

# FEMA Administrator Criswell Addresses Tribal Leaders at the National Congress of American Indians

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WASHINGTON -- FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell spoke at the [National Congress of American Indians](#) 2023 Executive Council Winter Session today in Washington, D.C.

The annual meeting presents an opportunity for tribal delegates to hear from members of Congress and the administration and helps to further the government-to-government relationship between Tribal Nations and the federal government.

Administrator Criswell told attendees that FEMA, more than ever, is here to support Tribal Nations.

“The bottom line is this, we must find ways to improve nation-to-nation relationships, support tribal sovereignty and tribal self-determination,” Administrator Criswell said. “Admittedly, too often in our history, we have failed to understand your nations’ unique needs in disaster response and recovery. I think we can all agree that for decades, federal agencies have done more talking than listening. Sadly, this is particularly true for our relationships with Tribal Nations. Over the last year, however, we started talking less and listening more.”

In August 2022, FEMA released the [agency’s first ever national tribal strategy](#). The strategy is a nationwide roadmap to support tribal nations by aligning our actions to promote equity by building climate resilience, enhancing preparedness and improving disaster response in native communities. To develop this strategy, FEMA consulted with 135 representatives of 78 Tribal Nations who provided feedback to help us better address our responsibilities on tribal lands.

Administrator Criswell also highlighted the agency’s hiring of a [national tribal advocate](#) to ensure relationships continue to grow and improve.



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“We acknowledge that just as every community is different, so is every Tribal Nation,” she said. “Therefore, we are committed to co-creating solutions that factor in the expertise of Tribal Nations and tribal leadership. Solutions that also address the climate challenges we are facing, which threaten more than your livelihoods, but your very way of life.”

Administrator Criswell’s entire prepared remarks at the winter session can be [read on FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov).



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