



Elder Visions

Newsletter of the National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.

Summer 2003

NICOA reaches out to Elders and disabled in Seattle

Education and outreach demonstration project for American Indians and Alaska Natives

The National Indian Council on Aging is sponsoring a coalition of Native and non-Native health and social service organizations in Seattle to bring information about the full range of Social Security benefits to urban American Indian and Alaska Native people. This project is the fourth and, sadly, the last phase of a contract with the two agencies that manage the benefit programs – the Social Security Administration and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. The Indian Health Service is also a partner to an historic agreement among the three agencies that has funded NICOA for the past three years. The

project began in 2000 and was developed among the pueblos of Northern New Mexico.

It moved on to reservations in Minnesota and Montana and now to the urban setting in Seattle.

Our funding ends with this phase. Although we will continue to promote continuation, prospects are grim as all three agencies face intense budget pressures.

Elders' grassroots ideas form our path

Despite an uncertain future, the good news is the broad-based Coalition of health and social service organizations who have come together under NICOA's guidance.

These organizations already serve the native people of Seattle through their own missions. We are bringing to the table each month, the leadership of key Native organizations, agencies from all levels of govern-

ment and the private sector. Active in our Coalition is United Indians of all Tribes, the Chief Seattle Club and the Seattle Indian Health Board (our partner in Seattle). From the city government we have the Mayor's Tribal Affairs Liaison, the Aging and Disability Services Division of the Seattle-King County, the Washington Community and Mental Health Association, the State Health Insurance Benefits Administration, the University of Washington's School of Medicine, Native American Center of Excellence and private sector organizations such as the Washington Health Foundation. The State





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Thoughts from executive director Dave Baldrige ———
American Indian or Native American?

Several years ago I received an email message from an eastern college professor who had been criticized by her department for calling Indians "Indians" instead of Native Americans. I responded that American Indian / Alaska Native is the correct term, not Native American . . . and that I hoped her department would find something more substantive to get uptight about. But here at NICOA we also find ourselves trying to clear up the use of these terms, so maybe it's time to talk about it.

Who cares, anyway? Certainly not Native American, Indian elders—who frequently refer to themselves as Native Americans. We figure that Indian elders know who you are and what you want to be called. It's not our job to correct you. Even the Older Americans Act (OAA) refers to us as Native Americans.

But the OAA, we think, along with members of Congress and the national aging network, should be more careful with their words. They should say American Indian / Alaska Native instead of Native American. The reason isn't hard to understand. It's about the Federal Trust Responsibility to provide health care and human services to Indians just like those that other Americans can get. The Federal Trust Responsibility is based on 800 treaties broken by the U.S. government—treaties that are recognized internationally as enforceable law. It is also based on federal statute (law) and case law (court decisions that support federal law). The Federal Trust Responsibility is, as you can see, very important to Indian elders. It applies not to Indian tribes (there are more than 560 of them) but to Indian individuals. Here's the problem. It does not apply to Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, or other Native Americans. It applies only to American Indians and Alaska Natives. This is not to say that other Native Americans get better services than Indians, or that the needs of Indians are greater, or that Indians are more deserving. But in fact Indians are the only Native American

NICOA featured employee
Clytemnestra Davison



Clytemnestra "Cly" Davison was born in Arizona and raised in California, Arizona, and Utah, which may begin to explain her keen interest in people and geography. Cly joined the NICOA team nearly 2 1/2 years ago, and currently serves as a secondary Executive Administrative Assistant and Receptionist. Her sincere desire to learn has made her a very valuable addition to NICOA's administrative staff. Cly traces her work ethic and desire to help others from lessons learned from the elders who helped to raise her. She believes that "The most important thing an elder has taught me in my own life is respect for traditional beliefs and to always appreciate the special gift of life and family."

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What do we call ourselves?



group that has a special political relationship with the U.S. government. Yes, we are Native Americans, but we are not just Native Americans. The United States has a formalized legal obligation to provide services to us.

This simple choice of words can have a lot of impact. In the late 1980s, the Older Americans Act was just being approved by Congress. I am told that, at the last minute, Hawaiian Senator Matsunaga (deceased)—a good advocate for older Americans—got wording in that took a full 10 percent of Title VI dollars (nutrition and other services) and provided them to Native Hawaiians. Indian advocates,

who had worked hard for the title's already-too-small funding, were stunned. The wording exists today. Yes, that part of Title VI goes to Native Americans but it does not go to American Indians or Alaska Natives.

With our different cultural histories, issues, and needs, Indian country—especially Indian elders—cannot afford to lose the benefits we get from the Federal Trust Responsibility. You'll see Indian leaders, if they know their stuff, calling themselves American Indians or Alaska Natives. Native American just doesn't say enough.

NICOA to give technical assistance

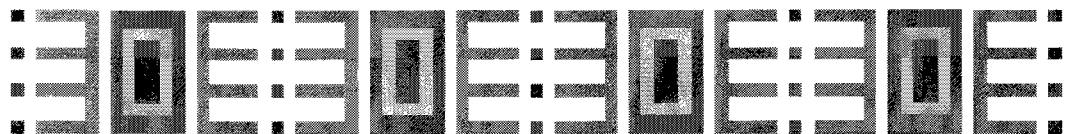
New IHS long-term care grants for tribes

The Indian Health Service is publishing a new grant announcement, expected by June 20, "to support projects that develop long term care services for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) elders."

Federally-recognized tribes and non-profits serving Indians can apply. The IHS hopes to provide 12-24 grants, ranging from \$30-50,000. According to NICOA board chairman Gary Kodaseet, "This is the first time we can remember that IHS has put this much money and effort into tribal long-term care programs."

In addition to the grant announcement, the IHS has asked NICOA to provide technical assistance to tribes who want to apply for grants, and also to tribes who compete successfully and are awarded grants. NICOA's long-term care help for tribes is already available. A "bank" of experts in Indian LTC, located around the country, will provide phone and / or on-site assistance to interested tribes. The Center will respond to TA requests on a first come, first-served basis. Types of help available through the Center include assistance with grant writing, needs assessment, surveys, focus groups, residential care, assisted living, home health care, Medicare and Medicaid, and many other issues of long-term care.

The Center's Information & Referral database and library will provide information to all interested tribes. The Center will also publish a newsletter and will host a series of "Tribal Leaders Forums" on LTC. The forums s will be conducted by phone and at selected meetings and workshops. Interested tribes and organizations should phone NICOA for Eva or Dave at 505/292-2001.





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Medical Assistance Administration (Medicaid), Division of Insurance and Governor's Office are represented. The local federal sponsorship and participation has been active from the start. The Seattle Regional Offices of the Social Security Administration and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services are fully engaged in the project. NICOA has also received continuing assistance and counsel from the Portland Area Office of the Indian Health Service. Two of NICOA's Board Members addressed our first Coalition meeting: James Delacruz and Andrew Joseph.

Training, training, training

The project in Seattle seeks to work with the Coalition by training community workers in the basics of the Social Security benefits programs. The Coalition has guided us in developing the curriculum for the basic training with added emphasis on issues that apply to Indian clients. NICOA will build on its prior record of organizing this basic federal benefits

training. We are also developing a special cultural respect program for non-Native outreach workers – a special request of our Coalition members. Of great importance is a special presentation by Judge Arnold Batisse, a native administrative Law Judge with the Social Security Administration, on the hearings and appeals process for disability. Judge Batisse will discuss a topic that is a significant problem throughout Indian Country. Nearly 75% of initial disability claims are denied and very few Indian people file for reconsideration, hearing, or appeal of that claim. They suffer with their disabilities because the process to get assistance is so difficult. NICOA will work with the federal partners to bring a seminar to physicians on the medical evidence needed to support disability claims. This program will provide the doctors with Continuing Medical Education credits. The Seattle project is focused on a model for the urban Indian population. However, the Washington State Tribes are invited to all training programs.

Mutual respect means mutual benefit

The Seattle program is heavily based on training however, the Coalition has also begun to provide mutual benefits to its members by their association and regular meetings. As an example, the Seattle-King County Aging and Disability Services Division needed advice from the Native community and input to its four year area plan. Several Coalition members met with this city / county agency to assist in the process and propose ideas and options. We hope the Coalition will continue to work together after our project ends.

Our onsite coordinator brings it all together

Another key to the success of the Seattle program and the Coalition is NICOA's Onsite Coordinator - Rose Rapoza (Klallam, Elwha Band. A long-term resident of Seattle, Washington, Rosie has more than 20 years of experience within Seattle City Government including Housing and Human Services and as a legislative aide to the City Council. She has per-

sonal experience in diversity programs and community service both as an adjunct to her positions with the City and as a volunteer. Rose supports the Seattle project through her extensive network building skills and she manages all the logistics of our monthly Coalition meetings and training programs. She can be reached at the Seattle Indian Health Board (NICOA's partner in Seattle). Phone 206.324-9360 ext. 1145.

Environmental issues —
Representing Elders at EPA

Members of the NICOA Map Team represented elders at Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sessions focusing on elders and the environment. Heather Mann and Chandra Bales spoke in Los Angeles, California recently. The two told EPA officials that elders are very interested in changes affecting water and air quality. They also emphasized the need for cultural sensitivity and respect for elders in all aspects of EPA outreach.