

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Serious Impact of Meth

By now most everyone has heard about meth, short for methamphetamine. What most people only know is that it's a drug, that it's harmful, addictive, and illegal. But **how** harmful? What is its impact on families and the tribe? We need to give much thought to these questions.

On Feb. 13 at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians conference, I spoke on a panel about meth. I would like to share with you some of the points I made in that presentation.

We, as council members, hear about many tragic events. Meth is of special concern because it's so easy to obtain or make. It can be made from common over-the-counter medicines like Contact, Sudafed, or Tylenol Cold.

In fact, they were so easy to get at the corner drugstore that now, if you need Contact or Sudafed, you have to sign for it. These medicines still are very easy to get on the street and meth is easy to make. One can even get the formula on the Internet.

The effects of meth on its users become evident after just a few months. Appearance and personal health deteriorate. Some of the effects cannot be restored, for example, the damage to one's gums and teeth. The gums become infected and shrink, which results in decay and loss of teeth.

The Siletz Community Health Clinic reported in 2005 that meth was the sixth leading purpose for visits to our clinic. Also in 2005, our tribe documented 90 cases of meth mouth in our dental unit, but in 2004 it was half that number. Just think about it – the cases doubled in just one year! We never kept track prior to that.

Of the 90 cases last year, **only 17** have returned to the clinic for follow-up treatment. Active users generally don't return for follow-up treatment and that also is a sad situation.

If users don't get follow-up treatment, meth rapidly deteriorates the jawbone, leading to the loss of teeth. The cost for the clinic to treat meth mouth is approximately \$10,000 per individual. Treatment is expensive, but think how expensive not treating it is in terms of health and the cost of the untreated user and the social cost to his or her family.

Meth is highly addictive, moreso than any other drug. Users have a much lower recovery rate. And like alcohol and other drugs, it has long-lasting effects on family and friends.

Users need money for drugs. If it isn't readily available from family and friends, they steal it. Horrendous crimes often are attributed directly to drug users, including meth users.

Tribal representatives reported that in Indian homes, heirlooms are now in pawnshops. Items like buckskin dresses, gauntlets, and regalia are lost to families forever. It's reported this has occurred on many reservations.

The detrimental effect is not only on the user, but also on family members. In our tribe, ICW reports that out



Delores Pigsley

of 104 cases, meth users account for 83 percent of the parents whose children are removed from their care.

Only 13 percent of parents follow through with their treatment, resulting in family breakups. The other 87 percent continue in protective custody and generally are placed with other families.

The fallout is tragic, resulting in family disputes, parents wanting their children back, grandparents raising grandchildren, children being shuffled between different homes, children separated from their siblings, etc.

Parents complain that they can't be reunited with their children, but in many cases they haven't followed through with their treatment. We, as council members, hear about many tragic situations. And as the statistics from our health clinic reveal, the problem is getting worse.

How/when will it end? We don't know. Raising happy, healthy families has been a basic goal of our tribe ever since we were restored. At that time, drug use was not the problem it is today. But during the past 25 years, we, like other tribes, have been caught up in a growing epidemic of drug use that's sweeping our nation.

The cost for treating addiction is very high for tribal communities. We are engaged in prevention and treatment programs in an effort to stem the tide. In Siletz, our Housing program offers training sessions on the drug problem for residents.

The tribe is involved with the Lincoln County Meth Task Force. Tribal residents as well as a member of our police department are part of that task force. They meet regularly and have had several drug busts in Siletz.

What is the tribe's role? As a responsible government, it's our job to first of all recognize that we have a problem and begin keeping statistics so that we know what is happening.

A couple of us attended an eye-opening meeting at Kah-Nee-Ta a few months ago. Representatives of tribal, state, and federal governments shared important information. The need is great to provide support services to users and families that are affected. Families also must get protection from users and the crimes that ensue.

A Lincoln County organization has been formed that includes members of

the tribe, the county, and other agencies and entities. The district attorney's office has taken an active role on the team. We have a long way to go but as a result of the involvement of the community and the tribe as well as the county sheriff's office, this effort is proving effective.

In closing, we all need to understand that the stakes are high for our families, our children, and our tribe. Let's face it, the cost of prevention and treatment is high, if we do nothing the cost will be even higher.

Tribes must join together to fight this epidemic and make it a No. 1 priority. Currently tribes are looking at entering into an inter-tribal Memorandum of Understanding to raise the level of awareness regarding this issue.

Sen. McCain Hears Testimony on Proposed Cascade Locks Casino

For many months now, the Warm Springs Tribe has been struggling to open a casino in Cascade Locks. Its application has been subjected to intense scrutiny and controversy.

The latest stormy episode happened in Washington, D.C., on March 6 before Sen. John McCain's Senate Indian Affairs Committee. The following report is based on notes provided by Mark Phillips, the tribe's lobbyist.

Appearing in support of the Cascade Locks casino were Warm Springs Chairman Ron Suppah, Hood River County Commissioner Carol York, and a surprise witness, Gov. Ted Kulongoski.

In opposition to the casino were Grand Ronde Chairman Cheryl Kennedy, Michael Lang of Friends of the Gorge (FOG), and Congressman David Wu, a surprise uninvited opponent.

Grand Ronde, which runs the most lucrative casino in Oregon, has consistently opposed Warm Springs' proposed casino, so it was no surprise the Grand Ronde chairman would be present to testify in opposition.

Although the stated purpose of the hearing was land-into-trust for gaming and the secretarial two-part determination processes, it didn't take long for the hearing to collapse into Wu, Kennedy, and Lang's opposition to the proposed Cascade Locks casino and opposition to McCain's bill to amend IGRA by including a grandfather provision.

When given an opportunity to ask a question of George Skabine of the Office of Indian Gaming Management, Wu charged the Warm Springs Tribe with having twisted the environmental impact statement (EIS) process so any on-reservation alternative was excluded. Skabine said he would look into this when his office reviews the tribe's EIS.

Chairman Suppah and Commissioner York stated that the tribe complied fully with all federal fee-to-trust and other requirements.

Chairman Kennedy argued that Grand Ronde was opposed to off-reservation gaming and also that the grandfather provision for shutting down the off-

reservation gaming option be done away with. Lang complained that FOG had been "shut out" of the process and also argued for doing away with McCain's grandfather provision.

McCain questioned how Kennedy could oppose the Warm Springs proposal when Grand Ronde was itself promoting a Portland casino. Her response indicated that the governor had changed the rules and later said that if Warm Springs is successful, Grand Ronde would pursue the Portland area.

As for Lang's complaint, McCain led Lang to contradict himself by admitting that FOG had, indeed, taken part in the EIS process.

Gov. Kulongoski, who was invited by McCain to testify, presented a strong statement as to why he supports the Warm Springs' Cascade Locks proposal; that no on-reservation casino would be economically feasible and that further, the tribe is badly in need of a viable tribal enterprise in order to achieve self-sufficiency.

Sen. Gordon Smith, a committee member, regretted the fact there were two opposing tribes and ended up saying the current process should proceed.

It's hoped that the issues that are preventing the Warm Springs Tribe's proposed casino from moving forward soon will be resolved.



Remembering Dolly Fisher

In the March issue of *Siletz News*, an article appeared about Dolly Fisher, who passed away Feb. 9, 2006. We were given a brief profile of her life, including her work on Siletz restoration, her having served as a Tribal Council officer, and of her awards.

Against that background, I would like to say a few words about what she meant to me and to the tribe.

For several years – even before the tribe was restored – Dolly ran the CETA training program in Siletz, funded by the Urban Indian Program. She helped provide jobs for our Siletz people and sent young adults to school for many years.

She cared deeply about her community and the people who needed help. She not only worked for the tribe, but also served on various committees and the Tribal Council. She and Dan were mainstays of the community and we miss them both.