



Native Aging Visions

A Resource for Native Elders

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A publication of the National Resource Center on Native American Aging located at the Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences



Tawnshi!

Greetings to all. I hope this message finds you well. Here at the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) spring has sprung and we are rounding the corner to summer. Yards are being cleaned, flowers are blooming, and gardens are being planted. My thoughts go back to the past when my mother and father would plant their garden. It was family teamwork from planting, weeding, harvesting, and canning. I can still taste my favorite garden soup that my mother would make. It consisted of smaller red potatoes, string beans, and salt pork. If my memory serves me right, she may have dipped a spoonful of bacon grease into it for extra flavor. It was not just the fresh vegetables though, that was beneficial from having a garden; it was the activity itself. Gardening is a good way to get some exercise. The NRCNAA’s *“Identifying Our Needs: A Survey of Elder”* reveals that gardening is a preferred mode of activity for our elders, only second to walking. It is important that our elders have the proper nutrition and exercise/activity to prevent chronic disease, and gardening is a great way to get both!

In May we celebrated the annual Older American’s month and the Administration for Community Living hailed it as a time to “Age out loud,” to give a voice to the elders’ journey of aging. There are several important pieces to the 2017 Older American’s month theme, including: “knowing your rights, staying engaged,

striving for wellness, and exploring new things.” Let’s all assist our treasured elders in implementing as many of these pieces as possible into their lives and positively impact their quality of life. They certainly deserve it.

June 15th was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day or WEAAD. The first WEAAD was observed in 2011 and the color purple was adopted to symbolize it. With the growth of our elder populations comes an increased probability of elder abuse and neglect. WEAAD is an opportunity for communities to come together to raise awareness of elder abuse and how it erodes the strength of our Native elders and our communities. The NRCNAA shares in this commemoration with the great hope that together we can defeat the scourge of elder abuse. As we observe World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, let’s remember the ways our elders have showed us love and there are so many ways we, now, can give that love back.

I will leave you always with this one request, to love and cherish our amazing elders. We are cut from a strong, courageous, and nurturing cloth, the same cloth as our Native elders. Bless you all. Be safe and well.

Many Blessings! Miigwech.
- Paula Morin-Carter

American Society on Aging (ASA) Conference

In March, the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) staff attended the American Society on Aging (ASA) Conference in Chicago. The conference works to provide resources and knowledge to educate the public and professionals on issues that affect older adults. Dr. Paula Carter; Director, Collette Adamsen; Project Coordinator, and members from the Alaskan and Hawaiian centers presented on the topic, “Listening to the Underserved: Techniques for Gathering Information to Inform Programming.” During the five-day trip, we provided general information at our exhibit booth. In

addition, we offered promotional items, such as pens, fans, brochures, pill containers, and pedometers to conference attendees. Throughout the conference our staff reconnected with colleagues and discussed the potential for new research topics in the near future. At the same time we connected with new individuals and groups who could potentially participate in our “Needs Assessment Survey” or collaborate with the center in terms of writing and research. Next year the American Society on Aging Conference takes place in San Francisco and we accepted our invite to present again!

In Memory of Our Colleague

Ann Miller passed away on December 15, 2016. She started at the National Resource Center on Native American Aging in 2009 where she worked as an administrative assistant. In her spare time, Ann loved reading, sewing, knitting, and watching old movies, professional tennis, and basketball. Despite her claim she hated gardening, she also had the loveliest flowers growing in her yard.





Left to right: Macelyn Roberts, budget specialist; Kandis Balderrama, executive secretary; Melvin Deer, Title VI director; Christina Blackman, social worker II; Lynndella Ben, support services supervisor; Cole Ward, NRCNAA research specialist; and Collette Adamsen, NRCNAA project coordinator

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

In an effort to become more acquainted with the Title VI programs that we work with, the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) is trying to meet with Title VI programs when possible. In February, the NRCNAA had the opportunity to meet with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Title VI program in the metropolitan Phoenix area. The staff was very friendly and welcoming while taking us on a tour of their Title VI facility which boasted an entertainment center and an outdoor seating area with an activities yard for the Native elders.

It was a beautiful facility with a very helpful staff. We also had the opportunity to discuss the “*Identifying Our Needs: A Survey of Elders VI*” with the group who provided us with valuable feedback on the survey. In addition, the staff had taken us on a mini tour of the Tribal Community which was very impressive. We were able to see the tribal headquarters and spoke with members of one of the tribal programs in the community. It was a very enjoyable experience and we look forward to the next time we can visit.

Cataract Awareness Month

June was Cataract Awareness Month. Cataracts are a clouding of the eye's lens which blocks or changes the passage of light into the eye. Symptoms include blurred vision, ghost images, or the sense of a "film" over your eyes, lights seem too dim for reading or close-up work, or you are "dazzled" by strong light. It may look like a milky or yellowish spot in your pupil.

There are different types of cataracts which include age-related (95% of cataracts are age-related, usually after age 40), congenital (present at birth, normally caused by infection or inflammation during pregnancy; possibly inherited), traumatic (lens damage from a hard blow, cut, puncture, intense heat or chemical burn), and secondary (some medicines, eye disease, eye infection, or diseases such as diabetes).

Cataracts affect more than 24 million Americans age 40 and older. It is the leading cause of vision loss among older adults in the United States, however, cataracts can affect anyone at any age. Heredity, disease, eye injury, and smoking could cause the disease to develop at an earlier age. It is estimated that half of all Americans will have cataracts by the time they are 80 years old. It is important to take preventive measures to ensure you have a lower risk. If you feel you may have developed cataracts see your eye doctor and receive treatment. Unfortunately, there has not been a proven preventive method for age-related cataracts. Although, a healthy lifestyle does help. You can help slow or delay the progression of the eye disease if you avoid smoking, reduce exposure to UV rays, and wear proper eye protection to prevent eye injury. If you experience symptoms that may be cataracts, make an appointment with your doctor right away. They will perform an eye exam to determine if you have cataracts and measure the affects on your vision. They will advise you, if surgery would help, and the types of treatment and lens replacement would be best for your situation.

If you are diagnosed with cataracts, the only proven treatment is surgery. It cannot be treated with medicines. Surgery has a 95% success rate and has restored

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Healthy Lens



Cataracts

vision to millions of people. The surgery, involves removing your clouded lens and replacing it with an intraocular lens (IOL). This can be completed in outpatient surgery and takes about 15 minutes.

Generally, people who have the surgery can expect to see well enough to resume normal activities after a few days. Vision will continue to improve over the next weeks and even months. However,

if you have other eye problems it may take longer to recover.

In order to prevent vision loss it is important to receive regular eye exams. People who are 65 years or older should have an eye exam completed every one to two years. Let's raise awareness about cataracts and teach others how to lower the risk of losing vision by taking measures to ensure healthy eyes.

Update on Survey

The *“Identifying Our Needs: A Survey of Elders VI”* ended on March 31 of this year. The participation numbers for Cycle VI were 18,134 completed surveys which consisted of 164 sites representing 232 Native American tribes/Alaska villages/Hawaiian homesteads. The survey participation for this cycle surpassed the number for all six cycles throughout the years. We would like to congratulate all of the participating tribes on this accomplishment. Everyone did a great job with the process. We would like to thank all participants and Title VI programs for making this past cycle a great success!

We began Cycle VII on April 1, 2017 and it will continue through March 31, 2020. We have recently made a few small changes to the survey that will hopefully make it easier to read and less time

consuming for the user. We recently received the new printed Cycle VII surveys and are ready to receive any requests for survey mail outs. As always, we would like to encourage everyone to start the process early by getting your tribal resolutions, having your elder count, and thinking about how you will administer the surveys. We encourage tribes to have staff or trained volunteers to interview the elders to help make the process smoother for our participants. Some options for collecting survey data may include hosting an elder event, scheduling home visits, or any other options you feel would be viable for data collection. It's never too early to start the process. We are always here to help with any questions you may have, so please feel free to contact us. We will be with you every step of the way. Let's make Cycle VII an even bigger success than the last one!

Senior Companions

The Senior Companions at the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians tribe located in Belcourt, North Dakota boasts the largest participating group in the state of North Dakota with 10 senior companions. The Turtle Mountain Senior Companion group has provided services for elders in the community for 18 years. The Senior Companions provide friendship and community participation, assistance with daily activities, support for those who are ill, assistance for those recovering after a hospital stay, and respite care for family caregivers. They also provide personal care, which includes exercise and walks, nutrition, social recreation, home management, information and advocacy, some light house cleaning, and fun activities such as visiting or playing cards.

The Senior Companions often go above and beyond their duties. “Most of the time, the elders are

lonely and enjoy a visit from the Senior Companions a couple times of week which makes a big difference for them,” director Donna Lunday said. “Some elders don’t have access to having a meal on a daily basis so the Senior Companions have gotten these individuals set up with meals on wheels. Some of the elders have had a ramp put on their home with the help of the Senior Companions. They have done so much more and are appreciated every day for doing this.”

The group holds monthly meetings where they tell stories, share ideas, and enjoy each other’s company. The Turtle Mountain Senior Companions are a great group of people that continue to provide support to the Native elders living in the Belcourt area. They truly make an amazing difference in the community for the elders.



From left to right: Donna Lunday, St. Claire, director; Jolene Keplin, tribal health educator; Sonya Mickelson, Barb Davis, Christine Thompson, Vera Vondal, Mike Nelson, and Alma Charette. Not pictured: Barbara Poitra (Kroker), Joyce Gerber, Peggy Bercier, and Dennis Lafountain.

Arthritis Awareness

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in America. It can affect all ages. Although the word “arthritis” is viewed as one disease, it is not. In fact, it is used to define joint pain or joint disease and defines around 200 rheumatic disease and conditions that affect joints.

The symptoms of arthritis can develop gradually or suddenly which typically consist of pain, aching, stiffness, and swelling in and around one or more joints. In certain cases, arthritis can involve the immune system and different internal organs of the body. The symptoms of arthritis can range from mild to severe which can lead to chronic pain causing difficulty in performing daily activities of living. The effects of arthritis can cause permanent joint changes and visible changes to the external and even internal parts of the body. There are many different types of arthritis, which can affect the heart, eyes, lungs, kidneys and skin as well as the joints.

Nearly 53 million adults have been diagnosed with arthritis by their doctor. The Arthritis Foundation has generated some alarming statistics about arthritis which include the following:

- Working-age men and women (ages 18 to 64) with arthritis are less likely to be employed than those of the same age without arthritis.
- People with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis miss a combined 172 million workdays every year.
- Arthritis and related conditions account for more than \$156 billion annually in lost wages and medical expenses.

- There are nearly 1 million hospitalizations each year due to arthritis.
- 57% of adults with heart disease have arthritis.
- 52% of adults with diabetes have arthritis.
- 44% of adults with high blood pressure have arthritis.
- 36% of adults who are obese have arthritis.
- 33% of adults with arthritis age 45 and older have either anxiety or depression.

Arthritis is often diagnosed with your primary care provider performing a physical exam, blood tests, and imaging scans to determine the type of arthritis that is affecting the patient.

Although arthritis can be debilitating, there are treatments that can help with the pain and stiffness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, physical exercise is recommended for adults with arthritis.

Arthritis can affect many people at different ages. The important thing is to raise awareness and to be aware if you begin experiencing symptoms of arthritis. If you experience symptoms, make an appointment with your primary care doctor to be properly diagnosed. If you are diagnosed with arthritis, it is important to begin a proper treatment plan to alleviate the pain caused by this disease. Start treatment options right away to help manage arthritis pain. It will improve your quality of life and you will be able to enjoy your golden years.



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Upcoming Event

2017 National Title VI Training & Technical Assistance Conference

September 12-15, 2017

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www.mysticlake.com • (800) 262-7799

For More information: olderindians.acl.gov/upcoming-events

