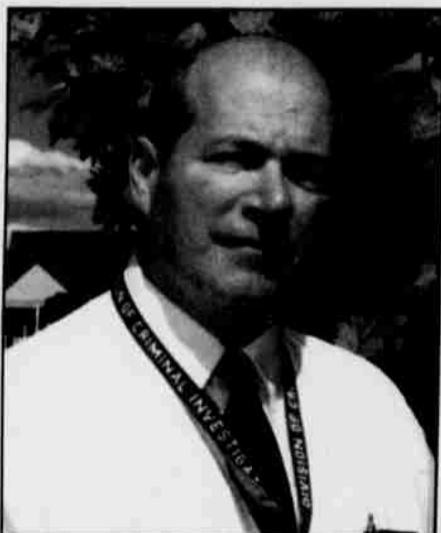


## Tribe, Social Services Department Host Gang Awareness Training

■ "Gang activity in Grand Ronde is low-level but emerging."



National Native American Gang Specialist Christopher M. Grant

By Toby McClary

On May 23-24, the Tribe welcomed Christopher M. Grant, National Native American Gang Specialist, to the community. Grant is also the former Chief of Detectives of the Rapid City Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division and the former commander of the Rapid City Area Gang Task Force.

Grant's objective was to train staff, community members, and educational leaders on gang culture, early signs of gang activity, and how gangs have an impact on the community. Grant also spent time touring the community and did an evaluation of the gang activity in and around Grand Ronde.

"I would characterize Grand Ronde gang activity as being low-level, but emerging," said Grant.

"It's clear that evidence of the gangster mentality is present. However, it is not nearly as problematic or entrenched as it is in some other Tribal communities."

Grant explained that gang activity occurs in cities of any size. And while the national age range for

for him to fathom.

"It doesn't make sense," said Grant, "in Native American culture, females were historically treated with respect and honor. In the gang culture, females are often viewed as nothing more than objects of ego-enhancement and

a clear and obvious dedication to the advancement of traditional culture which is an important barrier to gang activity. However, the community is not immune from the negative influences that spawn the growth of gangs and drugs."

In closing, Grant offered the community a list of recommendations to help prevent any further gang activity in the Grand Ronde community:

- ◆ A small community coalition involving a cross-section of the community to address gang issues as they emerge.
- ◆ The development of a mentoring program to identify Tribal youth who are on the path of gang and drug behavior and to help change the course of their direction.
- ◆ G.R.E.A.T. (gang resistance education and training) training for local law enforcement in order to deliver this gang resistance curriculum at the middle school level.
- ◆ Continuity of culturally-based activities with specific prohibition of gang activity or gang representing.
- ◆ Tracking of any and all gang involvement in the community
- ◆ Finally, the enactment of a Tribal gang ordinance designed to address criminal issues involved with gang behavior.

"While it's clear that gang activity is low in the area, the same cannot be said about drug activity," said Grant. "And where drug activity occurs, gang activity often follows." ■

*"It's clear that evidence of the gangster mentality is present (in Grand Ronde). However, it is not nearly as problematic or entrenched as it is in some other Tribal communities."*

~ Christopher Grant,  
National Native American Gang Specialist

gang members is approximately 13-24 years old, Grant stated that in Indian Country, the age range descends to about 11-19 years old.

One problem that helps influence gang mentality is adults not taking warning signs seriously or thinking that a group of kids "gang-banging" are just "wannabes" said Grant.

"Juveniles with this mentality often want to be recognized as real 'gangstas,'" explained Grant. "They want to be seen as real gang members and will act out on it."

Also as part of Grant's awareness seminar, he pointed out the fact that females currently make up about 10-15 percent of the gang population, a fact that seems hard

sexual gratification."

There are approximately 24,000 different gangs in the United States with about 800,000 active members belonging to them. Grant explained that where there is a lack of social, cultural, educational, and economical opportunities, gang activity will flourish.

"I see Grand Ronde as a healthy Tribal community," stated Grant. "I see some very distinct advantages within your community. Tribal staff members honestly and sincerely care about Tribal youth. I see a healthy community infrastructure including pride in community resources for Tribal members young and old," he continued. "I also see



Christopher M. Grant served as the guest speaker for the "Healthy Thursday" luncheon which was held on Thursday, May 24.