

# The Four Winds

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



Niibin 2013

Respect, Harmony, and Beauty

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## Elder Quote

"The Earth is our bible."  
*Louie Dick, 8/12/08*

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](mailto:membership@aiana.com)

# Message from President Gina Kerzman

Oki” (Oh-Kee) AIANEA members!

I hope this newsletter finds you all well and that everyone is having a great summer.

I have had the privilege to help instruct the “Working Effectively with American Indians” NEDC workshop in Wyoming and New Mexico this summer. In Wyoming, we were welcomed by the Arapahoe and Shoshone Tribes from the Wind River Reservation and learned how they have managed their wildlife and set aside land as a quasi “national park” within their own nation. It was my privilege to hear from an elder who was 95 years old and a former POW in World War II. He reminded us all to have a positive attitude in life and be happy. Like so many of our elders, he spoke more with his hands and eyes than he did with his words.

In New Mexico, the Pueblo tribes, Navajo and Mescalero Apache welcomed us. At Acoma Pueblo, we visited “Sky City,” a Pueblo City on top of a mesa that has been continuously occupied since before the Spanish arrived in the late 1500’s. My husband and I also took some vacation time and visited several other Pueblos including the Taos Pueblo. Their village has also been occupied since before the Spanish.

Such tradition and elegance abounds in the native lands across our nation. As federal employees, it is such a privilege to work with tribal nations and their citizens and fulfill our trust responsibility to help continue to protect these lands. It is the mission of AIANEA to support these efforts, and to support the federal employees who are committed to the government-to-government relationship.

Enjoy the rest of your summer.

Sincerely,

Gina Kerzman

2012-13 AIANEA President



Gina and her husband, Paul, at the Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument on the Cochiti Pueblo Reservation in New Mexico.

The Cochiti and the BLM co-manage the monument



### Membership Dues

Student - \$10.00  
Regular - \$25.00  
Tribal College - \$100.00  
Tribal - \$500.00  
Lifetime - \$250.00 1 x payment/or  
payable in 4 installments of \$65/year

Please mail payment to:

Harold Bryant  
Treasurer  
1510 29th Street  
Hondo, TX 78861

**PENALTY/  
FRANKED MAIL &  
OFFICIAL  
STATIONARY.  
YOU MAY NOT:**

Use official government envelopes (with or without applied postage) or official letterhead stationery for personal business.

## **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>

## Poarch Band of Creek Indians Recognized for Forestry Achievements submitted by David Elliott

AUBURN, Ala., March 14, 2013 - The Poarch Band of Creek Indians (PBCI) recently received the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award for the South Region at the Alabama Natural Resources Council's Awards Banquet, in Auburn, Alabama. This event recognizes forest owners who have shown exemplary dedication to the wise stewardship of natural resources. Dr. James Shepard, Auburn University Dean and Professor of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences presented James W. (Billy) Smith, PBCI Tribal Elder and Manager of the Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve (MBWR); and Keith Martin, Tribal Council Member, with a plaque, a certificate, and a limited edition painting. A video of the Tribe's forest accomplishments was produced by the Alabama Forestry Commission and shown at the banquet. The video is available on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfv3TmOia7g>.

The PBCI have earned many honors for their forest stewardship. In June 2010, they received three prestigious awards for forest management activities at MBWR: the Alabama Natural Resources Council's TREASURE Forest Award and certifications for the Forest Stewardship and the American Tree Farm Programs. This was the first time that a landowner had received all three recognitions at the same time.

MBWR is mostly timberland and is used as a recreational area for the Tribe and their guests. By working with various state and federal agencies, the Tribe has sustained, protected, and enhanced 6,000 acres of timberland and 50 lakes. The PBCI partnered with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to secure financial and technical assistance for site preparation on about 800 acres planted to longleaf pine, and to install permanent firebreaks and prescribe burn over 2,000 acres of pine plantation.

"Managing for timber is vital to our long-term forest goals. Seventy percent of our forest land is loblolly

and 30 percent has been converted to longleaf pine," said Billy Smith, PBCI Tribal Elder and Manager of the Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve. "Whenever we clear-cut an area of loblolly, we plant it back to longleaf pine. Right now we have planted about 800,000 longleaf pines on Tribal land."



Elder Billy Smith and Dr. William Puckett

Prescribed burning plays an important role in the longleaf pine ecosystem. It helps control disease and reduces competition of undesirable understory. It also provides wildlife habitat benefits by stimulating the growth of native plants for wildlife food.

"We are on a two year burn cycle and try to burn about 2,000 acres each year," Smith said.

The wildlife accomplishments include planting 37 acres of food plots to cool and warm season forages, building numerous wood duck boxes and bird houses, and thinning 2,000 acres to improve wildlife habitat.

They are attempting to reestablish native grasses. "After clearing the understory through a controlled

burn, we are seeing the comeback of native grasses that have been here all along,” said Smith.

The Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award promotes forestry through education. David Elliott, NRCS Tribal Liaison, said, “One of the opportunities that the PBCI provide is educational activities. Through partnerships with the Alabama Forestry Commission, Longleaf Alliance, USFWS, NRCS, and other agencies, the Tribe hosts tours that promote best management practices, and good forestry and wildlife management.”

Smith added, “One thing we are proud to offer our Tribe and the public is the pristine Big Escambia Creek. We own 12-14 miles of the creek bank, so we are able to control a lot of what goes on along the banks, which includes the MBWR.”

They often cater to Boy Scouts, churches, and other groups who wish to reserve the area. The MBWR offers canoeing, kayaking, tubing, zip lines, horseback trails, birding, and camping. They have a campground with 82 camp sites - 49 with full hookups and others with only power and water. Smith said they also offer boon dock camping, which is primitive camping in the more remote areas of MBWR.

Smith is proud of the outdoor activities they make available to the younger generations. He said, “Almost everything we do targets the young people. I feel like we can’t do enough for them. I want to get them out into the woods to walk and enjoy a little bit of the outside. If we can help just one kid by bringing them to MBWR to spend some time in the woods, then we have accomplished a lot.”

MBWR is home to the PBCI box turtle habitat program. They have a penned spot where they put the box turtles to acclimate to the area and then turn them loose. They use the box turtles as educational tools by taking and showing them to groups to demonstrate what they are doing to help them.

MBWR also has a large population of gopher tortoise which is a candidate species for the Threatened and

Endangered list. Smith says, “Taking care of the gopher tortoise is really important to us. We have an ongoing program where we catalog and keep GPS coordinates on each gopher tortoise burrow we find.”

Through all of these activities, the PBCI are very deserving of the Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award. “The Tribe serves as

ambassadors for conservation and sustainability, and I commend them for their achievements,” said NRCS State Conservationist Dr. William Puckett. “They not only maintain the land, but also improve it. They are committed to protecting the environment and ensuring that natural resources will thrive on Tribal land for future generations.”



(l-r) Dr. James Shepard presents Helene Mosley TREASURE Forest Award for the South Region to Billy Smith and Keith Martin. Photo by Kelvin Daniels.

## Jerry Wolfe Named Beloved Man of the Cherokee from Sylva Herald

Congratulations to Elder Wolfe!

For the first time in more than 200 years the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has bestowed the distinction “Beloved Man” on an elder of the tribe.

Jerry Wolfe, 88, was named a Beloved Man by unanimous vote April 11 by Tribal Council. This last occurred in 1801.

“Jerry embodies everything a beloved man should embody,” he said of his decision to seek the distinction for Wolfe. “He’s a veteran, a warrior. Being a veteran carries a lot of weight in our culture. He’s a man who gets out and does – and he does for others. He’s selfless.”

Wolfe was recently honored at the United South and Eastern Tribes Impact Week in Washington, D.C. There, Wolfe was recognized for his service during World War II, and for his work as an award-winning cultural preservationist and storyteller.

Wolfe, the council member said, serves as a role model for younger Cherokee men.

“He’s always worked,” Taylor said. “From boarding school until his last day he’ll probably be working.”

Wolfe currently works at The Museum of the Cherokee Indian. Reached there by telephone, Wolfe expressed humbleness about being designated a Beloved Man. He said that his understanding had been that Taylor wanted to do something for some of the tribe’s senior elders.

But work? Wolfe readily would talk about that.

“Daddy was a worker and mother was a worker,” he said. “So we were taught to work.”

By age 14 Wolfe was helping his father cut timber. At 18 he joined the U.S. Navy, which he served in for six years. Wolfe was part of the invasion of Omaha Beach, France, on D-Day. Wolfe also witnessed the declaration of peace signing on the USS Missouri.

“I just happened to be in these places,” he said.

Wolfe went to trade school and learned to build, including skills such as brick and rock laying.

“I did a lot of building in Cherokee,” he said. “Fireplaces, chimneys, rock walls.”

Wolfe also volunteered to build houses for the needy in Haiti, Jamaica, Barbados and South Africa.



Elder Wolfe and Mr. Bo Taylor, The Big Cove Council Representative

# Vilsack Appoints Two American Indians to Key USDA Roles

On May 31, Thomas Vilsack, secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, announced the appointment of two prominent American Indians to positions within the USDA.

Leslie Wheelock will serve as Director of the USDA Office of Tribal Relations, and Patrice Kunesh will serve as Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development according to a letter by Vilsack. Both appointments began immediately.

“Ms. Wheelock and Ms. Kunesh bring an important perspective to USDA, and will continue Obama Administration efforts to ensure that Native Americans have full access to USDA programs and a place at the table when decisions are made,” Vilsack wrote.

Wheelock, Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, was previously with the National Congress of American Indians as the organizations director of Economic Policy. While with NCAI she worked on numerous economic policies affecting economic development, energy and natural resources and agriculture the letter states. She served

as a manager and strategic planning consultant and intellectual property for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. She is an attorney with degrees from Cornell University.

Kunesh, Standing Rock Lakota descent, recently worked on a variety of legal issues concerning American Indian tribes and tribal lands in her role as the deputy solicitor for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior. She served on the faculty of the University of South Dakota School of Law. Kunesh has a history of working with tribes on matters of governance, economic and natural resource development. She is a graduate of Colorado Law and was an editor of the Colorado Law Review.

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## Relationships Among AIANEA, NRCS and Tribes

The AIANEA has a natural working relationship with the NRCS and Indian Tribes. Our common goal is to take care of Mother Earth by helping people help the land. Our work ensures the health of the United States, Indian Nations and their renewable natural resources. Together, weaving traditional conservation methods and NRCS “science based” conservation practices, we make a stronger and more effective ecosystem for all. AIANEA assists Tribes who are empowered to create and utilize their Integrated Resources Management Plans (IRMP) and are eager to participate in Farm Bill programs. NRCS is empowered to learn from and utilize the traditional ecological knowledge that America’s first farmers and first people have learned over thousands of years. The harmonious relationships among AIANEA, Tribes, and NRCS are honored through mutual respect and common goals resulting in productive lands and healthy environment. Amongst us, we have achieved respect, harmony and beauty.

Does this sound vaguely familiar to all of us? The reason I am sending this out is that, at one point we

were all on the Visioning Committee that helped to craft our **AIANEA 7 Generations Vision Plan**, some of you helped to craft this very portion of the document. Some of you were not present, but serve in an AIANEA Leadership role today.

There has also been a lot of success in reaching some of these goals since 2009. Each of the three groups within the Vision Committee will be, or has already reached out to their members. I would like to try and reconvene the Tribal Relations Group, with some additional members encouraged, as well. I will try to send something out soon looking for a possible teleconference date as well. In the meantime, please let me know if you are interested in continuing to work with me on seeing where we go next with this goal. The AIANEA is strongly considering encouraging small, localized groups of AIANEA members getting together, in person, to support each other’s professional, cultural, social and personal needs, as only we can. [Ciro Lo Pinto \[ciro.lopinto@pa.usda.gov\]\(mailto:ciro.lopinto@pa.usda.gov\)](mailto:ciro.lopinto@pa.usda.gov)

# Alaska Update—submitted by Kristine Harper

I am Kristine Harper the Alaska Native Liaison, I started about two years ago replacing Crystal Leonetti. I have been extremely busy and would like to share an update from the Far North (finally).

Alaska has been actively forming Tribal Conservation Districts, two years ago there were only three active TCDs. Today we have six whom are active with two awaiting the Sec. of Ag. signature. Five more are gathering the final signatures and approvals from their respective Tribes. So 11 total TCDs within the great state of Alaska. The formation of the Alaska Tribal Conservation Alliance (ATCA) has been extremely beneficial to assisting NRCS in the formation of TCDs. Last August, ATCA hosted the first annual symposium, Preserving Alaska. Over twenty Federally Recognized Tribes were in attendance, which is no small feat considering the subsistence lifestyle of many Alaska Natives during that time of the year!!

Tyonek TCD is by far the most successful to date! They have come leaps and bounds by forming additional partnerships with USFWS, State Agencies, and other non-profits, they hired an Executive Director, Accountant, and contracted for a Grant

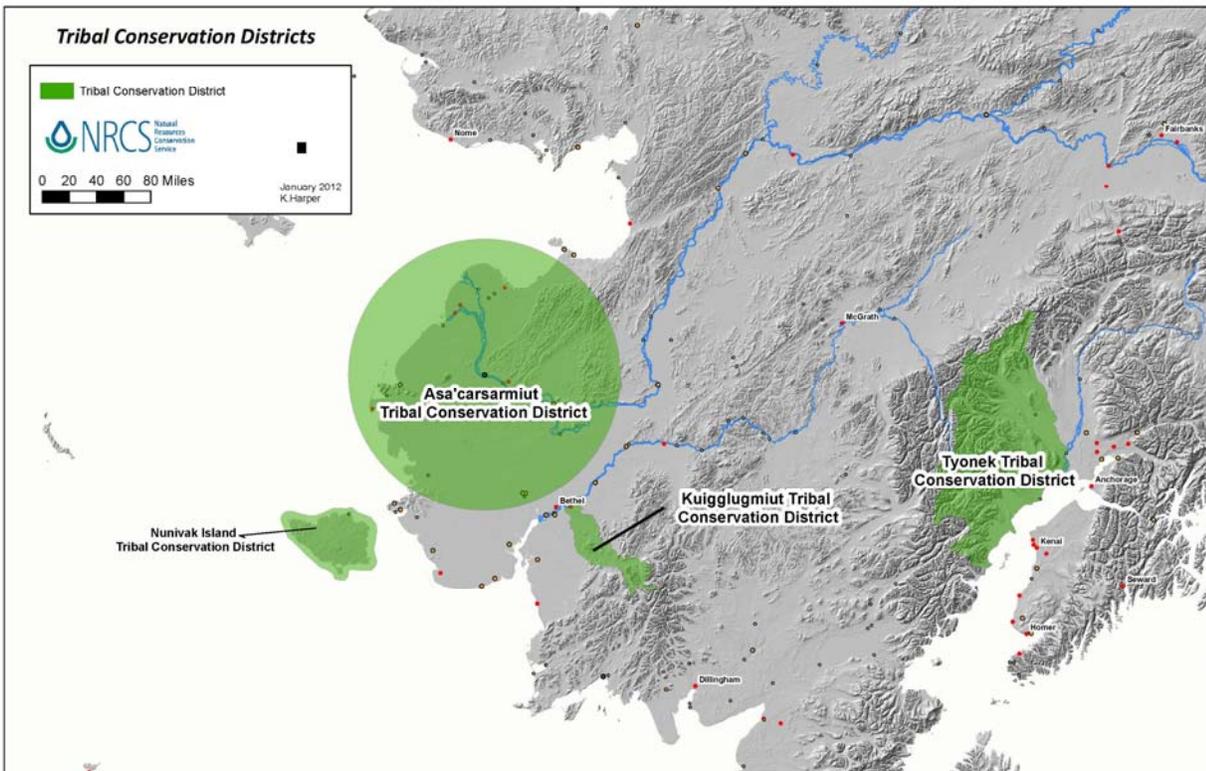
Writer and Natural Resource specialist. They were also the recipient of the OAO (Office of Outreach and Advocacy) Grant last year. They are currently looking to hire a permanent full time natural resource specialist within the next month as well.

Other TCD accomplishments include, Kwethluk TCD has been active in a high tunnel project in SW Alaska. Copper River Ahtna Intertribal Resource Conservation District (CRITR) once signed by the Sec. will be the largest TCD in terms of Tribes and possibly lands too in the US! They have the participation of 7 Tribes and 2 ANCSA Corporations, their mutual agreement is in the Sec. "inbox". Finally, Nunivak Island TCD has been actively pursuing reindeer herding, slaughter, and management.

We have been working closely with our Intertribal Agricultural Council Representatives too. I truly believe they are an under-utilized resource! (at least up here in AK)

*Kristine L. Harper*

**Alaska Native Liaison & Cultural Resources Specialist**



## NRCS Participates at the Southwest Oklahoma Native American & Hispanic Producers Cooperative Meeting and Workshop submitted by Dr. Carol Crouch

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) participated at the Southwest Oklahoma Native American and Hispanic Producers Cooperative meeting and workshop held on April 29, 2013, at the Caddo-Kiowa Technology Center, in Fort Cobb, Oklahoma.

The workshop was sponsored by the Indian Country Agriculture and Resource Development Corporation. Invitations were extended to all Oklahoma Tribes in southwest Oklahoma, tribal, Hispanic and fresh produce producers within southwest Oklahoma.

Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS American Indian and Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager and District Conservationist for the NRCS Purcell field office, was invited to attend the workshop as the representative of NRCS.



The focus of the workshop was to organize an agriculture coop that would work effectively for American Indian tribes, tribal, Hispanic and fresh produce producers, within southwest Oklahoma, to ensure they have access to program information and training needed to be economically sound agriculture producers.

Dr. Carol Crouch, District Conservationist from Purcell, Oklahoma and NRCS National AI/AN SEPM, provided NRCS program information and answered questions regarding opportunities for socially disadvantaged, limited resources and beginning farmers.

Dr. Crouch provided attendees information on the NRCS workshop and training session that is being planned for October 2013. The workshop is being designed to provide “hands on” training and assistance to producers in completing Farm Bill program applications and how to become eligible for USDA program opportunities.



## NRCS and OTCAC Participate at the 2013 Choctaw Nation Youth Summit submitted by Dr. Carol Crouch

The Choctaw Nation Event Center in Durant, OK, was the site for the “Xtreme Leadership” Youth Summit that was held on June 26, 2013. This event was sponsored by the Choctaw Nation, Big Five Community Services, Southern Workforce Board, KEDDO (Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma), Southeastern Workforce Board, Chickasaw Nation, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Citizen Pottawatomie Nation, OK Department of Career Technology and Education, Kiamichi Technology Center, Governor’s State Youth Council, Department of Rehabilitation Services, the OK Department of Commerce, the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Youth and young adults from all over the state of Oklahoma flock to this annual event that began in 2007 and is continuing to grow. There were approximately 1,680 people who attended this event, 1,557 of them being youth.

Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS National American Indian / Alaskan Native Special Emphasis program manager and District Conservationist; Derek Kelso, Soil Conservationist; Matthew Irby, Soil Conservation Technician and Debbie Brewster, Bryan County Conservation District secretary attended the Youth Summit and provided the NRCS American Indian Heritage poster to attendees. The event was designed to motivate and inspire youth and young adults ages 14 to 21 about their education and career opportunities



Dr. Crouch presents the NRCS American Indian Heritage poster to Choctaw Princess representing their Choctaw Tribal districts.

that are a possibility in their future. Crouch stated, “This youth summit provides a great opportunity for NRCS to share with our future leaders and employees what NRCS does as an agency”. Crouch added, “Providing the youth with a copy of the American Indian heritage poster also demonstrates the agency’s respect for American Indian culture and how we are truly partners in protecting our lands for future generations.”



Choctaw Nation Indian Princesses from ten and a half counties, representing the Choctaw Nation tribal boundaries, provided the opening prayer in their Choctaw language and sign language during opening ceremonies at the Youth Summit.



# AIANEA Join Today

*Celebrate our rich culture which includes tribal government, food, native traditions, natural resources, education and family connecting with the Natural Resource Conservation Service employees, Diversity of Tribes and Tribal Elders from 100's of different tribes across the United States.*

- Who can join AIANEA? **Anyone**
- Are you required to be of American Indian or Alaska Native heritage to join this employee association? **No**
- What are the benefits of becoming a member?
  - \* Network with NRCS employees throughout the United States
  - \* Learn about diversity of American Indian Cultures and Traditions
  - \* Mentor or become a Trail Blazer (*protégé*) in the **Bi-Cultural Mentoring Program**
  - \* Educational Opportunities
  - \* Support Tribal Youth Activities
  - \* Leadership Opportunities

How to join the American Indian Alaska Native Employees Association  
<http://www.aianea.com/index.html>

You can also visit us on Facebook

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

# Membership Form

## American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Association for NRCS

“Respect, Harmony, and Beauty”

[www.aianea.com](http://www.aianea.com)

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

Harold Bryant  
1510 29<sup>th</sup> 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 2013 AIANEA National Council

**Gina Kerzman – President**

**Steve Durgin - 1st Vice President**

**Richard Begay - 2nd Vice President**

**Garry Stephens - So. Central Region Rep.**

**Jack Lewis - Southeast Region Rep.**

**Athena Pratt - West Region Rep.**

**Samantha Lawien - Midwest Region Rep.**

**William Printup - East Region Rep.**

**Cameron Clark - Northern Plains Region Rep.**

**Melissa Sturdivant - Secretary**

**Harold Bryant - Treasurer**

**Bill Parrish - Treasurer**

