

PATROL OPERATIONS IN TRIBAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

A Law Enforcement Operations Toolkit — National Native Justice Institute | www.nativejustice.us

■ PATROL OPERATIONS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Patrol is the core function of tribal law enforcement — the visible, daily presence of public safety that deters crime, builds community confidence, and generates the first response to every incident. Effective tribal patrol operations require tactical competency, cultural awareness, jurisdictional knowledge, and the flexibility to operate often as a solo officer in remote environments with limited backup and resources.

 Tribal patrol officers routinely respond to complex incidents — domestic violence, mental health crises, drug overdoses — alone and miles from backup.

 Communication infrastructure in tribal areas is often inadequate. Every patrol officer must understand their communication capabilities and limitations.

 The most dangerous calls in tribal policing — domestic violence, traffic stops, and welfare checks — are also among the most routine. Complacency kills.

 Visible, consistent, and respectful patrol presence builds community trust that makes every investigation more effective and every patrol safer.

■ CORE PATROL OPERATION PRINCIPLES

Pre-Shift Preparation

- Conduct a thorough pre-shift vehicle and equipment inspection: lights, radio, body camera, first aid kit, firearm, less-lethal, PPE.
- Review the shift briefing, outstanding warrants, BOLOs (be on the lookout notices), and any significant prior-shift incidents in your patrol area.
- Know your patrol area: recent crime trends, high-activity locations, known offenders with outstanding warrants, and locations of vulnerable community members.

Patrol Techniques & Deployment

- Use directed patrol — concentrate patrol time in areas and times where crime is most likely based on recent data and community intelligence.
- Vary your patrol patterns to avoid predictability that offenders can exploit.
- Build non-enforcement contacts into every shift — welfare checks on elders, school visits, and community interaction are core patrol functions.
- Document patrol activities thoroughly: locations visited, contacts made, and observations recorded in daily patrol logs.

Traffic & Vehicle Stops

- Vehicle stops are among the most dangerous patrol activities. Always notify dispatch of location, plate, and vehicle description before initiating.
- Approach from the driver's rear quarter. Maintain physical distance and observe the driver's hands throughout the contact.
- For high-risk stops, request backup before approaching. No traffic stop is routine enough to skip basic safety positioning.

Call Response

- Size up every call before committing to approach: What is the nature? Who is there? What do I know about this location and these parties?
- For domestic violence calls, approach quietly, position away from windows and doors, and listen before announcing presence.
- For mental health and welfare calls, slow down, reduce visible threat signals, and use de-escalation as the primary tactical tool.

■ TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE TRIBAL PATROL OPERATIONS

- **Know Your Jurisdiction Boundaries Cold** — Every patrol officer should know exactly where tribal, federal, state, and county jurisdiction begins and ends in their patrol area.
- **Use the 5-Point Patrol Assessment on Every Call** — Before exiting your vehicle: What is the threat? Who are the parties? Where is cover? What is my exit? Who needs to be notified?
- **Document Patrol Activity Consistently** — Daily patrol logs document your presence, community contacts, and activities. They are valuable for grant reporting, community accountability, and officer protection.
- **Build Community Intelligence Through Patrol** — Regular, respectful patrol contact — not just enforcement — generates the community intelligence that solves crimes before they escalate.
- **Plan for Backup Delays** — In remote tribal areas, backup may be 30–60 minutes away. Your tactics, positioning, and patience must account for that reality.
- **Conduct Post-Shift Vehicle Documentation** — Document any vehicle equipment issues, damage, or safety concerns at end of shift. Do not assume the next officer checked.

RESOURCES, GRANTS & SUPPORT

Funding, Training, and Support Resources — Tribal Patrol Operations Programs | www.nativejustice.us

■ FEDERAL GRANT RESOURCES

Operations & Equipment Funding

- **COPS Tribal Resources Grant (TRG)** – Funds patrol vehicles, equipment, uniforms, and operational training. cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources
- **CTAS – Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation** – DOJ consolidated tribal funding for law enforcement operations and patrol capacity. justice.gov/tribal
- **BJA Tribal Justice Programs** – Supports tribal law enforcement operations and capacity building. bjaojp.gov/program/tribal-justice
- **BIA Law Enforcement Services** – Federal operational support for tribal patrol including cross-deputization. bia.gov/bia/ojs

Technology & Communications

- **FEMA BRIC – Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities** – Funds communications infrastructure improvements in tribal communities. fema.gov/bric
- **FirstNet for Tribal Nations** – Priority public safety broadband for tribal law enforcement. firstnet.gov

■ STATE & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **State Homeland Security Grants (SHSGP)** – Tribal law enforcement may be eligible for state-administered FEMA homeland security funding.
- **Tribal Law & Order Act (TLOA) Resources** – Expanded tribal criminal authority and DOJ technical assistance for implementation.
- **Grants.gov Tribal Search Tool** – Search all federal grants available to tribal entities. grants.gov (filter: Tribal Government eligibility)

■ HELPFUL TIPS FOR TRIBAL PROGRAMS & LEADERS

Develop Written Patrol Deployment Guidelines Document your directed patrol strategy, deployment priorities, and activity expectations in a written patrol operations guide reviewed annually.	Map Your Radio Dead Zones Formally identify and document radio coverage gaps in your patrol area. Develop written backup communication protocols for each dead zone.
Implement Body-Worn Camera Policies Body-worn cameras protect officers and community members. Adopt a comprehensive policy covering activation requirements, retention, and review procedures.	Use Crime Data to Direct Patrol Regular review of call-for-service data, crime patterns, and time/location analysis improves patrol effectiveness and supports resource allocation decisions.

■ KEY WEBLINKS

National Native Justice Institute	www.nativejustice.us
BJA Tribal Justice Programs	bjaojp.gov/program/tribal-justice
COPS Tribal Resources	cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources
BIA Law Enforcement Services	bia.gov/bia/ojs
FirstNet for Tribal Nations	firstnet.gov
CTAS – DOJ Tribal Assistance	justice.gov/tribal
Grants.gov (Tribal Search)	grants.gov

■ PARTNER WITH NNJI — WE ARE READY TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

TAKE ACTION TODAY — Contact NNJI at www.nativejustice.us to schedule training, consultation, or access resources.

Strengthening Tribal Justice — One Community at a Time