preauthorization for health care.** Under RAP, eligible Native Veterans do not need VA preauthorization to receive health care services at participating I/T/U RAP health facilities.

**VA and IHS signed new reimbursement agreement.** In 2023/2024 VA expanded the scope of reimbursements to also include Purchased/Referred Care and contracted travel, in addition to direct care provided by I/T/U-operated facilities. On December 6, 2023, VA and IHS signed a new reimbursement agreement; thereafter, VA finalized the THP and UIO templates in June and July 2024, respectively.

### VETERANS BENEFITS

**Social Security Expanded Outreach Efforts for Veterans.** Social Security sought nationwide opportunities to clarify, for military service members, who can receive expedited processing of claims through our Veterans Wounded Warriors Program. To support this effort: On November 15th, SSA partnered with the Veterans Benefits Administration - Outreach, Transition and Economic Development Team at the Native American Heritage Month Symposium to share SSA's goals for FY 2024 to support AIAN populations. On April 19th, SSA presented information on the expedited application process to over 500 veterans and their spouses at the Native American Training Institute Veterans Symposium at the Isleta Tribal event center.

**SSA additionally provided FY 2024 goals to enhance third-party video service connections between tribal locations and SSA field offices in an effort to reduce geographic barriers.** This video service promotes accessibility for local service in Indian Health Service locations near veterans living in Tribal communities. As a result, SSA enhanced video connections across all sites by 91.4% and specifically with American Indian Alaska Native sites by 53.1%.

## **CANCER CARE**

**VA's NOP education campaign.** VA's National Oncology Program (NOP) and Office of Tribal Health collaborated to launch an education campaign to develop cancer care and screening education resources to inform the outreach more effectively into the Tribal Veteran communities. This education campaign is ongoing and is initially focused on the top cancers affecting Veterans, and on the cancers where screening has the greatest impact on outcomes like prostate, colorectal, breast, and lung. To reach across the VA enterprise, NOP distributed these cancer screening education materials to VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) with a high population of Native Veterans, the Office of Health Equity, the Office of Rural Health, and the Center for Minority Veterans. Through the Office of Tribal Health, cancer screening education materials have been distributed by National Outreach Managers and VISN Tribal Health Coordinators.

## **REVISED VA HEALTHCARE ENROLLMENT FORM**

**VHA Data Collection.** The VHA Office of Tribal Health (OTH) identified the need to improve the collection of American Indian/Alaska Native Veteran data. OTH and the VHA Health Eligibility Center partnered to revise the 10-10EZ form to reflect "American Indian/Alaska Native" and allow for the selection of two or more races. These changes further improve VA's data by reflecting a more accurate number of Native Veterans enrolled in VA health care.

## **PREVENTING SUICIDE AMONG SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES**

**Expanding the "Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families".** VA is working collaboratively with the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and have expanded the *Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families* (SMVF), which is now active in all 50 states and five territories. While the Governor's Challenge has been pivotal in supporting state SMVF suicide prevention work, a new model is being developed in partnership with Tribal Sovereign Nations. VA and SAMHSA are working to ensure that their collaborative efforts to support Native Veterans and their families, both elevate and celebrate the knowledge, service, and contributions of our Native communities.

## AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE VETERAN COPAYMENT EXEMPTION

**Copay Exemption for eligible Native Veterans.** To honor Native Veterans and treaties with sovereign nations, eligible Native Veterans no longer have a copayment for certain care received from VA. VA will also reimburse eligible Native Veterans for certain copayments for VA health care services provided on or after January 5, 2022. The copayment exemption aims to address health care access and health care disparities experienced by Native Veterans by eliminating certain copayment requirements so that Veterans are more likely to utilize the benefits they have earned. Since implementation and as of June 8, 2024, 5,409 Native Veterans have been approved for the copayment exemption, and more than 200,000 copayments have been exempted and/or reimbursed totaling more than \$4 million.

## TRADITIONAL HEALING SUMMIT

**HHS hosted 2024 Traditional Healing Summit.** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) hosted the 2024 Traditional Healing Summit. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), IHS, OTH, and other partners served on the interagency planning committee. The primary goal of the Summit is to partner with Traditional Healers and agency leaders. to continue to offer and expand Traditional Healing Services in Federal Agencies.

## TRIBAL CLAIMS CLINICS / PACT ACT EVENTS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

**PACT Act events.** The VA Office of Tribal Government Relations has coordinated over 30 Claims Clinics/PACT Act events in FY24 in Indian Country. Tribal Native Women Who Served in the Military: Addressing Post-Military Needs/Issues/Concerns.

**Tribal Women Veterans Summit.** On October 21, 2024, VA and the Muscogee Nation hosted their fifth annual Tribal Women Veterans Summit in Tulsa, Oklahoma during which VA Deputy Secretary Tanya Bradsher addressed Tribal women Veterans in a roundtable discussion. VA, hosted by Tribal Nations, held four Tribal Women Veterans Summits, addressing their needs, concerns, and issues related to topics, from women's health care, mental health, PTSD, TBI, suicide prevention, IPV/Domestic Violence, addressing and/or marrying military, to traditional culture-addressing those traditional barriers, and moral injury. Currently, many programs and services exist, culturally, for Native male Veterans, but not for Native female Veterans. These summits provide the opportunity to provide Native women Veterans a voice, and provides those who serve them an understanding of how to better serve this unique population.

## VA CLINIC ON THE CHEROKEE NATION IN VINITA, OKLAHOMA

**Historical agreement between Cherokee Nation and Eastern Oklahoma VA Health.** The Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System signed a historic agreement to provide a VA clinic inside the Tribe’s Vinita Health Center for area Veterans. The Tribe provides approximately 1,300 square feet of leased space for the VA Clinic. The VA clinic serves Native Veterans and non-Native Veterans in the region.

## VA-IHS OPEN CLINIC-IN-A-CLINIC

**VA and IHS grand opening of Clinics.** VA and IHS celebrated the grand opening of VA Clinics within IHS Facilities at both Chinle and Kayenta, AZ in the Spring of 2024. IHS is allowing VA Providers to see patients in the IHS clinic space at both of these remote locations.

## VHA-IHS REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT

**IHS reimbursement signed.** Through listening to Tribal Leaders, VA and IHS were proud to announce that in December 2023, the revised VHA-IHS Reimbursement Agreement was signed. Under this agreement, VA reimburses IHS for direct care provided to Native Veterans, and it now includes VA reimbursement for purchased and referred care (PRC) and contract travel.

**IHS-VA Claims Processing Guide.** To accompany the revised reimbursement agreement, the IHS and VA drafted, negotiated, and reached agreement on an *IHS-VA Claims Processing Guide* that outlines the process for claims to be submitted by the IHS and adjudicated by VA. Also, Tribal nations may enter into their own reimbursement agreements with VA if they so choose. Since the inception of this collaboration, our joined health care programs have mobilized over \$186 million from VA, extending comprehensive care to more than 15,000 veterans across 74 IHS sites and 116 Tribal health program sites.

## LOWER 48 REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT FOR TRIBAL HEALTH PROGRAMS AND URBAN INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS

**Tribal Health Program.** VA implemented a revised VA-Tribal Health Program (THP) and Urban Indian Organization (UIO) Reimbursement Agreement template for the Lower 48 states. This agreement template replaces and expands upon the prior direct care agreements between VA and THPs/UIOs, originally executed beginning in 2012. This significant update underscores VA’s commitment to strengthening the partnership between VA and THPs/UIOs to share resources and enhance access to health care services for Native Veterans. The revised agreement

template includes several key improvements designed to expand the scope of reimbursements and honor the unique capabilities and traditions of THPs/UIOs.

## NATIVE VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

**Stand Downs HUD-VASH.** VA will support Stand Downs in urban areas with the highest-documented populations of Native Veterans, collect and utilize Native Veteran data, identify best practices, and conduct post Stand Down outreach. Stand Downs are one-to-three-day events during which VA staff and volunteers provide food, clothing, and health screenings and referrals to homeless and at-risk Veterans. Tribal HUD-VASH will continue to provide supportive housing to Native Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

## NATIVE VETERAN NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTATION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGY

**VHA Office of Tribal Health strategy.** The VHA Office of Tribal Health is in the initial stages of developing a Native Veteran National Suicide Prevention and Intervention Strategy. The strategy will align to the VHA-IHS MOU and leverage the expertise and resources of VHA and IHS to support Native Veterans and communities.

## HOUSING

**Supporting Tribal Communities Through Service Memorandum of Understanding.** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Native American Programs and AmeriCorps proudly announce the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support Tribal communities through national service. This MOU creates a collaborative framework to place AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) members at Tribal sites funded under Housing and Urban Development programs, supporting affordable housing and community development initiatives. This partnership benefits Indian tribes, Tribally Designated Housing Entities, and the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, fostering mutual collaboration on programs, projects, training, and fieldwork. This agreement underscores the federal government's commitment to honoring the Trust responsibility while empowering Tribal self-determination. We look forward to the positive impact this partnership will have on Tribal communities and their housing and development needs.

**Rural Community Development Program.** HHS's ACF Office of Community Service (OCS) is currently in preproduction on several videos that highlight OCS-funded work including Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Rural Community Development Program (RCD), and the Affordable Housing and Supportive Services Demonstration Program among tribes, specifically in Oklahoma and Alaska. OCS has produced seven videos that highlight OCS' Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and the Rural Community Development program (RCD) funded services in tribal communities in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, and New York. Videos remain available.

**Reinforcing Water and Sanitation Infrastructure for Tribal Housing.** HUD and IHS are partnering to co-host a Tribal consultation to understand the existing barriers for Tribes to access water and sanitation infrastructure funding and how IHS and HUD can work together to better serve Tribes and honor Tribal self-determination.

**Building Equity for Tribes in HUD's Programs.** In alignment with Executive Order 14112 and supported by HUD's TIAC, HUD has worked across the Department to commit new set-aside funding for Tribes. These new dedicated resources will expand Tribes' ability to serve their communities and better address local housing needs.

**USDA Establishes New MOU on Tribal Guaranteed Housing Loans.** This year, USDA Rural Development's Rural Housing Service entered into the first Memorandum of Understanding with a nationwide lending partner with considerable experience in lending on Tribal trust lands, 1st Tribal Lending. Through these efforts Tribal citizens will have increased access to homeownership financing and Native Community Development Financial Institutions can collaborate with 1st Tribal Lending to originate and sell their loans to a secondary market investor. Through this approach, USDA anticipates increasing lender interest in utilizing this program to provide additional housing loans on Tribal trust land.

**Convene a National Tribal Home Ownership and Asset Building Summit.** On November 20-21, 2024, HUD hosted a national Native Homeownership & Asset Building Summit. The event will include speakers from a wide array of Federal agencies, financial institutions, and non-profit organizations. The breakout sessions and plenary speakers will highlight Federal and non-Federal resources that support homeownership and asset building for Tribal community members.

**Increasing Native Homeownership through the Section 184 Program.** On March 20, 2024, HUD published a final rule titled "Strengthening the Section 184 Indian Housing Loan Guarantee Program." This marks the culmination of many years of cumulative work between HUD, lenders, and Tribes.

**Tribal/Interagency Streamlining Toolkit (TIES).** HUD leads the Tribal Housing and Related Infrastructure Interagency Task Force and is excited to share the Tribal/Interagency Environmental Streamlining Toolkit (TIES).

**Tribal Safe Housing Center:** The Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS) at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) provides funding under the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) to the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC)'s Safety, Training, Technical Assistance and Resources Support (STTARS) Project as the national capacity building center for safe and supportive housing for domestic violence survivors in tribal communities. STTARS focus on developing and delivering comprehensive TTA in a culturally appropriate, relevant and sensitive manner on meeting the housing needs of Indigenous including Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian survivors living in tribal communities.

**Demonstration Grants to Strengthen the Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Native Communities: The Administration for Children and Families:** In 2024, OTIP continued funding direct services, assistance, and referrals, including housing, to Native American (i.e., American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and/or Pacific Islanders) victims of human trafficking through the Demonstration Grants to Strengthen the Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Native Communities Program.

**USDA Provides Additional Homeownership Opportunities through the Native Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) Relending Demonstration Program.** This year USDA Rural Development’s Rural Housing Service announced \$5.5 million in low interest loans to Native CDFIs that will be relent to expand homeownership opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians living on Tribal lands and Native Hawaiian Homelands. The loans were made to six certified Native CDFIs: Ha Yaakawu (AK), Nixwyaawii Community Financial Services (OR), Hawaii Community Lending (HI), Lake Superior CDC (MI), Cherokee Nation CNDTA Inc. (OK), and Wisconsin Native Loan Fund (WI). The Native CDFIs will use the loans to finance approximately 38 homes.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE**

### **MISSING OR MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE & VIOLENCE AGAINST NATIVE WOMEN**

**FCC Adopts New Alert Code to Help Law Enforcement Agencies in the Recovery of Missing and Endangered Persons.** In August 2024, the Federal Communications Commission’s five commissioners voted unanimously to change its rules and adopt a new event code for the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to enable the delivery of emergency alerts about missing and endangered persons (MEP). The EAS protocol uses fixed alert codes to identify the various elements of an emergency alert so that each alert can deliver accurate, secure, and geographically targeted alerts to the public. Alert originators, such as state, tribal, territorial, and local public safety officials, select from a group of event codes based on the nature of the emergency (for example, “CAE” signifies a Child Abduction Emergency, otherwise known as an AMBER Alert). The new event code for missing and endangered persons, “MEP,” was adopted to better and more widely disseminate information regarding missing and endangered persons across multiple jurisdictions, to notify the public so they can help with searches. The MEP code is expected to help support the issuance of EAS alerts for those missing and endangered persons who do not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert, and is intended to fill a critical gap to assist in the recovery of missing persons. The FCC expects that the MEP event code will assist law enforcement efforts to find missing and endangered persons, including Indigenous persons who are disproportionately at risk of being missing and endangered.

**FBI Validation of violent death certificates as part of the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS).** The FBI has been working with the



CDC related to sharing information to validate death certificates associated to violent deaths of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) persons within Indian Country. When a death occurs the death certificate and appropriate health information provided by the medical examiner/coroner is shared with the state Health and Human Service (HHS) department which in turn shares the death related information to CDC systems. For violent deaths that system is NVDRS and an extra layer of validating information is requested by the state HHS to the law enforcement agency who investigated the violent death. Currently, the NVDRS is missing law enforcement validating data associated to violent deaths on many reservations across the United States. In order to assist in the validation process, the FBI and CDC have been working together over the year to determine the ability to share and develop a process for the FBI to share information within legal parameters.

**DOJ's Indian Country Basic Course at the National Advocacy Center (NAC).** This year the FBI partnered with DOJ's National Advocacy Center to develop and provide a two-week Indian Country Violent Crime Basics training program, in Columbia, SC. The first iteration was presented in January 2024. Topics covered included Sexual Violence Investigations, Evaluating Strangulation and Gunshot Wounds, Trauma-Informed Victim Interviews and Minimal Facts and Forensic interviews involving Children and Adolescents, Crime Scene Management, Indian Country Criminal Jurisdiction, among others. 91 people participated in the program, including 41 FBI participants, Tribal law enforcement, Tribal prosecutors, BIA and other DOJ personnel. The FBI continues to work with the NAC and plans to offer this training annually.

**Agency Response to Not Invisible Act Commission Recommendations.** The Not Invisible Act Commission was created by P.L. 116-166, the Not Invisible Act of 2019, the enactment of which was led by Secretary Haaland during her time in Congress. The Commission included law enforcement, Tribal leaders, federal partners, service providers, family members of missing or murdered individuals, and survivors. As mandated by the Act, the Commission developed recommendations for federal government actions to take on six focused topics to combat violent crime against Indigenous people and within Indian lands, and to address the epidemic of missing people, and the murder or trafficking of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples, as specified under the law. DOJ and DOI released a joint response on March 5, 2024, addressing the 186 recommendations directed at DOJ or DOI. In the joint response, DOJ makes a variety of commitments that implicate a broad span of DOJ's work in support of Native communities. Subsequently, HHS released a Supplemental Response on November 15, 2024, the department details how it will improve services to human trafficking survivors, support improving data collection on MMIP and human trafficking, as well as uplift resources available to Tribes and organizations for violence prevention and healing.

**DOJ's MMIP Regional Outreach Program.** After DOJ's establishment of the MMIP Regional Outreach Program in June 2023, the program has worked in 2024 to coordinate with Tribal, federal, state, and local governmental and non-governmental agencies in three core areas: cases, outreach, and training. Currently, eight of ten MMIP Regional Assistant United States Attorneys and MMIP Regional Coordinators serve the five designated regions throughout Indian country. Highlights for the program in 2024 include enhanced coordination with BIA's Missing and Murdered Unit, prosecutions and case coordination in MMIP-related cases, and multiple

outreach and training events throughout the five program regions. The program continues to coordinate and collaborate with local United States Attorney's Offices, the National Native American Outreach Services Liaison, and the National Indian Country Training Initiative Training Coordinator.

**Second Annual Human Trafficking Summit.** The Justice Department's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) continues to coordinate with DOI's Missing and Murdered Unit (MMU) in the Bureau of Indian Affairs to enhance the MMU's capacity to conduct victim-centered, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive investigations into human trafficking and related crimes impacting Indigenous persons and communities. In August 2024, HTPU, in collaboration with DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and National Indian Country Training Initiative, will held its second annual human trafficking summit with the MMU, building on the initial human trafficking training summit convened in 2023.

**Continuing in DOJ's efforts to prioritize the resolution of missing or unidentified Native persons.** The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) program accomplished the following Tribal related activities between December 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024:

- Initiated efforts that supported the addition of 186 missing Native persons cases to the NamUs database, bringing the total number of active Tribally affiliated missing persons cases housed in the database to 875. Of those cases reported during that timeframe, 84 cases involved missing Native persons that were Tribally enrolled or affiliated, 55 cases involved a Native person that went missing from Tribal land, and 44 cases involved missing Native persons whose primary residence were on Tribal lands. Within that same timeframe, the NamUs program was directly involved in resolving 131 missing Native persons cases, 118 of whom were found alive.
- Added 32 unidentified suspected Native persons cases to NamUs, bringing the total number of active Tribally affiliated unidentified persons cases housed in the database to 223. Of those cases reported during that timeframe, 11 cases involved unidentified suspected Native persons that were found on Tribal land. Within that same timeframe, the NamUs program was directly involved in resolving 18 unidentified Native persons cases.
- Added 6 unclaimed Native persons cases to the NamUs database, bringing the total number of active Tribally affiliated unclaimed persons cases housed in the database to 35. The NamUs program was directly involved in resolving four of these cases.
- Since December, the program's prioritization of Tribal forensic service requests has cleared any backlog for forensic testing services for Native persons cases. NamUs facilitated over 100 forensic service requests for Native missing and unidentified persons cases which included DNA testing, forensic genetic genealogy, fingerprint analysis, odontology, and advanced image searching.
- The NamUs Tribal Liaison facilitated 15 trainings for Tribal law enforcement and community members, including support for dedicated missing persons day events, engaging with approximately 650 vested parties. An Associate Tribal Liaison

completed the updating of active Native persons cases in the database and continues to identify cases associated with Tribal agency investigations.

**AATTAP Program.** DOJ's AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AATTAP) Program will equip Tribes across the US with the tools needed to search for a missing child in Indian Country. Currently, DOJ is providing Tribe's toolkits containing resources needed when responding to the urgent call of a missing child. In the coming year, Tribes will be able to request additional resources, including, but not limited to airboats, technology, etc. for the purpose of a search of a missing child/investigation. The AMBER Alert in Indian Country (AATTAP) Program will also work with Tribal agencies across the US to develop and deliver Child Abduction Response Team (CART) Training and certification. Currently, there are no CART Teams in Indian Country. This individualized, culturally specific training will help Tribal communities prepare and train to respond in the case of a missing child. CART Teams require bringing all resources in a community together to plan for these events. CART Training Teams and evaluators with Indian Country subject matter expertise and training specific to each sovereign nation will work with Tribal communities to develop Tribal CART teams across the US and work to partner with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) and Tribal Community Response Plan (TCRP) initiatives. Expected date of completion is December 2024.

**VAWA 2022 Alaska Pilot Program Implementation.** The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization Act of 2022 required that the Attorney General establish a process to facilitate Alaska Tribes' participation in a Pilot Program for implementing special Tribal criminal jurisdiction (STCJ). In response, DOJ implemented a three track processes that reflects feedback received during consultations and discussions with Alaska Tribal leaders and advocates. DOJ has worked closely with the Alaska Native Justice Center (ANJC), along with five Alaska-based partners, to establish and support an Alaska-specific Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance Working Group (Alaska ITWG) on STCJ and provide technical assistance for Alaska Tribes seeking to enhance their criminal justice systems. The Alaska ITWG met for the first time on May 9-10, 2024, in Fairbanks, Alaska, and included over 100 participants. The second meeting of the Alaska ITWG was held on October 21-22, 2024, in Anchorage, Alaska. Representatives from more than 35 Alaska Tribes participated in each Alaska ITWG meeting. Currently, there are 17 Alaska Native Tribes formally participating in the Alaska ITWG, which will convene again in April 2025. DOJ continues to provide support to participating Tribes and welcomes requests to participate from both individual Alaska Native Tribes and consortiums that are interested in exploring any of the three tracks.

**DOJ FY 2024 Tribal Grants.** Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), and Community Oriented Policing Services Office (COPS)—announced FY 2024 awards in support of a broad range of public safety and capacity building goals. DOJ announced more than \$84 million through the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation, DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) awarded more than \$86 million, and DOJ's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) awarded over \$67 million to support Tribal communities in meeting the needs of crime victims under the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside program (TVSSA) from the Crime Victims Fund, of which \$54 million supported formula funding for

Tribal victim services programs. TVSSA funds are administered via an administrative formula and are used by Tribal communities to serve victims of arson, assault, burglary, child abuse, dating violence, domestic violence, elder abuse, fraud, identity theft, kidnapping, labor trafficking, rape/sexual assault, robbery, sex trafficking, and stalking. In consultation with Tribal Leaders in 2019 (and every year since), OVC determined that the TVSSA funds would be administered annually via a noncompetitive formula to interested federally recognized Indian Tribes. The formula-based funding was instituted in 2020. OVC consults annually on the administration of the Set-Aside and the population-based formula used to distribute TVSSA funds.

**FY 2025 Funding Requested for OVW’s Tribal Programs.** The President’s FY 2025 Budget for OVW totals \$800 million, which is \$87.0 million more than the FY 2024 Enacted Budget. Included in this amount is \$108.8 million in funding that supports programs and initiatives in Indian country and Alaska Native Villages. That is a \$27.8 million increase from the FY 2023 Enacted Budget. OVW’s Tribal-specific funding programs focus on preventing and addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking and include the following programs: the Grants to Indian Tribal Governments Program; the Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program (TSASP); the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Grant Program, including a Targeted Support for Alaska Native Tribes Special Initiative; the Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions Grant Program; the Tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorney (TSAUSA) Program; and funding for the National Tribal Clearinghouse on Sexual Assault (NTCSA).

**DOJ Healing and Response Team Initiative.** In response to the Not Invisible Act Commission (NIAC) findings and recommendations, DOJ’s Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) launched a new initiative to support the creation, training, and sustainability of Healing and Response Teams (HRT). This HRT initiative will assist Indian Tribes, Tribal community-based organizations, and urban Indian organizations, as described in the NIAC recommendations. HRTs are designed to provide victim-centered support, advocacy, resource liaisons, healing pathways, and systems navigation assistance using a Tribal-based model of care in responding to missing or murdered Indigenous people cases that involve domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking crimes. In FY 2024 OVW made a two-year award in the amount of \$2,000,000 to the Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) for the Healing and Response Teams Special Initiative. MIWSAC’s key partners in this work are the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center and the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center.

**Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Reimbursement Program.** In May 2024, OVW issued the first awards made through the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Reimbursement Program (Tribal Reimbursement Program) for Tribes who are exercising Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) under the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022. The Tribal Jurisdiction Program reimburses Tribes for expenses incurred in exercising STCJ over non-Native individuals who commit certain covered crimes on Tribal lands.

**Innovative Use of Microgrants for Victim Assistance in Alaska Communities.** DOJ/OVC invested \$4.3M to provide victim assistance funds and technical assistance to tribal communities in Alaska through microgrants in FY 2023. Throughout 2024, microgrants are being used to address unmet needs in tribal victim assistance programs and/or to develop or expand the ability of tribal victim assistance programs to provide services, including shelter for crime victims. Construction will be supported under this program including the renovation, repair, or improvements of existing structures and the construction of new structures to be used for victim services programs. In addition, funds may support Tribes with needs assessments, strategic plans, and program implementation to respond to extractive industries' impacts on violence and victimization. The funds will be administered through the Denali Commission.

**DOJ's Annual Tribal Governments Program Implementation Workshops.** Through these specialized workshops, the Office on Violence Against Women builds the capacity of Tribal governments, Tribal justice system professionals, and Tribal victim services organizations to respond effectively to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking. These workshops have significantly increased successful applications from Tribes and have greatly improved grant financial and program management by grantees. In FY 2024, DOJ/OVW expanded and replicated this model for Tribes in the California and Midwest regions. In FY 2025, expansion will continue to include Tribes in the Southwest and the Great Plains regions.

**23rd Meeting of DOJ's National Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance Working Group (National ITWG) on Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ).** DOJ hosted its 23rd Meeting of the National Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance Working Group (National ITWG) on Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) on December 3-4, 2024, at DOJ's National Advocacy Center in Columbia, SC. The ITWG is a collaborative, working group of Tribal representatives who exchange views, information, and advice about how Tribes may best exercise STCJ over non-Indians and address responses to the covered crimes as set forth in the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022. Over 50 Tribes regularly participate in this group.

**Convening and Expansion of the Task Force on Research on Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women.** The federal advisory committee, managed by DOJ/OVW and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), provided advice and recommendations on the Department's NIJ Program of Research on Violence against American Indian and Alaska Native Women at a June 17, 2024, virtual convening. The 904 Task Force was rechartered in 2024, and OVW and NIJ recently announced seven new members to join the current members, bringing the Task Force up to its full complement of 14 members.

**Effective Multi-Jurisdictional Collaboration in Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Cases, an eLearning course.** Released in January 2024 this COPS-supported eLearning course explores how partnerships between Tribal law enforcement and local, state, federal, and private sector agencies can strengthen the prevention and response to MMIP cases using a fair, victim-centered and trauma-informed approach. By employing MOUs/MOAs and utilizing other shared resources that enhance relationships, effective communication and

collaboration are strengthened for the prevention and response to MMIP cases. Through a case study exercise, learners will acquire insights into how MOUs/MOAs can serve as a framework for law enforcement agencies aiming to improve their MMIP efforts through the formalization of cooperative arrangements. As of early July 2024, nearly 300 participants have completed the course. The course is available in the COPS Training Portal [here](#).

### **Volunteer Engagement for American Indian and Alaska Native Missing Person Cases.**

Released at the end of 2023 this training program offered through the DOJ/COPS Office's Collaborative Reform Initiative – Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC) prepares and introduces the basic elements and practices for creating a volunteer engagement program to support law enforcement and communities in responding to emergent missing person cases. Every agency, Tribe, and missing person situation will have different needs and challenges. This training will provide Tribal stakeholders with options and considerations while building a volunteer engagement program to meet their unique needs.

**Research and Analysis.** During the past calendar year, DOJ/BJIS, the statistical arm of the Department, in consultation with Tribes, developed and implemented the Tribal Justice Statistics Program, including initiating the development of a 10-year strategic plan, enhancing and improving the Survey of Jails in Indian Country (SJIC), and consulting with Tribal nations and federal partners on the implementation of the 2024 Census of Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies (CTLEA) and 2024 Census of Tribal Courts Systems (CTCS). The 2023 SJIC featured new items on crimes against vulnerable persons (i.e., human trafficking, kidnapping, and elder abuse) and a broader range of offense categories. The 2024 CTLEA will collect data from Tribally operated law enforcement agencies in the lower 48 states, BIA police agencies, and the Alaska State Police, which operates the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program in Alaska Native villages. The 2024 CTCS will collect data from Tribal court systems in the lower 48 states, judicial forums in Alaska Native villages, and Code of Federal Regulations Courts operated by the BIA. DOJ/BJIS implemented a process to ensure a Tribal-centered statistical approach, high response rates and program growth over the long-term:

- In October 2023, DOJ/BJIS sent a letter to the 574 federally recognized Tribes announcing the new CTLEA and CTCS projects; and inviting Tribal participation in the development process of the CTLEA & CTCS.
- From February 2024 through April 2024, DOJ/BJIS held four listening sessions specifically for Tribal leaders, Tribal law enforcement, Tribal courts and federal agencies and the Alaska State Police's VPSO program.
- In April 2024, BJS hosted an in-person Tribal justice data expert panel meeting in Albuquerque, NM, to provide recommendations for improvements to the CTLEA & CTCS questionnaires based on input from the webinar listening sessions.

A total of 258 unique entities participated in the four Tribal crime and justice data listening sessions and one in-person expert panel meeting. Participants represented 120 different Tribal nations or Alaskan villages, 27 Tribal law enforcement agencies, 46 Tribal courts, and 10 federal agencies across 33 states and the District of Columbia. Data collection for the 2024 CTLEA & 2024 CTCS will commence in the Spring of 2025. In the Fall of 2024, DOJ/BJIS will be

conducting cognitive testing of the new web-based questionnaires on a sample of Tribal justice agencies to ensure the reliability and validity of responses and assess the respondent burden and quality of available data. Results from the 2023 SJIC are pending release this summer. Data collection for the 2024 SJIC commenced in July 2024.

**DOJ/National Institute of Justice (NIJ) participated in The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) seminar on Advancing the Federal Research Agenda on Tribal Crime, Justice, and Safety with Feedback from the Field on May 23, 2024.** This public seminar, led by NASEM, was held to obtain input on advancing the federal research agenda on Tribal crime, justice, and safety. Funding robust empirical studies remains challenging despite efforts across several bureaus and program offices throughout the Department of Justice to support Tribal research and evaluation over the last two decades. This seminar gathered feedback from interested groups, including members of Tribal communities, and contributed to a conversation about possibilities for supporting criminal justice-focused research and programming moving forward. The feedback and recommendations garnered from this meeting will help OJP better improve Tribal data collection efforts and research as it relates to missing or murdered AI/AN persons.

**Human Trafficking Webinar.** On February 7, 2024, DOJ's Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) served on a panel with Judge Pope, a Trial Judge for the Potawatomi Tribal Court, in a program convened by the Civil Rights and Social Justice Section of the American Bar Association for over 300 participants from a broad cross section of the legal sector to raise awareness of human trafficking issues affecting Tribal communities.

**Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Grants:** The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) through the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS) administers the mandatory formula FVPSA grants to tribes and tribal organizations to assist tribes with the increasing public awareness about primary and secondary prevention of family violence, domestic violence and dating violence; to provide immediate shelter and supportive services for victims of family violence, domestic violence and or dating violence and their dependents. The standing notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) can be found at: [FVPSA Standing Notice of Funding Opportunity for Tribes and Tribal Organizations | The Administration for Children and Families](#) and applications are due January 31, 2025.

**First-Ever DOJ Event on Legal Assistance for Native Communities and Impact on Public Safety and Justice.** In 2025, DOJ's Office for Access to Justice (ATJ) will hold a virtual event highlighting legal assistance needs of individual Tribal members and resources currently available in Native communities. This event is designed to improve agency awareness of the need for legal assistance, including civil legal assistance, for Tribal members, as well as to highlight distinct approaches to representation in Indian Country, such as the use of lay advocates and non-attorney justice workers.

**New DOJ Tribal Defense Resource Update.** DOJ/ATJ is launching an update to its existing PD Hub that will compile specific resources for public defense services in Tribal courts. This update

builds on work that the ATJ Initiative did in 2013, when it issued a guide on grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources provided by the federal government that may be of particular interest to Tribal criminal defense and delinquency representation providers. This project will highlight grant opportunities from the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS), OJP's Tribal Civil and Criminal Legal Assistance program (TCCLA), OVW's Tribal Jurisdiction and Tribal Reimbursement Programs (TJP & TRP), and OJP's Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (Byrne JAG), among others. This resource will also be useful to supplement the support DOJ is providing to Tribes seeking to join the Alaska Pilot Program. DOJ/ATJ will also work toward developing a training on Tribal public defense resources to accompany the resource.

**DOJ Criminal Investigation and Enforcement in Indian Country.** DOJ continues to undertake investigations, lead and participate in law enforcement operations, prosecute cases, and enter into litigation to support the enforcement of criminal laws in Indian Country. Examples of this year's accomplishments include:

- **FBI's Joint Operation Not Forgotten (June-September 2024).** To address the crisis of violence in Tribal communities, FBI launched Operation Not Forgotten (ONF) to focus resources on seeking justice for women and children who have been victims of crime and who have not yet seen their cases resolved. ONF surges resources to Tribal areas with the mission of examining cases that have gone unresolved. The goal is to move those cases closer to resolution, provide services for victims, and to bring offenders to justice, who have so far escaped it.
- In FY23, FBI surged 31 Special Agents and 7 Intelligence personnel to ten field offices with substantial Indian Country responsibilities. Through these resources, agents were able to conduct investigative activities connected to more than 200 pending investigations related to violence against Indigenous women and children.
- In FY24, FBI partnered with BIA-MMU to make ONF a joint operation between the FBI and BIA. BIA-MMU provided significant intelligence and investigative support for the duration of the operation. For the FY24 operation, 51 personnel deployed in support of ONF. Those personnel included 47 Special Agents and 4 Intelligence personnel. During ONF FY24, over 300 cases received investigative assistance, 44 offenders were arrested, and 9 child victims were located and recovered.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

**DHS Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC).** DHS supported Tribal law enforcement communities by providing low-cost and no-cost training opportunities conducted on its campuses as well as Tribal host locations across the United States. In August 2024, FLETC provided human trafficking and leadership training to Tribal law enforcement at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual U.S. Indian Police Academy Instructor and Training Certification Forum and the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual National Native American Law Enforcement Association Conference.



**Law Enforcement Hiring, Ensuring Tribal communities are safe remains a core responsibility of the United States.** BIA provides funding and direct services to Tribes for law enforcement, Tribal courts, and detention services. Recruiting and retaining law enforcement personnel is a historical challenge, but one the Department remains committed to solving. To that end, the BIA has taken steps to better recruit and retain law enforcement by increasing law enforcement pay so that it is on par with the rest of the Department, utilizing incentives such as recruitment bonuses, and shortening the time to hire so that job applicants receive timely job notifications, and expanding recruitment efforts. During the Biden-Harris Administration, BIA increased hiring by more than 5 percent improving critical public safety services to Indian Country.

**Bureau of Indian Affairs Law Enforcement Pay Parity.** BIA is focused on improving the recruitment and retention of BIA law enforcement. BIA's foremost strategy on staffing is a pay parity initiative to bring BIA law enforcement pay levels in line with other federal law enforcement, resulting in up to an additional \$30,000 annually for BIA law enforcement officers

**FBI's Expanded Safe Trails Task Force (STTF) Program in FY24.** In FY24, the FBI and DOJ created two additional Safe Trails Task Forces to address the increasing violent crime threat in Indian Country. These two STTFs were in the Boston Field Office and the Las Vegas Field Office. The Las Vegas Field Office seized the opportunity to strengthen relationships with Tribal partners in the Reno Resident Agency area of responsibility. The Nevada STTF is currently comprised of the FBI and 5 state and Tribal partner agencies. There are currently 26 STTFs.

**FBI Associate Deputy Director's American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Community Roundtable.** In July 2024, the FBI held an AI/AN Community Partner Roundtable with FBI's Associate Deputy Director. The Roundtable was focused on Public Safety Issues affecting AI/AN communities (urban and on Tribal lands), developing trusted partnerships, as well as recruitment and retention of AI/AN people into the FBI.

**Analysts Fully Embedded into FBI and BIA-MMU Partnership.** In FY24, an analyst from the Department of the Interior's Missing and Murdered Unit has been fully embedded as a Task Force Member into the FBI's Indian Country and International Violent Crime Unit through the Safe Trails Task Force (STTF) Program. As a Task Force Member, BIA-MMU is now receiving notification of all new Indian Country investigations as soon as the case is opened. The MMU analyst has access to all FBI Indian Country cases. There are plans for an FBI Intelligence analyst to have similar access to BIA-OJS systems.

**Alaska-specific Training and Technical Assistance.** The DOJ/COPS Office is supporting Alaska-specific training and technical assistance needs through a FY23 award to the Association of Village Council Presidents to update and deliver basic and advanced Village Police Officer/Tribal Police Officer training courses delivered by Yuut Elitnaurviat (YE) in Bethel, Alaska. The DOJ/COPS Office also made an award announcement in FY24 to provide funding to the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAL CAP) to deliver a project that will meet the emergent capacity building and training & technical assistance needs of Alaska's Tribes in establishing and expanding Tribal policing efforts through an assessment of Tribal law

enforcement needs, development of a technical assistance strategy, and deliveries of technical assistance.

**Training and Technical Assistance Pilot Program for Alaska Tribes.** In 2023, DOJ piloted a new approach to alleviate the struggle some remotely-located Tribes’ experience with the human and technological resources required to submit grant applications through government systems. This pilot was implemented in direct response to requests from Alaska Native villages for in-person support with grant applications. Grant managers from DOJ/OVC’s Tribal Division deployed to Alaska to meet with Alaska Village grant applicants to assist with such tasks as creating program designs and project budgeting. In 2024, 6 DOJ/OVC Tribal Division staff met with 30 grantees in 3 cities to provide hands-on technical assistance. In addition, staff from 4 DOJ/OVC Training and Technical Assistance providers also traveled to the 3 cities in Alaska to help ensure applicants had specific programmatic, financial, and construction-related assistance for both current and projected victim service projects.

## CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

**U.S. Intervention in Support of Tribe’s Challenge to On-Reservation Criminal Jurisdiction.** In *Muscogee (Creek) Nation v. City of Tulsa (N.D. Okla.)*, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation filed a complaint against the City of Tulsa, along with the City’s mayor, chief of police, and city attorney (together, the “City”), alleging that the City continues to prosecute Indian defendants within the Creek Reservation despite the holdings of *McGirt* and other federal case law saying that states and their political subsidiaries do not have criminal jurisdiction over Indian defendants in Indian country. In May 2024, DOJ/ENRD intervened as a plaintiff on behalf of the United States (acting on its own behalf and as trustee for the Tribe) to support the Tribe’s claims that the city lacks criminal jurisdiction over Indians for conduct occurring within the Reservation and that the City’s continued assertion of that jurisdiction violates federal law.

**DOJ Response to the Supreme Court Decision in *Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta*.** The Departments of Justice and the Interior (DOJ and DOI) held joint listening sessions on September 26-27, 2022, to discuss with Tribal leaders the implications of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Castro-Huerta* and its impact on Tribal communities. Based on Tribal feedback, DOJ is issuing an invitation to Tribes to consult formally on a possible legislative proposal in response to the *Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta* decision.

**Supporting Oklahoma Tribes in Response to *Castro-Huerta*.** In March 2024, DOJ filed an amicus brief in *Stitt v. City of Tulsa (Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals)*, an appeal of a conviction by a member of the Cherokee Nation for aggravated speeding within the boundaries of the City of Tulsa and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Specifically, DOJ argued that the United States and Tribes, not states, possess authority over Indians in Indian country and that *Castro-Huerta* did not overrule or alter principles of federal law under which states lack criminal jurisdiction over Indians in Indian country absent congressional authorization.

**Tribal Access Program Expansion.** On June 24, 2024, DOJ opened the application period for Tribes to participate in the Tribal Access Program (TAP) for National Crime Information. TAP

improves public safety by providing federally recognized Tribes the ability to access and exchange data with national crime information databases for authorized criminal justice and non-criminal justice purposes. In FY 2024, seventeen additional Tribes were selected for participation in the TAP program. There are currently 149 federally recognized Tribes and more than 460 Tribal government agencies participating in TAP. Using TAP, Tribes have shared information about missing persons; entered domestic violence orders of protection for nationwide enforcement; registered convicted sex offenders; run criminal histories; located fugitives; entered bookings and convictions; and completed fingerprint-based record checks for non-criminal justice purposes such as screening employees or volunteers who work with children.

**DOJ/Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) worked with the National Judicial College and other partners to sponsor the American Indian Justice Conference in Albuquerque, NM on July 30-31, 2024.** This two-day event brought together 200-300 individuals from Tribes across the nation with an opportunity to learn strategies to enhance Tribal justice systems while providing essential information on courts and traditional justice; alcohol and substance misuse; probation; reentry; policing; violent crime prevention; multidisciplinary collaboration; and other relevant topics.

**DOJ/BJA will sponsor Tribal Law Enforcement Quarterly Virtual Calls to introduce BJA staff and resources to Tribal Chiefs of Police and law enforcement.** The first call was held on August 7, 2024. Throughout this initiative, DOJ/BJA will collect information from Tribal law enforcement to inform the agenda for future quarterly calls, respond to training and technical assistance requests, and share information on current open solicitations that Tribes may apply and compete for resources, and learn about Tribal law enforcement success, challenges, issues, and needs.

## **HOLISTIC PUBLIC SAFETY WORK**

**New FBI Indigenous Language Analyst.** In FY24, the FBI hired its first-ever first Indigenous Language Analyst (Dinélanguage) as a 2-year pilot program. In prior years the translation work was being done as a collateral duty and not as a full-time linguist position.

**FBI's Indian Country Wellness and Resiliency Program (April- September 2024).** FBI Indian Country Agents investigate some of the most violent crimes, including homicide, aggravated assault, sexual assault, and the physical and sexual abuse of children. Repeated exposure to these types of investigations can have physical, emotional and psychological impacts on the people working them. Taking those impacts into consideration, the FBI developed the Indian Country Wellness and Resiliency Program (ICWaR). The first iteration of the program launched in FY22. Since then, the program has focused on providing participants with the knowledge and tools to identify and mitigate common stressors associated with Indian Country assignments. In FY24, ICWaR accommodated more than 250 Indian Country agents, TFOs and spouses/significant others. Based on feedback from participants, ICWaR has contributed to increased morale among the FBI's Indian Country investigators.

**DOJ/BJA, in partnership with the Tribal Law and Policy Institute (TLPI), hosted the 2024 Tribal Healing to Wellness Court Implementation and Enhancement Training in September 2024 in Phoenix, Arizona.** Tribal Healing to Wellness Court practitioners received training in the following areas: Tribal issues, jurisdictional and legal issues unique to Indian country, the incorporation of custom and tradition into the phases, case management, treatment curriculums, tangential services, and the peer-to-peer sharing of successful Healing to Wellness Courts models in operation. Training topics covered adult criminal, juvenile justice, family dependency, DWI/DUI, and veteran’s models.

**DOJ/Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) hosted a National Conference on November 19-21, 2024, to bring together youth and families, grantees, leading researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders from across the U.S. who are working to transform juvenile justice.** During this conference, DOJ/OJJDP hosted a Tribal Track with session topics such as: “Elders and Youth: Partnering for Success”, “We Are Living Arts: Create. Heal. Inspire. Native Youth Program,” and “Modeling a Combined Tribal Juvenile & Family Healing to Wellness Court, Possibilities & Challenges”. As a part of this conference, DOJ/OJJDP held a Tribal Pre-Conference for DOJ/OJJDP grantees on November 18th that included a Listening Session focused on the unmet needs of Tribal communities. DOJ/OJJDP also hosted a session entitled, “Building an Indigenous Response to Systems,” focusing on utilizing cultural practices as a protective factor to empower Indigenous youth in the child welfare system. This session was delivered from the perspective of our Supporting Vulnerable and At-Risk Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care and Tribal Children’s Advocacy Center Training and Technical Assistance programs (Tribal CAC TTA) and featured a panel discussion with individuals from Youth Collaboratory and Native Child Advocacy Resource Center/National Native Children’s Trauma Center.

**DOJ/OJJDP, in partnership with DOJ’s National Indian Country Training Initiative, is hosting a quarterly series of webinars centered on “Culture as Prevention.”** The series has presented four sessions to thousands of registered participants thus far on topics relevant to juvenile justice and child welfare, including Tribal notification when Tribal youth are in state juvenile justice systems, the use of Indigenous Knowledge in juvenile justice systems, the Alaska EXCEL program (a vocational training program for school districts in rural Alaska), and the use of Elders in youth programming.

**Protecting Heritage and Culture through Peacekeeping In-Person Training Course.** This one and a half day in-person training course, supported by the DOJ/COPS Office, was piloted this fall 2024. The course seeks to strengthen the relationships between local law enforcement and the Tribal jurisdictions they protect. Through discussion, lecture, and group activities law enforcement will explore Tribal history and recognize the unique culture of specific Tribes in their area. With an emphasis on tolerance and anti-biased policing practices, participants will explore interactions between Tribal members and law enforcement and discuss strategies for improved relations. Participants will identify community partners and opportunities for collaborative engagement between law enforcement and Tribal communities. Case studies and scenarios will be reviewed to identify successful strategies to help eliminate bias and intolerance.

**DOJ/OVC First Ever Alaska Regional Gathering.** In February 2024, 50 grantees, representing 26 Alaska Native communities, participated in hands on, skill building training at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage. The event provided individualized, in-person assistance to Tribal Victim Service Set-Aside (TVSSA) grantees; strengthened relationships with OVC grant managers and training and technical assistance providers; and offered opportunities for regional networking and peer support. The Tribal Victim Services Training and Technical Assistance (T-VSTTA) team, Tribal Financial Management Center (TFMC), Performance Management team, and OVC grant managers attended the gathering to share tools and resources for TVSSA project planning, budgets, progress reports, and financial reports.

**DOJ/DOI Tribal Justice, Safety, and Wellness Summit.** In July 2024, the Departments of Justice and the Interior jointly hosted an on-line Tribal Justice, Safety, and Wellness Summit. The summit was held virtually over three consecutive afternoons. This is the second time that the Summit was held. The first Summit was held in June 2022 and 737 persons attended; the year's summit included 948 attendees. The audience was comprised of federal, state and Tribal prosecutors, law enforcement officers, advocates, elected leaders, academics, medical professionals, and community stakeholders. There were four separate training tracks: resources; MMIP; criminal justice law enforcement and prosecution; and technology.

## DRUG TRAFFICKING

**DEA Supervisory Special Agents to Serve Indian Country.** DEA has designated 25 Supervisory Special Agents (SSAs) to serve as counterparts for Tribal matters in their districts. The list was created to mirror the FBI Safe Trails Task Forces (STTFs) that exist around the country. All 25 SSAs are in locations that correspond to FBI STTF locations. The SSAs on the list and their management have all been informed of their duties and responsibilities and have an open line of communication with HQ.

**DEA's Operation Overdrive on the Blackfeet Reservation.** In June 2024, DEA selected the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana as a DEA Operation Overdrive location. Operation Overdrive uses a data-driven, intelligence-led approach to identify and dismantle criminal drug networks operating in areas with the highest rates of violence and overdoses. To further mitigate the public health and safety impact on the communities, DEA incorporates prevention and outreach through close coordination with local stakeholders.

## YOUTH AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

**DOJ/OJP's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).** Tribal Youth Program training and technical assistance provider created and released two national grantee portals, one for Juvenile Healing to Wellness Courts and one for Tribal Youth Program grantees. These portals include important resources such as a grantee directory, strategic planning

resources, templates, training opportunities, as well as a forum that supports grantees' ability to connect with one another around specific topics.

This year DOJ/OJJDP will establish and administer a Tribal Youth Fellowship Program for two Tribal Youth Justice Fellows with lived experience in Tribal youth justice systems to ensure Tribal training and technical assistance efforts are grounded and centered on young people's lived experience within Tribal juvenile justice systems. In addition, OJJDP will fund a Tribal Youth Leadership & Partnerships Initiative and a State, Local, & Tribal Partnerships to Support Justice Involved Youth Program as part of the training and technical assistance. Grant awards were made October 2024.

DOJ/OJP's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is fulfilling its commitment made in the NIAC Response to convene a listening session to discuss children and youth who voluntarily go missing or are trafficked. This listening session will be held during the OVC's Indian Nations Conference at Agua Caliente on December 9, 2024.

DOJ/OJJDP's Tribal Children Advocacy Center (CAC) training and technical assistance provider will release a practice brief in the Fall of 2024 on "How to Develop a Tribal Multidisciplinary Team." A webinar will accompany this brief.

DOJ/OJJDP's Tribal CAC training and technical assistance provider presented two sessions at the National Children's Alliance Leadership conference in June, 2024. The sessions included "Engaging with Native Nations Around Multidisciplinary Teams and CACs" and "Reaching Native Kids: American Indian and Alaska Native Grantees Panel."

DOJ/OJJDP's Tribal CAC training and technical assistance provider developed five briefs housed on the National Native Child Advocacy Resource Center's website on various topics related to supporting child advocacy services for American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Briefs include Collaborating with the FBI to Serve Tribal Children and Families; Words of Wisdom from Tribal CAC Directors; Mental Health Services for Caregivers; Working with the Western Regional CAC; and Evidence-Supported, Culturally Responsive Mental Health Care for Native Children and Families in the CAC Setting.

## **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

**FEMA Designates 158 Tribal Nations' lands as Community Disaster Resilience Zones.** In 2022 President Biden signed the Community Disaster Resilience Zones (CDRZ) Act into law, which directed FEMA to identify census tracts most at risk for effects of natural hazards and climate change. The goal of CDRZ is building resilience by driving federal, public, and private resources to underserved communities that have high natural hazard risk. Throughout 2023 and 2024 FEMA worked collaboratively with Tribal Nations to identify 20% of the census tracts that overlap with their Tribal lands to be designated as a CDRZ. All 574 Tribal Nation are eligible for their own CDRZ designations and should contact their [FEMA Regional Tribal Liaison](#) or [FEMA Tribal Integration Team](#) to learn more about CDRZ and the designation process.

**FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant Program.** In FY 2023, FEMA prioritized 40% of funding of its Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program for disadvantaged communities, which included \$77 million in awards to Tribal Nations—a significant increase over prior funding levels. FEMA is approving the Tribal applicants for FY 2023 funding, supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and will release the NOFO for FY 2024 soon. Under the program, FEMA is also providing technical assistance to 51 Tribal Nations that includes support for climate risk assessments, community engagement, partnership building, hazard mitigation, and climate adaptation planning.

**Center for Domestic Preparedness 10th Annual Tribal Nations Training Week.** In 2024 FEMA hosted over 320 Tribal students from 108 Tribal Nations during the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tribal Nations Training Week, at the FEMA Center for Domestic Preparedness. FEMA will host the 10th Annual Tribal Nations Training Week during April 26-May 3, 2025. The training provides Tribal attendees with necessary emergency certifications, offers training from Tribal instructors, and helps build emergency management relationships across Indian Country and beyond. This training is fully funded up front for Tribal leaders, Tribal emergency responders, and any designated Tribal staff and includes roundtrip airfare, meals, and lodging. FEMA will additionally host a virtual Tribal Nations Training Week during May 5-9, 2025. If you would like to learn more about either week or register, please email [FEMA-tribalnationscdp@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-tribalnationscdp@fema.dhs.gov).

**FEMA Improves Individual Assistance for Tribal Community Members Impacted by Disasters.** In 2024, FEMA published an interim final rule improving its regulations governing its Individual Assistance (IA) program to help disaster survivors by establishing new benefits, cutting red tape and expand eligibility, and simplifying the application process for certain types of assistance. These improvements were influenced by government-to-government consultations with Tribal Nations. The improvements to the IA program were some of the biggest that FEMA has proposed in 20 years. FEMA Tribal Affairs has published [a tribal one-pager](#) to highlight these improvements for Tribal Nations and the positive impacts they will have on disaster survivors across Indian Country.

**Improving the FEMA Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide (PAPPG) for Indian Country.** FEMA is working to update and improve its (2020) Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide (PAPPG). The Guide provides a pathway for a Tribal Nation to request Public Assistance (PA) after a Presidential disaster is declared so that it can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies. In 2024, FEMA hosted a series of consultations, listening sessions, and webinars with Tribal Nations to gather input on revisions and updates to the PAPPG, specifically how to simplify the PA program, streamline ways for customers to meet requirements, and increase accessibility. The revised Guide will be released with [key improvements for Tribal Nations](#).

**Enhancing Long Term Disaster Recovery by through FEMA’s National Disaster Recovery Framework.** FEMA’s National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) explains how the federal government supports disaster impacted Tribal Nations as they recover and provides a framework to support Tribal Nations planning for and leading their own recovery operations. In 2024,

FEMA began its work to improve the following five NDRF issue areas that partners have identified as important areas for updating: recovery scope, roles and responsibilities, capacity and resources, planning, and data metrics. To better incorporate Tribal Nations within the NDRF, FEMA then hosted three Tribal Working Group sessions with Tribal emergency managers and Tribal leaders and hosted tribal consultations to gather feedback and input to improve disaster recovery in Indian Country. These consultations led to a NDRF that better incorporated Tribal Nations needs for recovery after a disaster strikes.

**FEMA Proposal for Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program Reform.** After Tribal consultation, FEMA proposed changes to Congress that would improve the Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program, which supports Tribal Nations and Tribal first responders in reducing risks from manmade and natural disasters. The proposed changes better meet the needs of Tribal Nations and acknowledge Tribal sovereignty.

- Through ACE and HHS, the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation have a Diaper Distribution Pilot grant awarded in 2023. In the Summer of 2024, the Tribe received supplemental funds of nearly \$540,000 along with a 12-month extension. The supplement combined with the extended program period will increase the tribe's capacity to provide diapers, diaper supplies, and wrap around support services to families in need.

**FEMA Launches the 2024 Tribal Declarations Interim Guidance.** Building upon the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) extensive government-to-government consultations and work with Tribal Nations in 2023, FEMA launched the Tribal Declarations Interim Guidance. The Guidance will help Tribal Nations better navigate pathways to receive Presidential disaster declarations and obtain assistance for Tribal community members when they need it most. Key improvements include decreasing the Public Assistance minimum damage amount from \$250,000 to \$100,000, launching two new pathways for Tribal Nations to receive a 98% cost share adjustment for disaster declarations, streamlining access to Individual Assistance for Tribal community members, increasing timelines to meet Tribal Nation needs, and more.

**Animal and Plant Emergency Response and Preparedness Trainings.** In 2024, USDA hosted eight regional trainings on or near Tribal-managed lands to increase awareness about animal and plant health emergencies and response capabilities. The trainings introduced Tribal personnel to their USDA counterparts, assisted Tribal Nations in developing plant and animal health emergency response plans, and outlined how Tribal and Federal responders can work together during an initial plant or animal health emergency.

## **EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**EPA enters Memorandum of Understanding with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and Northwest Indian College (NWIC).** In 2024, EPA entered into Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with several academic institutions and a national higher education organization, including the American Indian Higher Education Consortium



(AIHEC) and the Northwest Indian College (NWIC). These MOUs are intended to increase cooperation and promote collaboration through bidirectional and shared learning between communities, establish opportunities for activities based on shared goals, and provide for EPA leaders to meet directly with administrators, students, and other Tribal education professionals. With these MOUs, EPA is committed to technical partnerships, training students, and promoting environmental science and federal careers with the goal of connecting students with Tribal Environmental Programs and EPA Programs.

**EPA Region 7 Liaison Program with Haskell Indian Nations University.** Since October 2022, when EPA Region 7 and Haskell Indian Nations University renewed their memorandum of understanding (MOU) to pilot a new on-campus outreach program, the program has grown from mentoring 15 students in the 2022-2023 school year to 30 students in the 2023-2024 school year. Since the start of the pilot, 11 Haskell students have interned or are interning with EPA at Region 7 or Headquarters, and two were hired permanently at EPA. In addition, EPA staff have assisted Haskell students in applying for and receiving internships and permanent placements with other federal agencies through the pilot program.

**USDA Funded NDSU Creation of a Food Sovereignty and Public Health Student Summer Program.** USDA received \$1 million to develop a Tribal Public Health Resource Center at a land-grant university with existing Indigenous public health expertise to expand current partnerships and collaborative efforts with Indigenous groups, including Tribal colleges to improve the delivery of culturally appropriate public health services and functions in American Indian communities focusing on Indigenous food sovereignty. The Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) worked with North Dakota State University (NDSU) to develop a center focused on the intersection of Tribal food sovereignty and public health. In June 2024, 19 Native students spent three weeks in-person to complete both classroom and experiential learning, witnessing buffalo harvests and visiting food distribution programs, to engage with leaders and experts in the food sovereignty field to provide them with the tools to improve public health in their communities.

**New Tribal College Liaisons.** USDA created a new team of Tribal College and University (TCU) liaisons to serve Indian Country with regional staff nationwide. TCUs are engines of economic development and arms of Tribal governments, and these new staff will provide dedicated outreach and technical assistance to the TCUs and the Tribes they serve.

**White House Initiative for Advancing Education Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities co-hosted an Education Summit with the California Indian Nations College.** The Education Summit included conversations with state and tribal educators along with the California State Superintendent of Education, Tony Thurmond and California Assembly member James C. Ramos.

**Federal Working Group to Enhance Engagement with Tribal Nations and Native Communities.** In 2022, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, in collaboration with the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity for Native Americans and the U.S. Department of Education, established a federal working group to enhance engagement with Tribal Nations and Native communities. This initiative seeks to

uphold tribal sovereignty while improving education, workforce development, and economic opportunities for youth and adults, with an emphasis on including those with disabilities. Key activities completed include the Advancing Federal Interagency Problem Solving and Capacity-Building in Native Communities Summary Report (August 2024) and a convening on the same topic (October 2023). Additionally, a virtual dialogue series was conducted addressing mental health, community engagement, financial mobility, and healthcare career pathways from 2022 to 2023.

## INTERNSHIP, APPRENTICESHIP, AND SERVICE PROGRAMS

**Indian Youth Service Corps.** In FY 2024, the Department of the Interior provided nearly \$7 million in new funding to support the Indian Youth Service Corps Program. The programs and projects included support for food sovereignty through the reestablishment of indigenous farming methods and the development of traditional seed libraries to support the production of fresh foods and vegetables, cultural resource conservation, support for wildfire resilience, historic preservation of ancient ruins, environmental justice, language restoration, ecological restoration, and water conservation. Additionally, in FY 2024, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management established the BLM's Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC), and implemented ten Tribal youth cooperative agreements engaging 43 youth on both public and Tribal lands. Finally, the USDA Forest Service Workforce Development Partnerships Hub collaborated with the Reforestation and Fire & Aviation Management Programs to improve reforestation and hazardous fuels management activities, awarding more than \$9 million to eighteen new Indian Youth Service Corps reforestation and hazardous fuels management projects were funded in fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

**NextGen Agriculture.** The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture invested \$25.8 million in the next generation of future leaders at Tribal Colleges and Universities through the NextGen program, including support for scholarships and paid internships to encourage young people to grow their careers in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences. Projects are led by the College of Menominee Nation, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Northwest Indian College, and Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College. In 2024, the projects awarded 26 scholarships and funded more than 20 internships. Additional activities conducted include youth programs exposing young people and their families to careers in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences; support for student research and professional development (including research opportunities for high school students); the development of module-based internship programs to allow more flexibility for students as they meet learning outcomes.

**New FBI Outreach, Information Sharing, and Recruitment Efforts with AI/AN Serving Colleges/Universities & Tribal Colleges.** In FY24, the FBI launched a new outreach program to Tribally-owned colleges and AI/AN serving colleges and universities. This program will provide these education facilities and students with information about the FBI, including work the agency does and the variety of careers available. This initiative will encourage AI/AN students to see themselves as part of the FBI mission and provide additional options for their futures. This will also help fulfill issues regarding recruiting, hiring, and retention of Native employees brought up in the Not Invisible Act Commission report.

**U.S. Department of State – Indigenous Youth Leadership Coalition (IYLC).** The Indigenous Youth Leadership Coalition (IYLC) was established by the State Department’s Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice (SRREJ), in collaboration with the White House and Department of the Interior, as a new network to elevate the voices of Indigenous youth in conversations about global civic and political participation. From November 6-9, 2023, the SRREJ team organized and hosted the first annual IYLC cohort, bringing six Indigenous youth leaders from the Western Hemisphere to Washington, D.C. to participate for the first time in the White House Tribal Youth Forum Alongside Native American youth leaders. The Tribal Youth Forum offered the opportunity for the cohort to share effective practices with Native youth leaders and enabled them to share their perspectives on critical issues such as preserving Indigenous knowledge and languages, furthering climate resilience, and addressing health inequities.

**State Department Office of Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice (SRREJ) collaborating with representatives from the United Indian Tribal Youth.** In 2024, to further expand the success and sustainability of the initial program, SRREJ is collaborating with representatives from the United Indian Tribal Youth organization (UNITY), which has identified four Native American youth leaders to participate virtually in IYLC quarterly meetings, workshops, and knowledge exchange programs. The State Department and UNITY will also work to develop an in-person offsite retreat in the United States during the fall/winter of 2024 in close collaboration with a Native American Tribe that will allow the cohort to cultivate lasting relationships between future leaders and develop solution-driven knowledge exchanges between international Indigenous youth and Native American youth on issues that directly affect their communities. This inspirational in-person program has the potential to serve as an incubator for new perspectives to empower youth and encourage future collaboration beyond borders on issues impacting Indigenous communities.

**Meat Processing Workforce Development.** USDA funded Blackfeet Community College, Bay Mills Community College and Dine College to bolster workforce development in the meat and poultry sciences to encourage food security and food sovereignty. These Tribal colleges will partner with USDA and the Flower Hill Institute to provide assistance in the processing of meat and poultry from start to finish. The outcome will be training Tribal college students how to process meat and poultry in a safe environment.

**Meat Inspector Boot Camp.** Tribal nations across the country are standing up new meat processing facilities to service their and surrounding communities. The requirements to serve as a USDA meat and food inspector broadly include a four-year degree in a relevant field or a high school diploma with one-year of relevant experience. USDA is partnering with the American Meat Science Association and Tribal Agriculture Fellowship to develop and host at least two bootcamps in targeted locations in Indian Country that will provide aspiring Tribal food inspectors with the tools to competitively apply for federal food inspection positions.

**Tribal Food and Agriculture Internship Program.** USDA and the Partnership for Public Service onboarded 13 interns through the Future Leaders in Public Service Internship Program to work for the US Department of Agriculture both in Washington, DC and remotely within Indian Country on agriculture and food portfolios.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Social Security Provided Free Virtual National Training sessions.** Due to significant turnover through the Pandemic due to COVID, it was imperative for Social Security Administration to offer *SSA 101 Basic Benefits Training* for employees of Indian Health Service, Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations and for any other roles who provide social worker support for Tribal members applying for SSA programs and services. To support this effort, we developed a national training strategy help the workforce in these critical support roles better understand SSA benefits and services. We specifically took the following actions:

- In November 2023 and March 2024, SSA provided training on the Assistance Based on Need (ABON) program and the Native American Precedent Repository and Resource Center for employees of Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations who provide social work support roles for Tribal members applying for SSA programs and services. The training focused on exceptions to the SSI income and resource limits; COVID-related disaster relief payments; the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act; and the requirements necessary to classify Tribal benefit programs as ABON, which does not count towards SSI income limitations.
- In November 2023 and March 2024, SSA provided a *SSA 101 Basic Benefits Training* for employees of Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations who provide social worker support roles for Tribal members applying for SSA programs and services.
- In December, SSA published a detailed **Tribal Benefits Coordinator Guide** and created other educational resources for Tribal Benefit Coordinators on Social Security programs and services.
- In December, SSA released a Dear Tribal Leader Letter to notify and market SSAs Tribal affairs website ([www.ssa.gov/people/aian](http://www.ssa.gov/people/aian)) to Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations. The website provides information on services relevant to Tribal communities.
- In April, SSA provided a *Supplemental Security Income – Program Tools and Tips training* for employees of Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations. The training detailed the initial disability and appeals filing process.
- In May, SSA provided an *Appointed Representative versus Power of Attorney training* for employees of Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations. The training focused on the Appointed Representative role and how it could support disability claims and appeal filing.

- In June, SSA provided an *Understanding Benefits for Survivors training* for employees of Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations. The training focused on benefits available, eligibility, and how to apply.
- In July, SSA provided an *Understanding Overpayments training* for employees of Tribal Government Offices and Urban Indian Organizations. The training focused on an overpayment overview, policy changes, repayment options, and appeal rights.
- In August, SSA provided a *Program Overview of Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income training* for employees of Tribal Government Offices and 8 Urban Indian Organizations. The training focused on the differences in the two programs, factors of eligibility and entitlement, and the application process.

## HEALING FROM DESTRUCTIVE PAST POLICIES

### INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS

**Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.** Following the historic Presidential apology for the Federal Indian Boarding School era, DOI will announce new agreements with the U.S. Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History as part of the Department’s Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. The new agreements will house and protect the information uncovered as part of the initiative’s oral history project, preserve survivor experiences, and inform the public on histories relating to the federal Indian boarding school system and its impacts on Indigenous children and their communities.

### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APOLOGY

**The Navy Flag Officer apology to clan leaders and community of Angoon and Kake, Alaska.** In the 1800s, the U.S. Navy bombarded the Tlingit villages and Clans of Angoon and Kake (Alaska) causing significant and disproportionate loss of life and culture. The affected clans express continued effects and intergenerational trauma caused by these actions and are seeking an apology from uniformed military officers. A Navy flag officer delivered an apology to clan leaders and the community of Kake (September 21) and Angoon (October 26).

## VOTING AND CIVIL RIGHTS

**Designation of Voter Registration Sites through State Collaboration.** As part of President Biden’s Executive Order 14019, “Promoting Access to Voting” aimed to reduce past injustices of discriminatory voting policies in the United States. In 2022, New Mexico and Kansas became the first-ever states to designate the Department of the Interior’s two post-secondary schools as voter registration agencies: Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) and Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU), respectively. The state-led voter agency designations ensures that Haskell and SIPI students and community members have access to voting information and opportunities to register to vote. In September 2023, SIPI went further to announce the

establishment of its first-ever on-campus Voter Registration Office to start the 2023 school year and ensure its community members have full access to voter information.

**Justice Department ADA findings.** On June 18, 2024, the Justice Department issued findings that Alaska violated Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), discriminating against voters with disabilities by failing to provide an accessible ballot for in-person voting, selecting inaccessible polling places for federal, state, and local elections, and maintaining an inaccessible elections website.

On January 17, 2024, in *Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska v. Thurston County* (D. Neb.), the Department filed a statement of interest regarding Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. In that case, the Winnebago and Omaha Tribes of Nebraska, and several Tribal members, sued Thurston County alleging that the County's at-large method of electing its county supervisors diluted the voting strength of Native American voters in the County, in violation of Section 2. On January 26, 2024, the court entered a consent decree requiring the County to adopt a method of election compliant with Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

The Department has continued to hold meetings with state and local election officials and minority community members in various jurisdictions to discuss the minority language requirements of Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, and to answer questions regarding implementation of effective language assistance programs. Under the determinations made by the Director of the Census, published in the December 8, 2021 Federal Register, jurisdictions covered under Section 203 for American Indian and Alaska Native languages include jurisdictions within Alaska (Yup'ik, Aleut, Inupiat), Arizona (Navajo, Pueblo, Hopi, Paiute, Apache), Colorado (Ute), Florida (Seminole), Idaho (Nez Perce), Mississippi (Choctaw), Nevada (Shoshone), New Mexico (Navajo, Pueblo, Ute), Texas (Kickapoo, Alabama-Coushatta), and Minnesota and Wisconsin (Ho-Chunk).

On May 20, 2022, in *Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians v. Howe* (formerly *Jaeger*) (D.N.D.), the Department filed a statement of interest regarding Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The plaintiffs, including the Spirit Lake Tribe and individual Tribal members, alleged that North Dakota's legislative redistricting plan violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act because it dilutes the voting power of Native American voters. Secretary of State Jaeger filed a motion to dismiss, arguing, among other things, that the Voting Rights Act does not contain a private right of action for a violation of Section 2. The Department's statement articulated that private plaintiff do have a cause of action under Section 2. The district court denied Secretary Jaeger's motion to dismiss finding as the plaintiffs had standing to bring suit under Section 1983. After trial, the district court found that the State's plan violates Section 2. The case is now on appeal in the Eighth Circuit on the question of whether Section 2 is privately enforceable under Section 1983. The Department filed an amicus brief in the Eighth Circuit explaining that it is.

**Civil Rights Enforcement Actions in South Dakota.** On October 19, 2022, the Division filed *United States v. Retsel Corporation*, a lawsuit against the owners of a hotel and bar for making public comments that Native Americans were not allowed on the property and turning away Native Americans who tried to book hotel rooms. On November 29, 2023, the federal

district court for the District of South Dakota entered the consent order requiring the owners to adopt a non-discrimination policy, barred one of the owners from leading the company or managing the hotel for four years, and required the owners to issue a public apology to Tribal organizations in South Dakota and the Great Plains region. Throughout 2024, the Division has been working to ensure implementation of the terms of the consent order.

**Civil Rights Investigation of Phoenix, AZ Law Enforcement Department.** On June 13, 2024, the DOJ issued a findings report concerning its investigation of the Phoenix, Arizona Police Department. In operative part, the report stated: Phoenix Police Department “discriminates against Black, Hispanic, and Native American people when enforcing the law.”

**Financial Assistance to Farmers, Ranchers, and Forest Landowners through the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program.** Authorized and funded by the Inflation Reduction Act, the DFAP program issued payments to 43,000 individuals across all 50 states, ranging from \$10,000 to \$500,000. The program provided financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners, including Tribal citizens, who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. USDA is actively working to build a department that ensures no customers are ignored or left behind, as outlined in its 2024 Equity Action Plan.

## INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, KNOWLEDGE, AND CULTURE

### INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

**ACHP Policy Statement on Indigenous Knowledge and Historic Preservation.** In March 2024, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation unanimously approved a Policy Statement on Indigenous Knowledge and Historic Preservation. The policy statement tailors government-wide Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge to the needs of the historic preservation community. The policy communicates 12 baseline principles that federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental institutions should implement as a part of their stewardship, Section 106 participation and compliance, sacred sites management, and other historic-preservation actions, consistent with their unique missions and authorities. Overall, the policy statement reinforces that Indigenous Knowledge should be recognized as an independent, valid, and self-supporting line of evidence meant to support program, policy, and procedural decisions related to historic preservation and recognizes designated representatives of Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations as the appropriate subject matter experts capable of informing decision making related to such knowledge. The policy also calls on the historic preservation community to ensure the appropriate amount of time and resources are dedicated to the identification, documentation, utilization, management, and safeguarding of Indigenous Knowledge, along with developing guidance to inform these

activities. An overarching goal of the policy is to ensure the Indigenous Knowledge of Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and other Indigenous Peoples has an equitable and ongoing role in the decision-making process, recognizing the history of federal-Tribal/Native Hawaiian relations has not consistently or effectively accounted for this information.

**Exemption for Indigenous-Knowledge Informed Activities by Native Hawaiian**

**Organizations.** The ACHP has finalized an Exemption for Indigenous-Knowledge Informed Activities by Native Hawaiian Organizations. This exemption constitutes a Section 106 program alternative that exempts from Section 106 review certain federally funded, licensed, or managed restoration, rehabilitation, preservation, and reconstruction activities proposed, directed, authorized, or supported by Native Hawaiian Organizations. It applies to all undertakings as defined in the National Historic Preservation Act, including landscaping practices, agricultural activities, restoration of water features, restoration of historic pathways, restoration of sacred and traditional sites, installation of interpretive signs, return or incorporation of Indigenous names, and the reconstruction or restoration of traditional Native Hawaiian buildings and structures.

**National Park Service Tribal Historic Preservation.** Since 2021, the National Park Service has signed 27 new agreements with Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, supporting Indian Tribes in strengthening their historic preservation programs managed on Tribal lands. NPS has distributed \$77 million to Tribes to support historic and cultural preservation work, including apportionments to Tribal Historic Preservation Offices and through annual Tribal Heritage Grants, in addition to distributing another \$10.4 million in grants to museums, Indian Tribes, and NHOs to assist in consultation, documentation, and repatriation under NAGPRA. In 2022, the NPS also hired a full-time investigator to enhance oversight and museum compliance with NAGPRA for the first time in the Act’s 31-year history.

**Historic New Treaty on Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous**

**Peoples.** In May 2024, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge through its member states successfully approved a groundbreaking Treaty making history as the first WIPO Treaty to include Indigenous Peoples. Successful negotiations were led by the United States Government including the Departments of Commerce, Interior, and State, and consulted with U.S. Tribal governments and organizations consistent with protections of genetic resources and traditional knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples.

**EPA’s Indigenous Knowledge (IK) Training for Employees.** In December 2022, with the release of the “Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge,” EPA responded by creating and deploying an EPA-wide IK Training to educate staff regarding what Indigenous knowledge (IK) is, and how it can be recognized, considered, and applied in federal research, policy, and decision-making at EPA. “Live” trainings occurred throughout the 2024 calendar year. A recorded version of the training is accessible internally to EPA employees on EPA’s IK intranet site, which also features additional IK-related resources, including a recorded discussion between then EPA Deputy Administrator Janet McCabe and Dr. Robin Wall



Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*. As of June 2024, four of five planned IK trainings are complete, with almost 1800 employees attending.

**Promoting the use of Indigenous Knowledge in Federal Decision Making at DOI.** The Department of the Interior has taken steps to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into its work, including through the publication of departmental guidance on the inclusion and protection of Indigenous Knowledge in decision making and scientific research. Under Secretary Haaland’s leadership, a new chapter in the agency’s Departmental Manual formalized Indigenous Knowledge as a foundational piece of the Department’s mission and formally recognized Indigenous Knowledge as one of the many important knowledge systems that contribute to the well-being of the United States and to the collective understanding of the natural world. As part of the implementation of the Department Manual chapter, the Department is conducting Tribal consultation on a draft handbook that has been developed to provide guidance, practical tips, and promising practices for engaging with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities on the inclusion and application of Indigenous Knowledge.

**Promoting the use of Indigenous Knowledge in Federal Decision Making at USA.** In June 2024, USAID launched our new policy on Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning. The policy specifically identified Indigenous knowledge as a critical asset that USAID must consider in program design and implementation in order to increase equitable partnerships and improve program effectiveness and results. To support the implementation of the policy, USAID is exploring development of a framework and web-based tool to increase access to information and resources associated with understanding and engaging local and Indigenous knowledge in development and strengthening local learning systems.

## GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION

**Final Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Rule.** The Department of the Interior published final revisions to its NAGPRA regulations on December 13, 2023, that provide a systematic process for returning human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony to Tribal Nations and Native Hawaiian Organizations. The regulatory changes close loopholes and streamline the requirements for museums and federal agencies to inventory and identify human remains and cultural items in their collections with appropriate deference to Indigenous knowledge.

## NATIVE LANGUAGES

**Native Language Plan.** The Administration is releasing its 10-year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization (Plan). The Plan calls for historic action to address the United States government’s role in the loss of Native languages across the lower 48 states, Alaska, and

Hawai‘i. The Plan lays out a long-term, all-of-government strategy that works with Tribal Nations, the Native Hawaiian Community, Urban Native communities, Native language experts, schools, community organizations, and the philanthropic sector for the revitalization, protection, preservation, and reclamation of Native languages. The plan’s proposals would: 1) expand access to immersion language environments, 2) support community-led revitalization efforts, and 3) develop, grow and sustain Native language support networks. The Plan proposes ways to address a chronic under-investment in Native language revitalization to date. Implementation of this plan would require an investment of \$16.75 billion between 2025 and 2035 – \$1.5 billion per year. This is proportionate to the need *and* the historical harm that was caused during the boarding school and assimilation eras.

**National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education.** The Interior Department’s Bureau of Indian Education will announce \$7.5 cooperative agreement with the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education (National Fund) to support Native Language revitalization. Through this innovative partnership, DOI and the National Fund will work together to administer the BIE Language Grant Program (LGP), and support Native language revitalization systems. A core goal of the partnership is reimagining BIE schools as leaders in providing world class learning opportunities for students. To successfully support BIE students in learning their language and culture, the National Fund will provide grants to BIE schools to start or expand access to high-quality language and culture immersion programs. The partnership will foster a network of BIE schools undertaking this work and will help to create more efficiency and learning opportunities for the educators and school leaders engaged in the effort.

**SSA Native Languages Accessibility Improvements.** SSA is enhancing interpreter services and seeking opportunities to translate relevant SSA publications into Native Languages. In 2023, SSA developed strategies to translate targeted publications and market interpreter services in Tribal communities, implemented new Tribal outreach to Urban Indian Centers in Limited English Proficient communities, and worked on hiring bilingual employees. In 2024, SSA produced publications in Native Languages that included a poster for display in Field Offices titled “Share Your Race and Ethnicity & Help Us Improve Service and Access” in Yup’ik and Diné native languages. In April 2024, we posted the blog Social Security Publishes Native Language Action Plan to Improve Access to Our Programs and Services sharing our accomplishment in SSA’s first ever Native Language Action Plan to do our part in supporting Native language revitalization. By the end of the FY 2024, the Office of Native American Partnership bridged efforts with another federal agency to utilize a Native Language Center to translate a limited number of publications into 5 Native languages for publications. Those publications will be released in FY 2025.

## **TECHNOLOGY, BROADBAND, SPECTRUM, AND CYBERSECURITY**

## INTERNET AND BROADBAND

**BIA Indigenous Communications & Technology (ICT) Division.** In 2024, the Department of the Interior opened the new Bureau of Indian Affairs Indigenous Communications & Technology (ICT) Division to modernize access to wireless services and technical assistance to assist Tribal Nations in technological self-governance and economic development initiatives in managing, creating, and maintaining broadband infrastructure; review of new electromagnetic spectrum leasing mechanisms; providing technical assistance for needed interagency coordination and overlooked tribally-led wireless development on Tribal lands; and facilitation of new economic development opportunities between Tribes, tech industry, and the federal government, including electric vehicle deployment, that has been chronically absent on Tribal lands. The Department also announced the opening and new BIA ICT Division Director and Attorney-Advisor to further carry out the goals of the 2022 Tribal Spectrum MOU between the DOI-FCC-NTIA, and coordination of the National Spectrum Implementation Plan that required the President’s inclusion of Tribal Nations for the first time in history.

## CYBERSECURITY

**DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).** Completed several Security at First Entry (SAFE) assessments, an Infrastructure Survey Tool (IST) project for the Squaxin Island Tribal community, which is one of the federally recognized tribes. Participated on a Tribal symposium discussion panel for the Washington state tribal community.

**Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program (TCGP).** Part of the \$1B Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Cybersecurity Grant appropriation, with 3% of the \$1B being set aside for grants to be made directly to Federally Recognized Tribes. Approximately \$18.2M was available for this round of funding.

**DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations (ICE/HSI).** Collaborated with the DHS Know2Protect campaign and the Center for Combating Human Trafficking to bring education and awareness to Oklahoma Tribal communities concerning topics including cyber security, cyberbullying, social media, child exploitation, and human trafficking in the Tornado Alley Child Exploitation and Trafficking Task Force (TACETT).

## INTERNATIONAL AND BORDER ISSUES

### BORDER ISSUES

**Supporting global progress on the development of Indigenous Peoples.** In 2024, USAID invested approximately \$79 million to support the development efforts of global

Indigenous Peoples and other racial and ethnic communities in line with USAID's Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Interventions include:

- In Colombia, the Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian Empowerment Activity (IPACE) is partnering with nine umbrella Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations to contribute to the self-determined development of ethnic communities and to co-create and implement peacebuilding and sustainable development initiatives. In FY (FY) 2023, IPACE promoted the respect and effective enjoyment of collective rights of the Nasa, Inga, Kankuamo, Curripaco, Cubeo, Tikuna, Eperara Siapidara, Awa, Wiwa, Arhuaco, Kamentsa, Kogui, and Wayuu peoples. The partnership implemented actions for peacebuilding, preservation of cultural heritage, strengthening of their organizational capacities, food sovereignty, income generation and inclusive business development, prevention and response to natural and health emergencies, climate change adaptation, and youth and gender equality strengthening involving 5,439 individuals.
- In India, the Producer-Owned Women Enterprises (POWER) activity, implemented by the Industree Foundation, established three women-owned production units in FY 2023, benefitting 823 underprivileged women, particularly women from India's tribal communities. Two of these enterprises are based on sustainably-sourced tree leaves for leaf plate making and the third is based on sustainably-grown bamboo. Through this activity, USAID also mobilized approximately 440 farmers to establish bamboo plantations on their underutilized land, increasing economic productivity and access to resources. Though men own the land in a majority of cases, the activity worked with communities in promoting women's leadership and decision making in farming.
- In India, the Scaling up Early Reading Intervention (SERI) activity is working towards inclusion of Indigenous Peoples to ensure they are socially and linguistically integrated in the mainstream schooling system. Under SERI, multilingual education workbooks for grades 1 and 2 were developed in the State of Rajasthan to promote mother tongue-based instruction, including for tribal and Indigenous populations. In addition, an online course on multilingual education called "Multilingual Self Learning Package" was launched in the State for primary teachers. The objective of the course is to orient teachers on the significance and pedagogic approach to ensure linguistic inclusion in classrooms.
- USAID/India has several health programs supporting the Government of India to strengthen their ability to provide critical health screening, prevention, and treatment services to tribal populations across the country leveraging health-care solutions based on locally-identified needs. Under the Tribal tuberculosis (TB) program, USAID has supported tribal communities with TB screening, education, and treatment services. Under the ACCELERATE project, USAID has provided adolescents of different tribal communities in the Northeast with HIV services, education referrals, social protection linkages, and nutrition and life skills education.

- The USAID Regional Mission for Southern Africa implemented the Advancing Rights in Southern Africa (ARISA) program which advocated for the legal recognition and rights of Indigenous Peoples in the region. In its fifth and final year, ARISA advanced the rights of Indigenous Peoples through research, litigation, and capacity building and financial support for Indigenous Peoples organizations. ARISA trained 557 Indigenous leaders and activists on media, advocacy, and paralegal skills, far exceeding its annual target of 50. Groups that ARISA trained and supported were increasingly trusted and seen as credible by their communities and by the regional and international communities. For example, ARISA partners were invited to participate in a virtual workshop on the status of African Indigenous Peoples organized by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, enabling them to engage on policy issues at the continental level while networking with colleagues from other regions.

## INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

**Grant Award to Support the UN's Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples.** USAID participated in the United Nations Assembly on the Expert Mechanism for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) held in Geneva, Switzerland from July 8-12, 2024. The USG delegation announced USAID's support to enhance participation of Indigenous Peoples at the UN; and an award of a \$1,750,000, 5-year partnership with the UN Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples to advance their rights in the UN Fora.

**FAS Market Development Program Funding.** Since 1998, the Intertribal Agriculture Council has utilized Market Access Program (MAP) funds. In fiscal year 2024, IAC received \$716,181 in MAP funds, a threefold increase since 2019. The American Indian Foods program has established a presence in the global supply chain that supports producers entering various markets where they receive fair prices and increased market access for their foods and products.

### **Communities Forest Tenure Pledge, Forest Tenure Funders Group (FTFG)**

At COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, the U.S. Government and 21 funders, including governments and private philanthropic organizations, announced a \$1.7 billion pledge in support of advancing Indigenous Peoples and local communities' forest tenure rights. As stated in the Pledge statement, donor contributions are for: a) Funding that channels increased and direct support to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including for capacity building, development of collective governance structures, and sustainable livelihoods; and b) Activities that strengthen and protect Indigenous Peoples and local communities' land and resource rights, including support for forest tenure reforms and implementation. USAID has led the participation of the USG in the FTFG pledge and

reporting. This year, the "Third Annual Progress Report" will provide an update on donor spending during January to December 2023. It aggregates donor spending data and provides details on how funds were spent. The report also captures key challenges for achieving pledge ambitions and identifies areas for greater collaboration between donors, Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' organizations, and wider stakeholders.

**Tribal Products in Agricultural Trade Missions and Shows.** In 2024, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service hosted an Agribusiness Trade Mission to Canada focusing on expanding opportunities for food and agriculture businesses representing Tribes, Tribal members, and the Native Hawaiian Community. The first of its kind, this trade mission specifically highlighted products made and produced by Native agribusinesses, focusing on the reinvigoration of historic Native Nations agricultural trade networks across the United States and Canada. Tribal producers participated in the mission and highlighted the Made/Produced by American Indians official trademark, privately certified by the Intertribal Agriculture Council. Producers from the Native Hawaiian Community operating on Hawaiian Home Lands also participated and showcased their products. Collectively, these 14 Native agrifood businesses participated in 130 business-to-business meetings resulting in over \$1.15 million in projected 12-month sales.

## APPENDIX A. - LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Term</b>
ACF.....	Administration for Children and Families (part of HHS)
ACHP.....	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
AI/AN.....	American Indian / Alaska Native
BIA.....	Bureau of Indian Affairs (part of DOI)
BIE.....	Bureau of Indian Education (part of DOI)
BIL.....	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
BJA.....	Bureau of Justice Assistance (part of DOJ)
BJS. ....	Bureau of Justice Statistics (part of DOJ)
BTFA.....	Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (part of DOI)
CEQ.....	White House Council on Environmental Quality (part of EOP)
COPS.....	Community Oriented Policing Services (part of DOJ)
DHS.....	Department of Homeland Security
DOC.....	Department of Commerce
DOE.....	Department of Energy
DOI.....	Department of the Interior
DOJ.....	Department of Justice
DOL.....	Department of Labor
DOT.....	Department of Transportation
DPC.....	White House Domestic Policy Council (part of EOP)
EOP.....	Executive Office of the President of the United States
ED.....	Department of Education
EPA.....	Environmental Protection Agency
FBI.....	Federal Bureau of Investigation (part of DOJ)
FCC.....	Federal Communications Commission
FEMA.....	Federal Emergency Management Agency (part of DHS)
GSA.....	General Services Administration
HHS.....	Department of Health and Human Services
HRSA.....	Health Resources and Services Administration (part of HHS)
HUD.....	Department of Housing and Urban Development
ICE.....	Immigration and Customs Enforcement (part of DHS)
IHS.....	Indian Health Service (part of HHS)
IRA.....	Inflation Reduction Act
IRS.....	Internal Revenue Service (part of Treasury)
ITBC.....	Intertribal Buffalo Council (non-governmental)
MMU.....	Missing and Murdered Unit (part of BIA/DOI)
NOAA.....	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (part of DOC)
NTIA.....	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (part of DOC)
OJJDP.....	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (part of DOJ)

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Term</b>
OMB.....	Office of Management and Budget (part of EOP)
OTR.....	Office of Tribal Relations (part of USDA)
SAMHSA.....	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (part of HHS)
SBA.....	Small Business Administration
SSA.....	Social Security Administration
State/DOS.....	Department of State
TCU.....	Tribal Colleges and Universities
Treasury.....	Department of the Treasury
UIO.....	Urban Indian Organization (non-governmental)
USACE.....	United States Army Corps of Engineers (part of DOD)
USAID.....	United States Agency for International Development
USDA.....	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS.....	United States Forest Service (part of USDA)
VA.....	Department of Veterans Affairs
WHCNA.....	White House Council on Native American Affairs