

# Public Safety in Rural Alaska: Law Enforcement and Tribal Engagement

## House Tribal Affairs Committee

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**Commissioner James Cockrell**

**Captain Daron Cooper**, Commander of the Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit (SDEU)

**Darlene Dye**, Tribal Liaison

**Investigator Joel Smith**, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP)

**Director James Hoelscher**, Village Public Safety Operations (VPSO)

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Department of Public Safety



# Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit (SDEU)

Coordinating statewide drug investigations through the Alaska High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) task force with federal, state, and local partners

**Primary Entry Hub:** roughly 82% of major drug seizures are made in Anchorage before distribution statewide

**Federal Partners:** Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

**2025 Statewide Seizures:** 516,878 grams of illegal drugs interdicted

**Major Drugs Seized in 2025:** Methamphetamine (125,300g), Cocaine (51,328g), Fentanyl (34,893g), Heroin (4,438g)



# Rural Alaska Drug Interdiction

**Western Alaska Alcohol and Narcotics Team (WAANT)** leads drug and alcohol interdiction operations across Western Alaska

Focus on intercepting drugs and illegal alcohol destined for local option communities

**2025 Alcohol Interdictions:** 2,326 bottles seized (1,797 liters) destined for dry communities

**Targeting Trafficking Routes:** Intercepting drugs from Anchorage hub cities into rural Western Alaska villages

**Operational Emphasis:** Interdictions through air travel, cargo shipments, and U.S. mail trafficking networks



# Tribal Affairs Office

*Listen. Learn. Communicate.*



## Detachments A, B, C, D

- Alaska State Troopers
- Alaska Bureau of Investigations
- Alaska Wildlife Troopers
- Fire and Life Safety
- Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons

## Community and Tribal Engagement Outreach and Education

- Statewide Conferences
- Full Faith and Credit
- Educational Sites
- Statewide Tribal Liaison Working Group



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# Alaska State Troopers: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Unit

## Four Investigators

Investigator Lonny Piscoya

Investigator Joel Smith

Investigator Shayne Lacroix

Investigator Kristi Muilenburg

## Missing Person Cases

## Cold Case Murder Investigations

DNA collection, interviews, Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory (SCDL) evidence testing

## Unidentified Human Remains Cases

Location-based case research and familial DNA collection and testing

## 22 Community Visits

- Tribal Council meetings
- Public meetings
- Alaska Native Corporation Board of Director meetings
- Statewide conferences



# Alaska Native Cultures & Missing Murdered Indigenous Person (MMIP) Awareness Training

- AS 18.65.240(a)(3), SB 151 (Chapter 53, SLA 24)
- **Goal:** Strengthen trust, cultural understanding, and communication between law enforcement and Alaska Natives.
  - Addresses historical context affecting trust between Alaska Natives and law enforcement
  - Builds cultural understanding and communication skills
  - Includes MMIP awareness and Alaska-specific risk factors
- Instruction delivered since July 2024
  - Alaska Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALET)
  - Anchorage Police Department Academy
  - Interior Alaska Academy
- Online training in development for statewide law enforcement compliance by January 1, 2027



# Thank You, *Gunalchéesh*



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anywhere in Alaska**

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texting 847411, online,  
or by calling (907) 451-5100

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