

The Four Winds

Newsletter of the American Indian Alaska Native Employees Association for NRCS (AIANEA)



Elder Quote

My life's experience has taught me that we do have a spiritual responsibility to guide and direct those gifts that beget and sustain us as human beings.

That's fundamental in our beliefs, as fundamental as the air we breathe and food we eat. We all have an obligation to share this knowledge with those who follow us; in the same way that we have learned it from our own elders.

~ Leland Debe

Fall - Niibin 2011

Respect, Harmony, and Beauty

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Please send articles on what is happening in your area. News stories, articles of interest, gatherings, pow wow's, whatever you want to share! Email to membership@aiana.com

Message from President **Ciro LoPinto**

Greetings members and friends,

I hope this message finds most of you happy and healthy. Indeed, our prayers go to the Elders, AIANEA members and their families who have had hardships and loss since we were last in each other's company in South Dakota in 2010. It has been some time since we've sent out a message and we have many positive things to talk about. There are several excellent updates and initiatives taking place from our members, the field and headquarters. Keep your eyes out for the 2011 Tribal Nations Progress Report...NRCS actually shows up in this year's report! The report most importantly notes that six NRCS Programs that Tribes participated in saw an 85% increase in funding to tribes over last year. I would also like to add that most of the above and following accomplishments are a true group effort and is a testament to all of our desires and abilities to serve our co-workers and Indian communities...the people, land, plants, air and water that we are all so connected to.



Our National council is working on contacting every member to determine our will and desire to redefine and restructure our needs and abilities as an Organization serving NRCS, students, Elders and the people and lands in Indian Country. Expect to hear from your elected AIANEA Regional Representatives about the future of AIANEA and the services we provide. Information and inquiries will also be circulated regarding our planned 2011 AIANEA Annual Business Meeting as well as the possibility of participating in some small, regional gatherings of members.

Some of our past and future Presidents of AIANEA are working with the other NRCS Employee Organizations in order to provide advice back to the National Councils as to how our organizations can still provide service to NRCS, our members and our chosen focus groups.

The Leadership and Mentoring arm of our Seven Generations Visioning Committee has made great strides in further developing a Bi-Cultural Mentoring Program and helping to develop an on-line survey for those of us wishing to participate in NRCS work details specific to Indian Country. Special thanks go to the Office of Outreach and Advocacy in helping to generate this survey. Keep your eyes open for the opportunity to get involved.

On the National front there is also some very good news afloat. Several of our members have been diligently working, many years, and have accomplished the task of establishing Regional Tribal Consultation Advisory Councils (RTCAC) within NRCS. The RTCACs will provide a direct line of communication of tribal issues and concerns to the Chief of NRCS, Regional Conservationists, and State Conservationists. The goal of this effort is to promote tribal participation in "all things NRCS" that affect tribal lands. The really good news is

that these RTCACs are also slated to include and AIANEA Elder! Don't forget to remind folks that Tribal Consultation is our duty, not just "something we'd like to try out".

Also on the National front, NRCS NHQ has developed and funded an initiative designed to strengthen Tribal Colleges in the development of a cadre of 4-5 Tribal Certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs). The program is led by the Tribal College of Menominee and NRCS. The initiative is designed to increase the technical capacity for Tribes, Tribal Conservation Districts and Tribal Colleges.

Lastly, don't forget that the NRCS Guidebook entitled "Indigenous Stewardship Methods (ISMs) and NRCS Conservation Practices" has been formally adopted by the Agency. You should be able to find a link from AIANEA.com. The work was coordinated by our own former President, Crystal Leonetti. The guidebook has been out for one year, and I'm not sure that any indigenous practices (ISM) have been accepted by NRCS as of yet. If you have used the guidebook, please let us know. Explore the guidebook and propose a practice. Maybe AIANEA will consider presenting an award to the first AIANEA member to successfully pioneer the use of this guidebook and gain acceptance of an ISM.

I am very proud of my opportunity to serve the AIANEA as President and I am very grateful for the hard work of our membership. All of these accomplishments were made possible by some contribution from membership.

LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK!



AIANEA is now on Facebook! AIANEA wanted to take advantage of the most popular social media tools to stay connected. This will give AIANEA the opportunity to stay connected not only with our membership, but with partners, friends, students and associates. AIANEA and Friends can use Facebook to post pictures of our events, share activities with tribes, share our journeys and participate in discussion forums. Please take advantage and stay connected!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/American-Indian-Alaska-Native-Employees-Association/160121254007738?sk=wall>

ELDER LELAND "AWSAWDUM" DEBE

Leland "Awsawdum" Debe, 76, of Cloquet, died Monday, Feb. 14, 2011, in his home.

He was born in Sawyer on the Fond du Lac Indian Reservation. He was an enrolled member of the Lake Superior Band of Chippewa.

Lee demonstrated a sincere appreciation for those things of the Creator's hand and then nurtured by Sacred Mother Earth. Lee worked for the benefit of Indian people in many capacities, most recently by his tireless contribution to the Gitigaan Gardening program.

In the warrior tradition, Lee entered the U.S. Army as a teenager and proudly gave 22 years of distinguished service.

Holding positions of service as 1st Sergeant of several combat units in Vietnam, Lee contributed that unique expertise which won him meritorious recognition and the respect of his men and retired as a Master Sergeant.

Please take a moment and visit [http://www.aianea.com/newsletter/AIANEA Newsletter 4.pdf](http://www.aianea.com/newsletter/AIANEA%20Newsletter%204.pdf) to read an article on Leland Debe.



Artwork Selected for 2011 American Indian Heritage Poster

This year's winner of the American Indian Heritage Poster contest is Carrie Silverhorn of Miami, Okla. Silverhorn is a member of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma and is of Eastern Shawnee/Wyandotte decent. The 32 year old has been an artist since childhood and claims, "Art is the passion that drives me to create beauty from my surroundings and allows me to produce what my imagination whispers to me."

Every year, an American Indian residing in the selected American Indian Alaska Native Employee Association (AIANEA) region, is eligible to enter their artwork in a contest sponsored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This year, the South Central Region [Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas] was selected.

Oklahoma was charged with conducting the contest. The winning artwork is then produced into a poster used during American Indian Heritage Month, which is in November.

On June 17, 2011, seventeen entries were judged at the NRCS state office, in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

"Judging wasn't easy," State Conservationist Ron Hilliard said. "We received some outstanding pieces of art and each artist brought something different into the painting.

According to Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS National AI/AN SEPM and District Conservationist in Norman and Purcell, Oklahoma, "the title for the poster is, *Conservation: Preservation of Land for Future Generations* and the theme is, *A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children.*"

Crouch stated, "it was important that the judges for the artwork represented our diverse workforce as well as Tribal Members." Judges this year included the NRCS

Oklahoma Civil

Rights Advisory Council (CRAC), two Tribal members and NRCS leadership. The poster will be delivery to all NRCS offices in 50 states; plus the Caribbean Pacific Basin in October. The poster will be utilized to celebrate American Indian Heritage in November.



NRCS Employee is Inspired by American Indian College Students to Complete College Degree

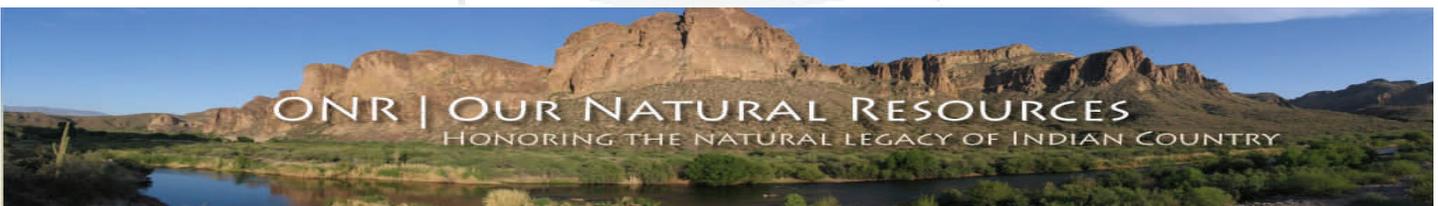
In November 2009, Oregon's NRCS American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM), Gerald Allison, was selected as a recruiting cadre member to recruit for NRCS at the annual American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES). During the four day recruitment event, Gerald was able to visit among seven hundred college students from over 260 colleges across the Nation. Gerald shared with Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS National AI/AN SEPM, that he was inspired by the dedication and commitment these students had made to completing their higher education and they inspired him to complete his a college degree.

Gerald is an enrolled member of the Great River Pima Indian Community and has worked for NRCS for 32 years as a Soil Conservation Technician. On August 4, 2011, Dr. Crouch received an email from



Gerald Allison – front row- first one from the left

Gerald announcing that he had completed his Bachelor degree in Management and Organizational Leadership from George Fox University, in Newberg, Oregon. Gerald has also completed a Bachelor degree of Arts in Theology from Beacon Institute of Ministry. Inspiration can show-up when we least expect it; Gerald should inspire us all that it is never too late to complete our educational dreams.



AIANEA members and District Conservationists with tribal responsibilities, in particular, are encouraged to review the following web page. This might also be something to share with tribal contacts.

<http://www.ournaturalresources.org/>

The site is being coordinated by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) as an alliance and network of organizations working collaboratively to provide references and to serve as a clearinghouse and toolkit for input on the next farm bill and for promoting a national tribal resources strategy called "Our Natural Resources" (ONR).

According to the ONR (pronounced "honor") web page, ONR:

- Is an alliance of intertribal organizations and tribes committed to developing and advancing a national tribal natural resources strategy.
- Brings together a unique blend of expertise to support the capacity of tribes to use, protect, restore, and enhance the natural resources that are central to the well-being of their communities.
- Is open to all tribes, organizations, and individuals that support the mission, attainment of the goals, and work towards the vision.

A World of Excellence by Deborah Clairmont-NRCS Soil Conservationist, Cortez, Colorado

Bismarck, ND-The 2011 American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) Conference held host to several USDA agencies giving their career opportunities and advice to students from USDA/1994 Programs Land Grant Tribal Colleges. Over six hundred students arrive to compete in several skills; writing, web page design, science bowl, art, traditional plants, science poster, business, speech, film, volleyball, Indian hand games, archery and Wii sports.

The 1994 Programs created the first 'USDA Position Paper Competition' where teams of three students from several 1994 Tribal Colleges competed in producing a thesis paper on issues that affect their Tribal College and tribal community. Students topics were

based on the USDA current goals: enhancing food availability to help combat obesity, improve personal health and improve nutritional options; Tribal Energy Independence to create jobs, improve the general economic development and become more diverse, sustainable and vibrant; strategies to improve air quality, clean water, wildlife habitat, help farmers and ranchers protect environmental and natural resources for generations to follow; maximize Native Farmers and Ranchers profitability and promote Economic Development in the tribal community.

Five teams were selected from entries to present a current issue and solutions for their Tribal College and tribal community at the AIHEC conference. The USDA Position Paper Competition consisted of four judges; Lorena Carrasco-Deputy Assistant Administrator; Lawrence Shorty-National Team Leader USDA/1994 Programs; Stephanie Koziski-Program Analyst 1994 Programs; Deborah Clairmont-NRCS Soil Conservationist.

Three student teams were chosen for **first place**: Dine

Tribal College-Improving Lifestyles & Improving

1st place winners; Dine Tribal College standing with Lawrence Shorty National Team Leader USDA/1994 Programs



Life for Native Adolescence', Tye Brown, Lindsey Deswood, Erik Freeman, **second place**: Sitting Bull Tribal College 'Living the Healthy Lifestyle', Jalisa Cruz, Harriet Blackhoop, Shantelle Cruz and **third place**: Fort Berthold Tribal College- 'A Native American Dream: Farming and Ranching in today's World', Tamara Halvorson, Pearl Roy, Victoria Mandan.

Other Keynote speakers: Kathleen Merrigan-Deputy Secretary of Agriculture USDA spoke about 'Know Your Farmer Know Your Food'; Jodi Gillette-Deputy Assistant Secretary- Indian Affairs for Policy and Economic Development U. S. Department of the Interior, and Hattie Kauffman-National Television Correspondent shared their experiences of being a leader. In addition, other USDA representatives present: Cathea M. Simelton-USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program; Barbara A. King-USDA/ARS NPA Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity Program Manager.

South Texas NRCS and Partners Learn about Rare and Endangered Plant Species by Garry Stephens & Melissa Blair

More than 35 NRCS employees and conservation partners learned about the habitats of rare, threatened and endangered plants as well as plants of cultural concern that inhabit rangeland areas of South Texas, on Wed. Nov. 3 in Rio Grande City.

“As USDA recognizes November as American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month, this training gave our field employees an opportunity to learn firsthand about plants that are rare and that provide aspects of cultural significance to the Indigenous People of the area,” said Garry Stephens, Zone 3 wildlife biologist and Texas NRCS Tribal Liaison.

Ted Herrera provided invaluable assistance in this training exercise by leading a discussion about Rare Plant Species that are of Cultural Concern to the Indigenous People of South Texas. Peyote, for instance, is considered to be “sacred medicine” for 90 Native American Churches in 40 states in the country and grows in this area in association with several plant species that are considered to be threatened and endangered.

Herrera is from the Coahuilteco Nation and is one of five Tribal Leaders of the Texas recognized Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation which is headquartered in San Antonio. Ted

is the founder, and Spiritual leader of the Rio Grande Native American Church. He also serves on the USDA/NRCS Texas State Technical Committee, as an

advocate for stakeholders of tribally owned land and land owned by Tribal members. Herrera also serves as an Elder of the American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Organization (AIANEA) for NRCS.

Noting the importance of maintaining our natural resources for now and for the future Herrera recently provided insight by saying, “Before our ways of life came to an end, our natural resources were sacred. Our ancestors prayed for the survival of their descendants, that they would keep their ways and protect their natural resources. We are those descendants.”



Conservation Partners Hold USDA Farm Bill Programs & Conservation Informational Meeting

The Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency (FSA) sponsored a conservation informational meeting to discuss funding opportunities for local farmers, ranchers, Tribes and tribal landowners. Valuable information was provided to attendees on the new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), USDA Farm Bill Programs and program opportunities from other federal and state agencies. The meeting was held on Thursday, January 27, 2011, at the Caddo Kiowa Technology Center in Fort Cobb, Oklahoma. The meeting was well attended by Oklahoma Tribes and tribal and local landowners. The meeting began at 9:30 am and concluded 1:30 pm. Lunch was sponsored by the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC). The meeting was facilitated by OTCAC board member, Darrel Dominick, NRCS State Conservationist, Ron Hilliard and NRCS Tribal Liaison Kirk Schreiner and NRCS Liaison for OTCAC, District Conservationist, Carol Crouch. Mr. Jasper Parker, acting zone three, Assistant for Field operations represented zone three.

The meeting began with an opening prayer by Kiowa Tribal Conservation District member Milton Savo. Kirk Schreiner, District Conservationist for NRCS, presented on 2008 Farm Bill Programs; including the new Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Amanda Tye and Tom McCullough Garner presented on FSA programs and Farm Loan programs. Chris Allen presented on Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) projects ongoing in Southwest Oklahoma. Larry Wright, Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) coordinator, presented on community based projects and opportunities for local and tribal governments. Terry Dupree, US Fish and Wildlife (USFW) provided an overview of opportunities for Tribes to partner with USFW on community projects. David Moore, American Indian Coordinator for USDA Rural Development (RD) provided an overview of technical assistance and program opportunities for Tribes and tribal and local landowners. Mr. Mark Conklin, NRCS Resource Specialist, presented on best management practices to address invasive Eastern red cedars. Displays and handout materials were available for all attendees.



Attendees receive valuable information regarding 2008 Farm Bill Programs and other conservation programs at Fort Cobb, Oklahoma on January 27, 2011

Second Annual Tribal and Native American Youth Field Day

Lockeford Plant Materials Center

The Second Annual Tribal and Native American Youth Field Day was held at the California Plant Materials Center on July 29, 2010. The Field Day commenced with an introduction by Reina Rogers, NRCS Tribal Liaison; then continued with a walking tour of the PMC, a lunch break, and then concluded with presentations on California native basketweaving materials and techniques by California native basketweavers, Kathy Wallace (Karuk/Yurok/Mohawk/Hoopa), and Ennis Peck (Mountain Maidu).

The walking tour gave participants a chance to view examples of different uses of native plants; for landscaping around buildings as well as for conservation purposes.

The group next visited the Native Plant Resource Hedgerow planted in 2006. Culturally significant plants growing here include the Incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), and White sage (*Salvia apiana*).

Reina Rogers describes plants the native plants and their uses in the Native Plant Resource Hedgerow.



Stewardship Methods (ISM).

As the group walked back to the main buildings along the Mokelumne River levee, which is well shaded with large black walnut and other vegetation, we stopped at areas previously planted with sedge for basketweaving material. Some of the youth had participated in the 2009 field day and were excited to see the willow they planted last year.

After a picnic lunch eaten outside under the trees, we divided into groups to rotate through stations for different activities.



Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp *caerula*), redbud (*Cercis orbiculata*) and flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum*) growing in the landscaped area next to offices at the CA PMC.

The group continued on to the ten acre area close to the Mokelumne River, which has plantings of native trees and shrubs including oaks, elderberry, and willow and some tobacco, a plant of great cultural significance. This area is planned as the site of more native plantings and investigations into Indigenous

Members of the Sierra Native Alliance enjoying a moment during their walk



During the Field Day we asked for suggestions and partners in developing the ten acre native plant area. The 10 acre area contains many elderberry, black walnut, and oak trees as well as annual grasses and forbs. The area could be planted with traditional food,

such as bulbs and other root foods, berries, or other fleshy fruit or leafy green producing plants. Native American elders will be invited this fall to visit the area and offer their suggestions.

Melany Johnson, Susanville Indian Rancheria Cultural Resource Specialist, describes the management and various traditional uses of elderberry.



Woven mat from Tule stems.



PMC Agronomists, Christina Smith and Annie Young-Matthews, helped the participants transplant sedge plants (*Carex barbae*) to take with them for transplanting in the fall.



Ceremony marks return of salmon, tradition to Colville Reservation

Tome Louie didn't know if he would ever live to see the day when the spring Chinook came home again. It has been some 80 years since the last time they had made their way up the Columbia and Okanogan Rivers, into Omak Creek and onto the Colville Indian Reservation. Still, for most of his life, he prayed for their return.

In June 2005, Louie's prayers were answered when 11 spring Chinook salmon once again swam into tribal waters. Their return infused new life into an important cultural event- the First Salmon Ceremony for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

The return of the salmon also signaled an enormous conservation achievement for the Tribe and for the NRCS.

Last spring, Chief White and State Conservationist Roylene Rides at the Door participated in the First Salmon ceremony.



For more information on the return of the salmon to, see the link

ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/WA/news/conservation_shocases/CS_FirstSalmon_3-06.pdf

Tribal councilman Andy Joseph harvests the first spring Chinook to be taken from Omak Creek in 80 years. The fish was prepared for the Colville Confederated Tribe's First Salmon Ceremony. (Photo by Keith Kistler)



NRCS Oklahoma held *Working Effectively with American Indian Tribes* Harmony Workshop For NRCS and USDA Employees

NRCS Oklahoma held a *Working Effectively with American Indian Tribes (WEWAI)* harmony workshop in Shawnee, Oklahoma on August 2 and August 3, 2011. The Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC) and the Citizen Potawatomi Nation hosted the cultural awareness workshop on Citizen Potawatomi Tribal Grounds. Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS National AI/AN SEPM and NRCS District Conservationist in Purcell & Norman, Oklahoma, Levi Montoya, NRCS District Conservationist in Trinidad, Colorado and Richard Vigil, NRCS Engineer in Utah were the American Indian NRCS NEDC cadre instructors for the harmony workshop. Participants for the training included; fifty NRCS employees from Oklahoma, one employee each from NRCS North Dakota, Missouri, and Arkansas, five Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees and four employees from Rural Development (RD).

The workshop provided spiritual, cultural and intellectual awareness of the American Indian community in order for USDA employees to work effectively while providing assistance. Field and management personnel were given the opportunity to explore the basic history, and protocol of working with American Indians. Participants also experienced many facets of American Indian culture; they were taken on a tour of the Citizen Potawatomi Cultural Heritage Center and interacted



with cadre instructors. Instructors shared their cultural heritage as well as their experiences balancing being American Indian and a federal employee. Participants were able to interact and hear from tribal representatives such as: Tribal leaders, Elders and Tribal Attorney. These individuals gave the participants a brief overview of trust responsibilities, basic Indian rights, laws and treaties and government to government relationships.

According to Dr. Crouch, “in order to work more effectively with American Indians and Indian Nations it is critical that our employees receive this type of cultural awareness training. Our employees need to understand USDA policies as they pertain to Indian Country. They need guidance and “tools” to conduct the appropriate protocol and governmental procedures that will assist them as they move forward and delivery conservation programs to all diverse populations that NRCS are tasked to serve.” Oklahoma is second in the Nation for having the most American Indian Tribes and the largest population of American Indians residing within any state. Ron Hilliard, Oklahoma State Conservationist stated; “holding this workshop and others like it; is *win/win* situation for our employees and our customers. The workshop was a huge success and this type of training will continue in Oklahoma.”



Membership Form

American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Association for NRCS

“Respect, Harmony, and Beauty”

www.aianea.com

Please make checks payable to AIANEA and mail your membership form and dues to:

Harold Bryant
1510 29th Street
Hondo, TX 78861

Date: _____

Name: _____

Position/Title: _____

Office Address: _____ New Address?

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax _____

e-mail: _____

Tribal Affiliation (optional) _____

Type of membership. (Membership is for one calendar year **January 1 to December 31**)

My membership is for the year 20____.

Regular-\$25.00 Check here if this is a renewal membership

Student -\$10.00 full-time high school or college students

Lifetime - \$250.00 or payable in 4 installments of \$65/year

Enclosed is payment # 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____

Tribal College-\$100.00

Tribal - \$500.00

The 2011 AIANEA National Council

Ciro Lo Pinto – President

Gina Kerzman - 1st Vice President

Levi Montoya - 2nd Vice President

Leota Burnett - So. Central Region Rep.

Jack Lewis - Southeast Region Rep.

Ralph Goh - West Region Rep.

Stacy Kimble - Midwest Region Rep.

John Whitney - East Region Rep.

David Pesicka - Northern Plains Region Rep.

Sherry Cosper - Secretary

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