

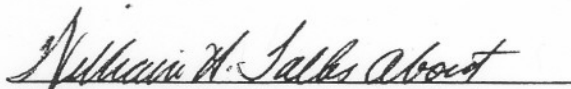
Hello, my name is William A. TalksAbout, I am a full-blooded member of the Blackfeet Nation. I have been married to Marie TalksAbout for 31 years and have 3 children.

I graduated from High School at Flandreau Indian Boarding School in 1967. After graduation I attended Haskell Indian College for one term. I then enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in March of 1969, and served a term of 3 years being honorably discharged in March of 1972. I am a Vietnam Combat Veteran having served with the 2 battalion 1st Marine Infantry Division.

After returning from military service I started to build my adult life here on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Working many different roles of labor, such as: Firefighting, Carpentry, Road Construction and the National Park Service.

I entered the political realm on the Blackfeet Nation in 1996 and have been involved to this date.

As Chairman of the Blackfeet Nation, my overall goal for my people is to lead them into self-sufficiency through the economic development of our rich natural resources. To pursue Business ventures with the Government and Private sectors, promoting economic growth and stability.



William A. TalksAbout, Chairmen of the Blackfeet Nation

Oki' (Greetings in the Blackfeet Language)

Chairman Grassley, Senator Baucus and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

My name is William A. TalksAbout, a full-blooded member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Indians of the State of Montana.

I am pleased to have been invited to present testimony on behalf of my tribe before this honorable committee.

I am the Chairman of our Tribal Council, which consists of nine councilmen, who are the representative Government of the members of the Blackfeet Tribe.

Our council and I are in full agreement about the relevance of this issue and they have empowered me to speak on their behalf and that of our membership.

The Blackfeet Indian Reservation borders Canada and Glacier National Park. This reservation consists of 1.5 million acres. The enrolled population is approximately 15,500 members, of which over 8,000+ reside on the Blackfeet reservation. The reservation makes up most of Glacier County and small portion of Pondera County.

As public safety becomes a greater issue everywhere, detention and correctional facilities have become a greater concern for the Blackfeet Tribe. The Blackfeet Tribe has seen a dramatic inmate population growth, operational and management changes, and an increase in special needs population.

With your permission, if I can use the distinction of non-Indian Jails, (meaning other jails in America) versus Indian Jails, (those jails on Indian reservations), then through study perception we will see that there is a distinct contrast between Indian and non-Indian Jails. That is the non-Indian jails are built properly, have adequate staff and funding

from tax monies. The need for new correction/detention facilities is preeminent on the Blackfeet reservation.

--The conditions relative to the Blackfeet Community jail are; negatively immense, intense and blight. The conditions are typical and are a good example of Indian Jails across the Nation.

It is a simple analogy that if one jail in Indian Country is the only jail that needs to be corrected, then the answer would be to fix that one jail, but if there is a continuous pattern of deplorable conditions that exist across the Nation in Indian Jails then reform needs to take place!

Just as much, that there is a sense of URGENCY to reform the system of Incarceration on Indian Reservations, by the Federal Government, then the same sense of urgency is felt by those actively involved in the Law & Order on Indian reservations and their people that are affected.

Across the board and throughout the hallmarks of Justice, this committee will hear of the nature of those conditions in Indian jails. That will add credence that reform is needed.

In 1970, the Blackfeet tribal jail was constructed and was condemned shortly thereafter because of a bad sewer system. It is approximately 9,197 square feet and has 12 cells. And to date, is still a condemned facility. Renovation took place, but was a band-aid effect and gradually moved back to the current situation of being bad and blight. The jail has a very small recreation area that is only accessible in the summer months. The building is constructed out of brick, so in the summer months it is up to 20 degrees hotter inside the facility. Further, the plumbing in the cells only works sometime. Many inmates have sentences longer than (30) days.

Our current juvenile detention facility was originally built for the youth as a safe haven. Eventually it was turned into a Correctional facility and has been eroding because of the material it was built out of. To date we have many inspections by the BIA Federal government, State, and Tribal agencies that require renovations.

What can we do, together to address the issue of jail reform?

My suggestions would be to:

- 1. — Build a larger adult detention facility to accommodate more prisoners in a safe and sanitary environment. The capacity for the 34- year old jail is 45 total- men and women. Currently the overcrowding prisoners present a threat to the health and welfare of the incarcerated individuals. At times there have been as many as 110- total men and women incarcerated at the Blackfeet jail.**
- 2. Build a larger juvenile detention facility to accommodate more prisoners in a safe and sanitary environment. The current capacity for the juveniles is 5 females, 9 males, and two safety cells which adds additional 2 incarcerated juveniles= for a total of 16 maximum. Upon certain celebrations and occasions our detention facility has had as many as 35 incarcerated at one time which is twice the building capacity.**
- 3. Promote the Tribal Court and Northern Police Training Center be built with our adult and juvenile detention facility to create stability and integrity to the Blackfeet Nation. Without the Tribal court and Law enforcement collaborating closely together, our Law & Order will not be and is currently not balanced.**
- 4. Within the new structure we will have the added floor space for the rehabilitation that is currently lacking in both the adult and juvenile facilities. Which is the counseling offices, and outdoor recreation.**
- 5. The Police Training Center would not only be for our Blackfeet members but for all the Northern Tribes that do not have the financial ability to continue to send their members to Albuquerque, N.M.**

I would like to thank you for your time Senators, and I and our people are eager and anxious to work toward this great effort.

Additional written testimony is added to this Oral.

Sincerely, William A. TalksAbout