

**TESTIMONY OF
IVAN D. POSEY, CHAIRMAN
OF THE
EASTERN SHOSHONE BUSINESS COUNCIL
TO THE
UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE
ON
INDIAN AFFAIRS
ON
THE PROBLEM OF METHAMPHETAMINE
IN INDIAN COUNTRY**

APRIL 5, 2006

Good morning. My name is Ivan Posey and I currently serve as the Chairman for the Eastern Shoshone Business Council and Co Chair for the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Joint Business Council. We both share the 2.3 million acre Wind River Indian Reservation in west central Wyoming. It is the only reservation in the State of Wyoming.

There are currently 3900 Eastern Shoshone and 8200 Northern Arapaho tribal members. Over 50% of tribal members from both tribes are under the age of 30. The reservation is home to approximately 7000 American Indians and 9000 non-Indians.

First of all I would to thank the distinguished Senators on the committee, including our own Senator Craig Thomas, for allowing me to testify on a very important issue that is affecting Indian Country.....Methamphetamine.

I would like to present testimony on the following: Foster Care, Health Care, Education, and Law Enforcement.

FOSTER CARE

According to workers in the Social Service programs for the tribes, Methamphetamine plays a large role in 65% of all cases involving child neglect and placement of children in foster care. Use of the drug has devastating and sometimes lasting affects to the tribal family structure. Let me explain, foster care parents are hard to come by in Indian Country which sometime places the burden on relative placement which may be the grandparents, uncles, aunts, and siblings. Although our extended family structure is a great strength for us it sometimes has negative affects on the children in the system that may still have close ties with a parent, or parents, who are still utilizing this illegal drug. When a family member has a substance abuse problem it affects the whole family. We don't alienate our family members and that sometimes creates a

codependent system for the whole family including the children. With the drug so easily available and addictive it increases the chances of violence in households.

The strain on our social workers is tremendous considering the rural setting of the reservation and the distance between our four communities and the towns of Lander and Riverton. The continuing coordination with the court system, recovery programs, counselors and others involved with children is, at times, overwhelming. Our Social Services programs are staffed with committed people who are being bombarded with the affects of this drug in an already strained system.

I believe that we must provide the family with the necessary tools to adequately address this problem. This may include counseling for the entire family and the resources to adequately fund these initiatives. I understand that there is no easy solution when it comes to the devastating affects of methamphetamine in Indian Country but realize that family structure is the most important.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE

There was an instance where a young lady went to school “tweaking” from the affects of this drug. She mentioned to her friends that she acquired the drug from her parents “stash” and that she would share with them if they wanted some. The sad part of this story is that this young lady was in sixth grade.

Access to this drug has become more available to students in all grades on and off our reservation.

Methamphetamine amongst parents affects students, especially preschool and Head Start age, through increased absenteeism and malnutrition. When parents who use don't have an appetite they in turn don't feed their children. This has a direct affect on a children's learning ability.

Education, I feel, is the key to addressing the problem of methamphetamine in Indian Country. Whether it is the local school system, tribal governments, or interagency coordination, getting the word out on the devastating affects of this drug is essential. There has to be more efforts to educate our elders and community members to the dangers of methamphetamine use. Our tribe currently performs pre-employment and random drug testing and has established an employee assistance program for those who wish to seek help if they are tested positive.

Our health care system in Indian Country is already at the breaking point for providing adequate health care for tribal people. Methamphetamine use has increased the number of vehicle crashes, domestic violence visits, and prolonged hospital stays due to some of these factors.

The use of this drug has long lasting affects to those who become addicted. Long term affects range from continued mental and dental care to permanent brain damage. Some people will become lifelong patients to our tribal health care systems.

What is needed in Indian Country are residential treatment facilities that address chemical dependency in sometimes a cultural and traditional manner. 80% of all residents in the Rock Springs, Wyoming treatment facility are from the Fremont County, where we reside. This facility is 2.5 hours away from our home. Some youth patients go as far as California and South Dakota.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement has seen 4 homicides in 2004 related to methamphetamine use on the Wind River Reservation. There were 284 drug related misdemeanors in 2004 (possession, sell and manufacture) with 99 in 2005. There were also 125 child abuse cases reported in 2004 and 90 in 2005.

One of the key aspects to combat methamphetamine was the establishments of partnerships with the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Wyoming Department of Criminal Investigation. Support from the Shoshone and Arapaho Tribe Joint Business Council for this partnership was instrumental in allowing this to happen in 2004.

Our local law enforcement has been very active working with other organizations to address the problem and look at the issue in a broader sense.

The major drug bust in May 2005 has shown that this drug does not discriminate. From our judicial system to our local schools it has, and continues, to have drastic affects. With our rural setting we still need enough uniformed officers to adequately patrol and protect our homes. We need an increase of funding for our law enforcement and tribal courts in Indian Country.

SUMMARY

In closing I would like to emphasize the need for more prevention programs that can be offered through our Boys and Girls Clubs or other youth organizations. There is also a place for this at our Senior Citizens programs. We need to continue to educate at all age levels and strongly push the negative affects of this drug. We also need to look at long term treatment facilities in areas such as ours which are in rural settings which makes us send our loved ones to other states to receive treatment. The emphasis needs to be Prevention, Education, and Treatment. Unfortunately, those caught in the middle are subject to our law enforcement and judicial systems.

As Sovereign Nations, Indian Tribes need to look forward to ensure that we pass the torch to our younger generation so our people have the same right to quality of life and other opportunities as we have had. Methamphetamine is a very real threat that we

need to address and overcome as a nation to feel we did what we could to make this a better place for those who follow us.

Thank You.