
ElderVoices

Newsletter of the National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.

Fall 2000

NICOA Conference 2000 Report

A record number of early registrants and a dedicated host tribe combined to make NICOA Conference 2000 a great success. The new millennium was cause for NICOA to come together and take a new approach to an issue affecting people of all races; spirituality. A range of speakers, from the Social Security Commissioner to the keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf pipe, gave perspectives on what the new millennium means to America.

Speakers such as Chickasaw Governor Bill Anoatubby reminded conferees that the strength of the nation relies on the strength of the spirit, while NICOA intern Corey Suazo told of how much tribal youth

rely on elders for guidance and strength.

Speakers also talked of healing body and spirit. Joyce Dugan, former chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, urged elders to pass on their experiences with in order to prevent the disease, while Madonna Bluehorse-Beard spoke of spiritual recovery from abuse. The speakers served as inspiration for the development of the Spiritual Message to America, a copy of which is included in this newsletter.

In addition to speakers focused on spiritual issues, Social Security commissioner Kenneth Apfel spoke to the NICOA membership on the Social Security Administration's commitment to benefit education. His speech introduced the Inter-Agency Agreement between the Social Security Administration, The Health Care Financing Administration, and Indian Health Service, the details of which can be found in this newsletter.

Board Election Results

Six Board of Directors and the Title VI representative were up for re-election this year at the conference. Here are the results:

- ◆ Gary Kodaseet, Anadarko Area
- ◆ Lillian Taylor, Central Area
- ◆ Patricia Woods, Muskogee Area
- ◆ Steve Wilson, Title VI Representative
- ◆ Tammy Sixkiller, Phoenix Area
- ◆ Andrew C. Joseph, Sr., Portland Area
- ◆ Harriet Rhoades, Sacramento Area

**TheNationalIndian
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**NICOA
Board of Directors**

Frank Chee Willetto (Navajo Area)
(Chairman) 505/786-5435

Gary Kodaseet (Anadarko Area)
(Vice Chairman) 405/793-0958

Gloria LeftHand (Aberdeen Area)
(Secretary) 701/766-1244

Janet Guthrie (Juneau Area)
(Treasurer) 907/886-7191

Steve Wilsom (National Title VI)
580/421-6284

Jean Campbell (Billings Area)
406/353-4919

Tammy Sixkiller (Phoenix Area)
623/846-7991

Archie Chavez (Albuquerque Area)
505/867-6854

Helen Cummings (Minneapolis Area)
218/335-3500

Andrew Joseph, Sr. (Portland Area)
509/633-2404

Harriet Rhoades (Sacramento Area)
707/964-2647

Lillian Taylor (Central Area)
716/354-9287

Pat Woods (Muskogee Area)
(Past Chair) 580/622-2057

Education and Outreach

Inter-Agency Agreement Announced

One of the highlights of the NICOA conference was the announcement of the Inter-Agency Agreement recently established between the Indian Health Service, the Health Care Financing Administration, and the Social Security Administration. This agreement creates a multiple agency initiative to conduct Benefits Education and Disease Prevention outreach programs based on the NICOA model.

The importance of this agreement was reinforced by the presence of Social Security Commissioner Kenneth Apfel, who spoke to NICOA members at the conference. He indicated his

hopes that this agreement will increase awareness of eligibility.

The purpose of this agreement includes creating effective, culturally sensitive information to Indian people on benefit eligibility and disease management by using guidance and direction from Indian communities and creating partnerships with Indian organizations. The most promising aspect of this agreement is that it encourages other federal agencies to participate, opening the door for the Administration on Aging and the Veterans Administration to join in this education effort in the future.

**OLDER
AMERICANS
ACT
REPORT**

Message to America Update

I sit here with a bag full of the various messages you gave NICOA at the conference, and it is as if they are tugging at my leg, begging me to read them again. And I know I must. But I am not ready. Images of your beautiful faces fill my mind, and the words you spoke at the conference are burned into my ears. I hear you laughing when you hear a joke at your lunch table, and your excited conversation when you meet up with an old friend. I realize how much I miss all of you. Part of getting back to business here at NICOA has been overcoming my loneliness for you.

As I console myself with the thought that Indian Country is a small world, that I will see you all somewhere, I re-read the messages in our conference bag. They are both overwhelming and invaluable. I was fortunate to be a part of the team that furiously worked on assembling the Spiritual Message to America, which is enclosed in this issue of the NICOA newsletter. From three o'clock Monday afternoon until six o'clock Tuesday morning, this team read, organized, typed, printed and proofread draft after draft of the Message. I must tell you that you would be proud of this dedicated team. There were many young people in the group, including our two interns, Corey Suazo and Phoebe Suina. These young people were tireless in their dedication to your words.

The message you read here is your message with only a few words added to make it all flow together. The biggest challenge the Message Team faced was editing for length. Because the team felt the message needed to be only a few pages to maintain the attention of the reader (especially the younger ones), we were forced to choose the most eloquent phrases from both the group development sessions and the personal written messages. Not surprisingly, most of the messages we received were extremely eloquent and worthy of inclusion. That was when the team realized that the general message we were assembling from your words was not be enough.

Your specific messages addressing problems such as youth, environment, sovereignty, and policy need to be compiled and available for others to read. As a member of this team, I feel selfish, like I am holding out on the rest of America by keeping these messages to myself. Therefore, I want to take this time to assure you that work will continue on the message. I hope that in the next month or so the core Message Team that met in Duluth will be able to come together and have a little more time, and a lot less pressure, to organize and produce a more comprehensive message. I hope to have more specifics by the next newsletter.

I want to end by telling you how much you mean to me, and how personally affected I am by the words you offered at the NICOA conference. I want to assure you that there are young people listening to you, I know this because I am listening, and the other young people at the conference are listening. Don't give up on us or the others who take your words too lightly. We all need you. We need you to be patient, to keep telling us, to stay healthy for us so you will be around to tell our babies, and most importantly, to set a good example for us. Thank you for your words, and I can't wait to see you again.

last page

LONG TERM CARE GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT?

National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.
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Conference Registration Numbers:

1280 Elders registered
105 tribes represented
351 non-Elders registered
31 Registered Exhibitors