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NATIVE AMERICAN ISSUES GROUP MEETS IN OMAHA

U.S. Attorneys' Group Meets to Discuss Native American Law Enforcement Issues

OMAHA, NE - The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Nebraska was host for a series of meetings of the Attorney General's Advisory Subcommittee on Native American Issues this week. The meetings were called by Western District of North Carolina's United States Attorney, Gretchen C.F. Shappert, Subcommittee Chair. Meeting with U.S. Attorney Joe Stecher of Nebraska, and U.S. Attorney Shappert of Western North Carolina, in Omaha on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, December 2, 3, and 4, were a number of additional United States Attorneys (chief federal prosecutors) from across the country. The group of U.S. Attorneys serve Native American populations residing in their federal judicial districts. Joining the U.S. Attorneys group were representatives from the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, and the Office of Tribal Justice, as well as Kenneth Melson, Director of the Justice Department's Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys. Also present for portions of the meetings were federal law enforcement representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, FBI, and Nebraska State Highway Patrol.

On Wednesday, December 3, the group traveled to Bancroft, Nebraska to meet with representatives of the Omaha Tribe, Winnebago Tribe, and Santee Sioux Tribe at the John G. Neihardt Center. Michelle Parker of the Omaha Tribe, and Coordinator for the federal Weed and

Seed Program, was host to the group of U.S. Attorneys. The Weed and Seed Program has several partners, including both the Winnebago Tribe and the Omaha Tribe. The group toured the I.H.S. Medical Facility and Boys & Girls Club, which serves as the Weed & Seed Safe Haven, in Winnebago.

State, Federal, and Tribal Courts and law enforcement authorities (including local law enforcement personnel) all share portions of concurrent jurisdiction for Indian Country across the United States. Many federal crimes which occur in Indian Country result in prosecutions by United States Attorneys in federal courts across the country every year. It is part of the responsibility of the Attorney General of the United States to address problems surrounding criminal law enforcement and matters involving provision of law enforcement resources in connection with crimes committed in Indian Country.

The Native American Issues Subcommittee (NAIS) of the Attorney General's Advisory Committee (AGAC) was the first subcommittee established when the Attorney General's Advisory Committee was convened by the Attorney General for the first time in 1976. The NAIS was originally formed to address matters such as jurisdictional problems in cases involving Indian Country, and the need for the creation of an office within the Department of Justice devoted to Indian criminal matters. The NAIS is responsible for making policy recommendations to the Attorney General regarding public safety and legal issues related to Indian Country as defined in Title 18 of the United States Code. The NAIS is also responsible for the implementation of Department policy as it relates to Indian Country issues.

Currently, the NAIS has 26 member United States Attorneys who represent the vast majority of native American and Alaskan Native Communities in the nation. During 2008, the NAIS has conducted meetings in and visited Native American Communities in South Dakota, Arizona, and Nebraska. The NAIS has met regularly to address issues and priority areas

involving law enforcement and criminal justice in Indian Country including homeland and border security, violent crimes, to include gangs, drugs, guns and family violence; Indian gaming; and jurisdictional questions and issues of law enforcement resources.

The NAIS was updated on Tuesday, December 2, in Omaha, regarding portions of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, which affect Indian Country; ongoing concerns regarding domestic violence in Indian Country; and problems associated with limited federal law enforcement resources operating in Indian Country.

The appointment of an Advisory Committee of United States Attorneys to the Attorney General (AGAC) was publicly announced on September 20, 1973, by Attorney General Elliot Richardson. By order dated February 13, 1976, Attorney General Edward Levi formally established the Committee and had its existence and responsibilities set forth in 28 CFR, Section 0.10.

The Committee consists of 17 United States Attorneys selected by the Attorney General. U.S. Attorneys selected to serve on the AGAC are intended to represent office size, judicial district, issues, and diversity. The Attorney General selects a chairperson and vice-chairperson. The Committee establishes such subcommittees as it deems necessary to carry out its functions. The NAIS is a subcommittee of the AGAC.

The AGAC has two functions: It gives United States Attorneys a voice in Department policies and advises the Attorney General of the United States.

In advising the Attorney General, the Committee conducts studies and makes recommendations to improve management of United States Attorney operations and the relationship between the Department and the federal prosecutors. It also helps formulate new programs for improvement of the criminal justice system and the delivery of legal services at all levels.

In serving the United States Attorneys, the Committee coordinates the collective efforts of the United States Attorneys with the divisions and agencies of the Department of Justice, and departments and agencies external to the Department of Justice. It also represents the United States Attorneys with the Department of Justice, other departments and agencies of the government, and occasionally private organizations.

United States Attorneys who are not members of the Attorney General's Advisory Committee may serve on its subcommittees and working groups. A current listing of Advisory Committee members and Subcommittee members is available from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys at 202.514.2121.¹

For more information please visit the U.S. Department of Justice Tribal Justice and Safety in Indian Country Website at www.tribaljusticeandsafety.gov.

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¹United States Attorneys' Manual