

# Native Health Initiative

## LOVE Newsletter

### INSHARE Making Great Strides CATHY WONG and ALICIA STEELE

The home of the Waccamaw Siouan tribe is located in the counties of Columbus and Bladen, North Carolina. In an effort to empower the community, Brittany Simmons, who herself is a member of the Waccamaw Siouan tribe, co-developed a program named Indigenous Nations Sharing Health Achievements, Resources, and Education (INSHARE). The mission of INSHARE is to create a coalition between Indigenous Nations around the world to provide access to information regarding the health of nations.

INSHARE collaborates with the Native Health Initiative. Through the Native Health Initiative, INSHARE hosted two volunteers/interns during the summer of 2008, who were Alicia Steele from Michigan and Cathy Wong from California. After their experience as volunteers for INSHARE, the two interns learned so much about the love among people from the Waccamaw Siouan Tribe. From Alicia's experience, she gained great encouragement from being welcomed into a community that shared



their struggles, knowledge, resources and joy. Alicia described, "It was clear that everyone, including youth and elders, had strong voices and actions that contributed towards their community efforts." The community also welcomed the volunteers' voices and the cultural exchange was very important for everyone. Cathy was inspired by Ms. Simmons's commitment to empower the youth in her community. Cathy states,

"I was able to witness and see that only one person's motivation can positively impact the lives of many people."

Since its inception in 2006, the Waccamaw Siouan Cultural Day Camp has positively enhanced the lives of many children from the tribal community. The Cultural Day Camp is a program developed by Ms. Simmons.

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### APPLES-NHI Alternative Winter Break Trip MARION BOULICAULT

On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 13 UNC Students will head down to Pembroke, NC to participate in the first ever APPLES – NHI Alternative Winter Break Trip. In a partnership that began one year ago with an Alternative Fall Break Trip to Pembroke, NHI and APPLES have come together again to provide an invaluable link between

the UNC and Native communities. The Winter Break Trip will be a longer, more extensive version of the Fall Break Trip in that it will expose UNC Students to a greater number of issues. In addition, a focus of the new Winter Break Trip will be to build sustainable relationships with the Native communities

that can be built upon in the following year's trip. The Winter Break Trip also seeks to provide a foundation for the Native American Diversity Awareness Partnership's (NADAP) Teaching Fellows Program that will begin this coming Spring.

*APPLES continued on*

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## It is a Good Thing... MISS BRAYBOY

It was just a short while ago when Anthony Fleg called the NC Commission of Indian Affairs in Raleigh and talked to me about his idea of wanting to start a Native Health Initiative (NHI) in North Carolina utilizing college students as health educators. These young students from different parts of the world would come and spend some of their summer vacation in our Indian communities working with leaders and individuals on the health issues they were concerned about. It sounded great so I asked him to come to our office and discuss it further. From the beginning, I knew it was “a good thing,” and I wanted to learn more. The way it all came together is truly a miracle for what we needed to do was to get the community leaders interested by helping them see the vision. It was not difficult because everyone understood the importance and the need to get more health education into the minds of Indian people.

*GOOD continued on pg 6*

### 2008 NHI Loving Service Awards

#### NHI North Carolina

**Brittany Simmons** for her tireless energy toward her Tribe's youth and toward NHI's summer internships

**Preston Sweeney** for his hospitality during NHI's summer orientation

#### NHI New Mexico

**Joaquin Baca** for his smile, energy and partnership with NHI

**Catherine Joy** for her guidance, support and service in helping NHI-NC get off the ground

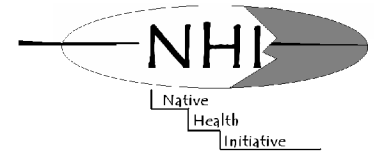
#### APPLES *continued*

The Co-Chairmen of the Winter Break Trip are Sarah Hatcher, the Executive Coordinator of the APPLES Service-Learning Initiative, and Marion Boulicault, an NHI Intern and Co-Director of NADAP. Over 40 students applied to participate in the trip and, after extensive interviews, 11 students were selected. These students bring a diversity of background, experience and opinion that we hope will provide an enriching learning environment for all those involved.

While the Winter Break itinerary is still very much a work in progress, there are a number of exciting potential activities in store for this year's participants. After presenting at the Title VII Indian Education Leadership Workshop this past October, I met with Ms. Rita Locklear, the Title VII Coordinator for Robeson County. We talked about how the Winter Break participants could get involved in education issues and she proposed that the participants lead workshops at this year's Native American Student Association's (NASA) Day. In addition, she proposed that the participants spend a day working with local High School Students on their Graduation Projects (a new NC graduation requirement). A training session has been set up with Dr. Kidwell, director of the UNC American Indian Center, to teach the Winter Break participants about the components of the Graduation Project.

Further potential activities include working at the American Indian Mother's Association, working on Project Divine (a diabetes awareness project), visiting a traditional Native American healer and working at the Lumbee Tribal Center.

Whichever activities we end up participating in, we hope above all to bring with us open minds and loving hearts and thus to uphold the APPLES-NHI commitment to loving service-learning.



Community Healing Through Youth Empowerment – NHI presentation at Minority Health Conference receives standing ovation!

By SHANNON and ANTHONY FLEG

There was something new at the 2008 Minority Health Conference – youth presenting to national leaders in public health. The conference, held by UNC each February, brings together leaders in the struggle to better understand and address the inequities in health in the U.S.

NHI brought possibly the most unique session to this year's conference, with youth from three different communities and three diverse programs speaking to the audience about their efforts to make their community healthier.

The session started with a discussion of community asset mapping, a paradigm that assumes that communities must heal by recognizing their strengths and assets, not by relying on outside entities. Youth are a primary example of an asset that is often overlooked and ignored completely. However, as the youth began to share of their work, passion for making a difference, and

dreams in life, you could feel the audience become convinced of the power of youth to lead communities toward health.

William Funes (El Salvadorian) and Felipe Labrada (Colombian) from Pa'lante, a youth-led media organization whose members are children of Latino immigrants talked about their weekly radio program." The number one goal of Pa'lante is to make the community healthy by keeping them informed about activities and issues that will help them grow as individuals and a community as a whole," said Labrada. Then, Marques and Anthony Smallwood spoke about their work with DIG – Durham Inner-city Gardeners, making note of how important it was to reconnect with their elders culture of farming; they also spoke about the consciousness around healthy eating that growing their own food cultivated in them and their peers. Finally, Liberty and Shane Bigham of the Coharie

Tribe shared about the work of the Coharie Smoke-Free Hawks, a youth-led effort to teach the traditional uses of tobacco as a way to prevent their community from smoking cigarettes and using other forms of commercial tobacco.

And, in something that is never seen at such conferences, after each presentation, the youth received standing ovations from those in attendance.

"It was really quite beautiful to see these youth from different backgrounds and communities share together, and then begin to talk amongst themselves how they could work together – the Smoke Free Hawks wanted to bring DIG out to help them begin farming...DIG wanted to talk to Pa'lante about how to use media to share their message...my wife and I knew that the over 100 hours of loving service that it had taken to bring this event together was more than worth it," smiles Anthony Fleg.

NHI Coordinators

NHI-NC  
Cheryl Boone  
Mark Deese  
Hemanth Kunduru  
Ginger Jacobs  
Vivvette Jeffries-Logan  
Lee Lowery  
Brittany Simmons  
Bruce Swett

NHI-NM  
Missy Begay  
Rose Chavez  
Shannon Fleg  
Anthony Fleg

NHI-CT  
Teresa Doucet  
Sara Wilcox

NHI-CA  
Jared Dunlap  
Caleb Dunlap

NHI Interns, Fall 2008  
Marion Boulicault (NC)  
Sophia Malik (NC)  
Travis McKenzie (NM)  
Chris White (NC)

New NHI Partnership!

The Native American Diversity Awareness Partnership (NADAP) is an exciting new initiative that aims to bring Native American students and tomorrow's educators together. Through NADAP, Teaching Fellows will plan and lead Youth Leadership Days, which are workshops focusing on developing leadership skills and exposing the students to higher education opportunities. The two-way street of education allows the Teaching Fellows to gain a better understanding of Native culture and issues while inspiring and challenging the Native students. This partnership has been awarded a Seagraves Public Service Grant to fund its projects in North Carolina Indian communities!

For more information and ways to get involved with NADAP's work, please contact Chris White [whitecr@email.unc.edu](mailto:whitecr@email.unc.edu)



*Untitled, Rafael Lope (Navajo)*



## Loving Service Explained

In 2004, a group of Tribal leaders and health professions students created an internship program that would bring students to work with Tribes on health projects. There was a sense that this work was needed, and that despite the lack of infrastructure and financial support, the internships could and would happen if everyone gave of their talents and resources to make it happen. In addition, it became clear as the summer of 2005 neared that the group working to make this first summer a success were more and more friends, not merely “co-workers.” It was not just the fact that everyone was volunteering their time to plan for the summer; there was a sincere trust that amongst the NHI members, one that allowed communities to invite in strangers from afar, and which allowed students to work tirelessly to recruit volunteers and to arrange the logistics. And as all of this incredible energy grew, many well-meaning folks from outside institutions cautioned, “It’s a good idea – wait a few years and write some grants to make it happen.” NHI members persisted and the first summer’s internships brought nine students to Tribes in NC, with a total budget for the program amounting to \$0.00. This is what we call “loving service,” the funding source for the vast majority of NHI’s work.

Loving service is a term we have given to a communal ethic of trusting friendships that are the foundation for addressing injustices and moving toward a more equitable, caring society. Loving service is our way of describing the currency of Indian communities, where the titles, degrees, and one’s financial wealth are not as important as one’s willingness to help family and community members, one’s desire to sacrifice their time and resources for the greater good. Loving service, then, is not something unique to NHI, but is a way of being that we have adopted from Indigenous communities. Honoring its roots, we understand loving service as a circular concept, not one that can be linearized into a definition. Whenever possible, we use Indigenous terms/concepts to explain its meaning, recognizing that “love” is not a term used in some Tribes.

*Example: A’jooba and Naa’alyah are two Navajo words that encompass loving service; the first means “to have mercy, no matter what” and the second means “to give back, what you owe.”*

Why we choose loving service:

- 1) It is a return to an Indigenous currency, one where money is not central, but instead one’s sincerity and goodness toward others is most valued. As one Pueblo elder said, “I see our young leaders today, and all they are after is money. They have forgotten that our relations with others is what is most important to us Indian people.”
- 2) It inspires a human-to-human element to our work, a communal ethic that minimizes the ego and maximizes all of the qualities we hope to amplify in our partnership (caring for one another, kindness, honesty, trust, )
- 3) It builds on the strength of Indigenous communities, and helps to educate our volunteers, our partner organizations, and academic and governmental institutions about this aspect of these communities.

When we asked NHI members to describe what loving service meant to them, here is what they said...

*“Loving service is giving without expecting anything in return. The ability to serve someone in need can be a gift in itself.”*

-Randi Byrd (Cherokee), NHI-NC supporter since 2004

*“To me, it is not so much an act but a state of mind. I believe it is giving of oneself truly and completely to someone you would not normally do so, like a complete stranger. By putting their needs and wants above your own, you can truly serve in love. It is much more than a “service”, its adding people to your family and treating them as one of your own.”*

-Rachelle Smith, 2008 Summer Intern with NHI-NC

*“Loving service is service and fellowship that makes your soul feel good.”*

-Roberto Blanco, NHI-NC volunteer

*“Loving service is when your connection and for those you are working with exceeds any concerns about the task at hand.”*

-Sophia Malik, 2008 Spring Intern with NHI-NC

INSHARE *continued*

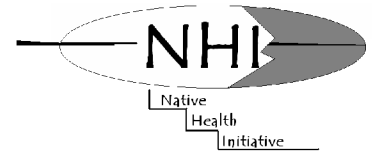
The goal of the camp is to educate children ages 8 to 12 on healthy living, which consists of the physical, mental, and spiritual health, through traditional practices in a modern context. There were many fun activities scheduled each day such as arts and crafts; beading; preparing healthy lunches; exercising from dancing and aerobic sessions; and cultural and health lessons.

Furthermore, another project from INSHARE is the Waccamaw Siouan Nation Youth Ambassadors Community Project. Ms. Simmons developed this program in 2008 for youth ages 13 to 19. The goals of the program are to create a youth group that will become representatives for the Waccamaw Siouan People, to nurture young leaders, and to create informed citizens. In addition the program aims to provide a base of knowledge of traditional teachings, governmental practices, and advocating for rights of people in order to bring about social change. Ms. Simmons is currently mentoring and supporting six Ambassadors in the youth group. At this moment the Youth Ambassadors are in the process of creating and developing their community project. The Ambassadors have identified some goals of their project which are to enhance cultural knowledge of their people, broaden their perspectives and learn about other tribes, and promote more youth to participate in other projects and programs that will better their community. Bailey Sutherland, who is 14 years-old, participated in the Waccamaw Siouan Cultural Day Camp and is currently a member from the Youth Ambassador group for this year. Ms. Sutherland states that, "The Youth Ambassador program has brought me closer to my culture by letting me see the past, the present, and the upcoming future."

Every summer, the Native Health Initiative, in collaboration with INSHARE, plans to continue hosting students as volunteers with Indigenous Nations. During the summer of 2008, Alicia and Cathy found their volunteering experiencing to be memorable. They had the opportunity to immerse themselves and learn about Waccamaw Siouan culture. When they were immersed in a different culture from their own, Alicia and Cathy learned and realized that all people, no matter what ethnicity they are, have the basic desire to be physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy. That desire contributes to the interconnectedness and love among people, not matter what their culture is. The volunteers had a great experience serving in a loving manner to positively impact the lives of people from the Waccamaw Siouan tribe and were so pleased to be positively impacted in return.



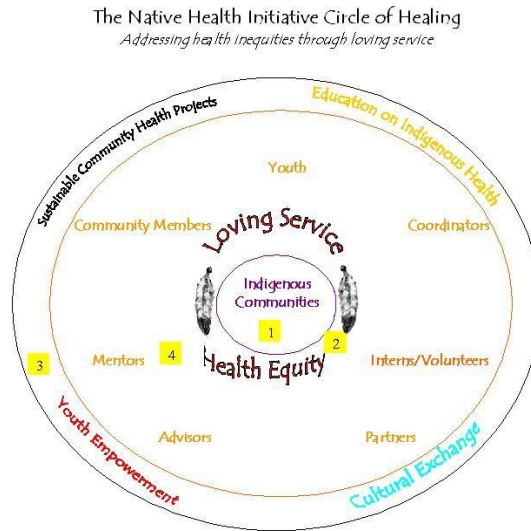
*Nutrition Jeopardy being led by a student at the "Celebrate Wellness/ Celebra la Salud" event in Albuquerque, New Mexico on November 29th, 2008. This event, organized by middle school students to bring information about healthy living to improve the community, was funded by a NHI Youth Leading the Way project grant.*



## Native Health Initiative

Since 2004, NHI has worked to address health inequities through loving service through community capacity building, undoing the power structures of racism and colonialism, empowering youth, and bringing Tribal leaders and health professions students together to address causes of sub-optimal health in our Indigenous communities. We use the term “loving service” to describe an ethic of human-to-human friendships that build the partnerships that then mobilize resources to address injustices; NHI is utilizing this currency of Indigenous communities, not money, to carry out our work. The partnership began in North Carolina, and now has two additional sites - New Mexico and Connecticut.

Shown is a picture of the NHI Circle of Healing, which captures NHI's work, with the center being the Indigenous communities with which we work.



GOOD continued

Today, it is health education that remains the greatest need in American Indian communities. Our people perish because of a “lack of knowledge.” When Indian people suffer from illnesses it breaks your heart for most of these illnesses could have been avoided if they had known how to implement good personal behaviors such as eating in a healthy way, avoiding tobacco use, and performing moderate exercise such as brisk walking 3 or 4 times a week, would have made a difference in their overall health.

With NHI it was a matter of young people from all over the world wanting to unselfishly give of themselves to Indian people. These young students taught on the concept of community health and how members of the community can take charge of their own personal health by implementing good health habits to improve the quality of life. Today, the Native Health Initiative is successful because of those wonderful young men and women who came to our communities with eager hearts to give and a willingness to listen, and a love to share with those whom they knew so little about. It is with great pride that I wholeheartedly promote and endorse this fantastic and much needed program in all indigenous communities all over the world.

## Please Join Us!

Instead of the usual end of a newsletter, the section where you are asked to open your wallet to give, we would simply like to invite you to join our work, either as an individual or as an organization that wants to partner with NHI:

- 1) You are a Tribal member wanting to improve the health and well-being of your community through partnerships
- 2) You are a service organization interested in working with/in American Indian communities
- 3) You are an organization working toward peace, toward eliminating inequities of all kinds, invested in creating love and beauty for this world

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We're on the Web! [lovingservice.us](http://lovingservice.us)  
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