



TRIBAL BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS

Written by Crystal Bass, Tribal Administrative Director in partnership with relevant departments and programs.

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC SAFETY LEADERSHIP



James Shike, III Commissioner of Public Safety

James has served as the Yakama Nation’s Public Safety Commissioner since February 2012, with a public safety portfolio beginning in 1994. He served as a Gate Guard in 1994 before transitioning to a Dispatcher/Jailer position and working through the roles of Police Officer, Detective, Detective Lieutenant, Acting Chief of Police, and his current role as Commissioner.

James has completed multiple levels of training, including training with the Indian Police Academy, the Department of Interior and Department of Justice, FBI, and BIA. By completing extensive training, he is eligible to engage in BIA Special Law Enforcement Officer Commissions.

The Commissioner oversees all programs and positions within Public Safety, such as gate guards and game wardens, Yakama Nation Police Department’s (“YNPD”) officers and special departments, Corrections, and Records.

Public Safety Responsibilities

Commissioner Shike and Lieutenant Jeff Chumley represent Yakama Nation’s population in various law and order meetings and initiatives, including the Central WA Fentanyl Task Force established by Congressman Dan Newhouse.



Public Safety Highlights

Past Work

The Public Safety Department participated in various large-scale initiatives



for the Yakama Nation, including working with Tribal Council during the implementation of *Retrocession* in 2016. Retrocession restored the Yakama Nation’s jurisdiction over Yakama enrollees and other Indians who reside or visit within Indian Country. On April 19, 2016, retrocession was implemented, highlighting the importance of partnerships with the FBI and U.S. Attorney’s Office. The Public Safety Department has completed or assisted with multiple federal investigations reaching prosecution, which highlighted the importance of the tribal voice and insight within federal cases – particularly those pertaining to Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (“MMIP”).

Public Safety supported the commencement of the Ceremonial Bison Hunting in Montana beginning January 2017. Now, Treaty Hunts take place in Gardiner and West Yellowstone, MT, with Public Safety’s support through on-site monitoring and enforcement surrounding Bison hunt regulations.

Beyond Yakama-centered initiatives, Public Safety looks to assist through outreach and community-centered efforts. Previously, Yakama Game Wardens served as a security detail for two members of the Biden Administration’s cabinet. The Game Wardens were also part of a multi-jurisdictional effort to close part of the Yakima River at North Meyers, driven by the want to protect cultural and natural resources.

Current Work

The Public Safety Department has launched its first established K-9 Unit, with Officer Barajas as the primary handler for four-legged officer Lobo.



Lobo is one of the first K-9 Officers within the Yakima Valley dual trained in apprehension and drug interdiction skills. He can provide specialized support within many cases, including drug detection and interdiction and suspect apprehension – which serves as a monumental asset to combating the fentanyl and opioid crisis on the Yakama Reservation that impacts tribal families. Alongside funding and project support from legislators, there is hope that the K-9 Department and officer numbers altogether will grow to sufficiently serve the Yakama Reservation and Treaty Territories.

In September 2024, the Yakama Nation Corrections Facility conducted a First Aid & CPR training session and Narcan training session for inmates. Both courses provided rehabilitative knowledge for the participants, resulting in thirteen inmates becoming certified in First Aid & CPR.

Criminal Investigations is currently in good standing with the FBI and U.S. Attorney’s Office, partnering for major crime violations and federal investigations within Yakama’s jurisdiction.

Public Safety prioritizes “community policing,” providing services for various community events to strengthen community presence. YNPD and Public Safety staff have assisted with funeral escorts, event coordination & volunteering, and security for pow wows and other local events.



Statistics & Insight

- All commissioned Public Safety Officers and patrol units meet the BIA 638 Contract background requirements. Patrol units meet regulations through recent upgrades to ballistic vests and firearms provided for each officer, prioritizing the officer’s safety while on-duty.
- Public Safety has eight certified background investigators, seventeen with the BIA Commission Card certification, and eleven in the process of obtaining their Special Law Enforcement Commissions (SLEC) certification. Additionally, all seventeen officers are eligible for their SLEC certification.
- Two officers are certified firearm instructors. This lowers costs for training and helps YNPD meet the BIA 638 Contract requirements.
- Two officers are certified in peer-to-peer support. Peer-to-peer support training consists of what to do in the event officers witness critical events and need assistance for their wellbeing.
- Public Safety has acquired four drones for use in various applications, with Officer Jensen currently a certified drone operator and two more enlisted for training.
- Three dispatchers and six YNPD officers are certified for access to the Washington State Patrol (“WSP”) database.
- Public Safety’s Dispatch is now fully staffed. Dispatch has access to the WSP database, allowing dispatch and their officers to check for warrants and stolen

items listed in their database. Most importantly, this access allows YNPD to enter MMIP information for WSP’s information.

**FINANCIAL
SPOTLIGHT**

AUDITS

The FY 2022 single audit is underway for the Tribal Government and is expected to be completed in the spring of 2025.

The FY 2023 and FY 2024 audits will immediately be initiated following FY 2022, and a regular audit schedule is expected to resume after December 31, 2025.

PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDING

The Public Safety Department is currently funded by the 56 Gaming Revenue account, the Adam Walsh grant, a BIA 638 Contract, and Department of Justice Fentanyl Taskforce.

A 2% community contribution was awarded by the Legends Casino, in 2024 for equipment upgrades in the amount of \$72,443.75.

**CONGRESSIONAL
SPOTLIGHT**

**CONGRESSIONAL DIRECT
SPENDING (CDS)**

\$1.2 Million in Defense Appropriations was approved through Maria Cantwell’s Office in 2024 to enhance & cover the cost of the K-9 unit while including additional training, equipment costs, and other related items needed for upgrades to outfit the K-9 Unit(s) and vehicles necessary for daily operations.

BADGES ACT

The Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety (“BADGES”) for Native Communities Act aims to strengthen tribal law enforcement agencies and provide data and resources to keep communities safe. The bipartisan legislation was introduced in the House and Senate in March 2023. Despite the federal cuts and changes, Yakama Nation continues to support the BADGES Act and PROTECT Act through legislative talks.

**SITE REVIEW
SPOTLIGHT**

BIA OJS DISTRICT VIII OFFICE

A site review was conducted, to assess and ensure that facilities, services, and operations related to public safety within tribal communities are operating effectively and in compliance with federal standards. An action plan was implemented to respond to programmatic findings for FY 2023.

These corrective actions included the implementation of improved evidence inventories and physical inventory of sensitive equipment.

Additional requirements included firearm qualifications that are met bi-annually for all police officers. The BIA provided self-audit forms to be performed annually and required quarterly reports (SF-425s) are submitted.

Yakama Nation Public Safety Data

10/1/2024 through 12/31/2024

Dispatch Calls	1,596
Warrant Arrests	39
Welfare Checks	132
Closed Investigations	27
Game Warden Citations	18

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