

January 22, 2016

Tribal Council  
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe  
412 State Route 37  
Akwesasne, NY 13655

**Re: Letter of support for proposed pretrial supervision program**

Dear Chief Thompson, Chief Cook, and Chief LaFrance:

The Center for Court Innovation is pleased to support the planning and implementation of a pre-trial supervision program for Native American arrestees, particularly members of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, who are charged with crimes in Bombay Town Court.

As you know, Native American arrestees face unique barriers in the justice system. One of these challenges is the fact that Native Americans who live on reservation lands generally cannot use their real property as collateral to secure a bail bond. Without this option, Native arrestees may find it impossible to post bail and, as a result, may be forced to remain in jail for weeks or months until their case is resolved.

The proposed pretrial supervision initiative would address this issue by giving the Bombay Town Court the option of releasing Native American arrestees to the supervision of a tribally-run supervised release program rather than setting bail. Native arrestees would be able to remain in the community pending resolution of their court cases, receive supervision by tribal staff, and access culturally-appropriate services offered by the SRMT. We believe the proposed program would promote tribal sovereignty by enabling the SRMT to play a central role in the supervision of members involved in the state justice system.

The Center for Court Innovation has worked with over 60 tribal justice systems across the country and has experience supporting the development of innovative tribal justice initiatives. Center staff have previously worked with the SRMT Tribal Court, having visited Akwesasne in 2012 and hosted visits by SRMT officials to the Harlem Community Justice Center and Brooklyn Justice Initiatives. We look forward to continuing this collaborative relationship and working with Chief Judge Herne and other SRMT officials on this important initiative.

This pretrial supervision program would be the first of its kind in the country and would serve as a model for ensuring that Native American arrestees have a fair opportunity to be released from jail pending resolution of their court case. We urge you to support this truly groundbreaking project.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Arnold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.

Aaron Arnold  
Director, Tribal Justice Exchange