



National Indian Council on Aging

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PRE-WHCOA EVENT SUMMARY REPORT

Name of Event: National Indian Elders Solutions Session
"The Future Needs of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Elders"

Date of Event: June 13, 2005

Location of Event: National Congress of American Indians Mid-Year Session, Green Bay, WI

No. of Persons Attending: 75

Sponsoring Organizations: National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)

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Event Agenda:

**2005 White House Conference on Aging Solutions Forum, focusing on
"The Future Needs of the American Indian and Alaska Native Elders"**

National Congress of American Indians' Mid-Year Session

June 13, 2005

1:30p.m. – 4:00p.m.

Location: Turtle Room, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center, Green Bay, WI

Program

Master of Ceremonies: James T. DeLaCruz, Sr., Chairman, National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA)

1:30 p.m. Welcoming Remarks
Tex Hall (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara), President, National Congress of

American Indians
James T. DeLaCruz, Sr. (Quinault), Chairman, NICOA

2:00 p.m. Solutions Forum
Dorcas R. Hardy, Policy Committee Chair
Robert Blancato, Policy Committee Member

Presentations

Planning Along the Lifespan

M. Helen Spencer, Esq., Indian Elder Rights law expert and WHCOA Delegate, Yakima, WA

Elsie Meeks (Oglala Lakota), Executive Director, First Nations Oweesta Corporation, SD

Workplace of the Future

Maudean Harden (Choctaw), Oklahoma Director, NICOA's Senior Community Service Employment Program, and WHCOA delegate, Oklahoma City, OK

Our Community

Wendell McLester (Oneida), Veteran and WHCOA delegate, DePere, WI

Russell McDonald (Arikara/Dakota), National Resource Center on Native American Aging, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND

Oneida Winship (Choctaw), Director of Choctaw Nation Title VI Senior Program and Alternate NCAI WHCOA Delegate, Durant, OK

Liana Pang-Tamura (Native Hawaiian), Director, Alu Like, Inc. and Alternate NCAI WHCOA Delegate, Honolulu, HI

Health and Long Term Living

Governor Joe Garcia (San Juan Pueblo), WHCOA delegate, San Juan Pueblo, NM

H. Sally Smith (Yupik), Chairman, National Indian Health Board, and WHCOA delegate, Dillingham, AK

Connie Bremner (Blackfeet), Director, Eagle Shield Senior Citizens Center, and WHCOA delegate, Browning, MT

Social Engagement

Juana Majel (Pauma/Yuima), NCAI Secretary and WHCOA Delegate, CA

Priority Issue #1: Lack of financial stability for American Indian and Alaska Native Elders
(Planning for the Future panel)

Barriers: Severe poverty; heavy reliance on Social Security as only form of income; lack of income for saving or investing; financial exploitation by family or others; and a lack of culturally relevant financial education.

Proposed Solution(s): In order to prepare future American Indian and Alaska Native communities for their later years, all Tribal members need culturally relevant financial education. Promotion of Individual Development Accounts and Community Development Institutions assisting Tribal members in owning their own home are critical. Making sure that Elders raising their grandchildren are taking advantage of earned income credits for which they may be eligible is another way to assist the community. More education and awareness raising needs to take place in Indian communities to make everyone aware that financial exploitation of Elders is wrong and must be addressed by the family and the community.

Priority Issue #2: Importance of Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to American Indian Elders
(Workplace of the Future panel)

Barriers: Under funded federal program - must provide services for more Elders than receive grant funding to do; with new regulations requiring all Social Security income to be counted, more low-income Elders are unable to participate in the program; DOL moving program away from its community service component with emphasis on permanent job placement, which is difficult for Elders with low skills and education levels living in rural and reservation communities where jobs are scarce.

Proposed Solution(s): Increase funding for program as the population of Elders is growing and people are living longer, thus requiring them to continue to earn income and supplement their Social Security, which is currently the most stable form of income for AI/AN Elders. The appropriations for the program must increase in order to allow the program to be viable in its service to low-income Elders across the country. NICOA as National Indian Sponsor should be able to serve Indians without regard for equitable distribution. The OAA amendments of 2000, provided that NICOA would not only be exempt from participating in the State Plans, but provided that the Secretary would meet with NICOA to establish a plan for service. In fact, this has not happened and NICOA has been forced to accept the allocation given by DOL.

Priority Issue #3: Resources to Assist Elders with Living Well in Their Tribal Communities as They Age
(Our Community panel)

Barriers: Lack of adequate funding for Title VI programs and resource sharing by Title III programs; Paucity of respite, caregiver and adult daycare programs in Tribal communities to help care for AI/AN Elders; Lack of culturally relevant training for para-professional and professional staff (Title VI Directors, Title VI staff, Caregivers, Community Health Representatives, Social Workers, Physicians, Nurses) to improve care of AI/AN Elders; Inadequate housing and lack of transportation infrastructure in Tribal communities causes Elders to live in unsafe conditions and remain isolated from their peers and the community at large.

Proposed Solution(s): Increase appropriations for Title VI programs to \$100 million to allow Tribes to provide meals five days a week as well as other supportive services, which currently do not have funding to do like the Title III programs. Enforce Title III programs to share their resources and work cooperatively with the Title VI programs. Offer training and technical assistance for para-professional and professional staff working with AI/AN Elders to ensure they are culturally competent in the care they provide. Address the lack of safe housing and assisted living units for Elders to remain in their communities with dignity. Increase funding for transportation to ensure AI/AN Elders can access the meal services, cultural programs, and medical services they require.

Priority Issue #4: Disproportionate funding and consideration for health needs of non-Indians greatly impacts Elders in Tribal communities.
(Health and Long Term Living panel)

Barriers: Lack of funding for the Indian Health Service – receives less than \$3 billion annually with projected level of need conservatively estimated at \$15 billion to address the needs of AI/AN communities; Lack of equity and sense of degradation - federal prisoners receive more than twice the amount spent per Native American for their health care needs; Congress has failed to reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, which is the vehicle for health care delivery in Indian Country; Lack of understanding within Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for how and why their sister agency, IHS, provides health care to AI/ANs ; Proposed Medicaid reforms will have detrimental impact on the Indian Health Service, Tribal Elders and Indian communities generally.

Proposed Solution(s): Increase funding for Indian Health Service by 10% incrementally each year until reach \$15 billion to begin adequate provision of preventive, diagnostic and urgent care. Congress must cease reducing the already inadequate appropriation for IHS by the amount of third party revenues it brings in. Increase funding for health promotion and disease prevention to begin addressing the alarming rates of health disparities experienced in AI/ANs communities compared to non-Indians and other minority groups in the United States. Reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to modernize the level of care received across Indian Country. Institute training and education for CMS staff about the federal trust responsibility, requirement to provide health services to AI/ANs and basic understanding of federal Indian law. Study and research how proposed Medicaid reforms will affect AI/ANs and funding of the Indian health care system across the country.