

# National Congress of American Indians Executive Council Winter Session 2024

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

February 14, 2024

## INTRODUCTION

- Good morning, everyone. We—myself and my Census Bureau colleagues—are honored to join you today.
- Thank you to your executive director, Larry Wright, for inviting me to address you at your Executive Council Winter session.
- I also want to thank Sandra Mitrovich. Sandra has been our go-to staffer at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and is a big supporter of the census. She is so helpful with our requests for tribal listening sessions, census breakout sessions, and presentations by our leadership to tribal audiences—we greatly appreciate her assistance.
- I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to your newly elected president, Mark Macarro.
- I'll begin by saying, on behalf of the Census Bureau, how honored I am to have the privilege of meeting with tribal leaders and tribal representatives. Our work together is of the highest priority. We seek to strengthen our nation-to-nation relationships. That is why we are here.
- Since I was sworn in as director in January 2022, I have met with tribal governments in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and New York State. Our staff make it a priority for me to visit with tribes on all my travels and I appreciated their work in making these meetings occur.
- We know that communities and tribes rely on data from the Census Bureau to understand who they are, their challenges, their accomplishments, and their needs.
- Because of that, we want to hear from you about what data you need, how you use our data, and how we can better serve you.
- For example, I was just in Washington state, where I met with the Tribal Council for the Tulalip [tuh-LAY-lip] Nation and met Chairwoman Teri Gobin. I also toured the Swinomish [SWIN-na-mish] reservation with Senator Brian Wilbur. If they are here this morning, I want to thank you both for your welcome to myself and my staff.
- It was so beneficial for me and my staff to listen to their issues and concerns—about housing, the economy, and detailed data for their tribe.
- Our staff showed tribal planners how to pull their detailed tribal data. Their concern was that their data were skewed due to nontribal residents living on their reservation. We were able to pull detailed tribal population counts and household median income that they needed for their grant writing staff.
- This is a great example that we are available to help you with your data needs.

## TRIBAL RELATIONS SPECIALIST PROGRAM

- Now, during the last census, one thing we heard from our Indian country partners was that our nation-to-nation relationship requires ongoing communication... it needs active, continuous engagement throughout the decade, not just before a decennial census.
- We heard you, and I am glad to tell you that we've established a new Tribal Relations Program.
- Starting in 2022, for the first time, the Census Bureau now has full-time specialists dedicated to tribal relations *between* decennial censuses.
- Our four Tribal Relations Specialists are all enrolled tribal citizens. They meet with tribal leaders, officers, and urban Indian partners across Indian Country.
- These wonderful people allow us to have more ears on the ground to listen to your concerns. They help us to work with you better understand your needs and concerns, and ultimately to provide tribal nations and AIAN individuals with better, more relevant data.... *your* data.
- The work of our tribal relations specialists is already beginning to bear fruit.
- For example, this year we had the highest ever response by tribal nations to our Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS).
- This is an annual survey we conduct to make sure we have the most up-to-date information about the legal boundaries of all governments, which includes tribal nations.
- The BAS 2024 letters went out in January, along with follow-up emails.
- Please let us know if you have not received this survey and we will make sure we get this important information to you.

## IMPORTANCE OF TRIBAL DATA/STATISTICAL PRODUCT FIRST

- Now, I'll talk a little about tribal data. We know that your data are used widely, such as for governance and for public health and economic planning. That's why we're so committed to producing the quality data your tribal communities rely on and deserve.
- Our census staff will be presenting today at 2:00 p.m. giving an overview of major projects geared for Indian country, which I encourage you to attend.
- I also want to mention our plans to engage American Indian and Alaska Native stakeholders in the design of new statistical products to meet your needs.
- We are implementing a really different approach. We want to start by finding out the information *you* need for your planning and governance. We want that to guide the development of our statistical products specifically with the AIAN community in mind, including tribes, researchers, and federal partners.
- We'll be using tribal listening sessions and virtual listening sessions as the starting point to gather AIAN stakeholder feedback on informational needs.
- By the way, this effort is called *Statistical Products First* because of the starting point on the products that users need. Staff will be giving a presentation on this new effort at a session today, so I invite you to attend that.

## DHC-B PROOF OF CONCEPT

- Recently, the Census Bureau released a Proof of Concept for the 2020 Census Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics File B (Detailed DHC-B) for public review and feedback.
- The Detailed DHC-B includes household type and tenure data, including total household counts, for about 1,500 detailed racial and ethnic groups and AIAN tribes and villages.
- This Proof of Concept illustrates the proposed 2020 Census data product design and disclosure avoidance settings using 2010 Census data.

- The 30-day public feedback period on the Proof of Concept concludes on February 28, 2024. I encourage you to send us your feedback to [2020DAS@census.gov](mailto:2020DAS@census.gov).
- The final Detailed DHC-B based on 2020 Census data will be released by September 2024.

## 2030 CENSUS

- And finally, we've begun preparing for the 2030 Census. But let's be clear—we can't plan and complete the census alone. We need to hear your voices, your ideas, your participation.
- You see your feedback leads to better, more inclusive data...data that can help your people.
- We look forward to future tribal consultations on the 2030 Census. If your tribal nation would like to host one of our 2030 Tribal Consultation sessions, please let us know, and we will get with your staff for future planning.

## CONCLUSION

- I'll close by saying that we look forward to a continued partnership with you.
- While I have talked about specific data products and data collections, what I really hope to convey to you today is that me and my staff are absolutely committed to a strong, ongoing working relationship.
- This relationship is generational. Career staff serve for decades at the Census Bureau. They work on large, difficult projects to produce the best possible data—data that inform a generation of policy and programs in communities and tribal nations like yours.
- We're confident that by working together over time, staying committed to collaboration and excellence, we can better meet your needs and produce useful statistics about the American Indian and Alaska Native population.
- I look forward to our discussion and do have other census data experts here with me to help with questions or clarifications. Thank you again for inviting me to speak to you. We truly appreciate NCAI's longtime partnership with the Census Bureau.