

REMARKS

OF

MARY LOU LEARY
ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIONAL INTERTRIBAL YOUTH SUMMIT

ON

MONDAY, JULY 30, 2012
CHEVY CHASE, MD

Thank you, Mel. I'm so glad to be here, and thrilled to be joined by the Acting Associate Attorney General – and all our federal partners.

It's a privilege to help welcome this outstanding group of young people to Washington. I find it remarkable – and commendable – that so many young tribal members are so strongly invested in the future of their communities. The pride you show in your heritage and the concern you display for maintaining it are truly admirable.

I had the honor of attending the last two youth summits in Santa Fe, and I was struck by the enthusiasm and the insights that were generated. I was especially struck by the passion and eloquence from people so young, talking about such serious issues – issues they've had to confront. I know I couldn't express myself nearly so well when I was a teenager. You'll see what I'm talking about when you watch the Public Service Announcement a little later.

It's gratifying for those of us in leadership positions at the federal and tribal levels to see this kind of commitment and concern from our future leaders.

At the last summit, you and your peers shared your vision for the future of Indian country. That vision includes better educational opportunities, greater reverence for tradition, more empowered youth, and stronger connections across generations. You talked about creating an intertribal voice, using new media to spread your message. You discussed the importance of active and healthy lifestyles. And you emphasized the need for good role models to inspire young people to dream. You had some terrific ideas.

This year, you're taking those ideas and putting them into action. You're working with each other – both with your teammates and with your peers from other tribal communities – to set goals and create action plans to accomplish those goals. In short, you're setting an agenda that will help ensure that young people have a say in the direction of your communities.

I'm glad that my agency – the Office of Justice Programs – can be part of these discussions. Much of our work involves helping tribal communities improve safety and serve youth. We consider these to be among our most important responsibilities.

We do our work in consultation and partnership with tribes, and we're big believers that decisions about what's best for tribes should involve tribal youth. No group has a greater stake in the future.

You've already shown that leadership is a quality available in abundance in tribal communities. The future clearly is in good hands. Thank you for everything you're doing for your communities, and keep up the good work.

It's now my great pleasure to introduce our next speaker – one of the leaders at the Department of Justice and a true advocate for tribal communities.

Tony West is the Acting Associate Attorney General, which is a rather long way of saying he's third in charge at the Department of Justice. Among his many responsibilities, he

coordinates my agency's work with other parts of the Department, including the Office of Tribal Justice. So he makes sure that all the funding and resources that go to tribes from our agency are responsive to tribal needs. He's fully committed to supporting tribes and to meeting our trust responsibilities in Indian country.

I'm very pleased he could join us today. Please welcome Acting Associate Attorney General Tony West.

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