

Essay Title :

Big beautiful sky, which stretches for miles over flat land. At night, stars so close you could rob the sky of it's bright beauty. The air fresh, crisp and full of joy. In "Gods Country " as it's called lies the Northern Cheyenne Reservation located in southeastern Montana. To outsiders, it is considered a little poor town in the middle of nowhere. But to me, it is what I call home. This is what I recall as a child living in Lame Deer, MT. Today, my tribal community faces many obstacles. The biggest issue is drugs and alcohol throughout the reservation. This problem has a ripple effect in our community. Drug use is potentially lethal, and it effects the tribal youth and our native culture.

The Northern Cheyenne is a dry reservation, which means no alcohol is allowed to be brought in, sold, or drank on the reservation. Although it is not highly enforced there are bars no less than five miles on every road in and out of the reservation. Alcohol is commonly abused among native people. Alcoholism is a catalyst for domestic violence among many Native American families. Many native children experience this first hand at a young age on the reservation. Seeing their parents and family members drink, the children are more likely to take up drinking as a way of comfort when they get older. For example, my uncle has a drinking problem. When he was younger his father would drink excessively to the point that if he didn't drink, his body would shake. When my grandpa passed away my uncle found comfort in the bottle the way his father did. On the reservation, alcohol is prohibited but it says nothing of drugs. The drug that is sweeping across reservations is Methamphetamine. Also know as Crystal Meth it is a white odorless powdered drug that effects the central nervous system. It is inexpensive to make and highly addictive. The drug made its way to Billings which is about an hour and a half drive from Lame Deer, then made its way down into the reservation. Now drug abuse is a common problem on my reservation.

In a article in the Colorlines Magazine, Kim Baca interviews a Lame Deer resident battling against drugs and alcohol. As a freshman at Lame Deer High School, Neela Bear was a model student inspiring to make honor society. But she was also dealing with family issues and was looking for comfort. Soon, she turned to her peers who introduced her to drugs. She began smoking marijuana to cope with her reality. Neela describes her first experience with Meth: " Being high at the time and feeling peer pressure, I thought it was OK to do it,"(Bara, 2) Her weight rapidly dropped from a healthy 115 to 85 pounds due to malnutrition which is a side effect of crystal meth.

Neela Bear is one example of the tragic stories of drug use. The effect of drugs runs throughout the school systems. The dropout rate of high school students on the reservation is at an all time high. Native students had a higher dropout rate of 40% compared to non native students of only 8%(Carol&David, 1). It is clear that teens are pre occupied with things other than school. In my own experience two of my cousins didn't graduate from high school due to crystal meth. They became addicted at a young age and dropped out of school. They still continue to use to this day.

In the mix of all this commotion our culture is slowly fading away. Drugs and alcohol have corrupted the minds of the native people on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. Instead of caring for our traditions they are addicted to a substance or a bottle. Many elders in today's life are going on to the spirit world. Taking many important aspects' of our culture along with them because there is not a next generation taking the responsibility to preserve them. If this continues our culture will no longer exist. The highly favored crystal meth must be driven out of the reservation. In order to make a difference the first step must be in the direction of the tribal council. They must direct their attention to stop the drug trafficking within the boundaries of the reservation, by strengthening the law enforcement. Establish a rehabilitation center in Lame Deer for those addicted to crystal meth. But most importantly educate the youth about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. It must start at

an early age, as young as third grade. Children are the key to the success of our future, without them we have no future. The schools must educate the importance of cultural tradition and encourage the parents as best they can to continue the tradition at home. Also make an addition to the extracurricular activities to keep students occupied, so that they stay out of trouble. Personally how I plan to make a difference, is giving back to my tribal community. After graduating from high school I will be attending St. Josephs College of Maine majoring in liberal arts. After earning my degree I plan on returning to the Northern Cheyenne reservation were I hope to educate the children academically and culturally. Together we will defeat these dark times. Like a powerful medicine man once said:

" Come, let us put our minds together to see what kind of lives we can make for our children" (Chief Sitting Bull).

Nea'eše. (Thank You)

EssayWorksCited :

#### Work Cited

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