



American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Association for NRCS

“Respect, Harmony, and Beauty”

**AMERICAN INDIAN / ALASKA NATIVE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
FOR NRCS
NATIONAL COUNCIL TELECONFERENCE
January 12, 2007**

Those present: David Elliott, David Wise, Levi Montoya, Crystal Leonetti (part of meeting), Pat Green, Millie Titla, Felix Nez, Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, Buster Landin, Ciro LoPinto, Leota Burnett, Edith Morigeau, Kurt Cates (part of meeting), and Ivan Dozier (part of meeting).

President, David Elliott called the meeting to order at approximately 11:35 am CST. He welcomed all and conducted the roll call. **Action items are noted in red. Motions are in blue.**

Scholarship Committee

This item was moved to the beginning of the agenda. Kurt Cates reported the Scholarship Committee would like to keep the criteria for the 2007-08 scholarships the same as 2006. The criteria can be found on the AIANEA website. The committee recommends increasing the two scholarships from \$200 to \$250 each and possibly increase the amount per scholarship by \$50 per year hereafter. In 2006, the scholarship amount increased, which resulted in a higher number of applications than in the past.

Discussion took place. Buster suggested the increase could possibly be higher, maybe \$100. David Elliott asked whether a future increase in the scholarship fund would result in increasing the two scholarships or possibly increasing the number of scholarships awarded.

Kurt reported that the application time is from Jan. 1 – April 1. The committee sends letters to the tribal colleges and contacts local colleges and universities, as well as high schools. This needs to be done soon.

It was reported that there will soon be the opportunity for AIANEA members to donate to the scholarship fund by direct deposit. A letter will be going out soon on the yahoo email or scholarship email address. The letter will be from the President. Kurt reported that we need to keep the account building and possibly increase the number of scholarships awarded.

MOTION 01122007-1: Motion was made to raise the scholarships to \$300 each for two scholarships for the 2007-08 year.

Motion made by: Felix Nez Jr.

Motion seconded: Pat Green

Motion passed: Unanimously

Felix added that goals for the scholarship fund need to be determined. **The Scholarship Committee should develop goals and present to the National Council for discussion.**

Approval of Minutes

The December 2006 minutes were reviewed and approved by Council members.

MOTION 01122007-2: Motion was made to accept the minutes of the December 2006 meeting.
Motion made by: Leota Burnett
Motion seconded: Felix Nez Jr.
Motion passed: Unanimously

David Elliott will contact Carol Crouch to have her add Edith Morigeau to the email list to receive all future teleconference minutes. Edie will be setting up and paying for future National Council teleconferences from her department in Washington DC.

Treasurer's Report

Tanya reviewed the Treasurer's Report that was emailed prior to the teleconference.

MOTION 01122007-3: Motion was made to accept the Treasurer's Report.

Motion made by: Leota Burnett
Motion seconded: Ciro Lo Pinto
Motion passed: Unanimously

NHQ National Tribal Relations Coordinator Report

Edie Morigeau reported that a Memorandum of Understanding between BIA, FSA, and NRCS was signed at the INCA / IAC conference in Las Vegas the first week of December. The three federal agencies will work together to improve tribal relations. The MOU can be found on the NRCS website. This will enable more work with BIA. Training is to be developed to better understand the MOU.

Edie also reported on the agreement between NRCS and USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS). This will enable NRCS employees to get census information from NASS. NASS asked NRCS to introduce them to tribal members, enabling enhanced interfacing with tribes during the census.

Two more tribal conservation districts are soon to be signed, increasing the total to 28. The new districts are Windy River in Wyoming and White Earth in Minnesota. Edie reported on a handbook being developed on how to establish tribal conservation districts. She is currently revising it and hopes to get it to the field soon.

She reported on a rollout with BIA on the term of "tribes", which has a varied definition and a lack of understanding. There now exists a good definition. Work is being done to develop a reference guide for NRCS employees to assist in understanding federal and tribal relations, including policy related to this. The reference guide will list all of the legislation, executive orders, policy etc. regarding NRCS working with tribes. She hopes to have this ready within the next 3 months.

The goal of all that Edie is involved in is to increase tribal participation in programs.

2007 Annual Conference

This agenda item was moved. Crystal Leonetti reported that a decision needs to be made on the location of the 2007 conference. There are offers from: Green Bay, WI; Corpus Christi, TX; and the Collinsville, IL.

Buster reported that the Green Bay, WI location is close to the airport (across the road) and is tribally owned by the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. The Oneida participate in NRCS programs. They have done field tours in the past for NRCS groups and can do that for AIANEA. It's a nice vacation destination. The State Conservationist shows support for having the conference there. There is an RC&D Coordinator in Green Bay that can do much of the local work. This is Loretta Metoxen's home, one of the AIANEA Elders.

Leota reported that there are actually two Texas locations, San Antonio and Corpus Christi. She recommends consideration of Corpus Christi. They have reasonable rates. Harold Bryant has done most of the leg work. There are lots of activities, tours. The hotel is willing to work with us. There is a free airport shuttle, covered parking. It is in a farming oriented area. There is tribal support. The Deputy State Conservationist has given 100% support.

Ivan Dozier reported that the Illinois site is in the Cahokia Mounds area. It is close to St. Louis. Cahokia Mounds is owned by the state of IL and includes an interpretative center. We would have access to the ceremonial mounds, not the sacred mounds. Lodging is \$60 per day at the Holiday Inn in Collinsville and includes a shuttle.

Crystal reminded the Council of the association's priority given to tribally owned facilities. The Texas site would include the conference in August; Illinois would be in July, in conjunction with a festival but would be flexible; and Wisconsin would be July 30-Aug. 2.

The National Council voted individually to give their first and second location choice. All first choice votes were totaled to equal 5 for Texas, 2 for Wisconsin, and 1 for Illinois. Total votes included 6 for Texas, 6 for Wisconsin, and 4 for Illinois.

Texas is the first choice for the 2007 conference location and Wisconsin 2nd choice. The planning committee will get started now. Crystal will set up the teleconference, in which a committee chair will be selected. The dates now set at the hotel in Texas are Aug. 27 – 31. Discussion took place regarding further concerns. It was suggested to find out about hurricane season and how that might affect the hotel contract. Also, Aug. 31 is the Friday of Labor Day Weekend. It was decided that Leota and Harold would try to change the dates to the 1st week of August or the last week of July. NOPHNRCSE's conference is Aug. 6-10 and APIO's conference is Aug. 20-24. There was also concern about the airport to be used and the cost if it is a small airport.

**The following week after the teleconference, Leota and Harold communicated with the hotel to try to change the dates. The dates for the conference will need to stay at Aug. 27-31, 2007. The planning committee can work around Labor Day Weekend issues. Also the airport concern is not an issue. The Corpus Christi airport is substantial and should not be a cost concern. And, hurricane season is long lasting with no way to avoid it. A decision needed to be made immediately whether to stay with the Corpus Christi location. An email vote ensued.

MOTION 01122007-4: Motion was made to hold the 2007 Training Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas the week of August 27 – 31, 2007.

Motion made by: Ciro Lo Pinto
Seconded by: Leota Burnett
Motion passed: Unanimously

Eddie will assist with the approval letter for the conference, getting it signed at headquarters.

Region Reports

Southeast Region – Pat Green reported the following:

The American Indian SE Work Group did hold their monthly teleconference meeting on December 20th and we adopted our final version of By-Laws and Constitution.

In Alabama – The Tennessee-Alabama Trail Commission hosted the inaugural Miss Indian Alabama contest and the first winner was from the Poarch Band of Creek Indians whom NRCS and David Elliott work very closely with.

In Kentucky – I've been working the final two weeks with the Kentucky State Parks Tourism Commission in arranging the weekend activities for the Annual Kentucky Native American Weekend January 26th through 28th at Lake Cumberland State Park.

In Georgia – NRCS is conducting an inventory on American Indian customers participating in NRCS administered programs and considering a customer satisfaction survey.

North Carolina – NRCS is working with the Cherokee Reservation School System in landscaping their school grounds with culturally sensitive and historical plants of the Cherokee in an outdoor classroom sitting.

The SE Work Group is in the development phase of a power point presentation that would be generic enough to use in all SE states promoting the works and success stories with our American Indian customers.

Sent out several e-mails to our SE members on the election results, status of our national meeting and soliciting information for today's teleconference.

Northern Plains Region – Levi Montoya reported the following:

He would like to talk to other regional representatives to learn more about his new duties as Northern Plains Regional Representative and will consult the Constitution and Bylaws.

Colorado – Ute Mountain Ute – I have nothing to report having been on leave almost continuously since our last teleconference. – Steve Myers

Montana – Blackfeet - Just wanted to let you know that I did not have any activity to report for Montana during the month of December. - Stacy Denny

Montana – Flathead Reservation - I don't have anything new to report for my piece of the world here on the Flathead Reservation. – Herb Webb

Montana – Fort Belknap - I had most of Dec. off for use or lose. I did find out that out of my 19 EQIP applications, 16 were funded in the amount of \$788,000. So for outreach, I haven't had to do much of that -- just maintenance -- for a couple of years. At the present time I am administering about 60 contracts in the amount of \$2.3 million. We are mostly installing fences in the range units and developing livestock water. I do have a couple of irrigation land leveling projects and the Tribe and a couple of other members are doing tree thinning on almost 1000 ac. In the past we installed 3 center pivots--low flow with drop tubes. We had 200 miles of fence cost shared as of EQIP 2006 and have installed 100 miles so far. So I think we have a good record and some good things going on. We had one of the first WHIP contracts funded under our Montana Indian Ear Marked dollars last year. We do have a Conservation District and we are just finishing the Range inventory on the range units for 350,000 ac. using a pilot project where field data was correlated to remote satellite photos using bands of colors. The report should be out soon. - Terry Buck

South Dakota – Flandreau Santee Sioux Reservation - 12/1/2006 Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe/NRCS Draft Internet Guidance on Putting Tribal Trust Land into WRP. 12/4-12/7/2006-“Caring for Mother Earth” Agricultural Symposium, INCA/IAC (Las Vegas) State Conservationist and State Tribal Liaison participated. 12/20/2006-Drought Disaster Impact & Solution Meetings (Standing Rock) Put on by Standing Rock Tribal Conservation District. NRCS SD/ND participated, FSA, Ag. Extension, etc. Approximately 50 people including 17 producers, USDA folks, Extension, and congressional representatives (staffers). - Dana R. Vaillancourt

East Region – Ciro LoPinto reported the following:

- I attended the EPA Region 2 Consultation with Tribal Leaders in NY. The EPA does a 3 day meeting in which tribal members, units of government and educational organizations make informative presentations to tribal members. At the end of the session an entire day is committed to consultation between EPA and the Nations. Myself and another NRCS employee made a presentation regarding outreach, AIANEA, SEPM Program and the upcoming Ag Census. The other NRCS person logged on and demonstrated on the screen the information available on the NY NRCS website, soil data mart and My.NRCS. It must have went pretty well because we were invited back.
- I attended the Cornell University Symposium entitled “Native Water Law and Public Policy: Critical issues in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Watersheds.” The two day conference had Education and Culture as its first day and Native Law and Water Rights as the second day. I distributed the NRCS Heritage month and tribal scholars information. I made many contacts and heard some excellent presentations that could be considered for our own future conferences.
- Two NY NRCS employees attended the INCA/IAC meeting. They said there was an absence of NE Indian Nations.
- NY is still trying to schedule the “Consultation with American Indian Governments” NEDC course.

West Region – Felix Nez reported the following:

Arizona NRCS employees completed three training modules for Civil Rights, this training was supported by Arizona Civil Right Committee and supported by Arizona NRCS Administration.

Navajo Nation held it 2007 Inauguration on January 9, 2007. President Joe Shirley and Vice President Ben Shelly were sworn in. The newly elected NN Tribal Council members were also sworn in during the event. USDA-FSA, USDA-RD officials were in attendance.

A partnership with Dine' Inc. of Navajo Nation, which is a non-profit organization with the Little Colorado River SWCD, to work on the following items:

1. Conservation or Natural Resource Education
2. Technology
3. Civil Rights and USDA Program Participation
4. Empower local people or companies to assist EQIP cooperators with construction efforts of conservation practices on their WHIP or EQIP contracts.

Midwest Region – Buster Landin reported

Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen reported that, in Iowa, she as the State Tribal Liaison, will be meeting with the local Tribal Conservationist, two Area Conservationists, and the RC&D Coordinator that assists

the federally recognized tribe in Iowa. It will be somewhat of a listening session, with Tanya also providing guidance on roles and responsibilities, training available etc.

South Central Region – Leota Burnett reported the following:

Most of her work has been in association with the 2007 Training Conference, working with Harold Bryant. The Choctaw Nation has 10 active EQIP contracts.

2008 Conference

Tanya, Crystal and Millie reported on the December teleconference with SAIGE regarding the 2008 conference. David Elliott reported that he needs a decision on whether AIANEA will partner with SAIGE on the 2008 conference or whether we wish to hold a joint conference with them. He believes there has been discussion, but no official documented decisions.

Millie stated that AIANEA can decide on a partnership vs. a joint meeting and can handle the conference to meet our needs, including taking in our own registrations etc.

MOTION 01122007-5: Motion made was based on the information presented today and on past conferences. It was moved that AIANEA hold a joint meeting with SAIGE, not a partnership, for the 2008 conference at the selected site and that AIANEA commits to 125 attendees.

Motion made by: Ciro Lo Pinto
Seconded by: Felix Nez Jr.
Motion passed: Unanimously, with one abstention.

Further discussion included the SAIGE Career Fair and that NRCS should have a presence there. The National Council also decided that AIANEA must develop and receive it's own registration fees. The agenda will be developed to include some general sessions with SAIGE. **David Elliott will attend the January 16, 2007 teleconference with SAIGE. Tanya will email the teleconference call-in info to David.**

****NOTE** – As a follow up, on February 1, 2007, Treasurer Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen emailed the National Council with a brief report from the January 16 and 26, 2007 AIANEA/SAIGE teleconferences. This email provided clarification and some change of decisions related to AIANEA National Council concerns. The email included an attached Draft Partnership Agreement between AIANEA and SAIGE. David Elliott, through Tanya, requested a vote of approval of this agreement. This agreement was approved by email vote, so it does overturn the National Council motion 01122007-5 and enter AIANEA into a partnership with SAIGE for the 2008 conference. The email vote is shown below:

MOTION01122007-8: Motion was made to approve the Draft Partnership Agreement between AIANEA and SAIGE in accordance with the decision of the AIANEA Elders on attendance as stipulated in the AIANEA/SAIGE agreement.

Motion made by: Ciro Lo Pinto
Seconded by: Buster Landin
Motion passed: Unanimously

Standing Committees

David Elliott will work with Millie to update the 2007 committee list. David reported that the committee Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary must be paid AIANEA members, according to the Constitution and Bylaws. This is not stipulated for other committee members. It was suggested that the National Council consider amending the Constitution and Bylaws to require paid membership of all committee members. Four committees have been recommended to be eliminated.

David Elliott will work with David Wise and the Constitution and Bylaws Committee to review amendment proposals.

Constitution and Bylaws

David Elliott reported that there will be amendment proposals coming soon related to the above item. There is currently one amendment that has been adopted and reviewed by the membership for over 30 days. **This amendment needs to be made official and added to the Constitution and Bylaws by Yvette Dulle, as well as posted on the website.** Tanya asked if Yvette is the keeper of the official Constitution and Bylaws. **David Elliott will check on who the official keeper of the C&B is.**

Other Business

Scholarship Donation Letter – Tanya reported that a draft letter has been developed to send to the AIANEA membership with the opportunity to donate to the scholarship fund by direct deposit. This type of donation requires member donors call Tanya for banking information. It was determined by the Scholarship Committee that this should not take place on government phones and Tanya's personal phone numbers should not be publicized.

Tanya reported on the potential purchase of a Tracfone as the least expensive method to meet NRCS ethics rules.

MOTION 01122007-6: Motion was made to purchase a Tracfone and calling card as presented by Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen for the purpose of conducting scholarship donation business.

Motion passed by: Ciro Lo Pinto

Seconded by: Levi Montoya

Motion passed: Unanimously, including David Elliott, Chair, in order to achieve a quorum.
(Several Council members had left teleconference)

The letter will go out to all members after the phone is purchased and phone number added to letter.

NOTE – If members leave the teleconference, please announce so before leaving so that it is known whether a quorum exists for voting purposes.

Budget Issues – David Elliott discussed the NRCS budget and how it may affect our training conference in 2007. The planning committee must take this into account. The hotel contract will be reviewed by the National Council before it is signed. The estimated number of conference attendees used to base the budget on may need to be smaller than past conferences.

Membership Dues – David reported that AIANEA dues are due Jan. 1 of each year. To be eligible to vote, Council members must be members in good standing (paid). **Council members are to send your membership dues to Tanya ASAP!**

Tanya will check with Yvette on membership cards.

President's Letter – **The letter will include a membership dues reminder. Also, a separate reminder with a membership form will be emailed to all members. Regional representatives will also remind members in their region.**

Adjourn and Next Meeting

The next meeting is on February 9, 2007 at 11:30 am CST. Call in information will be provided.

MOTION 01122007-7:

Motion was made that the January 2007 AIANEA meeting be adjourned at 2:10 pm.

Motion made by: Felix Nez

Motion seconded: Ciro LoPinto

Motion passed: Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by
Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, Treasurer