

## NCJTC- Fox Valley | A Tribal-State Collaboration Model: Poarch Band of Creek Indians' Journey to Success

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Welcome everyone to the National Criminal Justice Training Center webinar. Our topic today is the tribal state collaboration model, Poarch Band of Creek Indians' journey to success. Presenting today's webinar is Bruce Lee. My name is Justine Souto, and I'll be your moderator for today. This project was supported by a grant by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, US Department of Justice.

The opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this webinar are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice. I'd like to welcome you again to our webinar. I'd like to introduce you to our presenter for today. Bruce Lee is the director of public safety for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Bruce has more than 33 years of experience in law enforcement and public safety to include patrol, investigations, drug enforcement, special operations, administrative services, personnel management, and emergency management.

He began his career as FBI support in Washington, DC, and became a security police officer at Quantico, Virginia. Bruce returned home and spent the next 27 years as a member of the Mobile County sheriff's office. For the past five years, he has been with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Law Enforcement Department. And with that, Bruce, I'll turn the time over to you.

Thank you. Welcome, everybody. A couple of housekeeping items that I'd like to add into there. First off, this is my very first webinar. I've taught adjunct college classes, taught a lot of seminars. But this is my first webinar, so you're kind of my guinea pigs as I learn this new technology. So I'm working the PowerPoint and the camera, a couple things going on at once. So just kind of bear with me.

Second thing is I kind of speak southern. So if I'm going too fast for y'all, I will try to slow down. I'm a storyteller. I do tend to get long, drawn out on some things. And Miss Rebecca here is to try to keep me on track, so I don't get too far off field. And I wanted to tell you that this is-- the presentation I'm fixing to give y'all is not an I story. It's a we story.

I had a part to play in it, and I'm relating the story to you from my perspective. But this is a we. What we were able to get accomplished was a we story, and I don't want to lose sight of that as I'm relating this story. I had a question when we were doing some of the preparation for this. And we are a 638. We're a public law 638 state, which we may have some people signing in that are a 280 or other. So I just wanted to set that straight up front.

If you don't know what a protocol 638 state is, maybe at the end I can take your questions. I also wanted to mention my sincere respect for anybody out there in law enforcement or public safety who's had a career in Indian country. With almost 30 years of law enforcement experience, when I came to Indian country, I was a lost little lamb. I have been on an almost five year learning journey. And hopefully, I'm now able to start to share some of the things people have been very kind to me and what they've shared with me over the years.

So let's begin. I'm not going to read the slide to you. This is going to be some of the learning objectives. Describe specific barriers that we faced. Can some of the strategies I want to talk about-- can you use them in your own situation and identify some of the successful outcomes from partnerships with the state and local.

All right, so this is kind of the payoff. What you're seeing on your screen is Governor Kay Ivey's signature on the Poarch Police Powers Act, where the state of Alabama gave police authority to tribal police. As you travel around Indian country, we're all different. Some places have it. Some don't. Some have good relationships, some do not. So for those of you who may not have state police authority, I think you can understand what this actually means.

Bruce? You mentioned at the beginning of the webinar that you are from public law, is it 368? 638.

638 state. And so we have a question from Carolyn, who's asking if you could explain what the distinct is between 638 and a 280, public law 280 state or tribe.

In a short summary, I will try. Because it's actually sort of a complicated question. So public law 638 is-- some of it has to do with self governance, and the way BIA and the relationship between US government and the tribe and a lot of the government functions can be carried out by contract under BIA. Law enforcement is one of those.

So we actually operate here, and it's in one of my other slides. We actually operate under a contract with BIA, in public law too. 80 states, the federal government has allowed the states to have criminal jurisdiction on Indian country land. And that's a short snippet. It's actually more complicated than that, but that's kind of the short answer.

Thank you for that, Bruce.

So we're not going to give you a TED Talk. I throw this slide in here usually when I do a PowerPoint,

because I like to make fun of TED Talks. Seems like every professional development or advanced training I've been to in the last five or six years, there's a TED talk video. So this is part of my-- if I'm doing a live presentation, this is one of my little segways.

So as I'm a storyteller, I gotta approach some of this story out there to kind of paint a picture for you. So August 11, 1984, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians became the only recognized federal tribe in the state of Alabama. It did not happen easily. It did not happen overnight. They had to really fight and work for their sovereignty.

So as a history nerd, it is a very kind of cool story if you like history. So if you go back to the Peace Treaty of Fort Jackson signed in 1814, you will see that individual Creek Indians, chiefs, and families were given land grants in what would become the state of Alabama. And then after that, they were pretty much promptly forgotten about by the state.

They have remained in this rural part of South Alabama ever since then until recognition. So they have a very long history here. And kind of an interesting aside-- I grew up about 40 miles from here as the crow flies. And I knew nothing about the tribe. I'd never been on the reservation before. I knew they existed, because they advertise their annual powwow every Thanksgiving. But that was the extent of my knowledge before I came to work here. And a lot of the state of Alabama, it was the same way. It's kind of like, well, we know we have an Indian tribe. They just didn't know anything about us.

And this will be covered in another slide, but prior to 2017, when we passed a extradition law, which we're going to talk about in a minute. That was 33 years, so from recognition as an Indian tribe until we passed the bill in 2017. 33 years, the state of Alabama was just silent on its relationship with the tribe.

Another little aside is that the state of Alabama's constitution of 1901 is the longest operating constitution anywhere in the world. So this state-- we do not have what some states refer to as home rule. So counties cannot really pass legislation. You have to go to the state capital, which for us, is Montgomery. So you have to go to the state capital to pass everything, so it's controlled tightly by the state.

So a little bit about the Tribal Police Department. We operate under a BIA contract. Most of our officers have a Special Law Enforcement Commission, SLEC. Many of you may understand what that is. We have 48 officers that cover the main reservation and three casinos in the state of Alabama.

We have a small reservation. We also have six dispatchers. OK, a little bit continued on about the Tribal Police Department. When I arrived here, we already had very good relationships with our sheriffs. So we had cross deputization agreements with three county sheriffs where we operate in three counties in Alabama, Escambia, Montgomery, and Elmore County. These agreements allow tribal police officers to enforce state law on the reservation.

So without that, they would not have been able to operate. And that's going to be a lot of the rest of this story. We were a participant with the 21st judicial drug task force. It's since kind of disbanded, but we were active in that as well. A little bit about me again. You may get tired of hearing it, but it kind of paints this picture.

So 29 years in law enforcement, 27 years at the Mobile County Sheriff's office, 12 years as captain, and so I was the ranking officer for most of those 12 years, which is the highest you can go in America's system without being a political appointee. FBI National Academy graduate, master's degree in criminal justice, I was teaching at a local college when I took this job, so I'm not the smartest person in the room. I'm not the brightest bulb. But I felt competent at what I knew to be my craft until I came to Indian country.

So none of my previous experience really prepared me for the complexities, the jurisdictional challenges in Indian country, and the relationships needed and the politics of gaming in a non-gaming state. I can't say it enough. That was a steep learning curve. My first year was constantly it seemed to be playing catch up.

OK, so what have I done? About three, four months into it, that's what I'm asking myself. What have I done? So kind of operational picture when I was hired, so just in a snapshot you can see what's all on the slide. I don't want to read it to you verbatim. But three reservations in the state, three casinos in the state, three County Sheriff's offices.

We're deputized in all three offices. That means three county district attorneys. That means three district courts, three circuit courts. There are two federal court districts in Alabama-- we operate in two of them-- two US attorney's office, one FBI office, and one BIA OJS district in Nashville. And we operate in all of those everyday. 24/7 365 days a year, we've got operations going on in all that.

Few of the problems. So this is where it starts to get interesting. I'm going to touch on these just briefly. But we have MOUs with the Sheriff. That's how we enforce state law. But we didn't have any copies. I think I found one copy within about the first two or three months I was here, one of them we couldn't find anywhere at the tribe. I was actually lucky enough that the Sheriff's office had a copy,

and I got a copy back from them.

Trying to learn what are our liabilities, what are our authorities. Until I got those MOU agreements in hand, it's kind of hard to understand. So we have a small reservation, but there were no accurate maps. No state of Alabama recognition, so no honoring of arrest warrants. No extradition. So we were very fortunate to have NCIC terminal. Here in Alabama, we call it the ACJIS. But there's no ACJIS agreement.

I know that in the last couple years, BIA and the federal government have been providing access to tribes with the TAP program. So this was a big deal, but we don't have an agreement. So how do we have this NCIC terminal? How is it allowed? There's nothing in the writing. More of the problem. So we send our officers to the state academy for training, or we hire officers who already had state certification.

With the state code that governs the post academy here in Alabama, that they had nothing that allowed for tribal officer. There was a little catch all of the word, "other." So we didn't even get mentioned as a tribal officer. We just got allowed in by the little other category. So state of Alabama courts do not honor tribal warrants. No extradition state charges.

So not quite a half mile off the reservation at a tribally owned business, a tribal plaza. So it's a tribally owned business, but it's in the state. It's not on a reservation. Tribal member with a drug warrant pumping gas-- our officers can't arrest them and bring them back to the reservation because it's not allowed. At that time, it wasn't allowed in the state of Alabama. So that's some of the problems.

So how do you make things better? You brainstorm with internal stakeholders. I like that word, stakeholder. So some of the problems I mentioned, the state police powers, legislation, MOU. Do we need state police powers? Is the MOU deputization-- is that enough? Will it make things worse if we try to make things better? How good are the MOUs we currently have. Will other people recognize this problem?

So will somebody in another part of the state who we're trying to get their approval-- will they recognize the problems and the difficulties we have. And then how do we educate external stakeholders, other county representatives, state legislators. How do we execute-- educate those people? That was how you were discussing this problem.

So then you get to the internal roadblocks. A lot of internal resistance I really wasn't expecting. I'm new and I just didn't understand. Things like it will never work because Alabama hates Indians. In this

day and time, you may not think of that. I know a lot of tribes who all have different stories. But there was a time when the Indians here in Poarch weren't allowed to go to public school. And some of those people are still alive. That's still a history here. That's not in a book. That's actually happened.

So you hear those things like you're wasting your time. Sometimes, it would be, you're wasting your time, son. This is one that always gets me. It's always been that way. We've tried this before. It's always been this way. We are making do. We're OK. And I tell people that work for me good enough is the enemy of great. Don't settle for good enough if you want to be great. You've got to keep pushing.

And then probably the biggest one was don't rock the boat. Don't rock the boat. So on the plus column. Being new and stubborn, I was not prepared to accept no. I didn't know any better. Plus I am stubborn. We had a new attorney working in government relations with lobbying experience in the legislature, and had established relationships in that arena.

Tribal leadership was supportive. Many didn't believe it would happen, but they were willing to let me waste my time and try. So they supported me in that fashion. And then it's timing. You can't discount the timing is that there were no legislative fights on gaming issues that year. There was nothing negative that interfered with our actions. And there were no other big legislative fights that year, no taxation battles. So there wasn't anything that would kind of take up all the room for legislation that year.

And as I said kind of at the beginning, and I can't state this enough, there is no I in team. So this was a group effort. The tribal attorney general's office, the tribal government affairs office put a lot of hours into this. So this is where it's not an I project. This was a team. This was a we project.

This was collaboration at its best. Looking back afterwards, no one person saw credit. No one tried to control the message. It was pretty remarkable in that effect. In my career, in a 30 year career, this is one of those rare collaborative efforts at its best. I can't speak highly enough of the people that work on this.

So moving forward, this is 2016. And I got here in 2015, so this is taking place in 2016. 2017, January, we start getting ready for the legislative session that will come at the end of January or February. So this is normal management stuff. This is even something you do for your professional sports team. You make a roadmap. You make a plan. You're floating ideas. You're brainstorming.

We made a plan. We revised the plan. We talked to-- didn't hoard it and try to hide it. We talked to everybody in the tribal government in leadership and management positions. And it all started-- I

stated my case why I felt thought needed to be done to the tribal attorney general, assistant attorney general and somebody in government relations. You got to start somewhere.

So 2016, 2017, we're talking with others. We held meetings. We refined our plan. I want to tell you, this was months long. This just wasn't like, oh, let's make a plan this week. This took time as you kind of seek out these opinions. There are a lot of people here at Poarch that have been doing this for a long time and understood the things that I did not.

And then like I said, the government affairs was able to talk to legislators in a way that I didn't have experience talking to. They could talk to friendly legislatures. What's your opinion? Do you think this will pass? How would it pass? What's palatable to the other senators and representatives from around the state?

So how do you get your ideas? How do you go from ideas and plans to achieving your goal? So collaboration, networking, lobbying is not a dirty word. So you collaborate internally. When you collaborate, it's when you've got a group of people who are working toward a goal or a particular endgame. So that's these stakeholders. And that can be external stakeholders if they're collaborating with you and they're trying to reach a common goal that they agree in.

I am amazed at how easy sometimes it is to get help when you just ask the question, do you know how I can get this done? Can I get some help here? How do you think I can get this done? The next thing on the list is networking. Network, network, network. Any and all-- and this is what I'm talking about on my side of the house here. Any and all state associations, local police chief's groups. If your state or local has an LECC, a Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee, which is run through the US attorney's office, you can have one of those.

I made a comment to somebody one time. Talk to your high school PE coach if he can help you network and get your message out there. Don't leave anybody out. Preach it far and wide if your goal is worthy. It's your network. And lobby is not a dirty word. So in popular culture, in news, lobbying is a dirty word. But the legislature is awash with lobbyists. And they're all trying to get the attention and the eyeballs and the time of the legislator. So they work on behalf of their client.

So if you have a lobbyist who you have access to who can do that for you, it just opened the doors up that you may not have been able to get in yourself. You've got to get people to notice you if you want their vote in the legislature. I mean, that's what it comes down to at the end of the day is you've got to get on the calendar. You've got to get on the schedule or roster to get a vote. You've got to get that attention.

And if you don't have a lobbyist-- and I know many places may not-- there are friendly associations out there. And almost all of these statewide or large associations have a lobbyist. It's just a matter of reaching out to them and finding them. So out of our plans, we came-- we kind of narrowed down two major problems, which I've already mentioned.

There's a lack of state police authority for the police officers, and then the lack of criminal jurisdiction in the state. So those out of all of this months of talking and more talking, those were the two problems that we sort of settled on that we wanted to address. There's more than that, but those were the two big ones.

As we look at this, we want to tackle one problem, both problems. How do you strategize about this? Government relations was very good at this because they had legislative experience. They knew strategically who to sponsor your bill, which is actually something-- it would not have occurred to me. So I would've went to the local legislators that I know or knew of, already had a relationship with.

But strategically, if you've got a legislator, say, in another part of the state not close to you who might be a retired police chief who then went to legislature who has a background and an understanding of law and order issues, that person might be an excellent person to introduce your bill. And that's what happened to us for the 2017.

Also part of this strategy-- we worked on four draft bills, and I'll tell you this. The attorneys came up with the verbiage, but we worked on four draft bills that we floated around, three of them primarily on the police powers and then one on the one on the extradition. So Alabama has one of those courts for the state of Alabama and having this control in the state capital. But private state colleges in Alabama will often have state police officers, state police powers granted to a private college without a normal jurisdictional boundary.

So in Mobile, which is close to us, there is a Catholic Jesuit college, very old school, very good school. A couple of years before we started this project, we're given a state police department. So you've got a private college with a state police department. So we took that bill, we looked at it, we massaged it, cut and paste our name in and some of the things that apply to us directly. And then we did that with a few other bills as well.

Some of this sounds like common sense, but sometimes you've got to say it out loud. So we had MOUs with three sheriffs. We visited with each of those three sheriffs and asked for their help. What do you think about this? How do you think we can achieve it? Do you have any problems or concerns?



You don't want to blindsides somebody that you're working well with. So you start with them. Neighboring, friendly sheriffs. Other influential sheriffs in other parts of the state that I had no knowledge of-- we spoke with them. The state APOST director, which is the State Police Academy director and his staff. We met with him. We met with the Alabama Chiefs Association and their leadership. We spoke with the FBI National Academy Associates president and past presidents.

These are all influential voices in state law enforcement. They have legislators in their home districts. And so having them be able to be a voice for you in other parts of the state is invaluable. We spoke to other local law enforcement leaders. And basically, if anybody would give us an audience, I'd go speak to them. If they would let me talk, I would. And it takes that.

So this is 2016 getting ready for the 2017 legislative session. We found a sponsor for the bill and the local Escambia Act. So got to explain that a little bit. So we didn't think we could get the state of Alabama to give us a state wide extradition bill in the entire state. So then we looked at doing one county, so Escambia County, which is our home county-- we could do a county-only bill. And that's how we approached it.

So we currently have extradition for the state of Alabama in our county. I travel weekly to the state capital to visit legislators in their offices. Government affairs, they're there almost every day. I call it watching the sausage get made. It was kind of like a Spartan race and a chess match rolled into one. Because it was kind of an endurance project. Everyday slogging through there, but also with the chess match trying to get these bills advanced.

One bill would advance in the house, and then it would stall. And then a bill would advance in the Senate and stall. And it just went back and forth. And in the end, one was good in the Senate and one was good in the house. And at the end of the slide, you see we won. Actually kind of almost at the end of the session, our extradition bill, which only affected Escambia County, our home county, passed because it was a local-only bill. But it was a win.

So for the first time in 33 years, the state of Alabama passed legislation for the benefit of the courts trial. So huge, huge win. I can't understate at the time, it was like pop champagne bottles because we won. We won, at least partially. So the Police Powers bill didn't make it through. And then Justine's question was about how to keep the effort going. And I guess I am doubly blessed a lot of times, but we had a lot of stability here with our staff. There's not a lot of turnover, so we didn't see a lot of people changing hands.

We did get a little fatigued. It does kind of wear on you going to the middle part of the states, having to spend the night, going up for an hour meeting, driving three hours one way for an hour meeting and then driving back. It takes up the whole day. So there was fatigue, but luckily, there was no staff turnover. And Justine, it's probably just I'm stubborn. It takes a lot to convince me something's over and done. And it wasn't just me being stubborn, but that's kind of a take on it.

So you see it on the screen here, what's next? So we celebrate winning. We had a good little internal celebration. And then you start to work on the postmortem of what did not work. And then the bill not allowed and actually what happened with the Police Power bill-- never got it out to the floor for a final vote. We worked it through one side, and it would not go through the [INAUDIBLE] review. It didn't go through the Senate. Didn't get on the calendar, couldn't get a vote.

What was our strategy going forward where the bottleneck was? All of that helped for the next year, for 18. We're 1 and 17, so we're finishing up 17, and we start looking forward to 18. So I call that police power round two. The good news were we knew where the road blocks were. We knew there were people against the tribe, mostly erroneously because they thought that this was going to allow the tribe to expand gaming and gambling in Alabama, which wasn't true, wasn't the intention at all. But they believed it to be true.

There were some gaming interest from other outside areas that influenced it. There were just law enforcement officials who were just ill-informed about the tribe. So those that we could talk to or reach or try to connect with in the off season, I guess you want to say. We started reaching out and trying to make those connections. I made a note here on my slide here, start early. Visit, seek support.

So for example, the State Sheriffs Association-- we visited with them, but we didn't start with them. And that's where some of our opposition was with some of the sheriffs offices. For the 2018 upcoming year, my first visit was to the State Sheriffs Association. We started with them. And then government affairs-- they started with their lobbyists and started working on strategies for who to sponsor. So they changed some of the bill sponsors based on where they thought some of the resistance came from.

So I don't want to give it to trivialize. So 2017 paved the way for 2018. Personal relationships matter and then timing is everything. So don't want to trivialize the 2018 year, but what happened in '17 laid the groundwork. And once you know something can be done and people start to believe in you, it gets easier. It sounds hard, but it gets easier. You just have to kind of keep up the pressure, keep up the effort.

So everyone that contributed to the bill used their professional and personal relationships in the legislature. And then it started to pick up from there. Timing is everything. And, again, in 2018, there were no gaming issues. 10 years prior to this, the attorney general was trying to shut down all of the gaming in the state, including the tribes gaming. So a decade earlier, there'd been a huge battle in the state legislature over gaming.

Take nothing for granted, and you don't give up. You kind of keep pushing it forward. And I made myself a note on this one. You want to thank everybody who helped. I'm very thankful for tribal government relations, especially if they watch this recording one day, Adrian and Robbie, thank you. This is the Poarch Bill. And I kind of saved this for last because of the time constraints. But so another part of this cool history story.

Alabama would not give Poarch Creek any legislative recognition. However, a unrecognized-- a nonfederal tribe of some remnants of the Choctaw people have a state recognized tribe. They don't have a reservation. They're not federally recognized. It's one of those kind of odd things you do come across. They had a very powerful legislator who was able to get police powers for that nonrecognized Indian tribe about-- it was 1975.

So 25, 35, almost 40 years before we made our effort. So on the books in Alabama, there was a state police power bill that recognized the Indian tribe. So some very smart people-- wasn't me-- took that bill, and we amended it. So it was already on the books. It was already a law. We just amended it to include Poarch Creek. That's kind of the nerdy little history story there.

I don't want to trivialize how important it was for 2018, but the real work, the heavy lifting was in '17. Networking for the future. Every state's different. Every jurisdiction's different. Indian country covers a broad expanse of this country. So this is kind of unique to us, but there is a very active state chiefs of police association here in Alabama. They have two major conferences a year. Each of these conferences are probably 300 or 350 chiefs of police in attendance. So I try to hit least one or both of them, and I have since I got here.

I try to go to lunch with somebody I don't know. I try to hang out in the hall and talk to people and get introduced to other people. The State Sheriffs Association is very powerful. They've got their own Capitol Hill. They have a full time director who specializes in lobbying. The Alabama attorney general runs a couple of big training sessions every year. There may be 600, 700 people in attendance.

The FBI National Academy of Associates is active in the state. The US attorney has a Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee, the LECC. They do monthly meetings in one district. I try to go

about every three months. I try to make a meeting. They do one yearly large conference that's very well attended by not only chiefs of police, but also the deputy chiefs and other command type staff.

Two of the counties next to us have very active county chiefs associations. They do a breakfast once a month. It rotates around the county, so I try to-- when it's sponsored by one of the municipalities that has a good breakfast, I do try to catch those on attendance. But it's networking. It's not asking for anything, but it's making those connections with those people. And it's time and labor intensive to get out of your bubble and to get out of your office and go see these people.

But when you need something down the road, you could pick up the phone and call these people that you've made contacts with over the years. And it's not a stranger asking for something. It's they know you. I don't know if you can see on your end, if you could kind of see this picture. So this is six of our officers. Three of these are tribal members. And in the background, in the very far background, you can see the Alabama state capitol dome.

So Governor Ivey was re-elected. And in January 2019, the state troopers put out a request for help with crowd control and parades and the events from all of the local law enforcement in the state. And so we volunteered. So here, you see six tribal police officers working a law enforcement event in the state capital. Would not have happened without the Police Powers Bill. So this is kind of the payoff.

And I've got three of my younger up and coming tribal police officers there for this very first event. And this is just some of the pat on the back shots. Some of our tribal officers-- this is in front of our community center. This is some of our tribal officers and our chair. That was a good day.

I threw this slide in here. This is in the middle part of the state, where we've got 19 officers who work in the middle part of the state. They came to us asking us would we sponsor and help support this women in law enforcement, a luncheon for them a couple times a year. And this was after we had passed the bill. So this was kind of forward thinking. This is nurturing a group of female law enforcement future leaders. And this is just kind of being proactive. This is us being out there getting recognized for professional thinking, and the things that we could do to enhance our reputation.

Your reputation-- we're going to need something in the future, and our reputation as a professional agency organization pays dividends. But you got to keep the bill on that today. So this is some active shooter training. That's me and my chief of police and our lead dispatcher over by the fire station. I believe we have come to-- am I on time? I am right on time.

You're on time. Thank you for a great presentation, Bruce. We'll take some questions now if people

would like to type their questions into the chat box. And we do have one comment from Sheila. She had said that it really struck her in the beginning when you said that the timing was right. And you reiterated that at the very end here when you said that there were no major political issues going on with the tribe at the time. But I'm wondering how else do you know that the timing is right? And how do you create that opportunity for your police department?

I don't know that you can necessarily affect timing. I think it would be more of a long preparation in being ready. So if you see that the door is going to open or the window is going to open, and you move forward because everything's in place and you're ready. If your state legislature is having a big battle, and it ain't got to be over an Indian tribe. It doesn't have to be over a gaming issue or any of those things that affect us.

It could be over some statewide issue where there's going to be a drawn out battle, and you try to get something through that process, you're probably going to get caught up in the meat grinder. And you're just not going to make it through. And it's not anything you didn't do. It's not anything you did do. It's just that the timing was against you. Doesn't mean don't try again and depending on the state of circumstances. I might try anyway.

It's just you got to be prepared that you know you may not go forward, and it may not be your fault. It may not be anything you can affect. So like I said, 10 years prior to our doing this, we wouldn't have got through. I mean, I don't think the politics would have allowed it. But we got lucky we got fortunate timing.

Bruce, Bill had commented early on about the poll question regarding hiring officers. And he said that they only hire already certified, usually state certified officers. Sometimes they're federally certified, and on a few occasions they send new recruits to the state academy. How important is it for tribal police departments to have state or federally certified officers on their force?

Well, our contract with BIA requires us to have certified officers. So I can't speak to every 638 tribe in the country, but our contract requires it. I would assume that's the case in most tribal organizations that are working under that. So most of our officers were certified when we hired them. We've got some retired other old geezers like me, but younger in better shape.

But the being able to send somebody to the police academy-- so a couple of our officers, couple of our tribal officers got hired in and we were able to send into the academy, which allows us to hire tribal members. If you're going to only hire certified officers, that means your tribal member will have had to have gone somewhere and got through the academy to be hired back.

So we started, and it's been successful so far. We started a cadet program, I guess, four years ago. And we've done two tribal member cadets. So you hire them as cadet. You get them trained up. You send them to the academy. And it kind of gives us a chance to kind of direct how they're brought up into the law enforcement, the community and profession. We don't hire a lot because we're a smaller department, but two cadets, two tribal members hired over the course of four years I think for us is a big success. So I'm real proud of that. All that kind of gets tied up in that answer.

Bruce, thank you. We have just a couple of minutes now, and I've got some really good questions waiting here. Carolyn asks if you can give some concrete examples of what the tribal police can do now that they weren't able to do before that legislation was passed.

Well, now-- they were able to make arrests before the legislation passed by wearing their sheriff deputy hat. So it gets really complicated, guys. This is where this part-- it takes you a while to kind of wrap your head around this. So a non-tribal member on the reservation commits a crime. It could be a simple assault. It could be a theft. It could be a disorderly.

So if you arrest them as a sheriff's deputy, you're wearing sheriff deputy hat. And that's worked, of course, in the past. We have three sheriffs with three sets of SOPs and operating procedures. So like on all three of our locations, we have slightly different ways you operate based on where you are. So after we receive state recognition, we're a state officer while we're on the reservation. And so we can follow our own rules and not be bound by what the sheriff's office would dictate to us.

Second thing is MOU is only as good as the sheriff or the elected official that agreed to go into it with you. So every four years when our sheriffs are up for re-election, our MOUs are in jeopardy. So a new sheriff comes in. And we just had an election last year, but a new sheriff comes in, and we've got a new sheriff here in Escambia county. Fortunately for us, he's a great guy and really likes the working with tribe.

So that means every four years, you can make the best plans in the world, but every four years you get a new sheriff. You may not have an MOU for the next four years, and then you're out in the cold. So all of that doubt and uncertainty is gone. So it helped me particularly when it comes to long-range planning. I can make plans now based on what I know that's in law and what changed, if that makes any sense. It was a good question.

There are some great questions here. We're going to have to send them on to you, Bruce.

Unfortunately, it's time to wrap up. Thank you all for your wonderful questions. And Bruce, thank you

for a great presentation. This concludes the question and answer portion of the webinar. Thank you for joining us today and have a great day.

Thank you, guys. Thanks for the COPS program in Fox Valley for hosting me. So everybody have a good day and stay safe.