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Ads aim to curb meth use in Indian communities across the U.S.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) - An ad campaign has been launched in hopes of raising awareness and curbing the use of methamphetamine in American Indian communities across the nation. The National Congress of American Indians, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and federal officials unveiled the campaign Friday at the annual Gathering of Nations Pow Wow in Albuquerque.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) - An ad campaign has been launched in hopes of raising awareness and curbing the use of methamphetamine in American Indian communities across the nation. The National Congress of American Indians, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and federal officials unveiled the campaign Friday at the annual Gathering of Nations Pow Wow in Albuquerque.

Officials said it's the first national meth prevention initiative developed specifically for Indian Country, which has the highest rate of meth abuse among all ethnicities. Joe Garcia, president of NCAI and chairman of New Mexico's All Indian Pueblo Council, said the radio and print ads will be a good way to reach out and educate Indians on the dangers of meth. "This deadly drug is hurting our native communities and through the effort, NCAI is committed to saving our native youth and families from its grasp," Garcia said. "This educational initiative will undoubtedly save lives."

Officials said that nationally, American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians have the highest rates of methamphetamine abuse. They also pointed to a 2006 report from the Bureau of Indian Affairs that found nearly three-quarters of tribal police forces rank meth as their greatest drug threat. Scott Burns, deputy director for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, said the severity of the meth problem in Indian Country is alarming. "While many parts of the nation are seeing declines in meth production, trafficking and use, American Indian and Alaska Native communities are being preyed upon by criminals behind this horrific drug trade," he said.


Burns said developing culturally relevant meth prevention messages for Indians is an important step "in pushing back against this problem."

The ads encourage youth to draw strength from their traditions and heritage to avoid the trap of meth. They also aim to encourage Indian adults to stay involved in their children's lives. The NCAI said the ads were developed through comprehensive research and testing. The ads were piloted in several Indian communities in Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico and South Dakota over several months before debuting as part of the national campaign.

The ads have been posted on NCAI's Web site and the organization has been encouraging tribes to download and share them with their tribal members. Alina Diaz of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America said officials are hopeful the ads will get parents and children talking about the problem. "Increased education and

communication between parents, elders and teens is one of the most important factors in preventing meth use," she said.

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National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)
1301 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 200, Washington D.C. 20036
Phone: (202) 466-7767, Fax: (202) 466-7797
Email: ncai@ncai.org

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