



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## Resolutions Committee Recommendation

Resolution #: SPO-16-016

Title: “Supporting the General Principles Expressed in the Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration”

### Comments:

- Native Americans experience disproportionately high rates of cancer, diabetes, trauma, mental illness, substance abuse, and suicide.
- Federal, state, private, and non-profits offer prevention and treatment programs to address these issues, but many times these programs overlook culturally relevant or tailored approaches.
- Resolution calls for adoption of a Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration—document not yet developed—to provide a framework for the federal, state, private, and non-profit programs to incorporate cultural knowledge and traditional practices unique to tribes.

### Recommendations:

- Recommend consideration of Resolution with sponsor and attendee input on draft Declaration (included attachment to Resolution packet).
- Recommend tabling Resolution at this Mid Year Conference to gather further input and defer consideration for NCAI 2016 Annual
  - Further input should be gathered on other areas where cultural knowledge/wisdom could be included in the Declaration, such as, climate change/adaptation, co-management/stewardship, cultural science, etc.

Sponsor a member in good standing (yes/no)?: \_\_\_\_\_



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SPO-16-016

**TITLE:** Supporting the General Principles Expressed in the Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, Native Americans experience disproportionately high rates of cancer, diabetes, trauma, mental illness, substance abuse, suicide, and unintentional injury; and

**WHEREAS**, federal, state, private and non-profit programs focused on prevention, treatment, or research of the health issues affecting Native Americans oftentimes exclude or overlook culturally relevant and culturally tailored health promotion and healing interventions; and

**WHEREAS**, the principles expressed in the Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration, which is incorporated by this reference, provide a framework for federal, state, private and non-profit programs to incorporate and better understand and recognize the cultural knowledge and traditional practices inherent and unique to individual tribes; and

**WHEREAS**, NCAI supports the principles expressed in the Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration, with the understanding that the Declaration is an evolving document subject to amendments in the future.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians supports the principles expressed in the Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration with the understanding that the Declaration is an evolving document subject to amendments in the future.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2016 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Spokane Convention Center, June 27 to June 30, 2016, with a quorum present.

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Cladoosby, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary

## **A Rationale for this Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration<sup>1</sup>**

This statement is an attempt to motivate and set in motion, culturally derived efforts that will address the present state of Native American health. We hope this statement will be accepted and supported by American Indians, Alaska Natives, other Native Americans and Indigenous people of the world as a statement of intent that will move us forward in preserving and promoting our identities and cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices as indigenous peoples while practicing our traditional wisdom in health protection that has been passed from generation to generation. As Native people, **we** possess the culturally relevant knowledge and expertise that will begin to address and enhance the overall health and well-being of Native Americans and indigenous people of the world. We also expect this statement will be honored and implemented by U.S. Federal Agencies, state agencies, and private agencies charged with improving the health status of Native Americans.

<sup>1</sup> Citation: Antone, Chester., Flores, Miguel., Kahn-John, Michelle. and Arambula Solomon. Teshia G. (2016, March 25). Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration. Unpublished document. <http://nartc.fcm.arizona.edu>.

## **Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration**

### **Background:**

Native Americans are experiencing vast health inequities as evidenced by high rates of cancer, diabetes, trauma, mental illness, substance abuse, suicide, and unintentional injury. Present efforts to address the health status of Native Americans remain marginally effective in alleviating these health disparities. While research and programs consistently recommend that prevention and health care programs implement NA practices and philosophies, barriers exist that prevent the successful implementation of culturally tailored health promotion and healing interventions. The intent of this declaration is to address the existing barriers and move towards successful implementation of culturally driven NA health promotion models of care and healing. This declaration promotes the voice of Native people to ensure success in embedding culturally relevant health promotion and healing interventions into all health and human service initiatives.

### **We believe...**

We honor our ancestral cultural knowledge, wisdom, ceremony, and practices. Our cultural knowledge is sacred and has been practiced for centuries as evident in our shared inter-tribal survival and resilience. Native American cultural wisdom pre-dates the U.S. Constitution. We are experts of our own cultural wisdom. Our wisdom has been passed down orally from generation to generation, and the depths of our wisdom remain within the hearts and minds of our people, specifically our elders and traditional healers. Our cultural wisdom exists solely for us, it's tribe specific, region specific, and this sacred knowledge exists to benefit our health, our well-being, and the health and well-being of future generations. Our cultural wisdom is guarded and protected because of the history of broken trust we've experienced. Our cultural wisdom will remain protected. Our cultural wisdom will continue to be transferred orally, as it has been in the past. Our worldview on health and healing is holistic, encompassing the body, mind, spirit, nature and our environment.

### **We will....**

We will preserve and implement our cultural wisdom as a means to promote health and well-being in our communities through stories, songs, prayers, rituals, and ceremonies and other traditional practices. Our traditional wisdom, ceremonies, language, and customs will be implemented in our communities to benefit our present and future generations while we honor the ancestral and sacred elements of this knowledge and control its use and dissemination. All details of cultural wisdom will remain authentic to traditional ways of being, knowing, and doing. We will integrate authentic cultural interventions alongside existing healthcare promotion efforts to ensure a culturally tailored and culturally relevant approach to health promotion and healthcare delivery for Native people.

### **We know....**

We know that our Native American wisdom exists within our stories, language, ceremonies, songs, and teachings. We know our Native ways are effective. We know that these ways are different from the Western worldview. We know we are experts in practicing and implementing our traditional ways to enhance the health of our people. We know our ways are unique and specific to Tribal groups. The authenticity of our Native American cultural wisdom is acknowledged and validated by our families, our clans, and our communities. This knowledge has been validated for centuries by our ancestors. This knowledge exists within the Native American community, it is known by our people, and we will protect this sacred knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> Citation: Antone, Chester., Flores, Miguel., Kahn-John, Michelle. and Arambula Solomon. Teshia G. (2016, March 25). Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration. Unpublished document. <http://nartc.fcm.arizona.edu>.

**We expect the following from those agencies that have power, authority and funding relevant to Native American health including Tribal, State, Federal, Private and non-Profit agencies:**

- **TRUST**
- **RESPECT**
- **ACCEPTANCE**
- **COMMITMENT**
- **SUPPORT**
- **FINANCIAL RESOURCES.**

And to ensure the success of this declaration we recommend the following

- **Support** our unique ideas and models of health and healing interventions that may not fit typical or standard western approaches.
- **Modify** your requirements to fit the NA paradigm or allow room for flexibility when evaluating proposals submitted by Native American tribes/nations.
- **Provide** adequate time and financial resources required to work in rural and remote areas, with hard to reach populations and within the distinct and diverse laws of each sovereign nation.
- **Trust the Nations** to deliver culturally derived interventions.
- **Accept** our distinct Native American cultural ways of being, knowing and doing.
- Support our authority to practice Native American culture as practiced for generations, without modification, without restriction.
- **Support the cost** of structuring innovative and culturally tailored models of health promotion through budget increases and specific grant funding that target unique Native American health promotion efforts.
- **Respect** our intent to keep sacred knowledge private and allow details of this cultural knowledge and wisdom to remain with the knowledge keepers (elders, traditional healers, storytellers, NA people).

The following individuals, Tribes/Nations and other community agencies and organizations support this statement.

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SIGNATORIES

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DATE

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<sup>1</sup> Citation: Antone, Chester., Flores, Miguel., Kahn-John, Michelle. and Arambula Solomon. Teshia G. (2016, March 25). Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration. Unpublished document. <http://nartc.fcm.arizona.edu>.