

**United States Senate**

**Committee on Indian Affairs**

**Oversight Hearing on the Problem of Methamphetamine  
In Indian Country**

**April 5, 2006**

***Testimony of Karrie Azure, Grant Coordinator***

***United Tribes Multi-Tribal Indian Drug and Alcohol Initiative***

***United Tribes Technical College  
3315 University Drive  
Bismarck, ND 58504***

***701-255-3285***

For thirty-seven years, United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) has provided postsecondary vocational education, job training and family services to Indian students from throughout the nation. UTTC is governed by the five tribes located wholly or in part in the state of North Dakota. United Tribes exists to assist in furthering the common goals of the North Dakota Indian Tribes and Nations and is wholly owned, operated and controlled by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Spirit Lake Nation, the Three Affiliated Tribes, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

United Tribes Technical College received a Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance grant in September, 2004 under the Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program. The grant received is administered through United Tribes Technical College but the intended area of service is comprised of the four major reservations in North Dakota: the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation), the Spirit Lake Nation and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

In writing the grant, United Tribes understood the devastating problem of illegal drug and alcohol abuse, particularly amongst the youth population, and its correlation to the increase in violent crimes, child neglect and abuse, dysfunctional families and other criminal behavior. Moreover, United Tribes understood that illegal drugs know no boundaries as they are easily transportable across reservation lines, county and state lines and that the Attorney General of North Dakota and others have encouraged tribes to assist and cooperate with county, state and federal authorities in a manner respectful of tribal sovereignty and tribal cultural traditions to mount a vigorous effort to reduce illegal drug and alcohol abuse in the state of North Dakota. As a result, the grant received by United Tribes was designed to combat alcohol and substance abuse through a three-prong approach: prevention, treatment and law enforcement.

The intention is that through the cooperation among agencies at the tribal, state and federal levels, a sensible solution to the methamphetamine epidemic will be created. The principal goals of the grant are to: determine and eliminate the source of illegal drugs, track and dismantle the distribution networks, and to slow down the use of illegal drugs, with a strong emphasis on the youth population.

Another important component of the grant program is to create a tribal justice communication system to address the lack of reliable data to determine the exact extent of the problem. It is inherent to any future programming within tribal communities to identify and collect data about the nature of the methamphetamine problem as this information can be used to allow a proper allocation of scarce resources to existing problems, track trends relative to methamphetamine, justify additional resources where needed and determine appropriate treatment modalities.

As strongly stated already by tribal leaders and officials in addressing the methamphetamine problem, it is unrealistic for tribes to engage in a battle against substance abuse alone; developing partnerships with local, state and federal governments is necessary. In that vein, United Tribes' strategy to combat substance abuse is to develop a steering committee and task force with the overall objective being a relatively "borderless" integrated strategy of prevention of substance and alcohol abuse, law enforcement for offenders and treatment for substance and alcohol abusers. This strategy is in line with the objectives of the National Congress of American Indians: urging tribes to develop laws and policies to combat methamphetamine abuse and drug trafficking, seeking tribal partnerships with the White House and requesting Congressional hearings to address the issue. It is important to stress at this point the accomplishment of one of those objectives through attendance at the hearings before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs today.

In the implementation of United Tribes' grant, we are currently establishing lines of communication amongst tribes themselves, tribes and state governments and tribes and the federal government. These lines of communication will result in cooperative partnerships to address the methamphetamine problem in Indian Country. Several meetings have already been held in the development of a Task Force to address the issues and concerns faced by tribes in the state of North Dakota. The grassroots tribal task force meetings have resulted in the easing of some apprehension among tribal representatives that their respective programs are not fighting the battle alone. In fact, the convening of agencies within a tribe is a great step toward fighting the meth problem. It provides the opportunity for the tribal programs to come together and report what each program is currently doing to combat substance abuse.

Furthermore, in establishing cooperative partnerships with the state and federal government, tribes can identify outside resources that can be used in the fight against substance abuse. An example of one outside resource is working with law enforcement agencies. North Dakota tribes face boundary issues due to the location of the tribes within the state and oftentimes these boundaries create legal and jurisdictional issues. If these legal and jurisdictional issues can become untangled through joint agreements that are respectful of the sovereignty of various jurisdictions, and if these joint agreements draw on community support and are built on the strong tribal cultures that are present among the tribes in North Dakota, the law enforcement

activities conducted jointly in the area of illegal drug activities alone would allow a maximum use of the minimum resources available and reduce criminal behavior significantly. These joint efforts can focus on determining and eliminating the source of illegal drugs, track and dismantle the distribution networks and slow down the use of illegal drugs, especially use among the youth population.

Presently, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians operates the only Native American drug task force within the state of North Dakota. In operation for the past five years, their task force focuses upon drug-related crime on the reservation and surrounding area. The task force officers continue to collaborate and share information with numerous agencies, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Federal Bureau of Investigation; North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation; North Dakota Highway Patrol, United States Border Patrol; Drug Enforcement Administration and other law enforcement agencies. The task force has provided informants for other drug task forces throughout the state and has been a valuable asset in helping these agencies secure successful prosecutions. The use of task forces within communities is a tested strategy; through the collaborative efforts of tribal, local, state and federal governments, the task force shall continue and provide positive results in the area of illegal drug activity.

Currently, the Task Force established by United Tribes has the following responsibilities:

- i. **Development of community outreach and meetings regarding the nature and extent of the problems and possible solutions.** UTTC has begun its outreach efforts through on-site visits with tribal communities; the support and sponsorship of methamphetamine conferences and the hosting of task force meetings with tribal, state and federal representatives. To the extent possible, UTTC supports the gathering of community members at each of the reservations in North Dakota for the opportunity to share their issues and concerns regarding the alcohol and substance abuse problem.
- ii. **Further identification of resources available and determination of how they are presently being accessed.** UTTC continues to assess available resources and identifies whether tribal communities are currently availing themselves of such resources. It is of import to note that when discussing resources UTTC does not limit the definition to the use of financial resources, oftentimes resources available will include community elders and similar culturally-based programs.
- iii. **Development of community based agreements and memoranda of understanding between the tribes themselves, between tribes and the state; between tribes and the federal government.** This objective will provide the opportunity for the various governments to open the lines of communication and support for the overall goal of the elimination of the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. The use of methamphetamines is not an isolated problem, it is a nationwide

epidemic, as such, collaboration is inherent to winning the war against drugs.

- iv. **Identification of the need for data regarding the nature of the problems, development of agreements on its use and identification of mechanisms that could be used to coordinate the data.** UTTC is working with a consultant and the tribes in establishing a Tribal Justice Communications System that will be utilized to track offenders who cross jurisdictional boundaries. The information contained in the database will be collected based upon each tribe's individual needs to collect certain types of data, with certain data required by each tribe that can be accessed by other tribes.
- v. **Development of appropriate law enforcement strategies, cross-training platforms and other implementation strategies based on community input and needs.** Law enforcement is a basic need of any community. In Indian Country, however, the need is more pressing than ever. As an example of the desperate need for more resources, the Spirit Lake Nation's current police force can provide only one officer per shift to patrol their reservation community. As a result, tribal communities are forced to create alternative policing methods such as community oriented policing. But again, due to lack of financial resources, oftentimes tribal communities are unable to continue such services.

We also want to note the efforts of Thomas Heffelfinger, U.S. Attorney from the District of Minnesota (recently retired). Mr. Heffelfinger has recently convened (October, 2005) a task force of U.S. Attorneys from throughout Indian Country that has met with Tribal leaders, including representatives of our United Tribes Task Force. Mr. Heffelfinger will announce his task force's findings at the upcoming Federal Bar Association Indian Law Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico later this week. Mr. Heffelfinger has indicated that the task force he has created will employ strategies similar to those of our Indian Drug and Alcohol grant at United Tribes, in that the plan will encourage U.S. Attorneys in Indian Country districts to work closely with Tribal leaders and tribal law enforcement personnel, as well as other Federal, local and state law enforcement personnel to ensure that law enforcement actions against methamphetamine manufacture, distribution and use in Indian country are carried out in a comprehensive manner that recognizes the needs of the various jurisdictions involved and most importantly, that addresses the law enforcement and safety needs of the citizens of Tribal Nations within Indian country. We believe this effort is an important step forward in combating methamphetamine use in Indian country.

- vi. **Development of model tribal codes.** Currently, Three Affiliated is working on revision of their drug code to include methamphetamines. Many tribal codes are archaic when addressing illegal drugs as they were written several decades ago. As an exercise of tribal sovereignty, tribes need to revise or in some cases create tribal codes that will forcefully deal with drug offenders.
- vii. **Development of culturally appropriate treatment modalities.** Currently, many treatment programs utilize some form of culture as part of their program. The Spirit Lake Nation Wellness and Recovery Center has identified the Medicine Wheel as the core of their treatment program. Through the teachings of the Four Directions and Circle of Life, the Wellness Center provides culturally sensitive treatment modalities to its clients with great success.

In addition to the task of creating and strengthening a Drug and Alcohol Task Force within the state of North Dakota, United Tribes is working with the tribes in the development of a tribal justice communications system. The overall objective of this system is to network the tribes in North Dakota to gather statistical data to demonstrate the extent of the drug problem as oftentimes the statistical information is difficult to find or simply does not exist. Moreover, the data collected by each tribe can be used to track offenders across jurisdictional boundaries as each tribe would have access to the information within the tribal justice communication system.

The information provided above is a brief synopsis of the nature of United Tribes Technical College's grant. To reiterate, the core concept of this grant is communication and cooperation. In order to successfully eradicate the methamphetamine problem, collaboration amongst tribal, local, state and federal governments is needed. This is the only solution.

From work completed under the grant, United Tribes has identified key findings among tribal populations within the state of North Dakota:

- 1. Approximately 90% of individuals entering treatment programs at Turtle Mountain are methamphetamine related.**
- 2. There is a low recovery rate of methamphetamine addicts, approximately 3%, due to the fact that the treatment length is not long enough.**
- 3. Indian Health Service is not "coding", that is tracking, methamphetamine use so data is unreliable; there is currently no concrete data available.**
- 4. Methamphetamine dealers are traveling from reservation to reservation.**
- 5. Juveniles are being used as dealers and pushers because of lesser sanctions against juveniles.**
- 6. House explosions are occurring on reservations because of methamphetamine labs.**
- 7. For those reservation communities that have resident treatment facilities, there is a lack of bed space for new patients.**
- 8. There are no treatment facilities within the state for juveniles, and the only long term treatment facility for adults is at the State Penitentiary.**

9. **Treatment time is not long enough for methamphetamine addicts; twenty-eight (28) days is not enough time, oftentimes the need for recovery for methamphetamine addicts is six (6) months or longer.**
10. **Lack of law enforcement: there is not enough funding to address the need on many reservations and due to recent budget cuts, the Turtle Mountain reservation will lose its drug investigators, Spirit Lake will lose a police officer when it currently has only one (1) officer on duty per shift.**
11. **There is a dramatic increase in the number of babies being born affected by methamphetamine.**
12. **Information is not being shared with community; we need to educate the tribal community so members know what is going on with methamphetamine.**
13. **Drug testing is not being done at all levels of employment in tribal community.**

The aforementioned findings are preliminary findings from Task Force meetings held to date. What these findings signify is the need for: (1) prevention, (2) coordination among governmental entities, (3) data collection, (4) better coordination among law enforcement agencies and (5) additional funding.

#### **Identified needs for Prevention**

1. Education regarding methamphetamines must start as early as the elementary school;
2. Sustainable, effective and culturally sensitive prevention programs for tribal communities;
3. Funding for adequate staffing of prevention programs;
4. Resources for after-school activities for youth.

#### **Identified needs for Coordination amongst governmental entities**

1. Adequate and available treatment for youth and adults; provide a better understanding of how the treatment process works for native people in the state-run system regarding treatment costs;
2. Collaboration and communication between governmental agencies to address treatment issues;
3. Communication between governmental agencies regarding improved funding mechanisms for treatment support and infrastructure;
4. Access to long-term treatment and payment for that treatment.

#### **Identified needs for Data Collection**

1. Appropriate technology in place at the tribal level;
2. Identification of the types of data the tribe would like to address;
3. Understanding that due to the lack of data, tribal communities are unable to track trends in substance abuse and are unable to demonstrate the disastrous impact methamphetamine has had on the community.

### **Identified needs for Coordination amongst law enforcement**

1. Acquisition of more resources dedicated to prevention and investigation;
2. Development of cross-deputization agreements;
3. Commitment by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to work with tribal law enforcement;
4. Access to law enforcement data from each level of government, particularly in the field of warrants for arrest.

### **Identified needs for additional Funding**

1. Access to long-term treatment and payment for that treatment;
2. Additional funding for support staff for treatment, prevention, and law enforcement offices;
3. Additional funds for construction of residential treatment facilities and half-way houses;
4. Access to resources for use in establishing jobs for recovering addicts;
5. Additional funding to support tribal, local, state and federal Task Forces to ensure the lines of communication remain open between the governmental entities.

As is evident through the listing of preliminary findings and identified needs, the implementation of United Tribes Technical College's grant is a proactive and positive step toward eradicating the methamphetamine problem in Indian Country. Through collaboration and cooperation between all levels of government and continued support of grant programs that provide the opportunity to open the lines of communication between those levels of government, workable solutions will be identified and implemented to ensure the prosperity of future generations of Indian people.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.