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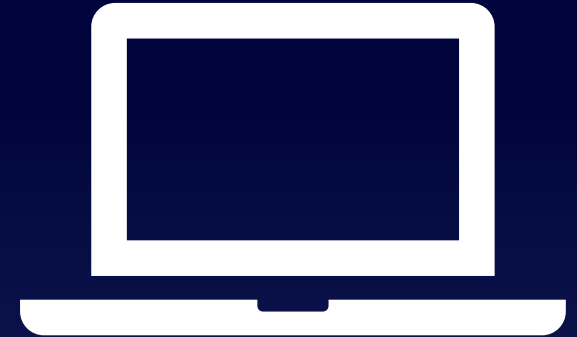


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# ***Public Information Officers & Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies Partnering During Missing Child Investigations***

*August 14, 2025 | Presented by:*

**Alica Wildcatt,**

**Project Coordinator, AMBER Alert in Indian Country**



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# AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program

## Mission

To safely recover missing, endangered, or abducted children through the coordinated efforts of law enforcement, media, transportation, and other partners by using training and technology to enhance response capacities and capabilities and increase public participation.



# Today's Presenter

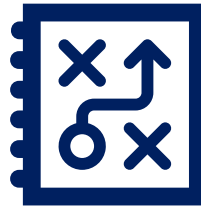
**Alica Wildcatt**  
Project Coordinator,  
AMBER Alert in Indian Country



# Learning Objectives



Learn the role of Public Information Officers (PIO).



Learn about the responsibilities and unique challenges Tribal agencies face in missing child cases.



Learn the importance of collaboration between PIOs and Tribal law enforcement to improve investigation outcomes and public engagement.

# What is a Public Information Officer?

An agency designated individual that is responsible for disseminating information from the organization to the public, media, and other stakeholders.

Their main role is to ensure accurate, timely, and consistent communication, especially during emergencies, public events and crises.

# Key Responsibilities

- Media relations
- Press releases and statements
- Crisis communications
- Public outreach





# Unique Challenges Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies Face in Missing Child Cases

- Jurisdictional complexity
- Limited resources
- Lack of established protocols
- Gaps in communication and notification
- Cultural considerations

# Role of a PIO in Missing or Abducted Child Investigations

- Coordinating public alerts
- Media relations
- Managing information flow
- Engaging the community
- Combating misinformation
- Supporting family communication



# Role of the Law Enforcement Agency

- Provide timely and accurate information
- Designate a single voice
- Support the release of critical information
- Participate in joint information sharing
- Maintain situational awareness
- Respect the investigation timeline
- Include the PIO in planning
- Foster community engagement



# Challenges & Solutions

- Jurisdictional complexity
- Cultural sensitivity and sovereignty
- Limited PIO and staffing resources
- Misinformation and social media rumors
- Delays in public notification
- Lack of coordination of messaging



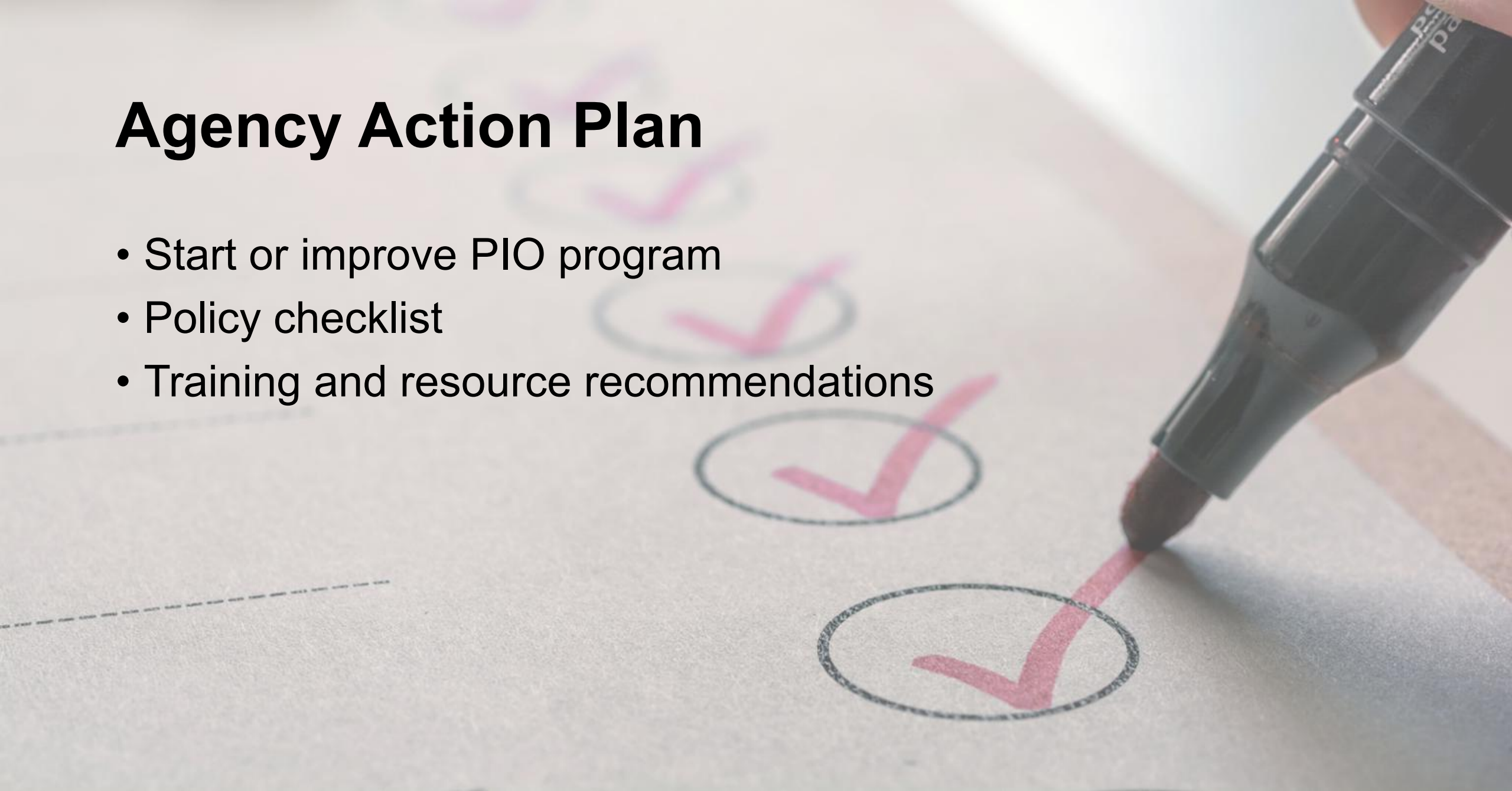
# Communication Tools

- TV
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Social media platforms
- Mass notification systems
- Crisis communication apps
- Survey and feedback tools



# Agency Action Plan

- Start or improve PIO program
- Policy checklist
- Training and resource recommendations





A woman and a young boy are outdoors in a grassy area with trees in the background. The boy, on the left, is wearing a blue puffer vest over a white shirt and grey pants. He is holding a green bubble wand and blowing a bubble. The woman, on the right, is wearing a black puffer vest over a grey long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. She is also holding a green bubble wand and blowing a bubble. A semi-transparent black rectangular box is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the text.

# Key Takeaway: Trust

Trust is built through consistent, honest, and culturally respectful communication.





# Key Takeaway: Transparency

Transparency strengthens credibility and accountability.





# Key Takeaway: Investment

A strong PIO function is an investment in community confidence.



A photograph of three young women with long dark hair, smiling and laughing joyfully. They are wearing colorful winter jackets (one floral, one camouflage, one red and pink). The background is a snowy outdoor area with evergreen trees. A dark semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

# Key Takeaway: Communication

Crisis communication requires preparation and clarity.



# Let's Start with Your Experience

Think back to a time your agency had to respond to a critical incident or missing person case.

- What was your biggest communication challenge?
- What worked well?
- Who was responsible for sharing information with the public?



# Case Snapshot: Why PIO Coordination Matters

In 2022, a 12-year-old child went missing from a rural tribal community.

- Local LE began a search but did not issue a public statement for 8 hours.
- Families posted online, creating conflicting and inaccurate details.
- The public demanded answers, and mistrust escalated.

Lesson: A trained PIO helps protect the investigation, calm the community, and support families.

# Draft a First Message for the Public

Your agency receives a credible report of a missing 10-year-old child. You are the designated PIO.

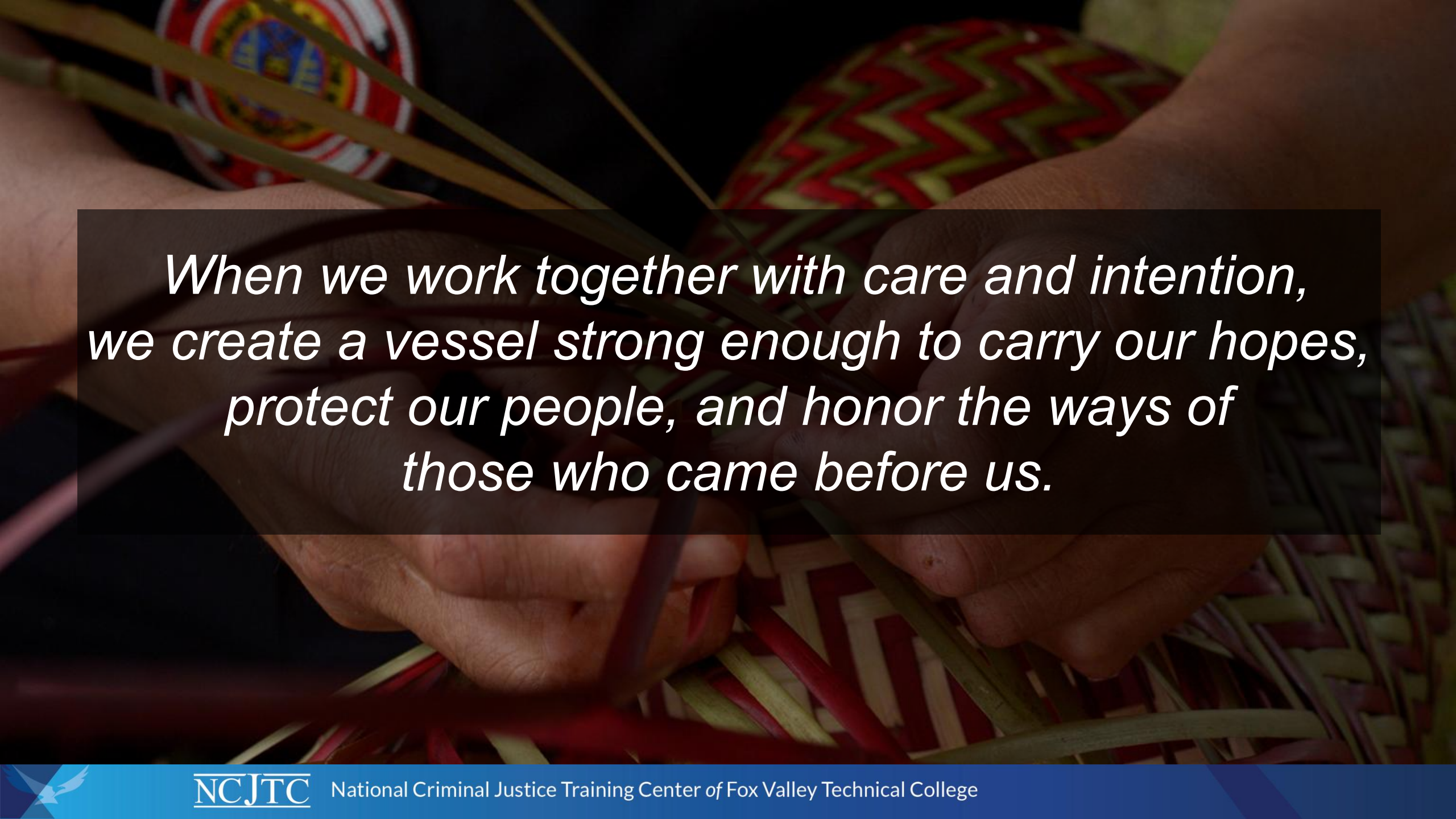
Draft a 3-sentence message you would post on your agency's social media or provide to the press.

- Guidelines:
  - Include only verified facts
  - Ask for public assistance (if appropriate)
  - Reflect cultural respect and urgency

# Resources to Strengthen Your PIO Function

- AMBER Alert in Indian Country Training  
*[ncjtc.fvtc.edu/amber](http://ncjtc.fvtc.edu/amber)*
- PIO Training from FEMA / ICS:  
*IS-29: Public Information Officer Awareness*
- Sample Tribal Media Policy Templates  
*Available from NCJTC or NCAI*
- NCJTC Communication Toolkits & Case Studies  
*[askamber@fvtc.edu](mailto:askamber@fvtc.edu)*



A close-up photograph of hands weaving a basket using red and yellow strands. In the upper left background, a police badge is visible. A semi-transparent dark rectangle is overlaid in the center, containing white text.

*When we work together with care and intention,  
we create a vessel strong enough to carry our hopes,  
protect our people, and honor the ways of  
those who came before us.*

# Contact Information & Final Q&A



**Alica Wildcatt**

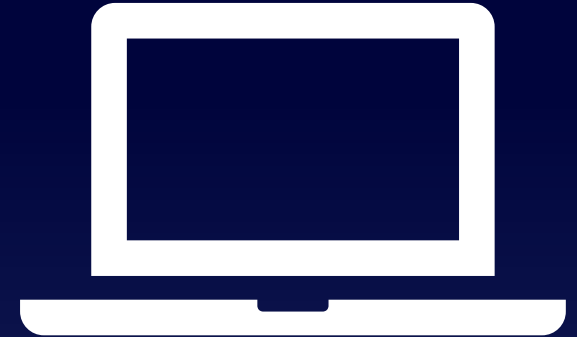
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