



# Native Aging Visions

A Resource for Native Elders

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## Tawnshi!

*Greetings to all.* I hope this message finds you well. Here in North Dakota we are experiencing some blustery winds and cooler temperatures and people are beginning to prepare for the coming winter months. Similar to generations past, fire wood is being collected, winter coats being dug out, vegetable gardens have been harvested and the canning jars are in place in the pantries. In the Northern Plains we have seen many communities once again implement gardens to supply much needed fresh produce. Since the overwhelming number of tribal communities would be considered food deserts, the trend to plant individual and community gardens will serve us well. It is also a good way to learn from our elders, using strategies from the past to put good food on the tables across Indian Country.

The National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) has recently been involved in a couple of conferences where there was great sharing of information and good hospitality. The NRCNAA staff attended the Title VI conference in Washington, DC in August. As is typical of the Administration for Community Living/ Administration on Aging, the hospitality was amazing. The best part however, was seeing all of the Title VI people and many that I consider family to the NRCNAA.

Another conference at which NRCNAA was involved was the "Inaugural National Conference on Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia in Native American Communities." During this Inaugural

conference many presenters convened and some great information was shared. There has been very little research on Alzheimer's and other dementias in

Indian Country and the literature is sparse. The NRCNAA health and social needs assessment titled, "Identifying Our Needs; a Survey of Elders" was recently revised to include a section on memory. It is our hope that there will soon be some initial information from that survey to get a sense of what is happening with Alzheimer's and other dementias in some of our Native tribal and urban communities.

One of the critical issues that came up at the Alzheimer's conference was respite care for our caregivers, many whom are elders themselves. Many of the tribal communities have a lack of resources for caregivers such as caregiver programs including respite care. To all the caregivers out there, please remember to nurture yourself along with the elder you are caring for so that you may both thrive.

As always, I ask every one of you to love and cherish our amazing elders. We are cut from a strong, courageous, and nurturing cloth, the same cloth as our Native elders. Be safe and well.

**Many Blessings! Miigwech.  
- Paula Morin-Carter**



**Paula Morin-Carter**



Center for  
Rural Health  
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# November is American Diabetes Month

By: Collette Adamsen, MPA

November is American Diabetes Month. It is the time to raise awareness about this chronic health condition that affects millions of Americans. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of disability and death in the United States. One in 12 Americans is diagnosed with diabetes and the number is even higher for American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/AN). The rate of AI/ANs with diabetes compared to non-Hispanic whites is 2.2 times higher. In addition, 30% of AI/ANs have pre-diabetes. Pre-diabetes occurs when your blood sugar is higher than normal, but not high enough to classify as Type 2 Diabetes. If intervention does not happen, it would likely result in becoming Type 2 Diabetes in 10 years or less. The mortality rate of AI/ANs who have diabetes compared to the general U.S. population is 1.6 times higher.

**Although this debilitating and deadly disease affects so many AI/ANs, there are ways to control your diagnosis of diabetes. Here are some healthy tips:**

- ☼ Reduce the amount of soft drinks, soda, and juice you drink. Try sparkling water with a twist of lemon or lime or a splash of fruit juice.
- ☼ Sweeten food at home (buy unsweetened products and add the sweetener or fruit yourself).
- ☼ Check labels. Look for low sugar products and use fresh or frozen ingredients instead of canned goods.
- ☼ Avoid processed or packaged foods (ex. canned soups, frozen dinners, or low-fat meals).
- ☼ Opt for products labeled “reduced sugar” or “no added sugar” when buying foods such as syrups, jellies, and sauces.
- ☼ Reduce the amount of sugar in recipes. You can also boost sweetness with mint, cinnamon, nutmeg, or vanilla extract instead of sugar.
- ☼ Find healthy ways to satisfy your sweet tooth. Blend up frozen bananas for a creamy, frozen treat or enjoy a small chunk of dark chocolate.
- ☼ Start with half of the dessert you normally eat and replace the other with fruit.
- ☼ Don’t skip breakfast.
- ☼ Eat regular, small meals (up to six per day).
- ☼ Keep calorie intake the same.
- ☼ Set a goal to be active for 30 minutes a day at least five days a week with any activity that raises your heart rate enough to make it slightly difficult to talk. Examples include brisk walking, taking



the stairs, or even vacuuming vigorously. Exercise increases insulin sensitivity, improving glucose uptake to your body's cells.

- ✿ Make sure you receive regular eye exams to treat potential eye diseases associated with diabetes, such as retinopathy.
- ✿ Make sure you receive your flu shot every fall season.
- ✿ If you are a smoker, speak with your doctor to help you make a plan to quit.

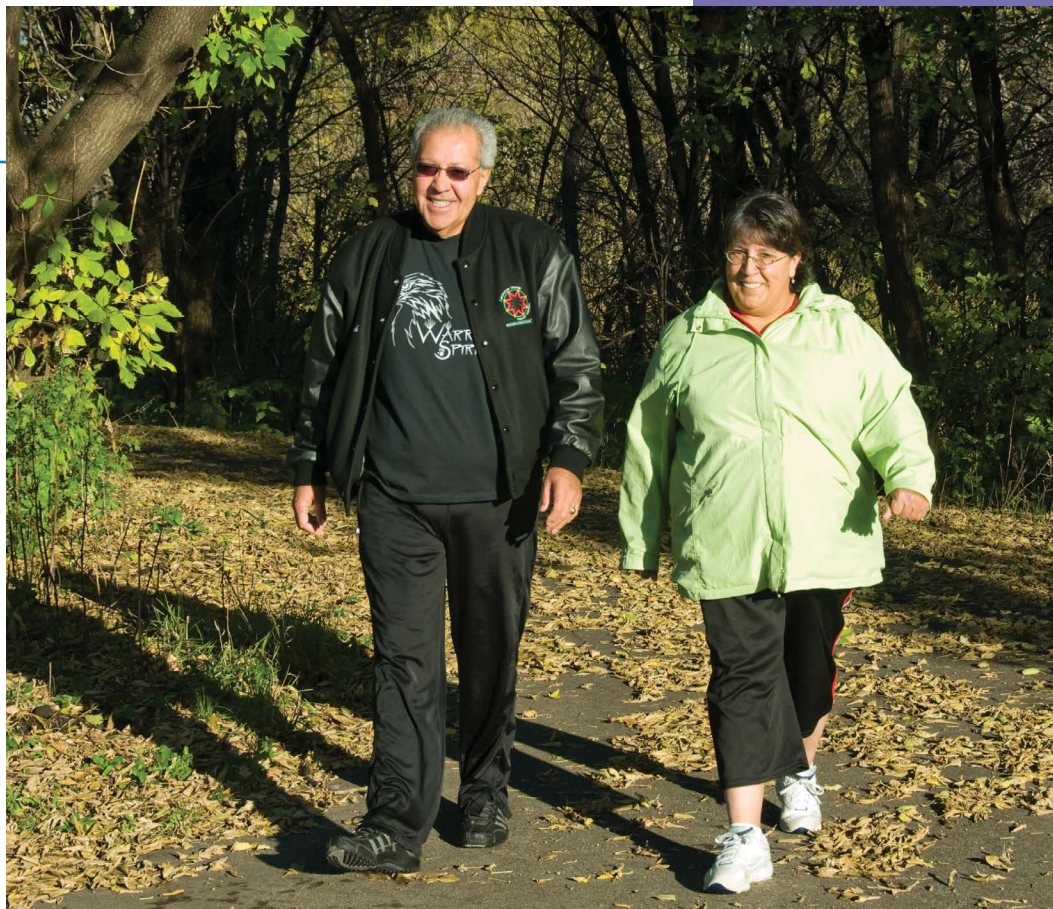
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Diabetes is a life threatening disease that affects many AI/AN people; however, if you follow a proper diet and get regular exercise, both will contribute to controlling your diabetes. Help raise awareness this November for American Diabetes month. For more information please visit the American Diabetes Associate website at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org) or [www.ihs.gov](http://www.ihs.gov).

# 2015 National Title VI Conference

By: Patty Stensland, BA

In August, the NRCNAA staff attended the 2015 National Title VI Training and Technical Assistance Conference and Tribal Consultation. The conference was held in Washington, D.C. on August 10th-13th by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Administration on Aging (AOA), and the Department of Health and Human Services. The four day conference was filled with pre-intensive, plenary, and workshop sessions. Cynthia LaCounte, Director, Office for American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Programs, ACL/AoA served as the Master of Ceremonies. The keynote speakers were Kathy Greenlee, Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging, ACL/AoA, Dr. Susan Karol, Chief Medical Officer, Indian Health Service (IHS), Aaron Bishop, Commissioner, Administration on Intellectual and Development Disabilities, and Susan Snyder, Evidence Based Leadership Council who presented as a group on the topic, "Tribal Consultation on Aging and Long Term Services and Supports," along with Edwin

Walker, ACL/AoA, and Joseph Ray, Elder and Disability Services Advocate, Pueblo of Laguna.

Many informative presentations were given such as, "Data is more than Just Numbers! It Also Tells the Story of Your Program," presented by Cecelia Aldridge, ACL/AoA and Fong Yee, ACL/AoA and "Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin's Model of Long Term Care and Increasing Revenue for the Title VI Program," presented by Denise Pommer, Menominee Tribe. In addition, the NRCNAA Director, Dr. Paula Carter presented with Rick Richards, Elderhaus, Inc. on, "Understanding Long Term Services and Support Needs of Your Community."

Overall, the conference provided valuable information and training to everyone who attended. It allowed members of AI/AN elder organizations and tribal entities to network and to share ideas in order to make a positive contribution in tribal communities for our Native elders.





# Native Elder Caregiver Curriculum Training presented at the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Tribe

By: Collette Adamsen, MPA

A Native Elder Caregiver Curriculum (NECC) training was presented at the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa tribe in Belcourt, North Dakota on August 12–14. It was a three day training provided by Chris Burd, RN, PhD. Ms. Burd is a Tribal Community Health Planning Consultant and has used the NECC extensively in her consultations and trainings throughout Indian country. The Community Health Representative Director from Turtle Mountain requested Ms. Burd's services to present the curriculum to Community Health Representatives (CHRs) from Turtle Mountain and Spirit Lake. In addition, the Senior Companions group through the Tribal Education Department participated in the training too.

The NECC was developed through a collaboration between the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) and Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC). The program was created as a tool to assist professionals and relatives/ community members who have the responsibility of caring for their elders at home. In addition, it helps to allow our Native elders to age in place. The curriculum was recently updated by Ms. Burd to fit the changing needs of our Native elder population.

The three day training was well-received. Everyone enjoyed the important information that was presented. The sessions not only provided valuable tools and knowledge on how to care for our Native elders, but also included refreshments, baked goods, and door prizes. On the last day of training, Ms. Burd was presented with a star quilt by the group as an appreciation for all of her hard work she does for tribal communities in regards to the curriculum and tribal community health planning. Ms. Burd will be returning for another training in the future on Dementia and Alzheimer's.

If you are interested in requesting an NECC training for CHRs or Native elder caregivers in your tribal community, please contact the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) by phone at (800) 896-7628 or by email [info@nrcnaa.org](mailto:info@nrcnaa.org). You can also visit our website to download the complete curriculum at [www.nrcnaa.org](http://www.nrcnaa.org)



Have you heard? The Rural Health Information Hub

(RHIhub) is the new name of the Rural Assistance Center. As of December 1st, you can find all of the same great resources at [ruralhealthinfo.org](http://ruralhealthinfo.org). Use the website to find publications, funding opportunities, coverage of rural issues, state guides, toolkits, program models and more. Customized assistance is available by phone or email. The RHIhub is funded by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

# Carol Sims: Native American Elder Band of Chippewa

By: Collette Adamsen, MPA

It is quite an accomplishment to have served in the military, especially when that person is a Native American female in the 1970s. Carol Sims always knew she wanted to serve her country. She enlisted in the Army at age 25. She was the only female in her family to have enlisted and one of only two Native American females in her service unit.

Recalling her first days in the service, Carol says, “The recruiter came to my house to pick me up. It was hard leaving. But I had always wanted to venture, I wanted to get out and see life.”

Carol remembers the first three weeks being lonely. Her unit was a co-ed mix with both males and females. She says, “Women had to do exactly everything the men did. But I was determined and liked a challenge. I didn’t care how strenuous it was, I still loved it!”

After completing her basic training and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in Fort Gordon, Georgia, she was sent to Europe and was stationed in Illesheim, Germany. Her job was 05 Bravo, which was a radio operator. She would decode and report the messages to her Lieutenant or Captain. She enjoyed working with her crew and Sargent, saying, “They were a good crew of people.”

Carol recalls the days when she was a “newbie” by how she was first welcomed into the service. “The Air Force welcomes you, but they didn’t tell me how.” One day she was walking from the mess

hall to the missile site at which she was stationed. Her fellow officers were laughing, so she had a feeling something was going on. She could feel the ground rumbling beneath her. Just then an F14 came flying down beside her. She says, “They say hi with their wings. You could see this guy laughing and waving at me. It was so loud, then he flew out and made a nice maneuver again. Welcome aboard Charlie Keelo! This was the Air Force way of saying hi.”

Carol always believed in teamwork and had compassion for her fellow servicemen. She recalls helping calm down one of her crew members during a gas chamber exercise. She talked him through and helped him to complete the training. She also assisted another crew member on how to become a better runner. After working with Carol, he became one of the best runners in their unit. She set her mind to everything she did while in the service. This helped her to out-run her very accomplished male superior who was very impressed by her defeat of him.

“It was the most fun time in my whole life, being in the Armed Forces,” Carol says. “Family was important to helping me stay strong. You realize how much you need a family when you’re in something like that, because you are put to the test.”

Due to her demonstration for performance duty, she was awarded the Designated Honor Graduate for the first graduating group of radio operators in May of 1979. She also

# Female Veteran Turtle Mountain

received both expert and grenade badges.

Carol served two years in the Armed Forces. After a short time back home due to a family tragedy, she returned to Germany to her future husband, Tony, who was also in the military. They remained in Germany until her husband was transferred back to the U.S. to Fort Berth, Texas. They had three children: John, Joe, and Wanda.

Tony retired after 24 years in the service. When deciding where to live following his retirement, Carol says, “Tony wanted to go live on an Indian reservation. He had never lived on one. And so we came to Belcourt, North Dakota. He loved it so much, he didn’t want to leave.”

Looking back on her time in the service, she says her most beneficial learning experience was regarding character. “You bring forth who you are as a person. When you’re growing up on the rez, that’s one life, when you go to boarding school that’s another life. I went to Flander Indian School, so it’s all Native rules and regulations you follow there. The Armed Forces is another life. But in each area of my life, I was building character. I was building respect for myself and for others.”

Carol says her biggest reward being in the military was to have served her country. “You can’t beat that. The greatest love I have was to have served and be able to tell people I’m a veteran, a soldier of the U.S. Armed Forces. I can salute that flag knowing I served with honor.”

Even though Carol is a Native American elder herself, when asked how Native elders have influenced her life she states proudly, “The determination to go forward in life. Always get up if you are knocked down, keep moving forward. Determination instills pride in you, of who you are as a Native American Indian. Regardless of how hard life may be, get up, walk forward and hold your head up. Stand tall and be proud. We only have this one life to live. Live it the best way you can, but always respect the people you come across and respect the life you’ve walked already.”

Carol also speaks about the importance of our Native elders in tribal communities, saying, “It’s like an eagle who flies the highest above all the birds. Look how close they are to the creator. They’re above, they’ve already lived. See how they come together, it’s like one, the eagle and the elders.”

Carol’s desire to push herself to the limit did not stop after her service ended. When she was 58, she earned her first degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and will be teaching children in Tae Kwon Do. She also works as an Education Technician at the Turtle Mountain Community Middle School in Belcourt, North Dakota. She is a respected Native American female veteran elder of the tribal community. She is a Native elder of whom we can all be truly proud.





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### **The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe was the first tribe to request and complete the Cycle VI**

**Identifying our Needs:** A Survey of Elders. On September 3rd the NRCNAA went to visit the Title VI director, Dawn Jaspers, to feature their Nutrition program and recognize them for their efforts in completing their assessment. Leech Lake has five Title VI/Caregiver Program Satellite sites they are located in Ball Club, Onigum, Bena/Sugar Point, Inger/S. Lake, and Cass Lake/Surrounding Communities. These sites altogether service 458 elders.

Dawn has been the director for just over a year and a half. She is a dedicated worker who helps deliver meals M-W-F and fills in as a cook or driver when needed. Of the 187 meals they prepare at the Cass Lake site 140 are home delivered. "This presents a challenge especially in the winter where some homes can't be reached after storms. A frozen meal vendor would really be helpful during the winters. We would be able to deliver a weeks worth of meals to elders when storms are coming and not have to worry about them having to do without," Jaspers said. "An assisted living facility is being built in Cass Lake and should be completed in the next year and a half. It will be able to house 43-48 elders and will also become the kitchen for the Cass Lake Elder Nutrition site. A larger kitchen has been something on their wish list. Other things we'd like to see would be more reliable transportation. I have an employee at the Bena site who uses her own vehicle to deliver meals."

Dawn would like to thank everyone who helped with the data collection and interviewing of elders to get their Needs Assessment completed.



**Candace Chase, Duane Fisher, and Dawn Jaspers**