

2010 State-Tribal Leaders Summit

During the May 2009 State-Tribal Leaders Summit, Governor Richardson identified addressing DWI through State-Tribal collaboration as an issue of importance to be discussed. The Governor's DWI Czar, Rachel O'Connor, and Tribal DWI Coordinator Michelle Brown-Yazzie presented current State-Tribal DWI statistics, issues, active initiatives and proposed solutions. Tribal leadership responded positively and stressed the importance of partnership between the State and Tribal Governments to reduce fatalities and injuries caused by DWI in New Mexico's tribal communities. To enhance and insure the protection of sovereignty, Tribal Leadership recommended written intergovernmental agreements for initiatives calling for tribal government participation.

Problem Statement: Approximately 25% of all alcohol-related fatalities in New Mexico occur on tribal land. Native American fatalities caused by Driving While Intoxicated (“DWI”) incidents in New Mexico may actually be higher than national statistics which show that Native Americans die in alcohol related crashes at a rate two to three times higher than any other ethnic group in the United States. For years, both tribal and state governments in New Mexico have separately made efforts to reduce DWI caused deaths and injuries. In 2003, greater commitment to collaborate in addressing the issue of DWI began through the passage of DWI information sharing legislation by the New Mexico State Legislature. In 2006, Governor Richardson also established the State-Tribal DWI Task Force and a Tribal DWI Coordinator was hired. As a result of these collaboration efforts, a New Mexico State-Tribal DWI Strategic Plan was developed by state and tribal official participation, increased state and county DWI funding now flows to tribes and tribal communities, additional intergovernmental agreements, including law enforcement cross-commissioning agreements, are in place and tribal, state and other local governments are partnering together more to implement effective DWI related programs in their shared communities. Although collaboration between governments has improved in the past few years, the alarmingly high rate of fatalities and injuries caused by alcohol related crashes in New Mexico's tribal communities remains the same. Until aggressive efforts and initiatives are fully implemented by both state and tribal governments, Native American fatalities caused by alcohol related crashes will remain high in New Mexico.

Solution #1: Commitment from State and Tribal Governments for continued and enhanced participation in State of New Mexico DWI initiatives and programs, including Operation DWI.

Solution #2: All Tribes participate in DWI Administrative License Revocation (“ALR”) and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding addressing ALR participation with the State of New Mexico. Through this process, DWI offenders arrested on tribal land would be eligible for the interlock ignition program that includes indigent funding for those deemed eligible. Only three Pueblos are currently fully participating.

Solution #3: Full and timely expenditure of DWI grant funding, including Operation DWI, to insure continued and increased funding for effective DWI programs.

Solution #4: Continue and enhance efforts and participation in the McKinley County – Navajo Nation Law Enforcement DWI Task Force from all participating agencies (Navajo Police Department, McKinley County Sherriff, NM State Police, and Gallup Police Department).