



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCT. 5, 2007

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., addresses native crime before National Native American Law Enforcement Assoc. conference

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., has credited the National Native American Law Enforcement Association with helping to elevate the profile of tribal law enforcement agencies and bring greater attention to the needs of tribes nationally.

The President made his comments Tuesday during the opening session of NNALEA's 15th annual training conference here.

Approximately 600 participants attended the conference. Also representing the Navajo Nation was Navajo Division of Public Safety Director Samson Cowboy, Navajo Police Chief Jim Benally and Navajo Nation Emergency Management Incident Commander Johnny Johnson.

NNALEA is a nonprofit organization to promote and foster mutual cooperation between American Indian Law Enforcement Officers/Agents/Personnel, their agencies, tribes, private industry and public.

"In this day and age, it seems every which way we turn our sovereignty as individuals, as families, as communities, as nations is tested by crime," President Shirley said.

"It really has been going on since time immemorial. And you know, we will continue to be tested by all the crime that is going on in our backyards, in our neighborhoods, our cities and towns. But we cannot let it break us."

He said crime doesn't have a face and knows no creed or color.



Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., is among the keynote speakers presented with a Pendleton blanket following the opening morning of the National Native American Law Enforcement Association's 15th annual training conference in Memphis, Tenn. this week. NNALEA President Joseph Wicks drapes the robe around the President while BIA Deputy Director Pat Ragsdale and U.S. Marshals Service Director John Clark look on.

"It's not a respecter of persons," he said. "It preys on all of us, even our elderly and our children, and it is rampant in many of our cities and our towns. It behooves us to stand together, to work together. It's the only way that I know to be."

The President said that because of NNALEA's efforts, federal officials have a greater awareness that the problems that confront one tribe confronts them all.

He was one of many keynote speakers who discussed the issues of homeland security, methamphetamine, gangs, domestic violence, sexual offenses, limited law enforcement resources and cross-jurisdictional issue tribes across the country are facing.

Among the speakers were Mark J. Sullivan, director of the U.S. Secret Service, John F. Clark, director of the U.S. Marshals Service, Scott M. Burns, deputy director for Office of State, Local, and Tribal Affairs for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, Christopher Chaney, deputy director of the Office of Justice Services in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Anne P. Petera, assistant secretary for Intergovernmental Programs in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Carl Peed, director of COPS – the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services – in the U. S. Department of Justice.

Carl Artman, the assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, said the best deterrent to crime is more skilled feet on the street.

“Tribal law enforcement has been one of the long-standing inherent functions of tribal government,” he said. “It pre-dates the federal-tribal relationship. Maintaining safety and security in tribal communities by upholding their laws is a core function of American Indian governments and an essence of tribal sovereignty.”

He said a tribe’s ability to serve its citizens through shared jurisdictional agreements on education, child welfare and other issues often relies on the tone set by law enforcement organizations.

“Necessary service can go unmet in the absence of effective relationships, and tribal sovereignty can be ignored by our neighbors,” he said.

He said the Interior department will invest \$68 million in law enforcement staffing and training through the 2008 Safe Indian Communities Initiative, and that Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne and he will improve the BIA’s Office of Justice Services through more money, manpower, technology and education.

“The BIA’s Office of Justice Services will constantly leverage resources to improve law enforcement,” Mr. Artman said. “We’ll continue to encourage cross-deputization agreements so that unique entities with like-minded goals can act in unison to close the gaps to achieve our goals and succeed against this.”

The first role of government is to protect its people to ensure that they have a sense of freedom and domestic tranquility, said Pat Ragsdale, deputy director of the BIA.

“Our most revered culture and tradition is protecting our own people,” he said. “In our tradition, warrior societies did that and did that very well.”

President Shirley said today one of the better recognized of the native warriors are the Navajo Code Talkers who helped win World War II.

“By working together, we’re getting back what has been taken from us, our independence, our fierceness for life ahead, and yes, our pride,” President Shirley said. “Native Americans have an intelligence and a power which is resounding around the world today.”

“Many of our people are still impoverished,” he said. “We don’t have enough police officers, jail spaces, equipment and training. Nonetheless, we have to stay the course. We have to stay focused.”

“With Native America, there has never been a doomsday, and there are no impossibilities. We must always keep that in mind and, yes, we must ingrain it into our minds and believe that.”

“We have to take the time to be with ourselves, to talk about and share information about our jobs, to reach out and network with friends and relatives, and to take the time to smoke the tobacco and offer up prayers and offerings to the Creator for guidance.”

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