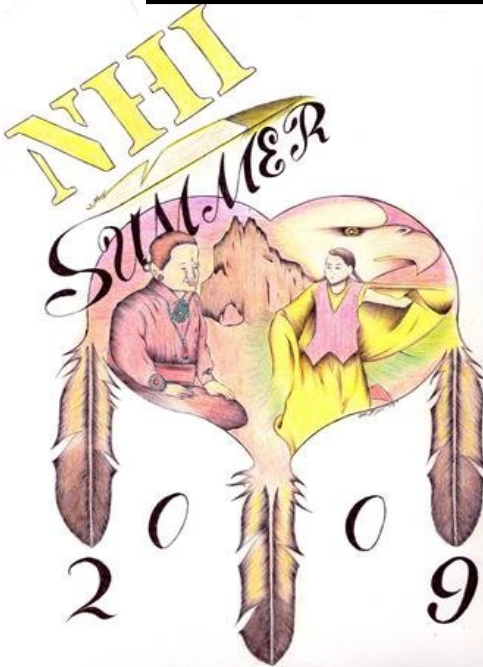




Welcome to the Native Health Initiative's

LOVEletter, Edition #2

WINTER 2010



Lots of exciting things have happened in the short time since we were putting together the first Loveletter. Our "fundraising" in early 2009 led to great results - 6,000 hours of loving service from leaders of Tribes in NC and NM, from our 10 2009 Summer Health Justice Interns, and from the community members, students, elders, youth, and partner organizations this summer!!! In New Mexico, NHI held its first summer internships, with an incredible group of partner Tribes and organizations joining together to make it work.

As you take a look at the insights, reflections, and art from NHI's volunteers, consider the question, "What is the difference between and organization and a partnership?" This question arose in many arenas in 2009, as we understand more deeply the identity of NHI as a partnership, a collaborative effort amongst communities, organizations and individuals, rather than a distinct, stand-alone entity. In essence, the energy of partnership continues to move NHI to bigger and greater things, in part because no one cares who gets the credit!

Enjoy the newsletter, compiled by Rafael Lope (Diné), NHI-NM Coordinator and winner of one of the 2009 NHI-NM "Loving Service" awards.

DECOLONIZE TOBACCO -

Breathe Tradition, Not Addiction: NHI's Campaign to promote traditional/ceremonial uses of tobacco as a way to prevent use of commercial use of tobacco.

Tribal communities respect culture and the traditional ways of life. NHI honors such practiced-based evidence that has been working for communities for generations. In doing so, we were inspired to work from an American Indian perspective and create a cultural tobacco prevention and cessation approach called "Decolonize Tobacco – Breathe Tradition, Not Addiction (BTNA)". It is a campaign that focuses on traditional tobacco versus is commercial tobacco product use (i.e. cigarettes, chew, snuff, and etc.).

One creative approach BTNA is using is the voice of the oral tradition as an educational tool that explains the differences between traditional tobacco and commercial tobacco products. With the use of a visual traditional tobacco collection of Native plants, Native names, and Native cultural roles, culturally appropriate information is shared with tribal youth, health professions students, medical and health professionals, tribal communities, and non-American Indian populations. NHI works to protect the sacredness of origin stories and traditional uses of tobacco, respecting the fact that in some communities this knowledge is not shared openly. BTNA also identifies how the word 'tobacco' misrepresents the traditional tobaccos of the Indigenous people.

If you are interested in learning more about this educational tool and/or an educational presentation, please contact Shannon Fleg at shannon@lovingservice.us.

You can also support the campaign by purchasing our Decolonize Tobacco t-shirts (with the logos depicted here), designed by SABA Wear's Randy Sabaque (Jemez/Diné).



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NHI makes headlines in 2009

We don't have a public relations specialist, we don't own a fax machine, but NHI sure did make some headlines this year! You can check out the articles on our [website](#), but here are some of the most exciting media coverage of our work in 2009, countdown style!

5) AMSA's Global Health Journal publishes an article on NHI, yet another sign that our attempt to re-define "global health" to include underserved communities in the U.S. is gaining traction

4) American Public Health Association writes a piece about NHI titled "All you need is love", talking about the unique model of loving service that funds and fuels NHI's work

3) Rafael Lope is pictured on the front page of the 2nd section of the Albuquerque Journal (biggest paper in NM) presenting Dr. Patch Adams a piece of his NHI artwork

2) Here's To Your Health, a radio show in North Carolina with a weekly audience of 25,000 did a 30 minute interview with NHI Coordinators

1) Indian Country Today, the largest and most read publication on Indigenous news in the U.S. writes a piece that makes it to the front page of the Healthy Living section profiling NHI as a new model for global health work



NHI Volunteers at a community health fair in New Mexico, April 2009

Cuban medical students hosted by NHI

As the six summer Health Justice interns in New Mexico closed their summer's work with their respective tribal communities, NHI was already preparing to host an energetic group of Cuban medical students who were learning about Indigenous health and culture.

The group, known as the Southwest Salud Exchange, had worked with NHI for months before their arrival, taking guidance on culturally appropriate ways of entering Native communities.

In a 7 day stretch, they spent 6 days with NHI, with highlights including:

- Attending Jemez Pueblo Feast
- Helping lead a community asset mapping workshop at an EMS conference
- Camping out at the Tracey family residence in Moenave, AZ where they got a taste of life on the rez!
- Home-cooked meals in Albuquerque, NM and Moenave, AZ (where they learned how to make fry bread)



Pictured: Southwest Salud Exchange members (many of them sporting NHI shirts!) along with community members in the Navajo community of Moenave, AZ

NHI WINS GLOBAL HEALTH PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD 2009

"NHI won what award?" and "You mean U.S. project of the year?" These were a few of the common responses we heard when we began to announce this award a few months ago.

Though NHI does not spend much time worrying about accolades, we wanted to share an exciting award from April of 2009, when the Global Health Education Consortium (GHEC) presented us with their Global Health Project of the Year award at their annual conference in Seattle, WA. NHI Advisory Board member and former 2007 Health Justice Intern in NC Emily Van Dyke accepted the award on our behalf.

The award represents our work over the last 5 years to remind the health and global health community that American Indian and other communities in the U.S.A. that lack access to quality healthcare and to the conditions that promote health need to be included in our models and programs in the realm of global health.

Beyond this award, NHI is proud to be one of, if not the only program in the U.S. that brings health professions from other countries to the U.S.A. to see firsthand the inequities facing many populations on our soil. Maybe more importantly, NHI is attracting American students who might otherwise travel abroad for summer internships, allowing them to serve much closer to home with Tribes that face many of the same health issues facing under-served communities around the world.

We are very appreciative of GHEC and their understanding that global health begins at home, that the U.S.A. is indeed part of the globe, and that to be honest in our work to improve health for marginalized populations, we need look no further than the Tribes and communities in our midst. Never one to miss an opportunity for creating wider-level change, NHI is following up with GHEC to offer our help in developing a network of similar U.S. based health equity projects (e.g migrant farm workers, U.S./Mexico border health, immigrant health, and urban communities), building an infrastructure for global health work here in the United States. *Stay tuned...*



YOUTH LEADING THE WAY - A THEME OF 2009

Imagine that your school’s bathrooms are filled with vandalism and gang-related writing. Teachers and parents might come up with solutions that include locking the bathrooms or having adults guard the bathrooms.

However, a group of youth (Pictured below) at the Native American Community Academy (NACA) in Albuquerque decided to create a much more beautiful, positive solution, serving as one shining example of our Youth Leading the Way grant recipients in 2009. These youth decided to put their graffiti art talents to work to address the problem of, vandalism creating 10-foot murals in the school’s bathrooms with the words “believe” and “respect” (two of the school’s core principles).



Nick Felipe, the student body president at NACA and the group’s leader explained their decision to use graffiti as the solution: “You know, to a lot of people, this type of art is a criminal activity, but we wanted to use it in a positive way, in a way that would beautify our school and eliminate the vandalism we had to live with. We also knew that this was a good solution because it is understood that you do not write over graffiti art, so this is a better solution than simply painting the wall a dark color or taking security measures to address the problem.”



The Youth Leading the Way grants give youth such as these NACA students a chance to create and carry out a project to improve the health and well-being of their community. The grants also allow the students to create a timeline and budget for their proposed work, help connect them with mentors in their community, and recognize the students publicly for their hard work.

In the case of the NACA students, they were recognized at their school’s annual feast day in November 2009. Furthermore, the youth were asked to present at a Martin Luther King day event attended by more than 500 community members. Nick Felipe was nominated by NHI to receive the “Youth in Philanthropy” award for his leadership on this project, and to our delight, he was indeed the winner for New Mexico’s youth in 2009, receiving his award at a formal luncheon of over 800 of the state’s most prominent leaders, politicians, and philanthropists.

Other recipients of Youth Leading the Way grants in 2009 include three groups from NC and one additional group from NM:

- * Occaneechi Eagles to carry out work of reviving their Tribe's traditional language
- * Coharie Smoke Free Hawks (Pictured above right) to educate their community on the harms of commercial tobacco while also teaching about the traditional and ceremonial uses of tobacco
- * Youth Ambassadors of the Waccamaw Siouan Tribe for their work in serving their community through volunteerism, advocacy and working with the younger generations
- * Youth for a Safer Martineztown who presented to their community leaders and local elected officials on changes they wanted to see, including speed bumps, bike lanes, and improved park facilities



Summer of Love

NHI Achieves New Heights in the 5th Summer of Health Justice Internships

What began as a vision between community members and students in rural North Carolina in January of 2005, to create the country's first summer internship program to allow health professions students to serve under Tribal leaders on community health projects, celebrated its 5th year of being a reality in the summer of 2009. Four interns served in NHI-NC, and in our first summer of an additional site, 6 interns served in NHI-NM.

Similar to 2005, when NHI heard from many people who thought that such a program was not possible without substantial grant funding, we heard the same in New Mexico. Even our explanation of the success in a community-driven, rather than grant-driven way to develop summer internships did not sway our colleagues in NM. "Well, it might have worked in the East, but Tribes are different out here," we would hear, from both Indians and non-Indians. Stubbornly, we stuck to our belief that loving service is not something defined by region or Tribe, and as we began to ask, there appeared a unique group of leaders from Tribes (Laguna and Santo Domingo Pueblo) and American Indian Organizations (Albuquerque Indian Center, SAGE Council, and First Nations Healthsource) who expressed interest in becoming sites for NHI Interns. The rest is history – the summer went great, and you could see the NHI community strengthening with each additional week. We knew things were going well when our community partners and NHI Mentors began to ask about prospects for interns in 2010!

In North Carolina meanwhile, Brittany Simmons once again went above and beyond to welcome the interns to southeastern North Carolina, site of three Tribes (Waccamaw Siouan, Tuscarora, and Lumbee) that have been at the center of NHI since its inception. Even a case of swine flu in one of our interns could not slow down the energy in NC. Many of the interns worked with youth empowerment efforts, giving them a unique perspective on health to inform their futures as healers. Looking ahead to 2010, NHI-NC had the unique "problem" this year of having to turn away interested communities, again a testament to Brittany and the community leaders of NHI-NC who have created a program that is respected amongst the state's Tribes.

Summer 2009 by the numbers: In total, our summer internships generated 6,000 hours of loving service on behalf of our Health Justice Interns, NHI Mentors and Coordinators, community members, and partner organization. On paper, we estimated the monetary costs of running our internships in NC and NM would total \$95,000. How much money did NHI take to make the summer happen? ... drum-roll.... \$1,900! This speaks to the power of loving service!



NHI 2009 Summer Orientation in Santo Domingo, NM. Back row L to R: Gianna Uttaro, Christine James, Alicia, Lacovara, Anthony Fleg, Annie Liu, Gary Tenorio, Rafael Lope, and Michael Bird; Front row L to R: Eudora Claw, Nizhoni Fleg, and Shannon Fleg.



NHI Summer Interns Christine James (L) and Eudora Claw (R) spend some time playing with NHI's mascots (2 guinea pigs pictured here) and NHI's Official Baby, Nizhoni Rose. Shannon Fleg, NHI Coordinator is pictured in the middle

An Eagle's Story - by Annie Liu

When I first met Joe, he told me to call him Eagle. It was the summer of 2009, my first time in New Mexico and an intern with the Native Health Initiative. His name Eagle described him very well – a fearless man, who had many life experiences that shaped him to be the caring father to so many children.

He was recruited as the supervisor of the Emergency Youth Shelter (EYS) because of his extraordinary leadership abilities and ease in working with youth. He told me that he was always asked to undertake difficult tasks, which he completed with much dedication and care. Eagle did not choose them based on the salary; instead he chose the one that needed the most help, or in his words the one that “cried to him”, and at the time EYS needed him.

On Santo Domingo, I always heard praise for Eagle. It was evident how great his leadership was from the smiles and the cohesiveness of his staff. Under Eagle’s supervision, the EYS was renovated and became a home for the children instead of a rooftop over their heads. He and his staff sacrificed their benefits just to keep the shelter open. I am honored to have befriended a man such as Eagle. I pray that he continues to sing so others may appreciate his great heart and beautiful voice. May Eagle rest in peace.



**** Above is a memorial written by a former NHI intern, Annie Liu. Annie and the NHI-NM Coordinators decided to award Joe with one of the NHI-NM 2009 Loving Service awards posthumously. Mr. Joe Quintana was the supervisor at the Emergency Youth Shelter in Santo Domingo, NM. The Emergency Youth Shelter provides a safe haven for Pueblo children while they are transitioning from their former living situation to a new home. Mr. Quintana worked closely with the Native Health Initiative (NHI) to develop programs for youths in educational and cultural development. He passed away in August 2009, he will be missed by many. May his*

Ms. Agnes Dill (Isleta/Laguna) To Receive Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from UNM



Ms. Agnes Dill, an elder from the Isleta and Laguna Pueblos, will receive an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree from the University of New Mexico at their May 15th, 2010 Commencement in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

“Grandma Agnes” has been a significant pioneer for human welfare on American Indian health issues, culture, history, Pueblo Indian tribal issues, education, and international issues. In the 1970s, she was known nationwide in Indian and non-Indian circles for her leadership on women’s issues. Currently, at 96 years old and hindered by macular degeneration, she actively volunteers her time in leadership roles, guest speaking, and

serves as an ambassador for American Indian elders. She has spoken at several NHI functions, always willing to teach health professions students about the importance of understanding culture to being able to create health and cure disease.

NHI felt that we had a responsibility to advocate for Ms. Dill to receive an honorary degree, and we spent a great deal of time putting together the proposal that was then submitted to UNM. In December, we got word that she was accepted to receive this high honor!

CONGRATULATIONS MS. AGNES DILL!!!!!!!



NHI in the months ahead

2010 promises to be a big year, and we thought we would give you a taste of what to expect:

- NHI will host the first Indigenous Health Leadership Institute (IHLLI), a 3 day gathering for health professions students across the U.S.
- NHI, which became incorporated in 2009, hopes to achieve non-profit (501-c3) status in 2010
- NHI will host its 6th summer of Health Justice Internships (NC and NM)
- NHI's Spring 2010 interns, the biggest group yet, will work on various community health projects in NC and NM



We Invite You To Join Our CIRCLE!!

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- ⇒ If you are a Tribal member wanting to improve the health and well-being of your community through partnerships
- ⇒ If you are a service organization interested in working with or within American Indian communities
- ⇒ If you are an organization working toward peace, toward eliminating inequities of all kinds, invested in creating love and beauty for this world
- ⇒ If you are an individual who wants to join our weekly list-serve, to stay informed about events and activities

We're on the Web: www.loving-service.us

Join our Facebook Group! [Native Health Initiative - NHI](#)

Editor's Note: I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this Loveletter. It's been such a great experience on knowing how much Love there is in this World. I spend my day's reflecting on how I can change this World, but it takes other's and asking for their help to make a difference. First and foremost, I gotta thank my Creator for giving me the strength to make each day brighter for others. And I would like to thank everyone else for their generosity and friendship. I can't forget my friends who accepted me for who I am on the inside. Thank you Anthony & Shannon Fleg. Until next time....Rafael Lope, (Dine') NHI-NM Coordinator