



Prevention & Recovery

Volume 3, No. 1
Winter 2015

“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.” — Chief Seattle, 1854

A Quarterly Newsletter ■ A Multi-Agency Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Collaboration

Engaging and Empowering Native Youth Leaders



INSIDE

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Conference	1
Director’s Corner	2
Departments of Justice and Education Release Correctional Education Guidance Package	3
Culture Leads Native Youth in Prevention	3
“Gen-I” Ambassadors Celebrated at White House Tribal Nations Conference	4
My Brother’s Keeper: A Year of Progress	4
NEW!! Native Youth Perspective	7
Why Youth Leadership?	7
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Youth Visit	8
Native Youth Honored by Secretary Jewell	9
Champion for Change Testifies	10
Resources	11
Announcement & Events	12

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Conference Engages and Empowers Native Youth

It is a good time to be young and Native. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the 2014 SAMHSA Native Youth Conference (NYC), held November 17–19. The 3-day conference, with participation of over 200 tribal representatives (nearly 125 Native youth) and 30 speakers from across the federal government, was the first SAMHSA cross-agency meeting to engage Native youth in efforts to improve the health and well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native communities. At the conference, youth shared their views on federal programs and activities; shared their input for a national tribal behavioral health agenda, and learned about best practices supported by SAMHSA’s tribal grants.

Philandrian Tree, a Native youth facilitator at NYC and tribal & program liaison to Chairwoman Mandy Metzger, District 4 Supervisor Coconino County in Arizona, explains how the young participants responded to the call to share their views with high-level federal representatives. “At first, many participants were shy and kept to themselves. But by the end, they were engaged and had a safe place to express the truth of their experiences, which was amazing to see.” Another Native youth facilitator at the conference, Maegan Ray, who works with Kauffman and Associates, Inc. and the SAMHSA Tribal Training and Technical Assistance Center, observed: “They brought

(continued on page 5)

Director's Corner



*Dr. Marcella
"Marcy" Ronyak*

*Director, Office of
Indian Alcohol and
Substance Abuse*

Before she became the new Director of the Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OIASA), Dr. Marcy Ronyak realized how important mental health and wellness are to Native communities and the interrelatedness of the two health areas in maintaining balance. Her life's work and educational pursuits in clinical services provided insight into how her community perceived mental health and wellness, and led to strategies for achieving holistic health by bridging the spiritual and emotional sides with mental health.

Dr. Ronyak, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in Nespelem, Washington, has been providing clinical services since 1997. She previously worked for the Colville Tribes as a tribal psychologist for two separate terms, and as an independent contractor providing clinical services to children and families within the community. It was in these capacities that she first recognized a need for wrap-around services to improve the health and wellness of the community.

But it was her study of the Colville Tribe while working on her doctorate degree that qualitatively identified community needs around mental health and wellness. The study, which involved tribal members 18 years of age and older indicated emotional support, mental wellness, a sense of self, physical wellness and spiritually as priorities for achieving balance in health and wellness. Tribal members also noted that physical and traditional activities made an impact on their mental health and wellness.

"This made me realize that there was a high need to address mental health and wellness through increased resiliency," Dr. Ronyak said. "We wanted to increase the strength of balance within their lives, increase positive relationships, support identification for connectedness to cultural elements, which would lead to personal success, improve self-esteem, and hopefully reduce substance abuse within the community."

Study participants identified that involvement in tribal activities, such as attending root feasts, berry picking, participating in pow wows, dances, grave cleaning, and

learning Indian songs were key to increasing their sense of self and having wellness and balance. Comprehensive programs and services designed to achieve balance culminated from the study's findings.

Leading Change in the Paschal Sherman Indian School

After working as a tribal psychologist for the Colville Tribe, Dr. Ronyak worked for the Paschal Sherman Indian School where she developed education models that incorporated psychological services for students and families. These services focused on addressing the underutilization of services for Colville tribal members and determined what gaps existed to develop making positive services that would instill a sense of hope.

As a result of her work, suspensions and expulsions went down and the number of students being out of class decreased as students learned effective coping skills. She also helped staff to better understand and provide for student needs, which impacted their ability to learn.

A Desire to Make Impact at the Policy Level

As a practitioner, Dr. Ronyak understood that making more impact would mean making changes at the policy level that would cascade down. As a practitioner, she recognized limitations in what she could do. Her desire to create meaningful, sustainable impact led her to the Office of Tribal Affairs and Policy (OTAP). She needed to go where policies were developed, reviewed and updated to be able to make changes that would impact all levels. Prior to becoming Director, she was the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Lead Public Health Advisor for the Indian Health Service (IHS), within the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH). She considers being Director an honor and is looking forward to building and strengthening partnerships.

In a statement to OIASA staff, Dr. Ronyak states:

"It is an honor to join the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), OTAP/OIASA team. As Director of the Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OIASA), I am dedicated to continue to build and strengthen the partnerships with the federal, state, regional, and local communities.

As a leader, it is important to recognize the strengths within our staff and federal partners to make the largest impact by aligning resources, implementing innovative ideas, and fulfilling the requirements of the

Tribal Law and Order Act. The knowledge, expertise, motivation, and passion within the OTAP team can be far reaching as we continue to build partnerships, respect tribal sovereignty, increase awareness and understanding of substance abuse and misuse, and support the development of culturally specific prevention, intervention, treatment, and long term recovery models.

My goal is to lead through example, by collaborating with federal partners to provide tribes with outstanding technical assistance and resources that are unique to tribal communities. Thinking outside of the box and incorporating the unique needs of tribal communities can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

First and foremost, providing outstanding customer service both internally and externally will allow for the development of trusting relationships. Our mission and goals lend itself to a multidisciplinary approach, which is necessary to increase awareness and implement culturally specific prevention, treatment, and long-term recovery modalities.

The holistic approach to healing will empower tribes to implement cultural specific programming, messaging, and treatment to strengthen their communities. The voices, beliefs, traditions, and cultural respect within the tribal communities will drive the new energized workflow of OIASA in the upcoming year.

It is time to strengthen our tribal communities through holistic healing, an enhanced definition of integrative behavioral health services, and strategic planning that accommodates the uniqueness of each tribal community."

About Dr. Marcella Ronyak Ph.D., LICSW, CDP

Dr. Marcella Ronyak received her doctorate degree in Counseling Psychology & Educational Leadership from Washington State University in 2004 and completed her pre-doctoral internship with Colorado State University Counseling Center in Fort Collins, Colorado.

She completed her Master of Social Work degree at Walla Walla College (University) in 1998 as a part of the advanced standing program and was a recipient of an Indian Health Service Scholarship in 1997-1998. Dr. Ronyak received her Bachelor's degree in social work from Eastern Washington University in 1997.

Departments of Justice and Education Release Correctional Education Guidance Package to Improve Quality of Education Services for Confined Youth



Former Attorney General Eric Holder and Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the release of the Correctional Education Package at the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center in Alexandria, VA, on December 8, 2014. Photo copyright U.S. Department of Education.

Former Attorney General Eric Holder and Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the release of the Correctional Education Guidance Package, a joint effort of the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education. The guidance and technical assistance resources that comprise the package will aid juvenile justice secure care facilities, and the local juvenile justice and education agencies that work with and support them, in improving the quality of education for confined youth.

"All children—all children—deserve equal access to a high-quality public education. And this is no less true for children in the juvenile justice system," said the Former Attorney General, speaking at the release event.

The package includes several documents intended to ensure that youth in confinement receive an education comparable to that provided in traditional public school settings. A resource guide, *Guiding Principles for Providing High-Quality Education in Juvenile Justice Secure Care Settings*, provides supportive core activities and identifies five principles for improving education for confined youth. Three "Dear Colleague" letters provide legal guidance on federally funded facilities' civil rights obligations to confined youth, outline federal laws guaranteeing the right of youth with disabilities to receive special education and related services, and clarify that young people in secure care settings may be eligible for Pell grants, respectively.

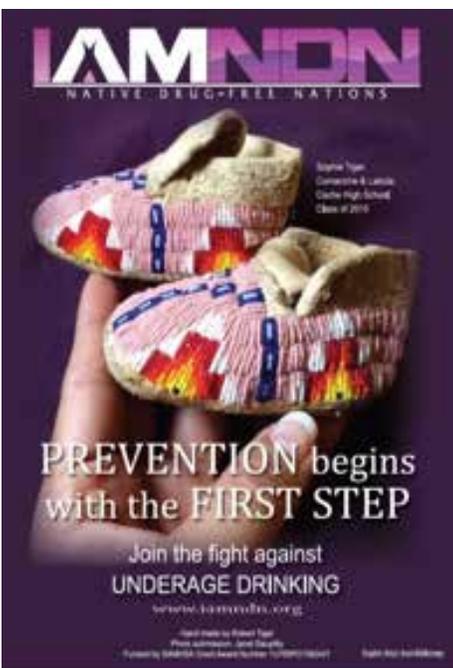
Additional resources include a 2-page fact sheet which provides an overview of the guidance package contents, a fact sheet on

federal student aid eligibility for students confined in adult correctional or juvenile justice facilities, and answers to frequently asked questions about the guidance package.

In a letter to the juvenile justice field announcing the availability of the Correctional Guidance Educational Package, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Administrator Robert Listenbee hailed the guidance package as "A significant step toward our collective vision of a juvenile justice system that promotes positive educational outcomes for all system-involved youth, enhances their academic and social-emotional skill sets, lessens the likelihood of youth reentering the justice system, and increases their chances of success in life."

For more information, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/correctional-education/index.html>

Article retrieved at http://www.ojjdp.gov/newsletter/248633/sf_3.html



Culture Leads Native Youth in Prevention: I am Indian ("IAMNDN")

Representatives from the Comanche tribe who attended the 2014 SAMHSA Native Youth Conference are a sub-recipient of a SAMHSA grant awarded to the Oklahoma City Area Inter-tribal Health Board (OCAITHB).

The Comanche community is doing something innovative to stop unhealthy cycles. Ronnie Wahkinney, who manages the OCAITHB grant, said that they have three or four bars on reservation, but only one convenience store and even fewer places for youth to come together. Part of the lure of drinking for kids in this community is that they are bored and have no place to go. To that end, Wahkinney and his colleague, Raquel Ramos, started a

culturally specific club in the public school that the Native youth attend. The club not only provides healthy activities for the students, but also promotes the Native culture and language.

Wahkinney wanted to do more. Grant funds were used to support a competition where Native youth competed to have their artwork on school supplies, including notebooks. The inside cover contains messages about substance abuse and prevention. Pre- and post-evaluations are given to assess the effectiveness. With the youth seeing these messages every day, some are taking hold.

"When other students see the notebooks and folders, they say, 'A kid did that and they're Native? I want to make the same thing. I want to be somebody,'" Olivia Komahcheet explained. Komahcheet is one of the first youth to have her artwork on the cover of school supplies, and she also attended the conference.

(continued on page 13)

“Gen-I” Ambassadors Celebrated at White House Tribal Nations Conference and in MTV Rebel Music Film

By Raina Thiele and Jodi Gillette



December 3, 2014. (Photo courtesy of the Indian Health Service)

On December 3, President Obama hosted the 6th annual White House Tribal Nations conference where he announced Generation Indigenous (“Gen-I”), a new initiative focused on removing the barriers that stand between Native youth and their opportunity to succeed using a comprehensive, culturally appropriate approach. In addition to leaders from the 566 federally-recognized Native nations, for the first time, 36 high-school aged “Gen-I” Native Youth Ambassadors were invited to engage with the President, Vice President, and Cabinet Officials representing the White House Council on Native American Affairs on key issues facing tribes.

The conference built on the President’s visit to the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation in June, during which he and First Lady Michelle Obama met with a group of Lakota young adults and learned about the obstacles and problems they had experienced resulting from substance abuse, violence and other poverty-related issues.

Through “Gen-I”, the Youth Ambassadors represented the voice of Native youth by joining with tribal leaders in breakout sessions and panels and participating in leadership development programming. [Click here to learn more about Gen-I!](#)

The 2014 Youth Ambassadors came from across the country, from Alaska to North Carolina, and are an inspiring group with big plans for making a positive impact in their communities. Over the course of their trip to D.C., they participated in exciting events in advance of the conference, including a White House screening of MTV’s riveting Rebel Music: Native America premiere episode followed by a panel discussion that included Rebel Music creator Nusrat Durrani and Lakota rapper Frank Waln.

A signing ceremony for a new memorandum of understanding between the Indian Health Service and Nike N7 was held, which included a visit with 2014 FIFA World Cup Kiowa soccer player Chris Wondolowski. Several of the Ambassadors were featured in a new MTV video “Meet Generation Indigenous” that followed two of the youth on their inspiring journey from their home communities to Washington, D.C.

The MTV Gen-I video featured young leaders like Youth Ambassador Dahkota Brown of the Wilton Band of Miwok Indians and Janay Jumping Eagle of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Brown

founded Native Education Raising Dedicated Students (NERDS), an organization that aims to decrease the dropout rate of Native youth by giving Native students a safe, helpful and healthy place to do their homework. Janay is also actively speaking out about suicide and dedicated her most recent basketball season to at-risk youth.

As the youth reflect on their experience at the Tribal Nations Conference, they are more inspired and motivated than ever before to create positive change in their communities. One of those students is Rory Wheeler of the Seneca Nation of Indians who said he’s “honored to serve as a founding member of Generation Indigenous and plan[s] on doing great things to enhance the lives of Native Youth across Indian Country.”

Darius Jackson from the Gila River Indian Community said the conference was “the highlight of [his] life so far.” And Kelsey Janway of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma who said that, as Ambassadors, “We’re going to be those people who make the difference.”

All of the 2014 Youth Ambassadors are incredibly impressive and will continue their work with the Administration and non-federal partners to help sculpt and support the “Gen-I” Initiative. We would like to thank each of them for setting a positive example and being a force for good in their communities.

My Brother’s Keeper: A Year of Progress

This post originally appeared on The White House Blog

When President Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) initiative one year ago, he did so with a powerful call to action to help more young people stay on the right track and achieve their full potential. Too many young people, including boys and young men of color, face daunting opportunity gaps and, like all of us, the President knows that America will be most successful when its young people are successful.

At the launch of MBK, the President called for government, businesses, nonprofits, schools, districts, and individuals, to commit to making a difference in the lives of our nation’s young people. Since then, nearly 200 cities, counties, and tribal nations from 43 states have accepted the MBK Community Challenge, a call to build and execute locally driven plans with a focus on achieving excellence and equity from birth through adolescence and the transition to early adulthood.

Last May, I joined young men in Denver, an MBK Community, for an open and honest discussion about their lives — their challenges, support systems, and visions for the future. So many of their stories — both heart-wrenching and inspiring — stick with me, but what perhaps struck me most were the words of Elias, who was once told he was “an exception to his race.” The words weighed heavily on him, as they did on me.

(continued on page 9)

fantastic people to the table. So many people have worked hard to get Native youth involved in changing their communities. To be heard and honored was amazing and gave us the momentum needed to keep fighting for change throughout the next year.”

The historic conference has the potential to mark a turning point in the way the government approaches developing behavioral health programs and activities for Native youth. Jeri Brunoe, conference facilitator and owner of a firm that provides training and consultation in wellness, service learning, prevention, and cultural preservation says, “As someone who has been communicating with the federal government for many years, I get the sense more than ever that there will be continuation of a dialogue with Native youth. When agencies value the voices of young people and engage them in the planning process, things begin to change and youth continue their involvement.”

Already Leaders

Young participants, who were ages 14–24 at the time of the conference, are involved in SAMHSA-supported programs focused on youth behavioral health in Native communities. Federal leaders from SAMHSA, the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Indian Health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy told the young participants that they are already leaders who have a positive impact in their communities. Youth took part in sessions to boost their leadership skills further. For example, they had opportunities to learn how to be a Gathering of Native Americans facilitator; find out about the Question, Persuade, Refer Model of suicide prevention; and explore Mental Health First Aid.

Through digital storytelling, youth developed videos with positive messages. They conveyed the most effective ways to communicate with Native youth to SAMHSA and other agencies. In turn, they learned about communicating with federal agencies, private sector organizations, and one another to prevent substance abuse and improve overall wellness in Native communities. The conference provided the

opportunity for young participants to network and connect with other youth who are also making a difference in their communities. “Since the conference, I have had many emails and discussions on various topics and new ideas. This has been helpful in my work on a youth webinar series, and I’ve been able to involve youth from other Northern California counties, who have organized a gathering for those who want changes in their communities,” says Ray.

“It is a positive space that focuses on strengths-based ideas, events, and language.”

Expanding the Network to Improve Native Youth Behavioral Health

For change to take hold and spread, it is important for the networking momentum to continue and expand. To empower Native youth as leaders for health and wellness for tribal communities across the country, NYC held a session on the effective use of social media to create change. Young participants formed the Young Native Leaders 4 Change Behavioral Health Network—a Facebook page to help those who attended the conference stay in touch and engage peers who also want change in their communities. Using social media, youth share stories and support one another. “Native youth who are positive and long for change may feel isolated and overwhelmed by the problems they see around them. A network that is part of a national conversation on solving these problems would help support them in their efforts to change their communities,” says Ms. Tree.

“Having a support network improves their wellness—to them, the site is a basis for behavioral health,” explains Brunoe. “It is a positive space that focuses on strengths-based ideas, events, and language. They don’t mention avoiding drugs and alcohol overtly,

because they are focused on positive aspects of their cultures and communities, solutions for problems, and future directions.”

If that positive, future-oriented perspective can be extended to more Native youth, the potential impact on behavioral health could be great. “Adolescent health behaviors set the framework for adult health outcomes. Although it is the healthiest period of the lifespan, it is also a period in which young people experience the highest rates of death and disability—primarily related to problems with the control of behaviors and emotional reactivity,” says Jeremiah Simmons, a facilitator at NYC, who is currently pursuing a doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of New Mexico.

Other participants echoed the strong link between youth behavioral health and dealing with emotions. “Youth often say that they want someone to teach them coping skills to deal with anger. Schools do not really teach coping skills and how to deal with emotions, and young people need tools that relate to their experiences and communities,” Brunoe observes. Ray adds, “For so many young people, it is important to learn healthy coping skills and to know your worth. This learning process has a cultural aspect, particularly that spirituality keeps us strong through traumas in life.”

Moving beyond the individual level of behavioral health, NYC emphasized the need to incorporate young people’s voices when designing behavioral health programs and services. “When you start to include young people in discussions on their health, they have an active role in how they are defined and one is immediately aware of their inherent sources of strengths and resilience that they carry with them,” says Simmons. He encourages young leaders to engage with adults and other youth to ensure that their perspectives help shape interventions and policies created on their behalf. Tree notes that young people in general, as well as Native youth, want services with non-traditional hours, for example.

(continued on page 6)



2014 SAMHSA Native Youth Conference. Top Left: Jeremiah Simmons, Leon R. Leader Charge, Philandrian Tree; Bottom: Pamela S. Hyde, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrator; Raina Thiele, Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement; Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the United States Department of the Interior; Yvette Roubideaux, Senior Advisor to the Secretary for American Indians and Alaska Natives; Mary Wakefield, Acting Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

However, youth engagement in behavioral health goes beyond being heard to being a part of the organizational structure and decision-making process—which requires an acknowledgment that young people have unique strengths related to their developmental stage. “Youth participation ensures that programs and services are relevant, engaging, and responsive to young people’s needs. For the young person, it gives them the opportunity to have a say about what is important to them, to take control of decisions that affect their lives, to increase their skills, and to build their confidence and connections to their community. For the organization, it means campaigns and programs are more effective in reaching young people, attracting their interest and representing their views and needs,” explains Simmons.

“ Youth participation ensures that programs and services are relevant, engaging, and responsive to young people’s needs. ”

Momentum and Moving Forward

Native Youth Conference participants believe that there is strong momentum in the federal-tribal dialogue with young people, and they want to keep moving forward—particularly on behavioral health issues. “Native youth are

ready for change and prepared to work hard for it. I have witnessed a great deal of growth in the number of youth leaders—now in the hundreds—during the past 5 years,” says Ray. Tree also emphasized the importance of Native youth leaders in tribal communities. “Native youth leaders should acknowledge that youth give strength to the community and maintain a conscious presence there. This brings hope to older people, inspires peers, and helps educate the general public about what it means to be Native American in the 21st century,” she says.

What can SAMHSA and other federal agencies involved in NYC and other Native youth initiatives do to maintain the momentum? “It’s important for youth who participated to feel that what they said has made a difference. Although we realize that it is hard to see progress in a short time, federal agencies need to make the connection between their policies and programs and changes in communities tighter,” says Ray. A road trip to Indian Country might be a good idea, according to Tree: “As a next step, I would suggest that federal agencies send representatives to visit young people who attended the Native Youth Conference and communities in person. Face-to-face meetings are a relevant way to engage Native American communities, because our culture is based on experiences, interactive conversations and unwritten teachings. Such visits could be a big part of solutions and opportunities.”

Presidential Initiatives Involve Native Youth and Focus on Behavioral Health

In December 2014, President Barack Obama convened the White House Tribal Nations Conference. For the first time in these conferences, the voice of Native youth was represented by 36 White House Youth Ambassadors, who joined tribal leaders in the breakout sessions and panels, and participated in leadership development programs. At the conference, the President announced several Native youth initiatives. Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) will take a comprehensive, culturally appropriate approach to help improve the lives and opportunities for Native youth (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/03/fact-sheet-white-house-tribal-nations-conference> for more information). President Obama will also expand federal outreach on youth internships and employment opportunities. Using the SAMHSA NYC as an example of engaging Native youth, the White House Tribal Youth Gathering—which will convene in summer 2015—will involve hundreds of young people in a day-long convening to move forward on behavioral health issues.

As part of the conference, the White House also released a new Native Youth Report. The report’s recommendations included calls to strengthen tribal control of education, provide comprehensive and community-based student supports, and bolster the integration of Native cultures and languages into school climate and classrooms. These recommendations recognize the tremendous importance of education in improving the life trajectories of Native youth and strengthening tribal nations. They also acknowledge that tribal nations are in the best position to address the unique needs of their students, and to do so, schools need access to resources that allow them to build their own comprehensive supports. The recommendations also pointed to the need to improve community systems of care to better address the behavioral health needs of Native youth.

There is no doubt that the SAMHSA NYC and the White House initiatives to improve the well-being of Native youth reflect an overall commitment to strengthening tribal communities.

NATIVE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

Ways Adults Can Empower Native Youth to be Leaders

By *Coloradas Mangas, Chiricahua Apache*

SAMSHA hosted the first-ever Native Youth Conference in Washington, D.C. The conference was meant to empower and engage Native youth from all corners of the United States. Native youth were brought to the Nation's Capital in an effort to help push them in a positive direction. Youth had the opportunity to meet and talk with high ranking officials from various departments of the federal government that dealt with Native American Tribes.

Taking pride in our Native heritage and helping cultural preservation was a big part of SAMSHA's Native Youth Conference. Youth were taught the values of learning cultural ways and how they can help us begin to heal mentally, spiritually, and physically; that by being proud of who we are as Native people, we can begin to move forward together, to bring about a brighter future for all Native people.

Youth were empowered by one of the conference's motivational speakers, Chance Lee Rush. He encouraged youth to stand up and take pride in their Tribal heritage and to begin to make changes for ourselves. He said that we are the leaders here and now and that change begins with us. Chance encouraged the Native youth by telling his story of perseverance and struggle as a Native male trying to make his way in the world.

Youth were given the opportunity to stand up and speak on their behalf; to tell of the hardships their people faced, not only for reservation Natives, but also city Natives. It was somewhat comforting to know that not any one tribe was suffering alone, and was even more comforting to know that we are able to help one another begin to heal from the trauma and abuse that Native



Coloradas Mangas, Chiricahua Apache; Mescalero, NM

people have faced for hundreds of years. Furthermore, that Native youth can begin to take charge and begin to break the chains and cycles of substance and alcohol abuse that have taken hold of the Native American people. Native youth have the ability to lift our people up and help strive for a better future through perseverance.

SAMSHA's Native Youth Conference was a wonderful experience. Not only was I able to meet other Native youth from across the United States, but I was also able to express the needs and concerns of my people to others who can relate and help to begin to make a difference. The conference allowed me to see what changes U.S. officials are making on behalf of the Native Americans. I was able to build leadership skills, which will help me as I strive for a bigger and brighter future for my people.

SAMSHA's Native Youth Conference helped me build what I would call lifetime friendships. I met Native youth from all walks of life — from the Inuit in Alaska to the Hoopa Valley in California; from the Tohono O'odham from Arizona, to the Menominee of Wisconsin. All sorts of Native youth came together to help empower one another in a positive manner. We built friendships that would help to further our knowledge of the world beyond our reservation borders, or even our state borders. The conference was one to remember.

From arriving the first day to leaving on the last, every single person was beaming with pride and joy as we came together in a good way to begin to bring change to not only our families, communities, or people, but also to ourselves. For we are the leaders of tomorrow, and we are taking charge today!

NATIVE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE



Why Youth Leadership?

By Michaela Stroup, Lower Brule Lakota Sioux

Leadership, to me, has always been more of an impulse than a controlled reaction. Student organization fairs have always been my kryptonite, for I cannot help but sign up for nearly every club. By these two sentences, you may be getting the sense that I am this ridic-

ulously outgoing person that feels completely comfortable talking to strangers about any topic. This, however, could not be farther from the truth. My fingernails turn purple and my heart starts racing when asked to tell the class my name, age, and major; a ritual quite common in nearly every situation. But when it comes to giving a presentation in front of a crowd or giving an opinion during a Student Senate meeting, I feel perfectly at home.

I got my first taste of leadership at the young age of eight years old. I was elected to the Martin Grade School Student Council. While I may have only won my spot because my posters had the coolest tiger pictures on them, something about it drew me in and I was hooked. My leadership resume has grown since my fourth grade debut and if there is anything I have learned, it is that you are never too young to make a difference. There is nothing that breaks my heart more than to see young people not getting involved because they believe their work will not matter.

The best thing that adults can do is encourage youths to take leadership positions they are passionate about, whatever the cause may

be. In contrast, telling a young person that their passions are insignificant or that they are too young to understand can be significantly destructive. It goes without saying that young people do not have the same amount of experience as adults. However, this may not be to their detriment. Young people's view on life is often a great deal less jaded than an adult's. Maybe we desperately need this fresh point of view to point out the solutions to our toughest problems, solutions that could be lurking right under our noses. I was fortunate enough to have a father that supported me without exception. Believe me, my interests and passions do not always align precisely with his; but he has always been my number one motivator. He is the reason that I have made it as far as I have today.

Kids today are constantly being torn down from every direction. It is vital to remind our youth how important they are because they are our future. We need a future full of innovators. We need a future full of self-motivators. We need a future full of problem solvers. The only way to achieve this future is to empower our youth today.

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Youth Visit

Youth from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe visited Washington, D.C., in November to meet with federal officials, including the President, as a follow-up from their meeting with him during the President's trip to their reservation in June. The youth met with the President and the First Lady in the Oval Office, and had lunch with them on Capitol Hill. They met with other White House and Agency officials during their trip; attended events with NCAI, SAMHSA, and Let's Move in Indian Country interagency staff; and learned about health careers at George Washington University.



President Barack Obama with youth from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

Elias told me that he doesn't want to be an exception to his race. Rather, he envisions a system where schools partner with nonprofits and higher education to create a pipeline to success that will work for everybody.

The good news is that Elias's vision is starting to take shape. Partners from across the country are recognizing the important work of MBK, with more than \$300 million independently pledged by foundations and corporations. And, in July, AT&T, the NBA, and the NBA Players Association announced efforts that will expand opportunities for learning, mentorship, volunteerism, and jobs for all youth, including boys and young men of color. From nonprofits and foundations to businesses, private sector efforts are accelerating the work of MBK to promote academic and career success, and mentoring and public engagement.

The Department of Education is doing its part, too, by improving existing programs to better serve our youth, and by creating new and better public-private partnerships that best serve the needs of our young people. And, the Council of the Great City Schools is coordi-

nating the leaders of 63 of the largest urban school systems in the country in an unprecedented joint pledge to change life outcomes by better serving students at every stage of their education.

In December, the Department of Education convened the White House Summit on Early Education, where we announced \$750 million in new federal grant awards from the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, to support early learning for over 63,000 additional children across the country.

And, I was pleased to join US Attorney General Holder in releasing a Correctional Education Guidance Package, which builds upon the recommendations in the My Brother's Keeper Task Force report. The guidance will help states and agencies strengthen the quality of education services provided to the approximately 57,000 young people in confinement every day.

Earlier this year, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice released joint guidance reminding states, school districts and

schools of their obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. The Departments also released additional tools and resources to help schools in serving English learner students and parents with limited English proficiency, including a toolkit to help school districts identify English learner students.

Great efforts are underway in communities across the country — but our young people still face great challenges. To truly change the face of opportunity in this country – to truly make the bounty of America available to the many, and not just the few — we must replicate and expand what's working.

Our work is far from over. Let's move forward, together, to do right by all our nation's young people.

Article retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2015/03/my-brothers-keeper-a-year-of-progress/>

Native Youth Honored by Secretary Jewell for Powerful Work in their Communities

The Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) recognized its 2015 Champions for Change on February 25-26 in Washington, D.C. The Champions for Change program, inspired by a White House initiative, is designed to shine a spotlight on positive stories in Indian Country, promote hope among Native American youth, and engage young people in leadership opportunities.

Bios on each Champion can be found at http://www.cnay.org/2015_CFCs.html.

2015 Champions for Change:

- ▶ Jazmyn Espinoza, 18, Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican
- ▶ Hamilton Seymour, 15, Nooksack Indian Tribe

- ▶ Rory Taylor, 18, Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
- ▶ Tatiana Ticknor, 16, Yup'ik, Tlingit, Dena'ina
- ▶ Carin Young, 22, Native Hawaiian

CNAY and its founder and chairman, US Senator Byron Dorgan (ret.), honored these five young Native American leaders, whose efforts include work on issues such as suicide prevention, culture preservation, college readiness and sexual abuse awareness. The Champions were announced on February 24th during a public event at the Aspen Institute and were also recognized during a reception with US Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to celebrate CNAY's fourth anniversary on February 25. While in D.C., the Champions met with Secretary Jewell, White House staff, Members of Congress, federal agency officials, tribal leaders and many others.

"Our Champions for Change program recognizes Native American youth who are doing inspiring work for their communities and peers," said former US Senator Byron Dorgan. "A long history of broken promises and failed policies has meant that too many Native American youth have not had equal access to opportunity. These young Champions for Change have overcome many challenges to inspire others. We are proud to honor them and their work, and to celebrate their accomplishments!"

Tatiana Ticknor, a 16-year-old Alaska Native was named a Champion for Change this year for her efforts to address a variety of issues in her community, including youth suicide and bullying prevention. She said, "Being recognized by the Center for Native American Youth for my efforts makes me feel really, really good."

(continued on page 10)

"I am excited to be connected with CNAY and continue my work to make a difference," said 15-year-old Hamilton Seymour, who lost his father to suicide and has been committed to culture and traditional sports as a way to grieve, heal and prevent suicide.

About one-third of Native children grow up in poverty. They experience suicide rates triple the national average and high school graduation rates hover around 50 percent.

Support for the Champions for Change program comes from an anonymous donor, the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, Comcast Foundation, and Nike's N7 Programs.

"Lifting up powerful Native youth voices is at the heart of everything CNAY does and the Champions for Change program is the perfect embodiment of that," said Erin Bailey, executive director of CNAY. "These Champions have amazing stories to tell and CNAY will support them in their efforts over the next two years."

In addition to the Champions for Change leadership program, CNAY is committed to spending time on the ground and reaching out to Native youth across Indian Country. Each year, CNAY publishes a report summarizing what they hear directly from Native youth through these youth roundtables. To access the fourth volume of the Voices of Native Youth

report, click on this link: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/upload/Voices%20Report%20Vol%20%20IV_2015.pdf.

Article retrieved at the Center for Native American Youth, cnayinfo@aspennstitute.org, The Aspen Institute | One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 700 | Washington, D.C. 20036

Champion for Change Testifies Before Senate Committee on Indian Affairs



Vance Home Gun, 2013 Champion for Change, provided testimony in front of the US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on January 28. The oversight hearing was titled, "Indian Country Priorities for the 114th Congress" and Vance testified on behalf of CNAY on Native American youth priorities, touching on issues of health, education, culture, and child welfare. During his testimony, Vance stated, "We all have the same

goal of creating a healthy, more prosperous Indian Country and United States of America. Native youth want to work alongside the 114th Congress as we reach that goal."

Article retrieved from the Center for Native American Youth at <http://www.icontact-archive.com/fqukL5pYA-ISQOkWMelnk7e-Hwnb11JGx?w=4#>

In February, Secretary Jewell kicked off President Obama's Native Youth Listening Tour. The tour is a key part of the Obama Administration's Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) initiative, a program meant to break down barriers standing between Native youth and their opportunity for success. Over the coming year, Obama Administration Cabinet officials will host similar listening sessions and discussions with Native youth across the country.

A video was created to show why the Administration is doing this listening tour and why it's important for the next generation of Indian Country. To view the video, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PD2CS77ELE>



Announcements

Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse (IASA) Inter-departmental Coordinating Committee Announces Launch of Learning Community

The IASA Inter-departmental Coordinating Committee recently announced the launch of the Tribal Action Plan (TAP) Learning Community. The portal provides information on TAP development, funding opportunities, training, webinars, and technical assistance for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Message to Tribes

Greetings,

On behalf of the Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse Inter-departmental Coordinating Committee (IASA) and the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OIASA) we cordially invite you to register for the Tribal Action Plan (TAP) Portal Learning Community! The TAP Portal provides information on TAP development, funding opportunities, trainings, webinars and technical assistance for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). The goal of the TAP Portal is to assist Tribes in developing TAPs which will serve as comprehensive strategic plans to address alcohol and substance issues within Tribal communities. According to the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-211) ("TLOA"), the law requires the Departments of Health and Human Services, Interior and Justice to coordinate resources and programs to assist Indian Tribes, as defined at 25 U.S.C. § 2403(3), "to achieve their goals in the prevention, intervention, and treatment of alcohol and substance abuse".

It was determined that there is a need to align, leverage, and coordinate Federal efforts and resources at multiple levels within each agency to effectuate comprehensive alcohol and substance abuse services and programs for AI/AN individuals, families, and communities. Therefore, the federal partners will assist Tribes in the development of a TAP to coordinate resources and programs relevant to alcohol and substance abuse prevention and treatment and will "enter into an agreement with the Tribe for the implementation of the Tribal Action Plan".

To register, visit <https://tap.bja.gov>. In addition to registering for the site please visit the TAP section on the TLOA website at <http://www.samhsa.gov/tloa/tap>. If you have questions, feel free to contact Michael Koscinski at (240) 276-2486 or Michael.Koscinski@samhsa.hhs.gov.

Federal partners are committed to strengthening their relationships with Tribes by and sharing and disseminating information in a streamlined fashion. We encourage you to visit the TAP Portal periodically for various updates.

Events

Save the Dates Tribal Interior Budget Council

May 20 - 21, 2015

Washington Plaza Hotel

10 Thomas Circle, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005

Room Reservations:

800-424-1140

Deadline: May 1, 2015 for group rates; \$229 plus taxes

Use reference code: TIBC meeting

www.washingtonplazahotel.com

August 5 - 6, 2015

Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town

800 Rio Grande Boulevard, NW Albuquerque, NM 87104

Room Reservations:

800-588-7666

Deadline: July 20, 2015 for group rates; \$83 plus taxes

Use reference code: Tribal Interior Budget Council Meeting

November 18 - 19, 2015

Washington Plaza Hotel

10 Thomas Circle, NW Washington, D.C. 20005

Room Reservations:

800-424-1140

Deadline: October 30, 2015 for group rates; \$177 plus taxes

Use Reference Code: TIBC Meeting | www.washingtonplazahotel.com



National Council of Urban Indian Health 2015 Annual Leadership Conference

May 20 - 21, 2015

Salt Lake City, UT

Register: https://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/50256/p/salsa/event/common/public/?event_KEY=81262



National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) 2015 Mid Year Conference & Marketplace

June 28 - July 1, 2015

St. Paul, MN

Register: <https://webportal.ncai.org/LogIn/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fConference%2fRegistrationProcessOverview.aspx%3fid%3d123&id=123>

(continued on page 13)

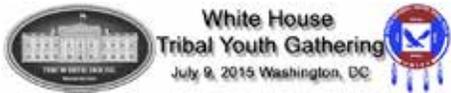
The theme of the products is "IAMNDN" (pronounced "I am Indian"), and the "NDN" ending stands for Native Drug-free Nations. This concept is becoming so popular that the Comanche tribe has received requests from other tribal communities around the country to ship some of the prevention school supplies.

The team behind IAMNDN recognizes the significant impact that empowered youth can have with each other and the broader community as well. They plan to obtain Gopro cameras to give young people the

opportunity to document and share some of their life experiences on and off reservation. There are also plans to have youth-run social media pages and discussions.

Article retrieved from <http://newsletter.samhsa.gov/2015/03/culture-leads-native-youth-in-prevention/>

Events (continued from page 12)



Whitehouse Tribal Youth Gathering
July 9, 2015

Renaissance Downtown Hotel
Washington, D.C.

Participant Application: https://white_house_native_youth_gathering.formstack.com/forms/application



2015 National UNITY Conference
July 10 - 14, 2015

Washington, D.C.

Register: https://unity.formstack.com/forms/2015_national_reg

12th Annual Direct Service Tribes National Meeting
August 26 - 27, 2015

Flagstaff, AZ

Contact: Emmalani Longenecker at emmalani.longenecker@ihs.gov
or (301) 443-1104

NIHB Annual Consumer Conference
September 21 - 24, 2015

Washington, D.C.

72nd Annual Convention and Marketplace
October 18 - 23, 2015

San Diego, CA

Feel free to copy and distribute

Contributing Agencies



Newsletter Contact Information

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact:

Sharece N. Tyer, Communications Chair
Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse
Office of Tribal Affairs and Policy
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
1 Choke Cherry Road, #4-1062
Rockville, MD 20857
Tel: (240) 276-2432
Email: Sharece.Tyer@samhsa.hhs.gov