



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES  
Office of the Director  
145 N Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20530

**COPS**★

National Native American Heritage Month

Dear Colleagues,

I can think of no better time to celebrate our American Indian and Alaska Native heritage than November. As we plan our Thanksgiving feasts, we recall the many ways the first Americans have contributed to our culture and shaped our national identity.

We owe a great deal to our Native Americans – from the Patuxet Indian Squanto, who helped the Pilgrims survive their first winter to the Navajo Code Talkers of World War II, whose native language communications secured the success of the U.S. Marines in the Pacific. What's more, we continue to benefit from the ongoing contributions of American Indians in government, the arts, business and many other areas of life. Their valiant service in our Armed Forces, proportionally far greater than any other ethnic group, makes this month, when we celebrate Veterans Day, an even more appropriate time to honor them.

Today, more than five million people belonging to 566 culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse Indian nations live in Alaska and 33 other states today. Each of these nations, also known as tribes, is self-governing. And though Indian lands vary widely in size, ranging from an area as large as West Virginia to just a few acres, many provide their own basic infrastructure, as well as services such as education, law enforcement, and judicial systems.

I am proud to say that since 1994, the COPS Office has provided significant support to these services, delivering about 2,500 Tribal Resource Grants totaling almost \$525 million, to assist tribal efforts in community policing. Most of these funds have been used to hire law enforcement officers and purchase equipment; but they have also provided [Tribal and Alaskan Native Training and Technical Assistance](#) in areas such as executive leadership, methamphetamine control, and the protection of drug endangered children.

We have also developed knowledge resources for tribal law enforcement, such as the [Successful Tribal Community Policing Initiatives: A Resource for Communities Developing Public Safety Programs and Strategies](#) publication. And we work closely in other areas as well. Last month, the COPS Office sponsored a workshop for government executives interested in conducting business with American Indian tribes.

We prize this special relationship, and take great pleasure in celebrating our American Indian and Alaska Native heritage. I myself will take the time to learn a little more about their history and culture this month – and invite you to do the same. There are many resources, but the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) web site is a good place to start: [http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes/indians\\_101.pdf](http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes/indians_101.pdf)

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Davis  
Director