Overview

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) continues to work with Oregon’s nine federally recognized tribes and tribal members toward identifying opportunities for partnership. Jennifer Black and Gary Sims are the new tribal contacts. All of the department’s institutions maintained contact with tribal representatives and tribal volunteers to develop and present special cultural ceremonies, promote inmate participation in cultural events and affiliations, and recruit volunteers.

Former Tribal Liaison, Bobbi Burton attended the 2011 Tribal Information Day at the Capitol. DOC has been a long-standing member of the Government-to-Government Public Safety Cluster. The agency actively participated in that cluster again this year. Our participation provides the DOC with current information on public safety activities and concerns among the various tribes, as well as those of other state agencies. Our participation also provides an avenue for building on-going relationships with tribal and state representatives. These relationships have been critical as we implement strategies and develop statewide procedures that may affect tribal members. We also believe that DOC participation has helped tribes and other state agencies better understand our agency mission and operations, and that our advice and participation in the cluster has been helpful and beneficial to Oregon’s tribes.

The department continues to collect data on all inmates during the intake process. Disclosure of ethnicity or tribal affiliation is voluntary, which makes it difficult to collect accurate data. Inmates may also request a change to their ethnic designation at any time during their incarceration.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Solar Project

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla owns 250 acres adjacent to Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla. In October, DOC employees met with a tribal representative to discuss the possibility of supplying solar energy to the institution. It was a very productive meeting and it was agreed that the tribe would not supply all of the power for the institution. However, they would like to do a portion of the peak power and are currently doing a cost benefit analysis.
Update on DOC’s Native American Procedures

The department began work on Native American spiritual and ceremonial procedures in 2007, following discussions with the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla. The purpose is to bring greater consistency and clarity to the Native American programs offered in Oregon’s prisons.

This handbook was completed and distributed to the institutions and Native American inmates in October of 2011. Many of the components in the procedure are already standard practice, or are being implemented. As a result, the Native American programs and services are more consistent throughout the department.

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 inmates 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 given 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 the offering during the coming year. Religious Services staff work with the Eagle Repository in Colorado to facilitate acquisition of eagle feathers for inmates. They also regularly provide wood, herbs, medicines, beads, and other materials for use in ceremonies. Each prison provides regular care and maintenance of its Native American Sweat Lodge and outdoor worship areas.

Native American Volunteers

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

Individual Institution Programs and Activities

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, Wilsonville: This facility holds a sweat lodge once a month. Smudge ceremonies are held twice a month in the medium security facility. 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.
Columbia River Correctional Institution, Portland; and South Fork Forest Camp, Tillamook:
CRCI hosted a Native American powwow again this past summer. The facility generally has a Sweat Lodge once a month. At the forest camp, there are typically a drum circle and sweat lodge once every two months. The powwow for the forest camp was held in conjunction with CRCI.

Deer Ridge Correctional Institution, Madras:
DRCI holds a sweat lodge once a month. A drum circle is held every week. Talking circles and smudge ceremonies are held on occasion.

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton:
EOCI holds sweat lodges regularly. Volunteers came to EOCI to assist with special spiritual care for inmates during family crisis. EOCI Religious Services established a spiritual seminar that has been requested by inmates. The facility Enrichment Committee established a Native American cultural seminar. EOCI conducted a Native pipe ceremony and a Memorial Ceremony over the past year.

Mill Creek Correctional Institution and Santiam Correctional Institution, Salem:
Native American religious activities at these facilities included sweat lodge ceremonies once per month every month this year. Song and drum practices were held once a week virtually every week this year. SCI held a three day Spirit Run in August, and a Change of Seasons Celebration/Feast was held in September. A Native American beading program was offered in preparation for Change of Seasons Celebration. New drums and drumsticks were provided this year.

Oregon State Correctional Institution, Salem:
Over the last year, OSCI has hosted regular Native American services and activities, including 18 Sweat lodge and pipe ceremonies with an average attendance of 31 inmates and 66 volunteer hours. A Sundance sweat was also held once a month. This year, there were 38 Native American drum circles, with an average attendance of 17 inmates. During this last year 30 talking circles were held, with an average attendance of 10 inmates. An annual powwow, sponsored by the Inipi Oyate-Ki Native Culture Club, was held in August. There was also a spirit run this year.

Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem:
OSP has a Lakota Oyate-Ki Native American club for inmates. Currently there are 51 inmates in the Lakota Club. This club meets every fourth Thursday of the month and helps support the weekly sweat lodge, pipe ceremony and drumming. They also help plan an annual Sundance sweat and a spirit run. OSP hosts an annual powwow. The work to produce such an event within the penitentiary is extensive. Bringing in so many guests and volunteers through security at one time is a challenge for staff and security. This year a spirit run was held over four days. There are also two cultural television channels in the institution that rotate between Native American, Hispanic and Asian programming.
Powder River Correctional Facility, Baker City:
With volunteer help, PRCF offers a sweat ceremony every month. Native circles are held every Friday night and include smudging, talking circles, drumming, songs and prayer. Native American video viewing is available every Wednesday. The facility has 42 Native American DVDs in its Chapel Library. A Native American spirit run occurs once a year. This year it was held in the evening over five weekdays, and was followed by a Saturday sweat.

Shutter Creek Correctional Institution, North Bend:
The Native American volunteers offer sweat lodge ceremonies on a monthly basis. There is one sweat lodge held for inmates in the SUMMIT program, and one is held for inmates in the general population. General population inmates have a drum line on weeks without a sweat lodge, and the volunteers have been available almost every other week.

Snake River Correctional Institution, Ontario:
Sweat Lodges are provided four times a month, with one sweat for each housing unit a month. This year there was a Sundance sweat, a New Years sweat, and a powwow held at the institution.

Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla:  TRCI conducts sweat lodges two or three times a month with pipe and smudge ceremonies. Instructional/cultural videos and discussion are held three or four times a year, provided by volunteers. Change of seasons celebrations were held quarterly this year, and fry bread was provided on second day of the sweat. A four-day spirit run was also held this year. Beading and braiding of medicine bags, prayer feathers, and spirit run staff were made in preparation of the annual spirit run. Native American volunteers provide individual counseling and mentorship to inmates when they are available. Special guests from various Native American tribal communities visit the institution.

Warner Creek Correctional Facility, Lakeview:  This facility holds Native American talking circles on Fridays. The circles include discussion of current concerns, prayer, singing accompanied by a drum, and of course, smudging for purification and prayers for the individual. Volunteers led a monthly Sweat on the fourth Friday of each month. Native American inmates maintain the outdoor worship grounds. Warner Creek’s greenhouse is used by Native American inmates for beading and craft sessions. There are occasional drumming circles that are held both indoors and outdoors. These circles teach new songs to all the participants. The facility has Native American books, CDs, and DVDs in its Chapel Library. Inmates at this facility grow and harvest white sage and sweetgrass in the greenhouse. The white sage and sweetgrass is used for on-site smudges and sweats and also sent to other institutions.

Conclusion

The department has continued to work with tribal representatives throughout the state to maintain cooperative relationships. We will work to continue and enhance those relationships in 2012. We look forward to more opportunities to involve the Native American community in our rehabilitative programs and the transition of inmates to communities. We also appreciate our Native American volunteers and look forward to working with them again in the coming year.
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