

Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations Public Hearing – August 20, 2009

Speaking Points

**Presented by Darren E. Kroenke, Executive Director
Spotted Eagle, Inc.**

Spotted Eagle, Inc. Background:

- Spotted Eagle, Inc. (SEI) has been in existence as a Native American community based organization serving the off-reservation Native American population residing in Southeastern Wisconsin since 1974. The nonprofit organization was originally called the Milwaukee Area American Indian Manpower Council and was reregistered under the name Spotted Eagle, Inc. in 2001.
- The Mission of SEI is to offer the American Indian Community services and resources to remove barriers to self-determination and empowerment, while strengthening family, community, and tribal bonds.
- SEI has continuously provided comprehensive workforce development services to the adult off-reservation Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian community under three successive pieces of federal employment and training legislation. First, under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, then under the Job Training Partnership Act, and currently under the Workforce Investment Act as a Section 166 Indian and Native American Program grantee.
- In 1994 SEI initiated a community project in coordination with several collaborative partners to create an alternative high school for at-risk Native American students. Spotted Eagle High School has operated since that time in partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools as an alternative education program for at-risk students that targets education services to the Native American community while accepting all MPS students who are determined to be at-risk of not graduating from high school.
- In recent years, SEI has expanded its portfolio of community development services to include a financial literacy and asset building education program, a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site, and a TANF case management subcontract with United Migrant Opportunity Services to assist Native American W2 clients with navigating the different target programs that provide resources for our community.
- The Vision of SEI is to create through collaboration a regional intertribal resource center that serves and empowers the off-reservation Indian population in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Challenges to Fulfilling Mission and Vision:

- Federal and state public policy does not adequately address the social and community development needs of Indian families and individuals living off-reservation.
- Funding opportunities for Indian-controlled nonprofit community based organizations through federal and state programs that target services to off-reservation Native American communities are almost nonexistent.
- Most Federal and State grant request for proposals (RFP's) list only tribes, tribal consortia, or tribal designated entities as eligible applicants for funding consideration

- Most private sector funders, including the philanthropic community, falsely assume that all Native Americans are realizing the personal financial benefits of tribal enterprise, specifically Indian gaming, in the form of profit sharing per capita payments.
- Off-reservation Native Americans are an “invisible” constituency group which seldom is addressed in public policy discussions concerning the development of minority communities in the same manner as African Americans, Latinos, the Hmong community, or refugee populations.

Recommendations for State Legislative Consideration:

- Change the language in State grant program RFP’s that target or address the community and social development needs of Native Americans to include “Indian-controlled nonprofit organizations” as eligible applicants.
- Include the significantly large off-reservation Indian population in and around the City of Milwaukee as a target population for service delivery in State grant program RFP’s
- Add a representative seat to the State-Tribal Relations Committee that serves as a liaison to the off-reservation Native American population residing in and around Milwaukee.
- Hold an annual public hearing of the State-Tribal Relations Committee in Milwaukee to hear the concerns of off-reservation tribal members and Native American community based organizations serving this community.
- Advocate for the social and community development needs of off-reservation Native American individuals and families as an important minority constituency at the same level as other minority communities within the State of Wisconsin.