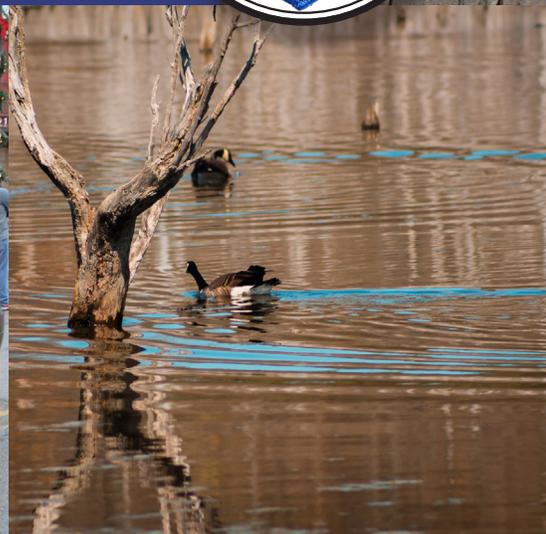


Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative

GUN LAKE (MICHIGAN) TRIBE



This project was supported, in whole or in part, by cooperative agreement number 2014-CR-WX-K004 awarded to CNA by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) or contributor(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. References to specific individuals, agencies, companies, products, or services should not be considered an endorsement by the author(s), the contributor(s), or the U.S. Department of Justice. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues.

The internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s), the contributor(s), nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

Recommended citation:

CNA Analysis & Solutions. 2019. *Gun Lake (Michigan) Tribe*. Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative. Arlington, VA: CNA.

Published 2019



Introduction

The Gun Lake (Michigan) Tribe Public Safety Department (GLT PSD) is one of 15 police departments participating in the Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative (SNPPI). SNPPI provides policy review, assessments, training, and technical assistance to a cohort of law enforcement agencies across the nation. The four goals of the initiative are to identify promising strategies that **reduce crime, protect officers' safety and wellness, establish productive interagency partnerships** with law enforcement and community stakeholders, and **implement innovative and effective technologies** to assist police departments to safeguard neighborhoods.

Methodology

Each of the 15 selected departments is assigned a CNA Strategic Site Coordinator (SSC) and an operations analyst to assist with planning, implementation, coordination, and delivery of technical assistance. CNA worked with the GLT PSD to develop a customized strategy to capitalize on the great work already in progress across the four policing principles. CNA looked at the GLT PSD's policies and practices related to crime

reduction efforts, policy effectiveness, technological capabilities, training structures and offerings, and officer safety and wellness philosophies. The CNA team then helped identify the training and technical assistance (TTA) opportunities and other tools and resources to enhance precision policing. The CNA team documented these best practices and will share these initiatives with police departments nationwide in an effort to promote public safety.

Background

The GLT, known formally as the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomis Indians of Michigan, is a federally recognized Indian tribe and sovereign nation with powers of self-government. Located just south of Grand Rapids, Michigan, in rural Allegan County, the GLT has multiple government departments, including education, environmental, housing, language and culture, and public safety. The tribe has approximately 700 members, though not all reside within the tribe's territory in Michigan (see figure 1 on page 3 for population details). The tribal lands are not contiguous; some parcels are more than 13 miles apart. The tribe's lands include a settlement, a community center, cultural grounds, a casino, a convenience store and gas station, and a restaurant.

In 2011, the GLT received certification for its PSD, under new director Richard Rabenort, to enforce federal, state, and tribal law.¹ This certification closely followed a cross-deputization agreement with the neighboring Allegan County Sheriff's Office that allowed officers of the GLT PSD to provide service to tribal members and to assist local law enforcement and community members when needed. Officers respond to calls for service outside of the tribal lands following the sheriff's office's "closest unit" policy. The GLT's 10 public safety officers have a wide range of responsibilities; they might enforce tribal laws one day and state and federal laws the next.

1. Herb Woerpel, "Gun Lake Tribal Police Gain Certification to Enforce Federal, State, Local Laws," *M Live*, June 13, 2011, http://www.mlive.com/penaseeglobe/index.ssf/2011/06/gun_lake_tribal_police_gain_ce.html.

Tribal law enforcement agencies have additional responsibilities beyond those of agencies in most cities, counties, and states. These responsibilities include ensuring that the tribe's customs and traditions are not being ignored or violated, remaining sensitive to the tribe's business enterprises, and knowing all of the laws that officers are responsible for enforcing, including whether the federal, tribal, or state court has jurisdiction.

Most GLT police work revolves around larcenies, accidents, public order, and traffic enforcement. Holidays and events which bring together many people and increase the use of alcohol contribute to local offenses. The GLT's crime rate, shown in table 1 on page 4, is lower than the rates of the surrounding jurisdictions, perhaps in part because of a large officer presence in the community and the use of video surveillance on tribal lands.

Figure 1. Gun Lake population, 2014–2016

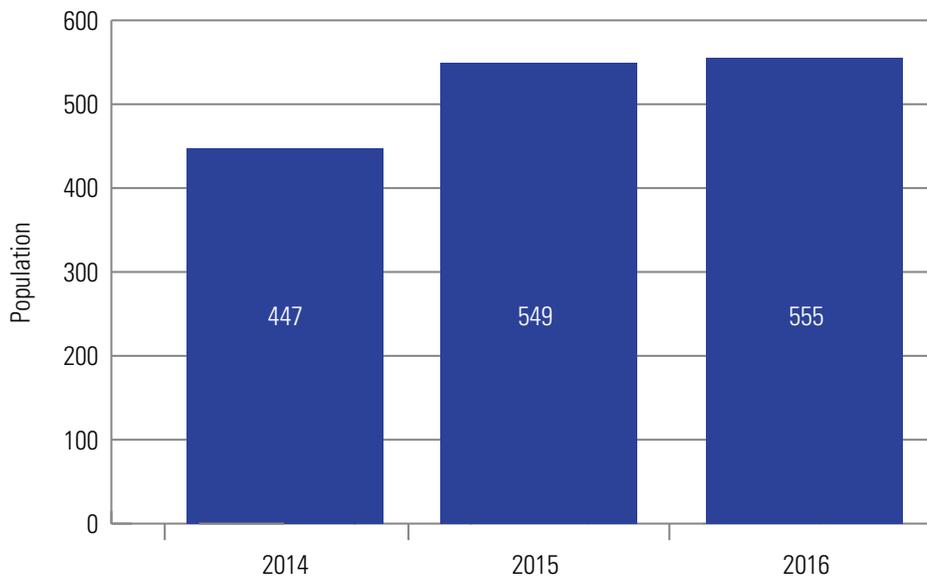


Table 1. Crime type and 2016 crime rate per 1,000 residents

Violent crime	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Homocide	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forcible rape	0	0	0	3	1	1	2
Robbery	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Aggravated assault	0	2	0	1	1	0	1
Property crime							
Burglary	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
Larceny-theft	0	6	3	40	67	99	112
Motor vehicle theft	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Arson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Identifying promising practices to reduce crime

In late 2017 and early 2018, the GLT PSD rapidly expanded the hiring of new officers. Since joining the department, those officers have participated in many trainings—several of them facilitated by this initiative—including antiterrorism, interrogation and interview techniques, and bomb response training. More experienced officers have also had opportunities to attend trainings on child abuse and neglect, grant management, and investigations.

The GLT PSD regularly works with personnel on the Gun Lake Tribe Casino security team. In February 2018, GLT took over full management control of the seven-year-old casino. As the department grows to its full allocation of 15 officers, it plans to staff the casino with an officer 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to reduce the number of calls for service coming from the casino, create a more secure environment, and interact with casino patrons. Currently, officers often patrol the casino in plain clothes and respond to incidents in uniform. This brings the GLT PSD into regular contact with both casino security and patrons from outside the tribal community.

Establishing productive interagency partnerships

The GLT PSD places great emphasis on collaborating with other tribal and local law enforcement agencies. In the winter of 2017, it helped a nearby, short-staffed city law enforcement agency by assigning officers to work 12-hour shifts there on a rotating basis. The GLT officers were authorized to act as agents of the city through a memorandum of understanding, but they did so in their GLT uniforms and vehicles. Officers reported that citizens of the city welcomed the tribal officers and that the shift assistance contributed to greater intercommunity engagement. The GLT officers assisted their department with relatively little accumulated overtime, upholding the tribal value of contribution for which the department strives. In another example of local and tribal cooperation, the Allegan County Sheriff's Officer recognized a GLT officer in August 2017 for working with other local law enforcement agencies to save the life of a man injured in a car accident.²

The GLT hosted a 21st Century and Tribal Policing Conference on May 24, 2017, at PSD headquarters. The conference brought together law enforcement executives from other Michigan tribes, the Allegan County Sheriff's Office, and local non-tribal law enforcement agencies. In addition to law enforcement agencies, members of the tribe were invited to attend the conference. Every member of the GLT Law Enforcement Advisory Committee attended, as did every member of the Tribal Council. The conference included presentations on procedural justice, officer safety and wellness, 21st-century policing in tribal law enforcement agencies, and lessons learned from the tribal justice system. As a result of this conference, the GLT strengthened its relationship with other local law enforcement agencies and created relationships with subject matter experts on tribal policing who came from around the country to give presentations at the conference. The conference also contributed to a greater understanding of policing in the GLT community and among its government leaders.

2. Audra Gamble, "Allegan Sheriff Applauds Deputies for Saving Car Fire Victim," *Holland Sentinel*, August 17, 2017, <http://www.hollandsentinel.com/news/20170817/allegan-sheriff-applauds-deputies-for-saving-car-fire-victim>.

Community engagement

Under Director Rabenort, the GLT PSD places a strong emphasis on engaging with its community, demonstrating community policing, and upholding procedural justice.

- With the assistance of a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Gun Lake Tribe Health Department operates an active youth intervention program called Youth Connections in which GLT PSD officers play a key role. The youth program provides extracurricular activities, such as basketball tournaments and fishing competitions, for local and tribal youth. Providing extracurricular opportunities like these can help curb delinquency because they allow youth to form friendships and connections with mentors. The program also conducts surveys among tribal families and youth to solicit their thoughts, goals, and information on any challenges or problems they may have.
- The department has a role in larger community events as well. The department makes a point of having officers present for important tribal holidays and celebrations, but emphasizes that their presence is to reinforce their role as guardians, not to be enforcers. To make this point, officers dress in department-issued polo shirts and slacks rather than full uniforms. The department's community engagement efforts are noteworthy; the community often reaches out to officers to include them in events.
- GLT officers have engaged with tribal youth to introduce them to the police and promote relationships with community members. For example, the department decorated its facility for Halloween in 2017 and invited tribal children for a tour to see the department and enjoy the holiday. Officers participate in dinners with community members who live in the small tribal settlement, where they have discussed local concerns such as speeding and trespassing.

As a result of focused engagements with the community, the GLT PSD has established personal, open relationships with community members. These relationships are effective in creating a community that is accountable, collaborative, and strives toward safety.



Law enforcement advisory committee

Since the PSD's inception in 2011, the tribe has had a Tribal Law Enforcement Advisory Committee. It was formed to guide the department's creation, using its members' longstanding relationships with county law enforcement and government to build similar relationships for the new GLT PSD. The committee also works to ensure that tribal members have a voice in developing an agency that met tribal cultural and community needs. This committee is made up of citizens, other tribal department heads, the vice chairman of the Tribal Council, and elders. It meets quarterly for a report and also makes a report at the yearly membership meeting; in addition, the department submits monthly reports to the Tribal Council meeting, which members can attend. The committee serves as a liaison and resource for the Tribal Council, the community, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The committee works with the PSD on recruiting officers, developing incident action plans, and promoting communication between the department and the community; these activities help keep agency decisions responsive to tribal needs. In an effort to strengthen ties between citizens, staff, and law enforcement, stakeholders chose the motto of "Keeping Our Community Safe and Strong," which is proudly displayed on all GLT's marked police vehicles. Working with the full GLT Tribal Council, the GLT PSD has also developed and implemented a strategic plan, which is evaluated yearly to sustain successes and improve service to the tribe.

Recruitment

The process for becoming a tribal officer is much like applying for any other law enforcement position. Being a member of the GLT or any other federally recognized tribe is not required, although it is preferred. The training requirements for tribal officers are the same as those for all other law enforcement officers in Michigan in that they must be certified or certifiable by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES). Officers need to be state certified, be cross-deputized with the county, and be commissioned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Officers must understand jurisdictional differences at all times and operate appropriately within the tribal community. Fit is an important part of the Gun Lake Tribe's candidate search process. As one person told an officer on his first day, "this will be different, you will be hugged." Maintaining public relations by smiling and greeting citizens by name is essential. The GLT looks for those who will function well in this environment.

Recruiting a workforce in and of itself has been a challenge for the GLT; trying to diversify has been even more of a challenge. The pool of candidates is small, and the GLT's background investigations mirror those using federal guidelines. The competition from larger agencies and the candidates' lack of knowledge about tribal policing add to the challenges.

One of the GLT's biggest challenges is recruiting Native Americans for careers in public safety. Historically, relations between Native Americans and police have been tense, and law enforcement is not often discussed as a career for native youth. Community policing is one of the tools the GLT PSD has used to develop trust and promote an interest in law enforcement careers. The GLT spends considerable time and resources introducing tribal youth to public safety activities and personnel, such as with its Tricycle to Bicycle program. Despite challenges, the GLT PSD recently hired its first tribal member to the department in a civilian cadet position with the possibility of becoming a sworn officer.

Training

Officers receive yearly instruction on legal and operational policies and procedures that should govern their interactions with the community. These training programs are mandated by the MCOLES. In addition to MCOLES programs, the GLT PSD is a member of the West Michigan



Criminal Justice Training Consortium and the Michigan State Police's Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN). The LEIN offers a unique opportunity for crossjurisdictional learning by publicizing available and ongoing training programs across the state. The GLT PSD recently hosted one of these sessions, Law Enforcement Response to Domestic Violence Training. The department uses its membership in various law enforcement communities to proactively find training opportunities, believing that education improves the department's ability to serve the community.

Protecting officer safety and wellness

The GLT PSD places strong emphasis on officer wellness and safety, and implements a multipronged approach to addressing comprehensive wellness and safety measures.

As employees of the tribe, all officers have access to a wellness center on site. The wellness center was designed with staff and tribal community needs in mind. Adjacent locker rooms allow officers to keep workout clothing on site. The department surveyed staff and community members during the design of the wellness center to customize equipment to meet



identified needs. Wellness center equipment includes treadmills, elliptical machines, rowing machines, free weights, and kettlebells, with new, enhanced equipment added in 2016. Group classes like yoga and core fitness, led by professional instructors, are offered regularly. Fitness classes are open to all staff and tribal community members. Participation in group fitness classes fosters community policing as well as officer wellness.

Officer safety is paramount to the department and the tribe. Protective vests and protective equipment are issued to all officers. Department policies mandate wearing protective vests and using seatbelts. Every time officers hit pursuit speeds, they must follow up with supervisors. Recently, the tribe invested in go bags for every officer. These bags provide highly protective equipment for extreme situations and are kept in department vehicles. They include Go Shields, ear and eye protection, stab-resistant gloves, level 3A tactical vests, a rifle plate, a helmet, and a gas mask.

Implementing innovative and effective technologies

The department installed a MILO Range simulator system, which officers can use to practice use of force and de-escalation scenarios. The system is owned and housed by the tribe but is available for use by agencies countywide. The simulator includes a 180-degree perspective and a variety of customizable scenarios. The department plans to create scenarios using footage from inside the tribe's casino to provide customized, real-world experiences. This training was especially useful for maintaining low levels of crime and responding to emerging issues as the casino came under full tribal authority in February 2018.

Lessons learned from SNPPI TTA

The GLT PSD feels strongly about its role as a mentoring agency. Reaching beyond its relationship with Native American agencies throughout Michigan, it has also sought to transform policing strategies in tribal agencies throughout the United States, sharing its successful efforts in Michigan and its involvement in SNPPI.

Through SNPPI, GLT PSD Director Rabenort and Senior Public Safety Officer Dennis Wilkins shared their successes in Michigan and best practices in overcoming tribal law enforcement jurisdictional barriers by participating in several national conferences on tribal law enforcement. One was the Western Oregon University's Community Policing Institute's Tribal Law Enforcement Executive Symposium, Breaking Down Tribal Jurisdictional Walls.

The GLT PSD was also an active participant in the National Native American Law Enforcement Association's 25th Annual International Training and Technical Assistance Conference (ITTAC), where senior representatives from the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Justice, and Homeland Security gave presentations. Key representatives from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center focused on a variety of crime-fighting strategies developed by the Trump administration, including for money laundering, human trafficking, violence against women, drug abuse, active shooter situations, and terrorism. Those presentations have spurred the department to prioritize trainings on similar topics in the future.

The GLT PSD continues to share its best practices with the tribal policing community. In early January 2018, it actively participated in the International Association of Chiefs of Police 21st Century Tribal Policing Forum. This forum focused on “identifying trends, emerging issues, and concerns of tribal and First Nation law enforcement.” The forum connected the GLT with other tribal law enforcement agencies, identified emerging issues in tribal policing, and offered long- and short-term recommendations for addressing current challenges.

Conclusion

A relatively young agency, the GLT PSD has aimed to strengthen its community ties and reduce crime by collaborating with other law enforcement agencies, involving community stakeholders in decision-making, maintaining officer safety and wellness, and engaging officers in specialized training. It strives to share its principles of precision policing with other tribal and nontribal law enforcement agencies throughout Michigan. The TTA delivered throughout this initiative has allowed the department to connect with its community members, other law enforcement officers, and local government decision-makers. The GLT PSD not only maintains a safe, productive community for its residents but also is prepared to serve as a model for other agencies, tribal and nontribal.





3003 Washington Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

703.824.2000

www.cna.org