

TESTIMONY
OF
CHAIRMAN LESTER THOMPSON
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
FIELD HEARING ON “THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF
TRIBAL LAW ENFORCEMENT
ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS”
JUNE 1, 2007

My name is Lester Thompson Jr., Chairman of the Great Nation of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. I and the current tribal council have been voted into office to make decisions for the best interest of the Hunkpati Dakota Oyate (Crow Creek Sioux Tribe).

I would like clarification from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, pertaining to their federal trust responsibility to the tribes of this nation. Is it not their legal duty as a fiduciary means that the federal government must act in the best interest of the Indian nations? Does it also impose a legal duty to provide public safety for these domestic dependant nations, as defined in B.I.A. O.J.S. training manual “Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country”.

These words that I have just written are nothing more than letters on a piece of paper and mean nothing to Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services. These words are hallow to me based on the fact that actions speak louder than words. I have written numerous letters to Bureau of Indian Affairs, Director Pat Ragsdale, Deputy Director Christopher Chaney, District I Special Agent in Charge, Elmer Four Dance, District I Supervisory Correctional Specialist Greta Baker and Crow Creek Chief of Police, Scott Shields, voicing our concerns of the lack of law enforcement services provided to the Great Nation of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, has continually provided the Great Nation of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe with beat around the bush tactics.

The problems created by the lack of and/or none existence of law enforcement on the Crow Creek Reservation are numerous. The rate of criminal activity is on the rise. Drug trafficking, domestic assaults, driving under the influence, harboring fugitives, aggravated assaults, etc., go unchecked and contribute to social breakdown of basic society.

In short Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services has failed the enrolled members of the Great Nation of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe.

Office of Justice Services has failed for years by not providing enough officers to adequately canvass the three districts with the necessary aggressive patrol to curtail unlawful activities on the Crow Creek Reservation. Office of Justice Services has continued to jeopardize the safety and welfare of the public by closing the detention center located in Fort Thompson on January 18, 2006.

Many reasons have been given to the closure of this facility with no real justification.

The Indian Law Reform Act stated B.I.A. O.J.S. is to provide law enforcement services, which includes the prevention, detection, and investigation of an offense, and the detention or confinement of an offender. Additional responsibilities include the protection of life and property. How is any of this possible when O.J.S. can not sustain its focus on problems long enough to resolve them?

Also the detention and confinement of offenders has rendered the tribal courts ineffective. When crimes against society are prosecuted and the offences require jail time, offenders are turned back onto the streets on probationary terms. With no detention it makes court rulings hallow threats thus creating a revolving door at the court house. Repeated offences have become the norm, further adding to the detriment of society.

Every excuse in the book has been given to why law enforcement services are so poor on Indian reservations. One excuse has always been the lack of funding allocated by the United States Government. Funds that are allocated for services are insufficient.

The dollar amount provided has not kept pace with inflation, creating a collapsing house of cards. Why hasn't more funding been made available?

According to Department of Interior Office of Inspector General's report dated September 2004 " An Assessment of Indian Detention Facilities" from an accounting stand point B.I.A. O.J.S. does not use sound business practices for planning, accounting for and monitoring of funds nor is anyone held accountable for the proper management of funds. Fraud can be perpetrated with impunity and waste can continue undiscovered because nobody at B.I.A. is paying attention. Is this why funding has been withheld due to the lack of proper management and inability to track funding?

Can the lack of funding to provide services be attributed to the fact that there are more high paying administration positions created under the new lines of authority? Has this venture really been cost effective? There is an old saying on the reservation about too many chiefs and not enough Indians! Need I say more?

It is my observation that this is contrary to the designated appropriation specified by Congress.

Has the federal government turned a blind eye to the problems that plague the indigenous people of this nation?

Efforts have been made by the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe to remedy our bleak situation by proposing 638 contracting law enforcement services here on our reservation.

These efforts have been met with resistance by District One's lack of communication and also lack of assistance in good faith. The B.I.A. O.J.S. has the mentality of do as I say and not as I do and constantly reminding us of what we can't do and not telling us what we can do. This mentality has caused confusion and hampered the positive progression of our tribe.

Indian people living in Indian Country, are they no less than other citizens of the United States? Don't we deserve to live in safe communities too?

Either provide us with the contracting of law enforcement services or provide us with adequate law enforcement!!!!!!!!!!