



# Department of Justice

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**TESTIMONY OF**

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SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE  
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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**FOR A FIELD OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**ADDRESSING THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF DANGEROUS DRUGS IN  
NATIVE COMMUNITIES**

**PRESENTED ON**

**MARCH 31, 2015**

**Testimony of Thomas P. Ravenelle  
Special Agent in Charge, Denver Division  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Before the Committee on Indian Affairs  
United States Senate  
March 31, 2015**

Good morning Chairman Barrasso. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the impact of drugs and violent crime on native communities.

High rates of violent crime on Indian Reservations continue to drive the Indian Country (IC) threat. Uniform Crime Report (UCR) 2012 data indicates violent crime rates on certain Indian Reservations are up to 15 times higher than the national average. The average violent crime rate of Indian Country as a whole is almost three times higher than the national average, which is driven largely by aggravated assaults.

The FBI has played a role in ensuring safety and security in Indian Country since our establishment in 1908. Within the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division, the Indian Country Crimes Unit (ICCU) is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to address the most egregious crime problems upon tribal reservations. ICCU supports the joint investigative efforts of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services (BIA OJS) tribal law enforcement and Safe Trails Task Forces (STTFs). ICCU manages IC personnel resources, procures services, funds specialized equipment to enhance FBI investigations, and acts as a liaison with the Department of Justice Office of Tribal Justice (DOJ OTJ), BIA OJS, the Executive Office for the United States Attorneys (EOUSA), and FBI Office of Victim Assistance (OVA). ICCU also provides high quality training to Indian Country law enforcement to ensure investigations are conducted in a consistent manner. Currently, the FBI has investigative responsibility for approximately 200 Indian Reservations, and investigative priorities include Death Investigations, Child Sexual/Physical Abuse, Rape, Assaults Resulting in Serious Bodily Injury, Domestic Violence, as well as Gang and Criminal Enterprise Investigations.

As you know, the Wind River Reservation is located in western Wyoming near Lander. The reservation is home to over 3,900 Eastern Shoshone and 8,600 Northern Arapahoe enrolled tribal members, and contains approximately 2,268,000 acres of land within its exterior boundary.

With Agents and Victim Specialists assigned to our Resident Agency (RA) in Lander, Wyoming, the FBI works in concert with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), our local partners, the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Wyoming United States Attorney's Office. The Lander RA currently has a pending caseload of approximately 150 cases related to the Wind River Reservation. Without question, the most prevalent substance associated with these crimes is alcohol.

Gang affiliation in Indian Country is often described as an "imitation" of urban street gangs, and is usually determined by neighborhood or family connections. Individuals who reside on the Wind River Reservation have claimed tenuous affiliations with a small number of gangs. The gangs lack hierarchal structures and are loosely organized. Gang members may claim

affiliation with multiple, even competing gangs and change membership frequently. Violent or major crimes committed in furtherance of gang objectives are rare.

Drug activity which has been identified on the Wind River Reservation includes the distribution of marijuana, diverted prescription drugs, and methamphetamine. Currently, drug-related issues on the reservation are handled primarily by the Wyoming DCI Task Force and the DEA. The DCI Task Force also includes FBI and the BIA. Through daily interaction and consistent teamwork, the FBI, DCI, and DEA are strong and collaborative partners.

There has been mention of several partnerships when it comes to Indian Country and there are two which I would like to highlight. First, it is important to recognize the FBI's OVA. The OVA plays a vital role in Indian Country investigations and has victim specialists dedicated specifically to Indian Country. They represent approximately one-third of the entire FBI victim specialist workforce. These victim specialists are heavily involved in our cases, assisting victims throughout the process.

Another important partnership we have is with the people who live and work on or near the reservation. Federal, State, and Local law enforcement officials rely on ongoing relationships with local communities to help identify and address problems before they become more serious issues. It is important that these partnerships and local trust are formed long before a crime is committed and must be preserved long after.

Chairman Barrasso, I thank you for this opportunity to testify concerning some of the challenges which face our Native American Communities. The FBI takes its responsibility in Indian Country very seriously. We appreciate your interest in these matters. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.