



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF
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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

FOR A HEARING ON
TO PROTECT AND SERVE: JOINT LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN
BUILDING SAFE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES AND STOPPING
DANGEROUS DRUGS FROM ENTERING INDIAN COUNTRY

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**Statement of Jill Sanborn
Special Agent in Charge, Minneapolis Division
Federal Bureau of Investigation
U.S. Department of Justice
Before the Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
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Good morning Chairman Hoeven, Senator Cramer, and Representative Armstrong. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) ongoing efforts to support our partners in federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement. Today, I will highlight the FBI's role in combatting violent crime and drug trafficking in Indian Country specifically here in the Dakotas and Northern Minnesota. I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss with you the FBI's investigative role in Indian Country and how we accomplish that mission. I will also share some success stories from the field. Most importantly, I hope to convey to you and your constituents the FBI's ongoing commitment to keeping our communities, especially our Indian Country communities, safe.

Let me begin by acknowledging our tribal law enforcement partners. The majority of criminal offenses committed, investigated, and prosecuted in tribal communities continue to be adjudicated in tribal justice systems. Through their hard work, tribal law enforcement and justice systems hold criminals accountable, protect victims, provide prevention programs, and confront precursors to crime such as alcohol and substance abuse. These efforts are often in partnership with federal agencies or accomplished with support from federal programs and federal funding opportunities.

Our highest Indian Country criminal priorities focus on crimes of violence including murder, child sexual and physical abuse, sexual abuse of adults, and violent assault. These priority investigations represent almost 80 percent of all FBI investigations in Indian Country. In the Minneapolis Division, our primary investigative focus is homicide followed by sexual assault and other violent assaults. That said, some of our toughest cases involve physical and sexual abuse of children. Those cases comprise 40 percent of our investigations, yet require 80 percent of our agents' investigative time. Additionally, crime related to gangs and drugs is an increasing concern in our reservation communities.

In addition to investigations, the FBI also offers substantial training resources to our agents and law enforcement partners. The FBI provides a comprehensive training program that includes intermediate and advanced classes on various topics related to the investigation of crimes in Indian Country. Many of these trainings are open to tribal law enforcement officers, Safe Trails Task Force officers and Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services (BIA-OJS) officers and agents. These courses are designed to support Indian Country agents in the field and to develop and implement strategies to address the most egregious crimes committed in Indian Country. Additionally, the FBI's partnership with the Department of Justice's National Indian Country Training Initiative has hosted more than 15 courses specific to Indian Country crime over the last several years.

In order to accomplish our mission and support our law enforcement partners, the FBI devotes significant resources to Indian Country. The FBI's Indian Country program includes more than 140 Special Agents (SA) and 40 Victim Specialists (VS) in 36 Field Offices. Indeed, one third of the FBI's Victim Specialists and half of the FBI's Child and Adolescent Forensic Interviewers (CAFI) work directly with victims and families in Indian Country. In the Minneapolis Division, we have assigned one of our four Assistant Special Agents in Charge to the Rapid City resident agency to oversee Indian Country criminal investigations. Nearly 30 percent of the agents assigned to the Minneapolis Division are assigned to work Indian Country criminal matters. Indian Country agents in our division typically come to the Bureau with substantial prior law enforcement experience and each agent assigned to Indian Country attends a specialized, intensive training course for FBI and BIA agents in Artesia, New Mexico. The FBI is committed to making sure each agent has the tools and ability to effectively investigate crimes that occur within Indian Country. The Minneapolis Division also offers 11 Victim Specialists to serve communities in Indian Country—that number represents 25% of the total number of Victim Specialists employed in Indian Country nationwide. Our Indian Country agents are specially trained and live in the Dakotas and Northern Minnesota. They are part of the communities we are committed to keeping safe.

In addition to our investigative resources, the FBI has leveraged considerable intelligence collection and analytical capabilities in support of our Indian Country efforts. This past summer, FBI Minneapolis hosted an Indian Country criminal intelligence summit. This first of its kind event brought together FBI Indian Country analysts and operations specialists from across the country focused on criminal threats in Indian Country. Recognizing the challenges posed to law enforcement efforts in predicting and preventing criminal behavior, we continue to develop new and valuable ways to use our intelligence assets to identify emerging criminal trends in our reservation communities.

The FBI cannot accomplish this mission alone. We share it with our BIA, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and state and tribal partners across the United States to deliver quality law enforcement service. We remain fully committed to our unique role in Indian Country and to our partnerships with other federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies. Our partnerships with the BIA-OJS, DEA, and state and tribal law enforcement are critical in resolving the unduly high volume of violent crimes and death investigations within Indian Country. While we have agents assigned and on-duty 365 days a year at each of our resident agencies, we often respond to crime scenes within Indian Country only after receiving notification from our tribal and BIA-OJS partners. Our agents, BIA partners and tribal police work hand in hand to process crime scenes, collect evidence, ensure victim safety, conduct interviews and locate suspects. The cooperation between the FBI, BIA-OJS, and tribal law enforcement is paramount to solving crime and protecting tribal communities.

As my colleagues at DEA can attest, the growing and ever evolving threat of opioids and other dangerous drugs presents great challenges to law enforcement in our reservation communities. To combat this threat, the FBI has established 18 Safe Trails Task Forces (STTFs) nationwide focused on drug crimes in and around our reservation communities. In the Minneapolis Division, we have three STTFs, located in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, with approximately 30 full-time Task Force Officers (TFOs) who provide a significant force multiplier in the fight against drug and violent crime offenses.

We continue to evolve our efforts and supplement resources to meet new law enforcement challenges. We recognized the need to surge personnel in order to confront the growth of drug distribution networks in the Bakken region of Western North Dakota. As a result, in 2015, FBI Minneapolis opened the Williston Resident Agency, the first new FBI office established in over 20 years. Just last year, the Minneapolis Division enhanced our STTF in North Dakota to continue those efforts. In the coming year, the FBI hopes to add other STTFs, and to increase the number of county, state, tribal, and federal officers nationwide. Our task force efforts have had great success and we continue to devote expanding resources to address violent crime and drug trafficking on our reservations.

While we are always looking for better ways to address criminal threats and safety concerns in our reservation communities, we can also point to some remarkable success. The Minneapolis Division currently has nearly 700 pending cases in Indian Country communities. In 2018 alone, the division opened 572 new cases and made nearly 400 arrests. We are actively investigating 162 pending Controlled Substance Act cases in Indian Country in the Minneapolis Division alone. Eighty-nine (89) of those cases were opened in 2018, and we arrested 15 subjects in those cases last year.

The numbers alone tell only part of the story, however. In 2014, FBI Minneapolis, the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Police, BIA and DEA began an investigation of a growing methamphetamine epidemic on the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Reservation. During the course of the investigation, the FBI and its partners uncovered a large scale drug trafficking operation responsible for bringing several pounds of meth per week to the reservation. This deadly drug arrived from locations as near as Rapid City and from as far as Denver, Houston, and Phoenix. After more than 3 years of complex investigation, our investigative team identified and convicted 9 major drug dealers with sentences ranging from 10 to 15 years.

In 2015, FBI Minneapolis, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Police and other tribal, state, and federal law enforcement partners identified yet another large scale methamphetamine trafficking operation on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation. In that case, the primary source of narcotics sold between \$30,000 and \$50,000 of meth per month. This multi-year joint investigation led to the conviction of 8 drug traffickers resulting in sentences ranging from 3 to 13 years.

Just last month, a North Dakota Federal Judge sentenced two Spirit Lake men for the murder of Carla Yellowbird. Carla was 27 years old in 2016, when she and a friend drove from Mandan, North Dakota to the Spirit Lake Reservation. Though she made the trip intending only to sell drugs, the transaction turned violent. Unbeknownst to Carla, she had become the target of a robbery plot. During the robbery, Carla was shot once and died immediately, her body dragged off and hidden in the brush. With the cooperation of our law enforcement partners, and through dogged investigation, we uncovered the full nature of the conspiracy that led to the murder and were able to find justice on behalf the community. Carla's case illustrates the very real danger that drug trafficking presents to our reservation communities and the devastating effect of the associated violence. Each of these examples illustrates the FBI's strength in conducting large scale investigations, leveraging successful law enforcement partnerships, and combatting dangerous drug trafficking operations in Indian Country.

In summary, the FBI remains fully committed to working with its partners at all levels on the issues raised in this hearing today. We look forward to continuing this important work and

appreciate the support of this committee. In conclusion and to be clear - the FBI is focused on battling Indian Country crime in this region with a common goal shared among our partners - to build safe tribal communities and keep them free of illegal and dangerous drugs. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions.