

## **HOUSING & SANITATION**

There is a housing crisis in Indian country. Despite the Indian Housing Authority's (IHAs) recent efforts, the need for adequate housing on reservations remains acute. One legislator deplored the fact that "there are 90,000 homeless or underhoused Indian families, and that 30% of Indian housing is overcrowded and less than 50% of it is connected to a public sewer." (March 8, 2004, Indian Country Today).

In addition, many American Indians are living in substandard housing. About 40% of on-reservation housing is considered inadequate (2003, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights). The waiting list for tribal housing is long; the wait is often three years or more, and overcrowding is inevitable. Most families will not turn away family members or anyone who needs a place to stay. It is not uncommon for 3 or more generations to live in a two-bedroom home with inadequate plumbing, kitchen facilities, cooling, and heating.

Further increasing the concerns with reservation housing is the noticeable absence of utilities. While most Americans take running water, telephones, and electricity for granted, many reservation families live without these amenities. On a seriously stretched budget, utilities are viewed as luxuries compared to food and transportation. Overcrowding, substandard dwellings, and lack of utilities all increase the potential for health risk, especially in rural and remote areas where there is a lack of accessible healthcare.

## **HEALTH**

Due to underfunding, Indian Health Service facilities are crisis-driven and leave a wide gap in adequate and preventative health care for many Native Americans on the reservations. Pharmacies and doctor's offices outside of hospitals are completely non-existent in some communities.

The pressures to shift from a traditional way of life toward a Western lifestyle has dramatically impacted the health and welfare of the Native peoples and created a terrible epidemic of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, tuberculosis, and cancer. The statistics are alarming.

### **HEALTH DISPARITIES**

- Native people die at higher rates than other Americans from
  - tuberculosis: 600% higher alcoholism: 510% higher ? diabetes: 189% higher
  - vehicular transportation crashes: 229% higher injuries: 152% higher ? suicide: 62% higher
- Indian youth have the highest rate of suicide among all ethnic groups in the US and is the second-leading cause of death for Native youth aged 15-24.

### **ENERGY ON TRIBAL LANDS**

- Indian tribes boast nearly a quarter of the nation's on-shore oil and gas reserves and developable resources and one-third of the West's low-sulfur coal. Yet, in total, it represents less than five percent of current national energy production.

- The Department of the Interior estimates that undeveloped reserves of coal, natural gas, and oil on tribal lands could generate nearly \$1 trillion in revenues for tribes and surrounding communities.
- Tribal wind and solar energy potential can provide respectively, 14 percent and 4.5 times the nation's energy needs.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) comprise over 104,000 miles of public roads and are owned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian tribes, states and counties.
  - More than 65 percent of the system is unimproved earth and gravel, and approximately 24 percent of IRR bridges are classified as deficient.
- While the number of fatal crashes in the nation declined 2.2 percent over the past 25 years, the number of fatal motor vehicle crashes per year on Indian reservations increased 52.5 percent.

## **EDUCATION**

- The number of American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled in colleges and universities and the number of postsecondary degrees awarded has more than doubled in the past 30 years.
- Only five percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives have received graduate or professional degrees, compared to 10 percent for the total population, and only nine percent of American Indians have earned bachelor's degrees compared to 19 percent for the US population.