



# Elder Visions

Newsletter of the National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.

Fall 2003

## NICOA reaches out to Elders and disabled in Seattle Seattle Training Project Joining People Together

**N**ICOA's Education and Outreach project in Seattle is midway through its one-year contract with its sponsoring agencies – the Social Security Administration, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Indian Health Service. The project has made significant progress establishing an active coalition and beginning train the trainer programs, the hallmark of the Education and Outreach project.

On July 10, more than 90 individuals from Seattle area health and social service organizations, including all of the Washington Tribes, attended a presentation given by Judge Arnold Battise (Alabama-Coushatta) on the Social Security Disability Hearings and Appeals process. Some Tribal members traveled more than 200 miles to hear the Judge discuss the processes and problems that native people encounter when their disability claims are denied. "The program was a resounding success," says Mary Kay Smith, Project Contractor for NICOA, "and we hope to have Judge Battise repeat his presentation later this fall."

The coalition met on August 14 to address three areas of priority for the remainder of the Seattle project. The three important areas discussed included:

### *Sustainability*

The coalition acknowledged the importance of development and encouragement of a steering

committee to sustain the coalition after NICOA departs from Seattle. The contract ends in January, 2004, and the coalition determined that sustainability of the project was the top priority for the program, as it will be one of NICOA's most important legacy.

### *Evaluation*

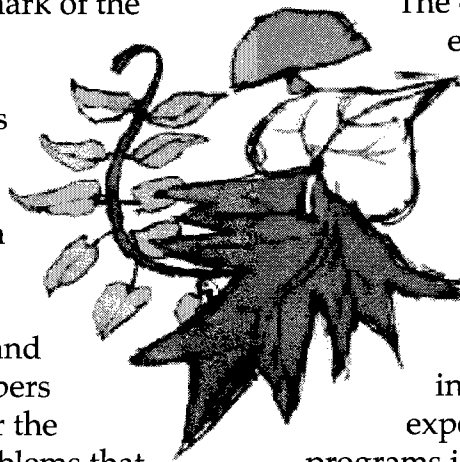
The coalition determined that effective evaluation of the first round of technical training and recommendations is necessary for future offerings of basic training in the full range of Social Security Act program benefits.

### *Reaching the homeless*

Development of methods for reaching the homeless native population in Seattle. The project coordinators expect to work with the Veteran's Affairs programs in the Seattle area. The Belltown Community Service Office of the State of Washington Department of Health and Social Services will also provide substantial advice and counsel.

In addition to determining the three areas of top priority for the coalition, the meeting also addressed approaches for cross-cultural training and veteran's benefits training. These topics were not originally in the project scope of work with the federal agencies, but NICOA is committed to assisting the coalition in finding ways to obtain training in these important areas.

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Baldrige leaves after 12 years  
**NICOA under new leadership**

**A**fter 12 years, Dave Baldrige stepped down as NICOA's executive director on October 1. Baldrige said that his decision to leave NICOA brought mixed emotions. "I'm really proud of the work NICOA has done for Indian elders but it is time for some new challenges, for both myself and NICOA." Says Baldrige, "Twelve years is a long time at the front of a national non-profit."

Baldrige intends to continue his tireless efforts in Indian Country with a new venture of his own. "My new company is called the *National Indian Project Center*. I'll be working with some really great partners, some of the best thinkers and doers in Indian Country, and we're going to do some first-class things for tribes and for Native people." NIPC's doors opened for business on October 1.

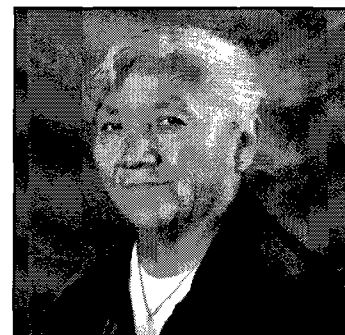
Baldrige says that "trying to create a voice for Indian elders has never been easy, and it probably never will be easy. It is more important now than ever before to stay on top of the game."

Baldrige said, "We've seen the Title VI funding go from \$13 million to \$30 million; we've completed successful projects for seven federal agencies and at least three foundations. Our conferences are among the biggest and best in the aging network...but most of all, we've kept Indian elders in the forefront of our work and our prayers. That's a good thing."

Baldrige believes that NICOA's best four achievements to date include that "We're bringing paychecks to 540 elders in 14 states through our Senior Community Service Employment Program. Second, our internal accounting is second to none - we even achieved a perfect audit, something few organizations can claim. Third, we've pioneered the computer mapping of Indian health - especially for diabetes. And fourth, our testimony and advocacy has made a difference and earned the respect of the National Aging Network.

NICOA thanks Dave for his tireless efforts for our elders, and wishes him the very best of luck in his future work in Indian Country.

NICOA employee feature  
**Frances Duran**

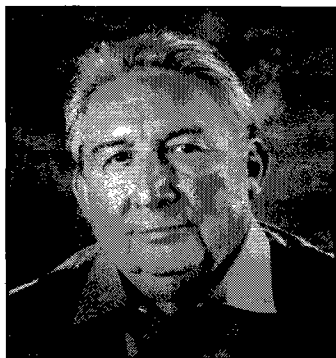


**F**rances Duran was born in front of a cozy fireplace in San Felipe Pueblo, New Mexico. She proudly says "I have lived at San Felipe my entire life." After graduating from high school and pursuing six months of business courses to become an Office Machines Operator, Frances worked for a small radio and television shop as their bookkeeper. Her elder program referred her to NICOA for employment in its SCSEP program three years ago, and she began her work as a trainee. Before long, she was a full-time employee for the organization. Frances works as a file clerk and provides a smiling face for everyone at the Albuquerque office. In her words, the best thing an elder ever taught her was that "everything has feelings and a heart. Respect it all, be it rocks, roots, or leaves."

NICOA selects interim director

## Kodaseet is interim director for NICOA

**N**ICOA board chairman Gary Kodaseet has been named as the interim executive director for the National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA). The action, approved unanimously by board members attending a June 24 – 26 meeting in Albuquerque, established Kodaseet as the interim executive director and he will assume his new position on October 1.



"I am honored to have this opportunity to serve NICOA and the nation's Indian elders," said Kodaseet. "The job is a big challenge and we are appreciative of the outstanding leadership Dave Baldrige provided to NICOA over these past 12 years." Kodaseet wants to assure the Indian elders that his efforts will be to maintain NICOA's role as the leading advocate and resource for all Native American elderly programs.

Kodaseet retired in 1996 after 28 years with the Federal government. In addition to serving on the Haskell Indian Nations University board of regents, he was a volunteer Minority Affairs specialist with the Oklahoma AARP and vice-chair of the Oklahoma State Council on Aging. He is a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Kodaseet will begin his new position on October 1, 2003. NICOA's board chairmanship will be assumed by vice-chairman Frank Chee Willetto. A former Navajo Code Talker and former Vice President of the Navajo Nation, Willetto will serve as NICOA's board chairman until NICOA's next board elections, scheduled for August 28-30, 2004, in Milwaukee, WI. Longtime board member Tammy Sixkiller, a Pima Indian from Phoenix, AZ, was elected to serve as interim Vice Chair. Sammy White, Kiowa, will serve as the alternate Anadarko representative.

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## Seattle benefits training

"The project coordinators are very pleased with the response to the Seattle project," says Smith.

For the first time, and perhaps in any major urban area, the project sponsored a forum for Native organizations and organizations serving American Indians and Alaska Native Elders, including disabled individuals, and brought them together to share resources and ideas, with the end result being results leading toward improved services as each coalition member pursues its own mission.

For more information about this project, contact: Rose Rapoza, Seattle Coordinator for NICOA. Phone: 206/324-9360. E-mail: RoseR@SIHB.org

NICOA Board  
Member feature

## Jean Campbell



**B**orn and raised at the Fort Belknap Agency only three miles from Harlem, MT, Jean Campbell appreciates the lessons she has learned throughout her life. Now a retired dietician, she works with her Senior Center and enjoys the opportunity it provides for her to interact with elders. She has been a NICOA board member for over a decade. After her first two years on the board, Jean began to understand the importance of her position. She met with congressional representatives and began to see her own importance as a representative of her own people, the Assiniboine/Gros Ventre, and other American Indian elders across the nation. Jean believes the most important thing an elder ever taught her was respect, "for an individual, for groups, for all things," and she advises, "be tolerant, have faith, and be considerate, for there is much good in everyone."