

FOREWORD

The elderly Indian, down through the years, has been the preserver of the Indian race, Indian culture, Indian history. Indian people have never been ashamed of growing old. They merely accept it as a fact of life because they understand the forces of life and the forces of nature, that all and everything that lives also decays.

The Indian elders have always been a part of the extended family. Being the heart and the center of that Indian family, they bring into that family unit an experience, maturity. They also bring to us knowledge, wisdom.

One of the greatest values of the Indian elderly is that they represent to us a repository. All that we like to claim and talk about as Indian didn't come to us from the university or the high school; it came to us from the Indian elderly. All that we hold so dear and so precious in our Indianness comes from those who have gone before us. When we look at the Indian elderly, there is something in them, with them, that is so precious.

Today, we salute the Indian elder for preserving what is left of the Indianness. Let us continue to hold hands and join forces and, in the name of Indians, while this country is lost in red, white, and blue, let us become lost in our Indianness and maintain our identity in our Indian community.

From the opening remarks of
Wendell Chino, President
National Tribal Chairmen's Association

There isn't any doubt in my mind, or in the minds of any of us who are working in the field of Aging, that, by any social or economic indicators commonly used to reflect conditions under which people live, American Indians frequently fall into the lowest of categories. And there is no question in our mind but that no other group of older Americans is faced with so stark a prospect in their old age as is the elderly American Indian. . . . There are many members of the Indian community who can be classified as older persons whose annual incomes are below the poverty threshold. That is an indefensible situation, but that is something that we have to keep working on until we get a correction.

From the keynote address by
Dr. Arthur S. Flemming
Commissioner on Aging

Hearing Before the Select Committee on Aging, U.S. House of Representatives, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, August 20, 1976	
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