



2010 CENSUS:  
**IT'S IN OUR HANDS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Tribal Leaders, U.S. Census Bureau Stress Importance of Census Count as 2010 Census Tour Stops in NM**

**ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—March 24, 2010**—As U.S. residents across the nation receive their Census questionnaires, including those in Indian Country, national and tribal leaders and the U.S. Census Bureau are continuing to encourage Native Americans and all Americans to participate in the count this decade as a catalyst for change.

“The goal of the 2010 Census is to paint a *Portrait of America* and each and every Native person who is counted makes a huge difference in ensuring the face of Indian Country is truly a part of this portrait,” said Derek Valdo, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Southwest Area Vice-President. “We know Indian Country faces many hurdles to an accurate Census. The state of New Mexico, which includes Native America, has one of the highest undercounts in the nation. But our future greatly depends on it.”

Valdo, who spoke at a news conference on Thursday during a 2010 Census *Portrait of America* Road Tour stop in Albuquerque, was among several national and local tribal leaders and U.S. Census officials touting the importance of participation in the count.

Both Valdo and Amadeo Shije, U.S. Census Tribal Partnership Coordinator of the Denver Region, encouraged tribes to participate in the Census as the data is used extensively for distribution of funds to state, tribal and local governments. The data is the basis for more than \$1 billion that flows into Indian Country for housing construction and road improvements or maintenance annually, as well as new jobs and training programs.

Shije also said the data aids in analyzing the need for Head Start programs, services for elders and economic development. Valdo said the data aids political power as the numbers are use in redistricting.

The Thursday event in Albuquerque is part of the **National Week of Action**, a movement by a diverse coalition of advocacy groups of color working to encourage participation in the Census within in their communities. The **National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)**, the oldest and largest civil rights organization for American Indians, is pleased to participate in the **National Call to Action** with the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, made up of the Asian American Justice Center, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund, the NAACP, and other national organizations. **NCAI** has created the **Indian Country Counts** campaign to aid tribes with the Census in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure an accurate count of all Native people. Historically, American Indians and Alaska Natives are among the nation's hardest populations to count because of a mistrust of the federal government, as well as linguistic, geographical and cultural challenges. The 2000 Census showed that eight of the 10 poorest counties in America were home to Indian reservations. American Indians were also severely undercounted in past Censuses.

The **Indian Country Counts** strategy of NCAI, which also serves on the 2010 U.S. Census Advisory Committee, includes a website with a downloadable tool kit for tribes, news about the Census, contact information for federal workers, Census job postings, updates from the Census Bureau, a discussion board, and stories about the Census across Indian Country. Website visitors also can share ideas about outreach in their communities, post their own stories, in addition learn about what is happening in other Native communities to encourage participation and plan events. Website visitors can also sign up for updates. For more information, go to the **Indian Country Counts** website at [www.indiancountrycounts.org](http://www.indiancountrycounts.org).

The **Portrait of America** tour involves 12 Sprinter cargo vans towing a 12' bumper pull trailer in the 12 Census regions, each with a unique name and theme that resonates with the region. The vehicles are equipped with technology to track the vehicles online and showcase stories from event participants. View messages from other Road Tour participants and contribute pictures, videos and messages to government leaders on your needs for the next 10 years. For more information about the **Portrait of America Road Tour** or the **2010 Census**, go to: [www.2010.census.gov](http://www.2010.census.gov).