

Oregon Department of Corrections



2015 Annual Government to Government Report on Tribal Relations

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2015 Annual Government-to-Government

Report on Tribal Relations

Executive Summary

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) continues to work with Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes and tribal members toward identifying opportunities for partnership. Gary Sims, Diversity and Inclusion Administrator, has been selected to serve as the tribal contact for the DOC, as well as chairman of the Public Safety Cluster Meetings. All of the department's institutions maintained contact with tribal representatives and tribal volunteers to develop and present special cultural ceremonies, promote participation of adults in custody in cultural events and affiliations, and recruit volunteers.

This report highlights the activities, ceremonies, and events that took place in 2015 in DOC prisons throughout the State of Oregon. These activities are broken down by institution to give the reader a clear and comprehensive understanding of all that is currently offered to Native American adults in custody. In addition, information is presented showing both ongoing activities, as well as newly added Native American religious programming. DOC is expanding services and exploring new and traditionally honored ways to serve this population. For example, DOC is involved in a new and growing emphasis on outside family involvement and participation in Native American events.

Overview

DOC has been a long-standing member of the Government-to-Government Public Safety Cluster. The agency actively participated in the cluster meetings again this year with Gary Sims, Diversity and Inclusion Administrator, chairing the quarterly meetings.

DOC's participation provides the agency with current information on public safety activities and concerns among the various tribes, as well as those of other state agencies. Participation also provides an avenue for building ongoing relationships with tribal and state representatives. These relationships have been critical as DOC implements strategies and develops statewide procedures that may affect tribal members. DOC's participation has also helped tribes and other state agencies better understand DOC's mission and operations.

Native American Events and Religious Services

A wide range of Native American services and events were provided during the year at all 14 of Oregon's prisons. DOC's Religious Services Unit continued to develop and deliver Native American spirituality and healing programs. Hundreds of male and female adults in custody attended Native American ceremonies and services.

Spiritual events and ceremonies that were provided include sweat lodges, drumming circles, powwows, talking circles, spirit runs, smudging, pipe ceremonies, language development, counseling, and other cultural and spiritual development. An extensive series of educational videos and seminars are available

to help people understand and heal from historical trauma and to further develop healthy self and tribal identities.

Religious Services has developed healing ceremonies at multiple facilities and plans to expand its offerings during the coming year. Religious Services staff work with the U.S. Eagle Repository in Colorado to facilitate acquisition of eagle feathers for adults in custody. Each prison provides regular care and maintenance of its Native American sweat lodge and outdoor worship areas.

DOC is moving toward a goal of enhancing family engagement for adults in custody. This shift in DOC's approach to events includes Native American activities, which have seen an increase in family attendance across the state.

Religious Services Administrators

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DOC's service to its Native American population is led by Dennis Holmes, Administrator of Religious Services, and Stuart Young, Assistant Administrator of Religious Services. Both are committed to ensuring that Native American spirituality, activities, and religious property associated with Native beliefs are accommodated and encouraged in all of DOC's institutions. Mr. Holmes and Mr. Young consistently seek out and receive needed input from DOC chaplains, Native volunteers, tribal advisors, adults in custody, and others to ensure religious accommodations are active and consistent throughout the state. Under their leadership, DOC has standardized many of its services and activities, and has helped to solidify the consistency of sweats, powwows, and other Native American events.

As with all religious accommodations, the real heroes are the volunteers and chaplains who work to make things happen on the front lines. Religious leadership in DOC is fully aware of how difficult the work these men and women perform is, to provide ongoing spiritual activities to DOC's population.

Volunteers play a crucial communicative, as well as practical, role. The relationships formed by volunteers offer correctional services something extremely valuable. Offender responsibility and healing are developed by building relationships between them and the Native community.

Volunteer interventions promote standards of compassion, humanity, and order in prisons. Spiritual interventions can redefine the meaning of imprisonment, making prisons more humane. For adults in custody and the community, they are expressions of growth and change.

Because of their potential to bring hope to the lives of adults in custody, DOC's leadership takes these factors very seriously and works diligently to ensure the continuation of the agency's spiritual activities, as well as ongoing relationship-building.

Native American Volunteers

DOC relies on Native American volunteers around the state. Volunteers conduct Native American ceremonies in prisons and provide spiritual guidance for hundreds of adults in custody. The agency, as well as those in custody who benefit and participate in these programs, is very grateful to have such dedicated volunteers. Many of the services and programs might not be available without them. DOC cannot thank these volunteers enough for giving their time and energy.

Individual Institution Programs and Activities

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, Wilsonville

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Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) holds a sweat lodge once a month. A talking circle is held once a month in the medium facility and two times a month in the minimum facility. A Spring Ceremony was held again this year for both the medium and minimum facilities. The medium facility also has a weekly class called *Healing the Sacred Hoop*, led by volunteers who provide culturally appropriate skills and education.

CCCF grows sacred medicines, sage, lavender, and sweet grass. The medicines are harvested by Native American adults in custody (under the supervision of Native volunteers) in the minimum facility. These medicines are used by Native volunteers and adults in custody for sacred ceremonies in both the facilities. The women who participate in Native services had the opportunity to make hand-crafted items to give away at the Spring Celebration. CCCF plans to continue with this program in 2016.

Red Lodge Transition services provided parole outfits, luggage, and hygiene kits to releasing women. They also sponsored several seminars called *Re-Entry and the Law* through the Legal Service Program for participants in the talking circle. Developed and offered by Red Lodge Transition Services, this intervention program provides culturally-appropriate support and teachings to Native American adults in custody who exhibit high-risk behavior. The intent is to reduce misconduct and to provide appropriate tools necessary for the development of pro-social skills among Native American women in custody. In 2015, there was an average of 16 participants in this class.

Columbia River Correctional Institution/South Fork Forest Camp, Portland

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The Native American program under the supervision of Religious Services at Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI) includes monthly sweats. CRCI also has a weekly talking circle, led by volunteer Cheryl Deland, and a weekly crafting class supervised by the Chaplain or an available Native American volunteer. CRCI also hosts an annual powwow in early September. South Fork Forest Camp adults in custody are brought to CRCI for the all-day event. Adults in custody are allowed to invite family members who are on their approved visiting list to attend the powwow.

Deer Ridge Correctional Institution, Madras

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Deer Ridge Correctional Institution (DRCI) holds a sweat lodge once a month, which includes a pipe ceremony. A drum circle is held once per month with a smudge preceding drumming. Talking circle with a smudge is held on a monthly basis. These ceremonies are conducted by a volunteer from the Warm Springs Confederated Tribes. DRCI also held its fourth powwow this year and included salmon donated from Warm Springs. Beading and craft work is accommodated four days per week beginning five months prior to the powwow. Powwow participants were allowed to invite family and friends to this event. A smudge ceremony is accommodated for any adult in custody who requests when a family member has passed away. Native American videos, music CDs, and books are available in the Chapel Library.

Eastern Oregon Correctional Facility, Pendleton

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Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution (EOCI) holds sweat lodges regularly. EOCI Religious Services established a spiritual seminar that has been requested by adults in custody. Additionally, the facility Enrichment Committee established a Native American cultural seminar. EOCI held another very successful powwow this year. This is a family event, giving family members a chance to attend this highly significant spiritual event with their incarcerated loved ones. To prepare for the event, adults in custody used the craft center to make giveaways and had weekly drum practice for two months prior to the powwow. EOCI was also given, through donation, ribbon shirts that the adults in custody wore during the event. EOCI also has sweats on alternate months with volunteers coming from the Willamette Valley and California. In addition, the institution held its Native American Harvest/First Foods family meal this year.

Mill Creek Correctional Facility, Salem

The Native American Circle meets once a week for smudging and drumming on Fridays. Mill Creek Correctional Facility (MCCF) has a sweat on the third Friday of the month. MCCF joined with Santiam Correctional Institution for their yearly powwow. Adults in custody make gifts for give always for the powwow several months in advance. MCCF had John Sanchez as a volunteer, and when he left Jim Cupples offered to help.

Oregon State Correctional Institution, Salem

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Native American events and activities that operate through Oregon State Correctional Institution’s (OSCI) Recreation Unit include an annual social, an annual spirit run (3-5 day event), and a bi-monthly club night. Events that operate through OSCI’s Religious Services Unit include an annual powwow, a monthly sweat ceremony, a weekly drumming circle, and a cultural video lending library.

Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem

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Through Oregon State Penitentiary’s (OSP) Activities Section, the Native community has a club called Lakota Oyate-Ki. The club meets every fourth Thursday. All club activities are coordinated by the Activities Section staff. These include monthly meetings, banquets, and the annual powwow. The powwow is coordinated and run by the club members and Activities staff advisors. Club members do most of the fundraising for the annual powwow. Currently, the institution is moving toward allowing family members to attend the powwow. These events require intensive staff and security support to make them happen inside OSP, of which Activities carries a great load. There are also two cultural television channels in the institution that rotate between Native American, Hispanic, and Asian programming.

Religious Services activities, such as weekly sweat lodge, sweat lodge maintenance, pipe ceremony, and learning/talking circles, are coordinated and facilitated by chaplains and volunteers from the community who are recognized as spiritual advisors. Religious services are provided for the adults in custody in the general population of the prison, as well as in special housing units.

The Indigenous Circle is learning the sacred songs that are used in the pipe ceremony. Over the next year, the hope is that all the adults in custody in the Circle will know and be able to sing the songs that are essential to the ceremonies of this community.

Powder River Correctional Facility, Baker City

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Powder River Correctional Facility (PRCF) has a Native American sweat the first Saturday of each month. PRCF also has Native American movie viewing every Sunday. There are nearly 50 different Native American movies and documentaries that help interested adults in custody learn about Native culture. Every Saturday, except sweat days, PRCF holds Native American drumming and, on Friday, PRCF offers powwow beading.

Santiam Correctional Institution, Salem

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In addition to the weekly song and drum and the monthly sweat lodge ceremonies, Santiam Correctional Institution (SCI) also held a powwow. This included the beading/crafts program leading up to the event.

Various fundraising activities by the Native American adults in custody at SCI underwrote the powwow expenses, including pizza feeds and special item sales. As a result of the hard work of the Native American adults in custody at SCI, enough money was raised to sponsor and organize a very successful powwow. The celebration included a wonderful feast and a program of speakers, music, dancing, and gifting. It was attended by families of the adults in custody and a large number of special honored guests from the community. Jim Cupples, our dedicated Native American volunteer, was present to greet the many special guests who attended from the community.

Shutter Creek Correctional Institution, North Bend

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Native American programming at Shutter Creek Correctional Institution (SCCI) expanded this year with a crafts program and additional events. SCCI offered a four-day spirit run with an Eagle Staff. The Staff is then brought to sundance. In the fall, SCCI has a Change of Seasons event at the time of the equinox. Elders came from across the state to bring a message of healing and restoration through reconnecting with traditional ways of prayer. Within the last 18 months, SCCI rebuilt its sweat lodge and dedicated it to service with a sweat and pipe ceremony. SCCI also offers pipe ceremony and a prayer circle hosted by Native American elders.

Snake River Correctional Institution, Ontario

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Snake River Correctional Institution (SRCI) provides four sweat lodge ceremonies per month, with one sweat for each of four housing units (which includes the minimum facility). In addition to the regular sweats, SRCI also had a summertime sundance sweat and a winter new year's sweat for all the units. The yearly powwow was held in October with over 300 people in attendance. SRCI had a weekly beading class, a weekly art class, and a weekly drumming class. Adults in custody in the minimum facility also attended the powwow.

Several adults in custody put together a CD of Native songs for sweats, powwows, sundance, death, and other special occasions. This CD will be used in-house for training so adults in custody can learn their songs. Several different tribal traditions are included in the CD.

SRCI also has periodic work crews to maintain the sweat lodge grounds. SRCI has hundreds of Native American-related books, DVDs, and CDs, which are available to adults in custody. Native adults in custody who have lost a loved one are allowed to have a pipe ceremony in memory of the person who passed over. SRCI has an in-house television channel on which many Native American movies, cultural events, and documentaries are shown.

Two Rivers Correctional Facility, Umatilla

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Two Rivers Correctional Institution (TRCI) provides a variety of programming for the Native American adults in custody. These programs include the following: change of seasons ceremonies (March, June, September, and December), week-long spirit run (held in summer), drum circle (third Sunday of each month), seasonal bead work (June through August), and monthly sweat ceremonies. Finally, TRCI held a sundance support spirit run in July.

TRCI provided drumming, pipe, smudge, and monthly sweat ceremonies for Native adults in custody who are in administrative segregation housing. TRCI continued to provide a bereavement pipe ceremony for those adults in custody who are notified that a loved one has passed away.

TRCI continued to seek volunteers to facilitate sweat ceremonies, talking circles, pipe and drum ceremonies, as well as instructional/teaching programs about the First Nation (indigenous) people. The chaplains have been given support and approval by TRCI executive management to provide supervision for sweat ceremonies in the event a volunteer becomes sick or the roads become too hazardous for travel. This way, sweat ceremonies will not be cancelled; the sweat ceremony is held monthly regardless of a volunteer being present or not.

New in 2015, TRCI hosted its first powwow in September 2015 and has a new volunteer who is providing a weekly *Native American Cultural Studies* class. She is bringing in guest speakers from Warm Springs Reservation, showing culturally-specific videos and teaching Native American crafts.

TRCI has also partnered with Central Oregon Community College's cultural diversity coordinator who is bringing in special groups on occasion. In February, TRCI had the group Native Visions come from California, who gave a powerful drama presentation.

Later this year, TRCI is bringing in a special showing of the documentary *Dakota 38*. Jim Miller from Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota is one of the primary features in the documentary, and he will be here to lead a discussion and healing time after the showing.

Warner Creek Correctional Facility, Lakeview

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Each Friday, Warner Creek Correctional Facility (WCCF) held a talking circle that included prayer, singing, hand drumming, discussion, announcement of upcoming events, and smudging for purification of each member. Volunteer Lloyd Powell led a sweat lodge on the fourth Friday of each month. WCCF maintained the outdoor worship area on a weekly basis by means of a small volunteer crew of Native adults in custody. WCCF also held a weekly beading class on Tuesdays, a weekly planning meeting for all upcoming events on Thursdays, and a weekly drum circle on Fridays.

WCCF held its most successful Native American powwow with three visiting drum groups, dancers, an animated emcee, and many mothers, fathers, wives, and children of WCCF adults in custody. What a feast and what great joy!

Linn and Douglas County Community Corrections

DOC works directly with adults in Linn and Douglas counties who are under community supervision (probation and post-prison). While neither DOC's Linn nor Douglas County Community Corrections Offices operate specific services for Native Americans, they do collaborate with the tribes and refer Native Americans on supervision to programs and services operated by the tribes.

Conclusion

DOC has continued to work with tribal representatives throughout the state to maintain cooperative relationships. DOC will work to maintain and enhance those relationships in 2016. DOC looks forward to more opportunities to involve the Native American community in its rehabilitative programs and the transition of adults in custody to communities. DOC also appreciates Native American volunteers and looks forward to working with them again in the coming year.

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