



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SAC-06-###

**TITLE: DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE TRIBAL RESPONSE TO ELDER ABUSE**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, Tribal Elders are the keepers of our heritage, culture and language. It is recognized that Tribal Elders have molded our Tribal Nations and strengthened the foundation for future generations. It is paramount that Tribal Governments in collaboration with the states, their Tribal communities, and local resources to come together to design a community-based system and laws to protect the health and dignity of Tribal Elders; and,

**WHEREAS**, the significant population increase in American Indian and Alaska Native Elders likely will result in escalating incidents of Elder abuse and will necessitate a response by justice system professionals in each Tribal community; and,

**WHEREAS**, Elder abuse encompasses both criminal and non-criminal acts of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, abandonment, and self-neglect and may have physical, behavioral, social, psychological and financial consequences for victims; and,

**WHEREAS**, many community members and professionals interact with older persons through their living of work situations. These Elders may be victimized by acts of abuse, neglect, and exploitation because they trust, depend on, or feel a kinship or obligation to these members. Elder abuse usually occurs in private, and many victims are unable or willing to report it; and,

**WHEREAS**, community members and professionals may have the opportunity to prevent, identify, and respond to Elder abuse during the course for the contact with the community Elders through participation at senior centers, social services, Indian Health Services, observation during field contacts, victim disclosure,

reports by others in the community. Community members and professionals, therefore, should be attentive to potential Elder abuse indicators when working with Elders; and,

**WHEREAS**, community members should and professionals must report suspected Elder abuse to adult protective services or law enforcement agencies, and in some states are mandated to report their suspicions to those agencies. It is further incumbent upon community members and professionals to collaborate with the justice system and community-based agencies and organizations on cases to promote the safety of victims and accountability and behavioral change among offenders; and,

**WHEREAS**, the criminal and juvenile justice systems have only recently responded to or acknowledged elder abuse. Currently, few Tribal law enforcement agencies, social services agencies, and health programs have specific policies, training curricula, or systematic methods to help prevent, identify, and track Elder abuse cases, and therefore, some agencies may believe Elder abuse is an insignificant problem and does not need specific criminal and juvenile justice responses; and,

**WHEREAS**, the heightened attention to Elder abuse and the potential role of community members and professionals in addressing it necessitates educating community members and professionals to prevent, identify, respond to, and coordinate with other service providers in Elder abuse cases; and,

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians hereby endorses and recognizes the importance of taking a proactive stance toward identifying and responding to potential Elder abuse, by strongly encouraging the establishment of Tribal laws and procedures, support efforts to provide professional and family training opportunities on this topic, and encourages collaboration among Tribal Nations, the federal government, Tribal justice systems and community agencies in providing needed services for victims and offenders living in Tribal communities.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2006 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Sacramento Convention Center in Sacramento, California on October 1-6, 2006 with a quorum present.

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President

**ATTEST:**

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Recording Secretary