

Tribal and State Relations Committee
Chairman, Senator David O'Connell
September 26, 2011

Patrick N. Bohn, Director for Transitional Planning Services
North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Division of Adult Services

Members of the Tribal and State Relations Committee, my name is Pat Bohn and I'm Director of Transitional Planning Services at the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

I believe we are at a pivotal point in America in the way we think about and address public safety and correction's influence on it. Punishment and incarceration serve a role in preserving our safety but if we want to enhance our safety, we have to address criminal behavior with greater intelligence and targeted strategies and avoid making decisions out of anger, frustration, prejudice, and ill-founded ideologies.

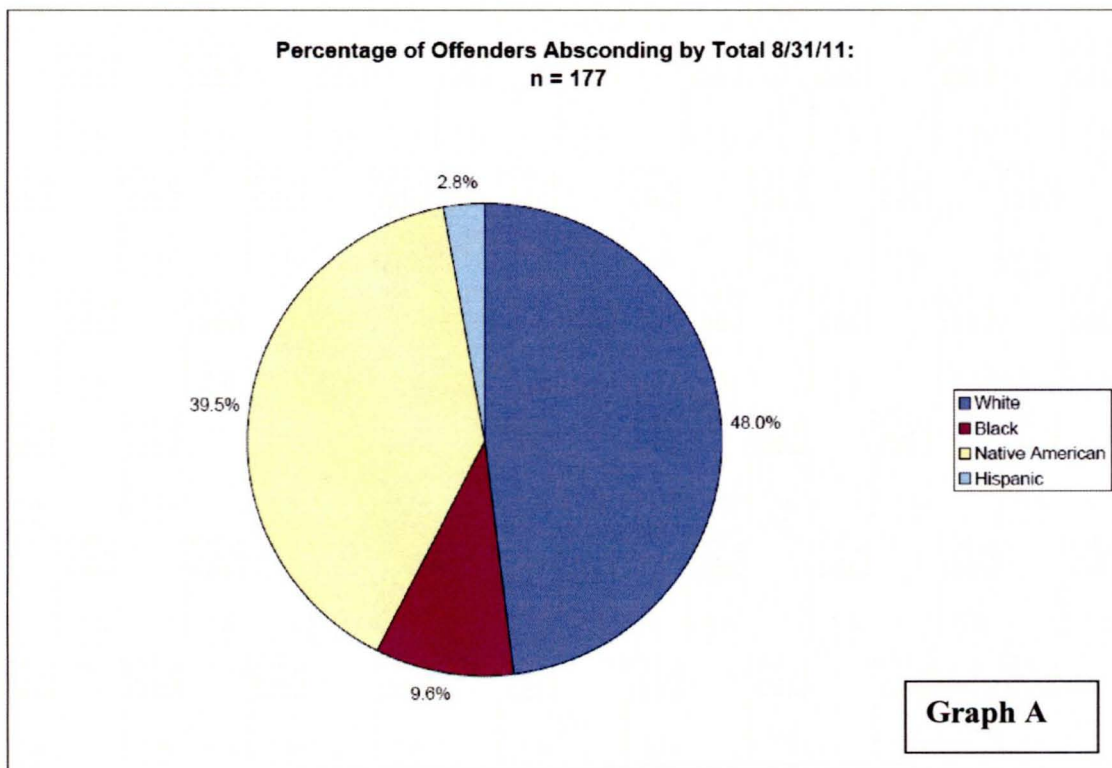
So let's take a brief look at American Indians and highlight a few things we are doing to intelligently and strategically address problems. Approximately 24% of our prison population and 16% of our state probation and parole population are comprised of American Indian men and women with the largest group identifying themselves as Sioux (42%). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, American Indians make up 5.4% of North Dakota's population. Our criminal justice system is prosecuting and incarcerating American Indians 4.4 times our state's general American Indian population and we have 3.2 times American Indians on probation and parole compared to our general state population. We strongly believe our role must be to improve our efforts in preparing American Indian people to transition from prison back to their communities with the goal that they never return to prison and to reduce the number of American Indians who have their probation or parole revoked and are sent to prison. Many inmates face a number of hurdles as they return from prison. Often they have lost their housing, have difficulty obtaining employment and have lower education levels, experience family difficulties, may be in need of mental health services or medical services beyond their means and battle ongoing chemical addiction issues.

During the 2010-2011 school year 39% of those participating in educational courses working toward a GED were American Indian. The department has initiated the Read Right® program in order to improve reading comprehension abilities among our inmate population in order to support their learning ability as so much of learning hinges upon reading comprehension.

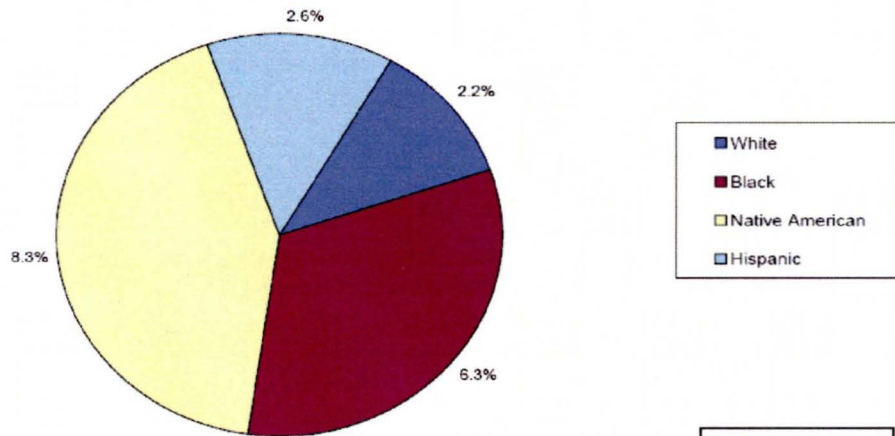
Similar to our overall inmate population, American Indians are in need of chemical treatment, sex offender treatment and mental health services. The department focused on improving outcomes by implementing more evidence-based approaches and services in our overall offender management plan. We are in the process of training our staff to

utilize motivational interviewing in order to improve communication between staff and offenders as well as improve the offenders' motivation to engage in the change process, including our treatment and education programs. Additionally, the department has contracted with the University of Cincinnati to revise our treatment program delivery services with one short-term goal being to improve participation and completion rates and a long-term goal to reduce recidivism rates. We have found that American Indians tend to complete treatment programs at a lower rate than our overall population (General Population = 73% vs American Indian Population = 55%. *2007-2009).

We have also found that American Indians abscond from probation supervision at a higher rate than other races which then becomes a major factor resulting in revocation (Reference Graphs A & B). We also find that American Indians are sent to state prison at higher rate than other races (Reference Graph C).

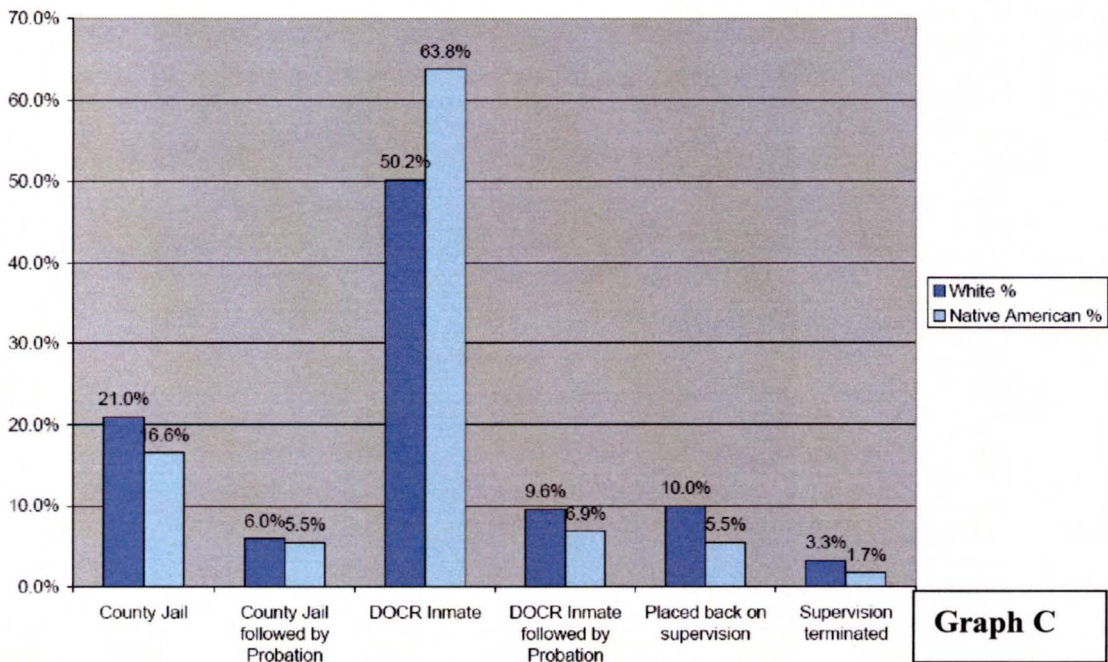


Percentage of Offenders on Active Absconding Status by Race 8/31/2011



Graph B

FY 2011 Revocation Disposition



Graph C

Other actions we have taken to help improve outcomes are having American Indian leaders speak to our American Indian inmates to educate and serve as quasi-mentors. We are also working with the Standing Rock Reservation to develop a Reentry Team in hopes that some local grass roots efforts can contribute to improving outcomes and

reducing recidivism. Likewise, in 2010 we established a Reentry Team in the Lake Region area which extends into the Spirit Lake Reservation.

In closing, there are many social and economic issues that impact our offender population and we will strive to continue to address these issues the best way possible. We are always open to ideas and collaborating with stakeholders in order to improve outcomes and will strive to use evidence-based practices to more intelligently and strategically improve public safety and reduce recidivism rates.