Just like other services that AMERIND provides, broadband is essential to the nation building of Tribal governments and institutions. So, as AMERIND protects the most necessary critical infrastructure in Tribal communities – Tribal homes – we can also help Tribes provide for those homes with the most important modern infrastructure: technology. This is a way to give back to our owners, Tribal Nations, and better serve their needs. That is one of our core values at AMERIND,” said Blackwell.

Blackwell made the announcement Monday during the first day of AMERIND’s and the National American Indian Housing Council’s (NAIHC) 2016 Annual Convention and Tradeshow. Blackwell oversees AMERIND’s legal affairs as well as the Finance, Information Technology, Human Resources, and Communications departments. He is the former founding Chief of the FCC’s Office of Native Affairs and Policy, and former Director of Strategic Relations and Minority Business Development at Chickasaw Nation Industries, Inc. During two separate tours of duty at the FCC, he managed efforts to work with Tribal Nations and write dozens of regulations and policies to deploy communications technologies on Tribal Lands, and assist Tribes in owning and operating telephone and Internet companies, as well as radio and TV stations.

Along with announcing the new ACI business line, AMERIND also welcomed Irene Flannery as the new Director of AMERIND Critical Infrastructure. Flannery is another long time former senior regulator at the FCC, and is a top national expert in the subsidy mechanisms of the FCC. She spent over a dozen years at the FCC, working her way up from a staff attorney to become the Chief of the Telecom Access Policy Division, which oversees FCC subsidies totaling over $9 billion annually. Flannery also worked for more than five years as the founding Deputy Chief of the FCC’s Office of Native Affairs and Policy, assisting in the management and drafting of key policy provisions that benefit Tribal schools, libraries, health care facilities, and low-income households. Flannery is also a former Vice President at the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), the entity that disburses FCC subsidies. While with USAC, Flannery was responsible for the disbursement of over $5 billion annually in the High Cost and Low Income programs.
Federal and Tribal officials also addressed the AMERIND and NAIHC conference. The Honorable Lourdes Castro Ramirez, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Honorable Brian Cladoosby, President of the National Congress of American Indians, gave reports on Tribal housing and NCAI. Gary Davis, President and CEO of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, also gave an invigorating keynote address about the importance of Native peoples working together to achieve a future of lasting economic prosperity. “We have to dispel the myth that self-sufficiency is impossible. We are innovative people,” said Davis.

“AMERIND certainly agrees,” Blackwell added, “and AMERIND is uniquely positioned to create this business line to support Tribal communities. What we already know, instinctively, is that when it comes to the technology goals and priorities of Tribal Nations, no one size fits all. Tribal Nations are unique and separate sovereigns, one to another. Their goals and priorities, and deeply held cultural traditions, reflect their individualities. We look forward to growing this ACI business line to assist Tribal Nations with the analysis, planning, management, financing, design, and execution of deploying broadband in their nations.

Tribes are asserting their cyber-sovereignty, and strengthening and protecting Tribal communities is what AMERIND is all about. AMERIND and NAIHC have held a collaborative convention the past few years to aid their organizations in offering extensive training opportunities. AMERIND Risk grew out of a need to provide affordable, accessible claims coverage to Tribal housing authorities when commercial insurance became too costly in 1986. AMERIND celebrates its 30-year milestone this year.

About AMERIND Risk
AMERIND Risk was founded 30 years ago by more than 400 Tribes who united and pooled their resources to create AMERIND Risk to keep money within Indian Country. AMERIND Risk provides employee benefits, and property, liability and workers compensation insurance for Tribes, Tribal governments, Tribal businesses and individual property coverage. It is the only 100% Tribally-owned and operated insurance solutions provider in Indian Country. To learn more about Tribes Protecting Tribes or for an insurance quote, go to www.AMERINDRisk.org.

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