

**STATEMENT OF
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS WIZIPAN GARRIOTT
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

March 16, 2022

Hello and good afternoon, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chair Murkowski, and members of the Committee. Iyuha cante nape ciyuzapelo. I greet you with a good heart. Wizipan emciyapelo, na Sicangu Lakota hemaca. My name is Wizipan Garriott, and I am a citizen of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. I serve as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department). Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's testimony at this important oversight hearing titled "Buy Native American: Federal Support for Native Business Capacity Building and Success."

The socioeconomic success of Indian country is an issue that is especially important to me. I was fortunate enough to grow up culturally wealthy with a loving family. But we were economically poor. My earliest memories are of no running water and frost on the walls of our one room trailer house in the winter. Through hard work my parents built a comfortable life for our family and helped me pay for college. But others in my community were not so fortunate. My home reservation has for decades ranked as one of the 10 poorest counties in the country on a per capita income basis. Prior to joining this Administration, I ran my Tribe's economic development corporation where we started numerous businesses and stood up an emerging community development financial institution (CDFI) and a highly successful community-based nonprofit.

The Department has an important trust responsibility to support tribes and tribal governments in protecting their people, lands, assets, and resources. This responsibility includes supporting and promoting economic development in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities to support prosperity, meaningful livelihoods, and self-sufficient and sustainable economies. Indian country is unique and diverse, with different historical, geographic, and socioeconomic circumstances and varying regulatory, financial, and business capacities. Therefore, our work must be multifaceted, interdisciplinary, and collaborative.

The economies of Indian country in many ways mirror the larger economy. Tribes, tribally owned enterprises, and individual entrepreneurs are industry leaders in a wide variety of sectors, including manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, farming, ranching, processing, technology, IT, entertainment, telecommunications, finance and investments, and many more. Tribes and tribal entrepreneurs operate buffalo ranches, market produce and vegetables in mainstream stores, own energy development enterprises, provide AI services to the Department of Defense, create award winning art and TV shows, and contribute to the American economy in virtually every imaginable way.

It is also important to note that Indian country has a long and storied economic history. Tribal industriousness, ingenuity and use of technology created thriving communities rich in food, clothing, weaponry, horses, art, and other goods that were connected by vast inter-tribal trade networks spanning the entire continent. Tribal agricultural and natural resource management practices produced abundance, ensuring community safety nets for the elderly and disabled while promoting work and dignity across the entire community. Individuals often spoke multiple languages, including sign language, to facilitate diplomacy and trade. It is upon this foundation that tribes have and are building their futures, and it is our job to support Indian country in revitalizing their economies.

Office of Indian Economic Development

The Bureau of Indians Affairs (BIA) Office of Indian Economic Development (OIED) provides technical assistance, training, and funding to assist tribes and tribal members with starting and sustaining their businesses, bringing ideas to the marketplace, and taking advantage of government and private procurement opportunities. Through these efforts, OIED provides tribal business owners avenues to address the lack of access to credit and limited economic opportunities that exist in many American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Recent legislation has expanded eligibility for some of these services to Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs). OIED primarily fulfills its work in three interconnected ways: providing access to capital; grants; and technical assistance.

Access to Capital

Within OIED the Division of Capital Investment (DCI) delivers the Indian Loan Guarantee and Insurance Program (ILGP.) This program supports Federally recognized tribes, bands, nations, pueblos, rancherias, villages, communities, corporations and their members secure conventional business financing on terms comparable to the non-Indian business community, by guaranteeing or insuring up to 90 percent of outstanding loan principal and interest.

DCI works with lenders and their borrowers to help applicants meet the “reasonable prospect of repayment” standard required for guarantee or insurance approval. Loans must have a positive economic impact on a tribe or tribal service area but can otherwise be used for nearly any business purposes - from real estate, equipment or inventory purchase, working capital, construction or renovation, revolving lines of credit, and refinancing.

In operation for nearly 50 years, this program has helped Indian businesses secure over \$2 billion worth of private loans, while maintaining one of the lowest loss rates among similar federal programs. In fiscal year (FY) 2020 the ILGP leveraged \$7,042,637 of federal funding to create \$126,517,775 of investment in Indian country. In FY 2021, the ILGP leveraged \$10,204,000 of federal funding to create \$80,281,006 of investment in Indian country. It is clear, the more we invest in the ILGP, the more Indian country will leverage this vital and important program to help support their communities.

Grant Programs

Within OIED, the Division of Economic Development (DED) administers competitive grants to support Native entrepreneurs, broadband deployment, business development feasibility studies, and the documentation and revitalization of tribal languages. DED Grant Programs include the:

- Native American Business Development Institute Grant – Helps tribes weigh their risks to determine whether a project is worth pursuing and empower them to make informed decisions about their economic futures. Results from studies can often help tribes persuade lenders and investors to provide financial backing to help turn their idea into a reality.
- National Tribal Broadband Grant – Provides tribes the opportunity to receive funding to develop or extend broadband services in their communities.
- Tribal Tourism Grant – Increases capacity for tribes to plan, develop and manage tourism and related infrastructure in support of economic development. This includes NATIVE Act supporting grants for tribal tourism feasibility studies and tribal tourism business plan development.
- Indian Business Incubators Program – Provides funds to establish and run business incubators that serve entrepreneurs who will provide products or services in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
- Indigenous Tourism – Provides technical assistance to tribes in the areas of tourism planning, management, and product development.
- Living Languages Grant Program – Provides funds to tribes to document and revitalize at risk languages.

Technical Assistance

As awareness of OIED services grows so too does the need to expand technical assistance. Currently, OIED provides technical assistance through grant training such as pre-application training, grant writing, and business planning. Technical assistance is available to all interested tribes, tribal organizations, and NHOs.

In addition to providing full life-cycle technical support services to OIED grantees and applicants, both virtual and onsite training events are opportunities to strengthen the connection between recipients and the federal staff who oversee these programs.

Office of Trust Services – Division of Energy and Mineral Development

Within the BIA Office of Trust Services, the Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD) provides technical assistance, grants, and marketing assistance to tribal mineral, renewable, and natural resource owners to support sustainable tribal economies through environmentally sound management of their resources.

DEMD provides technical staff to assist federally recognized Indian tribes to identify and implement opportunities to maximize their revenue streams for economic resource development. This includes:

- Assessment of resources quality and quantity.
- Engineering Assessments – design, modeling, economic, analyses, equipment needs throughout the project.
- Marketing – local, regional, and national sales forecasts, marketing forecasting, existing and future competitions, opportunities and challenges.
- Financial – short and long-term income streams, financial documents, potential lenders, government contracts, grants, and federal funding initiatives.
- Loans – BIA Loan Guarantees, other loan guarantee programs, and assistance with working with local, regional, and national lending institutions.

DEMD is currently a partner on 229 projects on 145 reservations through both technical assistance and awarded grants. In FY 2020 \$8.1 million in grant funds were awarded.

Buy Indian Act

The Buy Indian Act authorizes the Departments of the Interior and Health and Human Services to purchase supplies, services and certain kinds of construction equipment from qualified Native American vendors (“Indian Economic Enterprises”). The Department, including the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs (AS-IA), BIA, and Bureau of Indian Education, has prioritized supporting Indian Economic Enterprises through the Buy Indian Act and plans to increase purchases from FY 2021 of \$279.6 million in FY 2022. Indian Affairs is currently in the process of awarding new construction contracts for three BIE schools to Indian Small Business Economic Enterprises.

Implementation of the Buy Indian Act has been an evolutionary process. Originally enacted in 1910, the Department developed implementing regulations in 2013 with an increased emphasis in Buy Indian Act usage during FY 2019. As a result, Buy Indian Act purchasing has increased from \$124.4 million in FY 2019 to \$279.6 million in FY 2021, which represents 59 percent of all Indian Affairs purchasing directly supporting Indian enterprises. Updated regulations are being developed according to consultation with Indian country. It is anticipated that these updated regulations, over several years, will result in up to 65 percent of eligible Buy Indian Act purchasing and will result in a steady increase of eligible Buy Indian Act obligations being awarded to Indian Economic Enterprises.

Office of Native Hawaiian Relations

Since 2004, the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations (ONHR) has been principally responsible for carrying out the Secretary’s trust responsibilities under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), State of Hawaii Admission Act, and the Hawaiian Home Lands Recovery Act. In addition, ONHR has facilitated interagency efforts to address inequities that have plagued the Native Hawaiian Community in areas including economic development, educational achievement, health, housing, climate adaption, and the impacts of social and political dislocation.

In 2021, the Department administered the first economic development program specific to the Native Hawaiian Community. This included two cooperative agreements of \$600,000. ONHR,

in collaboration with the OIED, assisted NHOs with the enhancement and integration of indigenous tourism through the NATIVE Act.

In addition, economic development grant pre-application training, grant writing and business plan development, sustainability training, and coordination of an annual tourism grantee meeting has been extended to all interested NHOs. The Department is committed to expanding on these economic development opportunities for the Native Hawaiian Community.

NATIVE Act Implementation

The Department has utilized Community Economic Development and Road Maintenance funds from FYs 2019 – 2022 to implement the NATIVE Act administered by the BIA's Office of Indian Services (OIS) Division of Transportation and OIED to support:

- A five-year, performance-based cooperative agreement with the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA).
- Cooperative agreement with George Washington University to promote tourism to tribal locations in North Dakota and South Dakota.
- Cooperative agreement with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Virginia Tech to foster inter-tribal tourism in Montana and Virginia.
- Grant with the Taos Community Economic Development Corporation to promote agricultural-tourism and food-based visitation.
- Grant with a Native vendor to develop visitation centered around the Navajo Nation's sheep and woolen culture.

Moving forward, OIED will utilize NATIVE Act resources across Indian country through technical assistance and grant opportunities.

White House Council on Native American Affairs

The White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNAA) Committee on Economic Development, Energy, and Infrastructure (Committee) over the past year has focused on improving tribal access to federal resources, including access and utilization of funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The Committee is co-led by the Departments of Commerce (DOC), Transportation (DOT), Energy (DOE), and the Small Business Administration (SBA) with membership including Departments of the Interior, Housing and Urban Development, Treasury, Health and Human Services, Labor (DOL), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and more. The Committee meets at least once a month to coordinate, develop, and execute inter-agency efforts.

Over the past year, the Committee has supported inter-agency efforts for infrastructure that enables commerce and business, such as broadband. The Committee supported the organization of the 2021 National Tribal Broadband Summit, helped coordinate technical assistance on the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, and, most recently, supported the White House Tribal Broadband Briefing with Tribal leaders in February.

The Committee has also coordinated technical assistance opportunities for ARP and BIL funding by developing a central calendar of inter-agency events on the WHCNAA webpage:

https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/as-ia/opa/whcnaa/Upcoming_ARP_and_BIL_Support_Sessions_for_Tribes.pdf.

The Committee Cabinet-level leadership hosted a Tribal Engagement Session on January 31, with Secretary Haaland, DOT Secretary Buttigieg, DOE Secretary Granholm, EPA Administrator Regan, and DOC Deputy Secretary Graves. The Committee helped organize this virtual event for Tribal leaders for which over 1,000 people registered. The Cabinet leadership shared what economic development and infrastructure-related resources were available and heard recommendations from Tribal leaders.

The Committee also supported the 2021 White House Tribal Nations Summit in November 2021, which featured two panels focusing on economic development and infrastructure resources. These panels had Tribal leaders and SBA Administrator Guzman, DOL Secretary Walsh, DOE Secretary Granholm, and DOT Secretary Buttigieg.

Joint Secretarial Order 3403

On November 15, 2021, Secretary Haaland and Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack issued Secretarial Order 3403: *Joint Secretarial Order on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters*. This Secretarial Order recognizes that federal lands were previously owned and managed by Indian Tribes and that these lands and waters contain cultural and natural resources of significance and value to Indian tribes and their citizens, including, sacred religious sites, burial sites, wildlife, and sources of Indigenous foods and medicines. In addition, many of those federal lands and waters lie within areas where Indian tribes have the reserved right to hunt, fish, gather, and pray pursuant to ratified treaties and agreements with the United States.

The Department recognizes and values tribes' traditional ecological knowledge of the lands the Department administers. Our collaboration with tribes, through co-stewardship and the incorporation of tribal ecological knowledge into federal management practices, strengthens the management of the nation's public lands.

Co-stewardship agreements also strengthen tribal economies through providing opportunities for more robust tribal tourism and land management. The Department is looking to implement the Secretarial Order in several ways including a full range of co-stewardship agreements, inclusive of but not limited to formal co-management.

Supporting Native Communities

The Biden Administration has prioritized bringing vital resources to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities through the BIL.

The BIL provides:

- \$466 million investment in tribal climate resilience and infrastructure, including: \$216 million to address the effects of climate change and \$250 million for irrigation and power, safety of dams, water sanitation and other construction;
- \$2.5 billion to help the Department fulfill settlements of Indian water rights claims;
- \$16 billion to address legacy pollution, including \$150 million in Tribal grants to plug and remediate orphan oil and gas wells; and
- authorizes \$270 million over five years for the BIA road maintenance program.

The Department held consultations with tribes on BIL funding in January and we are working to ensure this funding gets out to Indian country as soon as possible.

Conclusion

This Administration is firmly committed to working with Tribal governments to meaningfully support economic development for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department's views on these important issues.