



Native Aging Visions

A Resource for Native Elders

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Dosha friends!

Native people throughout Indian Country have relied upon their strength and resilience to make it through all manner of hardship across generations. In my travels and work with and for Native elders, I have found one attribute we use regularly to carry us through adversity is humor; Native elders are some of the funniest people I have ever met. It is quite rare I go to a meeting or a conference with elders and don't somehow end up laughing. It is a means of 'doctoring', or as we say, a form of good medicine. I have often watched my mother get together with her girlfriends, and whether the topic discussed was politics, clothes, kids, or even Native men, I knew I would have a good laugh even if I just listened to their conversation.

I carry those good feelings with me and think of them when I am away from home and family, which I often am. In this spirit, we here at the National Resource Center on Native American Aging wanted to feature in this issue of Native Aging Visions the strengths we find in our

communities and our cultures. What sustains a people that face some of the biggest threats to their well-being in the nation on a daily basis? Humor, patience, relationships, culture; all of these are powerful influences in the lifespan of the Indigenous person, and we enjoy shining a light on the positive in our communities. Our conversation with Dr. Leigh Jeannotte highlights some of this. Whether it's an exercise program, the local heroes in our communities, or perhaps the social ties we have which keep us afloat and motivated, we wanted to share with you and hear about what makes Indian Country a wonderful place to live and why our spirits stay there.

Have a great day, relatives! The days are growing longer! I hope and pray you always have food on your table, a warm place to rest your head, and good people lifting you up. Maacigiraac!

- Twyla Baker-Demaray; Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation

A publication of the National Resource Center on Native American Aging located at the Center for Rural Health at The University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences



Patty Stensland

new research specialist

Patty Stensland is a research specialist with the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA). Patty assists with the Identifying our Needs: A Survey of Elders project, which is a nationwide needs assessment for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian seniors. Before Patty took her current position, she worked as a graduate research assistant with the NRCNAA since 2009.

Prior to joining the NRCNAA, Patty was director of Dakota Studies and project coordinator for the American Indian College Fund Woksape Oyate Wisdom of the People grant at Cankdeska Cikana Community College in Fort Totten, North Dakota.

Patty is an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Nation and is from Oberon, North Dakota.

Melissa Wheeler

new graduate research assistant

Melissa Wheeler is a graduate research assistant with the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA). Melissa is pursuing a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology degree from the University of North Dakota where she researches one of the most pertinent health issues facing American Indian communities: the alarming rates of substance use and abuse.

Melissa hopes her education at UND and the hands-on experience she gains from the NRCNAA will provide her the tools necessary to address the devastating effects of alcohol and other drug use while highlighting the current critical lack of culturally appropriate mental and behavioral health care in American Indian communities.

Melissa is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and is originally from Round Rock, Arizona.

Michael Mudgett

student research assistant

Michael Mudgett is a student research assistant with the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) and a member of the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences' Native Health Research Team. Michael is pursuing an undergraduate degree in psychology and plans to pursue a master's degree at UND. His

research interests include addressing health disparities in American Indian populations and he has studied the impact of ruminations on mental health. Michael has been part of the NRCNAA for a couple of years and has also worked with the INBRE and NARCH projects.

Michael is an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Nation.



Melissa Wheeler



Michael Mudgett

Safeguarding Your Health: Shots

American Indian/Alaska Native elders are seeing many positive health trends recently, such as decreased cancer rates and higher life expectancy. These trends are expected to continue. As the body ages, it becomes more susceptible to infectious diseases. Immunization remains the most effective method of reducing morbidity and mortality from infectious diseases, even at older ages.

Keeping up on your shots and vaccines can not only help protect yourself but your family and loved ones as well. Doing something as simple as consulting with your doctor about which vaccinations you should get can be tremendously helpful in keeping yourself and loved ones healthy.

Here is a list of some shots which may keep you healthy. Talk to your health care provider about which ones you may need.

Influenza “Flu” shot: Highly recommended for people 65 years and older. **Can decrease risk of heart attack by 50%.**

Shingles: 1 in 3 people will have Shingles at some point in their lives. Risk increases with age. Although not 100% effective, the vaccine has been documented as **51% -70% effective overall.**

Pneumococcal “Pneumonia”: Can prevent serious lung infections. This shot is considered safe, **may only be needed once**, and can be taken at the same time as the flu shot.

Hepatitis B “Hep B”: Serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the liver. **Vaccination can be very effective** against the virus and is highly recommended.

Tetanus: Sometimes called “lockjaw” and is caused by bacteria found in soil, dust, and manure and enters the body through the skin.

There are many ways you can protect yourself; vaccination is one of the most basic ways. This article is intended as informational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice.

Remember...
Some illnesses or treatments can weaken your immune system.

Always consult your healthcare provider first. Your provider should be aware of your health history and can advise you regarding your specific immunization needs.



Dr. Leigh Jeanotte

American Indian Leader

By Paula Carter and Jacob Davis

As we approach the American Indian Center at the University of North Dakota (UND), we feel a sense of excitement. Going to the Center, whether it's for a meeting or "Soup Fridays," feels like going home. Familiar, warm, and comfortable—both culturally and socially—the Center is home to Dr. Leigh Jeanotte and the American Indian Student Services (AISS). Dr. Jeanotte, AISS director, is why the Center feels so welcoming for many American Indian students and staff.

Dr. Jeanotte is from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indian Reservation in North Dakota. He has directed AISS for nearly 40 years. Prior to being director he taught school in the Turtle Mountain school system. In his current position, he serves American Indian students who attend UND in pursuit of higher education degrees and in the long run, their dreams of a rewarding,

successful career and life. In order to provide students with a strong support network and positive experience to ensure success, Dr. Jeanotte must work closely with the wide array of Indian-related programs housed on campus, the larger campus community, State and regional tribes, and tribal community colleges.

Dr. Jeanotte fondly recalls how his parents instilled the importance of education in him as a young man, inspiring him to help other American Indians get an education. At that time, he explained, there was a widespread mistrust of the education system throughout tribal populations and communities due to horrific accounts of cruelty and abuse that emerged from the boarding school era. He explains, "Yet, our tribal elders put a lot of faith in the promise of education and promoted it as the key to ensuring the success of future generations. My parents, too, viewed education and particularly attending college as a path to a far better life for their children." He recalls a critical turning point in his own views of education, a realization which came to him as he was nearing high school graduation; "As I went from office to office and classroom to classroom, it struck me there was not a single American Indian

American Indian Center



in Education

teacher or administrator.” At that point, Dr. Jeanotte realized this shortage of American Indian professionals, particularly in the schools, needed to be addressed. He began to envision forging a path toward addressing that need.

Dr. Jeanotte speaks humbly about obstacles he has run into as the director. He reflects one of the greatest challenges has been to get across to people, including the University’s administration, the unique history and needs American Indian people have, as well as the truly difficult struggles they face both as students and campus community members. When speaking of AISS, he states, “We have a mission closely aligned with the University’s mission to provide a quality education for American Indian students seeking to earn higher education degrees.”

When asked what keeps him connected to his tribal roots, Dr. Jeanotte doesn’t hesitate to respond with a warm smile, “Family!” He explains that for himself and most American Indian people, giving



back to tribal communities is an inherent desire. He states, “When Indian people get an education, it is on the backs of their families, communities, and all Native relatives. And the ones we look to with particular thankfulness and respect, are our tribal community elders. The personal sacrifices they made to ensure their children’s and grandchildren’s lives were enriched with opportunities for health, happiness, and success – were countless. And often as a result of these personal sacrifices, many elders continue to struggle with poverty, along with other critical, concerning issues such as declining health and isolation.” Dr. Jeanotte’s genuine concern for the welfare of all tribal community members continues to inspire his work at

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UND and his involvement in a long list of tribal, state, and national organizations and programs. One role he particularly enjoys and feels is a great honor is being selected as a Board of Directors member for Turtle Mountain Community College. As a Board member, Dr. Jeanotte continually strives to expand and improve educational opportunities for tribal community members. By returning to his roots and serving in this capacity, he feels that, in a sense, his career has taken him full circle.

When asked about current conditions and the quality of life for the elderly in tribal communities, he responded after a few silent moments, “There was far more respect in the past for our elders. Tribes turned to their elders before any important decisions were made, utilizing their wealth of knowledge, graceful wisdom, traditional teachings, and keen advisement. Our tribal communities and families paid more personal attention to them, attended to their

needs, and greatly valued their contributions to the community as a whole. Today, however, families are more spread out and both parents are working when their children attend school. All too often, our elders no longer have extended family to help care for them, and this is truly a shameful development of modern times. We need to, once again, put our focus back onto our elders and when they need care. We need to remember they are the ones who cared for us!”

As the interview drew to an end, Dr. Jeanotte was asked what he believes makes a person such as himself resilient. He does not hesitate to respond, “Supportive family and friends, remaining active, engaging in and contributing to your community, and taking the time to really enjoy life!” I suspect that Dr. Jeanotte’s sense of humor adds to his resiliency as well; when asked where he sees himself years from now, he jokingly responds, “probably hunting with Jesus!”

Congratulations on Your Accomplishment



The National Resource Center on Native American Aging Staff would like to congratulate our Director, Twyla Baker-Demaray, for completing her doctoral program of study! Twyla now has a PhD in research methodologies from the University of North Dakota.

Congratulations Dr. Twyla Baker-Demaray!



Healthy Steps

By Michael A. Mudgett

Walking is good for you. It's easy, fun, and, best of all, free! Starting a walking program or routine can be a great benefit to your overall health. You can do it on your own time, or with family members, friends, or colleagues. Simple things like this can help you look and feel better as each step brings you closer to overall health and wellness. Here are some facts about walking that may help:

Walking Improves Your Mood

If you're feeling down in the dumps, walking is a quick and easy solution that can reduce feelings of tension and depression.

Walking Torches Calories

Just 20 minutes of walking a day can help you lose up to seven pounds in a year.

Walking Improves Insomnia

Morning walks five days a week have been shown to significantly improve sleep.

Walking is Good For Your Health

People who take brisk walks for three or more hours per week reduce their risk of heart disease by 30-40%.

Regular walking can cut elderly disability risk almost 50% – meaning an increase in your likelihood of maintaining independence. Something as simple as walking can favorably affect your overall well-being.



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Wild rice hot dish

By Pearl Walker

- 1 cup wild rice
- 1 lb. hamburger (we like to use buffalo burger, deer, etc.)
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 2-3 celery sticks
- Salt/pepper

Put wild rice in a saucepan, add water.

Brown the hamburger, drain, and season it with a dash of salt and pepper.

Watch the rice, once it starts to boil, take it off the stove and strain.

Add more water and let it boil again, this part is to “clean” the rice.

If it boils this second time and the water is still a little murky, strain it again when the water starts to boil.

Add more water and set the stove to low heat (about 2). Clean and chop the celery into small pieces.

Pour cream of celery onto hamburger.

Add celery, season mix with dash of pepper.

Add the wild rice and mix evenly.

The pan might not be big enough to mix everything together so a large mixing bowl or large saucepan should be good.