

Message from Incoming President Gina Kerzman

“Oki” (Oh-Kee) AIANEA members!

As we get ready to begin our 17th year as an organization, I am humbled and excited as I prepare to serve as your 2012 AIANEA president. I have big shoes to fill, as so many who have gone before me have set the bar high. I want to thank **Ciro LoPinto** for his outstanding leadership during 2011.



I grew up on the northern plains on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana, and my family ranches on a portion of our original allotted land. I have been a member of AIANEA since its humble beginnings. It is exciting to say that I am not the first Blackfeet to serve as president. That honor belongs to **Roylene Rides at the Door**, who served as president in 1998. Again, big shoes to fill.

We face some new challenges and opportunities in 2012. Last year, we found ourselves without a national conference. We had to be resourceful and figure out alternative ways to communicate with members. This year, it is one of my goals to figure out alternative ways that our members can meet and continue to work towards our mission of growing leaders and making a difference in Indian Country. I will be looking for new partners to help us continue in our mission.

A new opportunity has been presented to the organization through the new Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils. Each of these councils requires participation from an AIANEA elder and an AIANEA member. What an opportunity to speak on behalf of Indian Country! Please be watching for more information.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the new council members of the association: **Stacy Kimble** – Second Vice President; **Samantha Lawien** – Midwest Regional Representative; **Athena Pratt** – West Regional Representative; and **Jack Lewis** - Southeast Regional Representative.

I look forward to working with all of you, as well as our continuing members: **Levi Montoya** - Vice President; **Harold Bryant** and **Bill Parrish**, Co-Treasurers; **David Pesicka** - Northern Plains Regional Representative; **John Whitney** - East Regional Representative; **Leota Burnett** - South Central Representative; and **Sherry Cosper** – Secretary.

If change is the only thing that remains constant, we as an association have to move with the times. I hope to lead us proudly into a time where we'll embrace these changes and, as a result, emerge stronger than ever.

May 2012 be filled with blessings for you and your families!

Sincerely,

Gina Kerzman

2012 AIANEA President