

The Four Winds

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

AIANEA Visioning Committee Has Been Hard at Work!

The members of your Visioning Committee have been making great progress since the Vision Summit took place at the AIANEA Training Conference in Spokane, Washington. Thank you to the many members that participated in the summit and provided such valuable input! Those of us on the committee were very pleased and also tremendously impressed by the results.

During the summit, participants conducted interviews with partners to gain knowledge about member experiences and also their vision for the future of AIANEA. By the end of August, each summit participant had conducted at least one interview with a member that was not able to attend. The total number of member interviews conducted was approximately 50. The post summit interviews were shared with the entire Visioning Committee.

The committee members then utilized all of the interview results to enter the design phase of the Appreciative Inquiry process and to get you closer to development of your vision plan. The input was used to identify key themes to be considered as components of the vision plan. Seven possibilities surfaced which told us we would need to prioritize. The Visioning Committee members voted to identify the top three overall actions to include in the vision plan. Those are shown in this newsletter.

Visioning- Niibin 2008

Respect, Harmony, and Beauty

Once the committee was divided into teams to work specifically on one of the three topics, they got to work! They worked together through several activities to enable them to develop draft

provocative proposition statements, as shown in this newsletter. These statements bring the idea alive and describe how things look when this vision is realized. The statement not only stretches and challenges us from where we are today, but is grounded to show real possibility and is something people really want. When you read these statements, you will really envision it!

Now, we are ready to develop action plans and you will see that we need your help! Several committee members have provided the information for this special edition newsletter to inform you of what is happening, where we are headed, and how you can get involved! We look forward to having you join us in this important work for the future generations of AIANEA!



“What problems are you having?”or “What is working around here?”

Those are two very different questions. Which one would you rather answer? The AIANEA chose the latter...to focus on what works. One evening at our 2008 Annual Training Conference in Spokane, the membership took part in an Appreciative Inquiry Summit. Our goal was to seek and find our core strengths and then use those strengths to dream and create a path to our future...not losing sight of our positive past. The evening was led by Nila Rinehart and the AIANEA Visioning Committee.

The approximately forty participants spent the evening “stirring up” memories of energizing moments of success in the association and in our personal lives. A list of our strengths was never asked of us before...it was just a bit scary for some. The humility of our group may have inhibited us in our past...but we all got through this. We all shared examples of what it feels like to be treated with dignity and respect. Our humility became our strength. These memories were used to create a new energy for our future that is positive and synergistic.

WE NEED YOU! AFTER ALL, THIS IS ALL ABOUT YOU.

The AIANEA Charter members crafted the following four missions (as written in our by-laws):

- A. Advocating for a culturally diverse workforce;
- B. Serving as a liaison between the American Indian and Alaska

This list of our core strengths gives us confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown). This journey is always better when we carry forward the best of our pasts (the known). During the remainder of the evening, this new group energy was used to dream of a future for our association. Our dreams coalesced into seven topics of discussion:

- Leadership, Growth, and Mentorship
- Recruitment to AIANEA
- Elder Involvement and Sharing Knowledge
- Involving Youth
- Relationship Between NRCS and Tribes
- Enhancing Association Infrastructure
- Natural Resources Conservation

After our summit the participants agreed to telephone or write to an AIANEA member and ask the same set of energizing questions...so all will have had the chance to be interviewed. This information is being used by the visioning committee and any volunteer AIANEA members to create a plan for the future of our organization...which they may still be talking about Seven Generations from now.

Native communities and the NRCS;

- C. Identifying and resolving barriers to employment of American Indian and Alaska Natives; and,
- D. Shaping the future of natural resource management.

YOU are a member, and therefore, you have agreed to help achieve these missions. We feel our dreams for the future are in line with these missions.

The Visioning Committee is on a roll, but now it's time again for our members to help. We need YOU to help us create and carry out three very innovative and exciting plans

of action. Listed below are three initiatives, their "provocative proposition statements", a list of example action items for each, and the person YOU should contact if YOU are interested in anything you see here. Make contact with these people at any time, but to get the most input contact them by **Monday, November 10th.**

Elder Involvement and Knowledge Sharing

Draft Provocative Proposition Statement:

Hand in hand, the AIANEA Tribal Elders and our member family are known to all NRCS leaders and employees as a valuable resource of cultural and conservation knowledge and wisdom. The agency can only fulfill its federal responsibility to provide exemplary conservation assistance to tribes across the United States as partners with us. Valuable assistance that will change the future of tribes is provided through conservation programs and AIANEA services. This is possible because the Elders walk beside a diverse and growing AIANEA membership, including our youth. The Elders share their traditional, cultural knowledge, wisdom, and values with all. Alongside the Elders, we walk with respect, in harmony, and amongst beauty as they guide us on life's path. Our balance comes when we keep a place for the Elders in our circle of life and the youth carry on AIANEA's mission, purpose, and vision.

Example Action Items:

- Capture traditional knowledge and share with a broader public
- Actively share our heritage and culture

with members and NRCS employees

- Pass on information through accessible archives
- Utilize our elders more fully across the agency. Provide a forum for the agency to get to know our elders.

Contact Person:

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Relationship Between NRCS and Tribes

Draft Provocative Proposition Statement:

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 Nation and its 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 participating 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 relationship between AIANEA, Tribes, and NRCS is honored through mutual respect and common goals resulting in productive lands and healthy environment. Amongst us, we have achieved respect, harmony and beauty.

Example Action Items:

- Allowing tribes equal access to programs
- Formalize the association as a chief advisory council of AIAN interaction
- Make tribes more full partners such as when working with conservation districts
- AIANEA works with local tribal conservation districts
- Together, we care for and are the keepers of our environment, we are all responsible (make a marketing campaign following this vision)
- Incorporate the knowledge that Native people have about the environment into NRCS standards – capture the knowledge and make it available

Contact Person:

Ciro LoPinto

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Leadership, Growth and Mentorship

Provocative Proposition Statement:

AIANEA is an employee association that GROWS its members. Through leadership opportunities, employee development, and mentoring relationships, its members thrive in their work environment. Their native culture enhances their NRCS work performance and interrelationships with other peoples by bringing forward traditional values of conservation and respect for the earth and its inhabitants. The AIANEA family, including elders and youth, brings out the best in each other through mutual support, information sharing, and acknowledgment of each other's valuable contribution to NRCS and the people we serve.

Example Action Items:

- Increase positive benefits of being a member
- Empower members to show their leadership potential through various opportunities
- Increase awareness of mentoring opportunities
- Encourage members to bring out their native culture to guide work
- Recruit and retain AIAN employees in NRCS

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Sharron Santure

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Activity to be completed by 11/20/08



Purpose: To develop an Action Plan identifying next

steps in making the design of this Provocative Proposition/Ideal Statement a reality

Self-Manage: Select a Discussion Leader, Time Keeper, Recorder and a Reporter for this activity.

Steps:

1. Meet with your group via teleconference.
2. Identify major specific next steps to be taken to begin this process of implementing this provocative proposition/ideal statement into your organization. Include short term steps/goals (6 months to 1 year) and long term steps/goals (3-5 years). Include a step to check in and reevaluate and revise plan during the annual AIANEA conference.
3. Refer to provocative proposition for inspiration.
4. As appropriate
 - identify who will take lead responsibility for assuring the actions are taken
 - target dates for completion
 - additional resources

- team members to assist the process

5. Send to the vision committee members for feedback by 11/20/08.
6. Incorporate that feedback into the plan by 12/2/08.
7. Invite partners who signed up during the summit – work as a team.
8. Discuss/revise/implement/report during scheduled calls.



AIANEA Visioning Committee

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