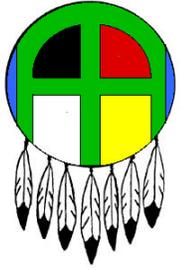


Four Directions



Native American Indian General Service Office

Winter 2006

Pg.1

NEEWING ONDAUNIMUT, NEEWING INAUNIMUT

*FROM FOUR DIRECTIONS BLOW THE WINDS,
TO FOUR DIRECTIONS BLOW THE WINDS.*

AYAUBEETUMUN NAUDIMOWIK KAETIMAUGOZIT

YOU WHO ABIDES- HELP THE POOR.

May the Creator continue to bless us!!

May you see the hand of the Great Spirit written across the pages of this issue, I hope the sharing reaches your heart as it has mine. On pages two and three is a heartwarming story of the struggle we face in carrying the message to Native Americans. Pages four through six contain a story from despair to hope. On pages ten through twelve you will find the report from the 2006 NAIGSO General Service Conference held January 29, 2006

I am honored to edit this newsletter and look forward to serving the fellowship of NAIGSO-AA.

*Wado! Aho! Ahlelamo! Haho!
"All My Relations"*

San Carlos Sacred Circle AA Alcothon

When I first moved to Globe, AZ, in March of last year, I was disappointed to find that there were few AA meetings, and only one meeting location in Globe.

At my first meeting in Globe, I asked if there were other meetings in the area. One member said that there was "a meeting" on the (San Carlos) reservation, but only one person from Globe AA had ever attended it, and no one present was able to give me directions to that meeting... I would have to wait for "Sergio".

A few meetings later, Sergio appeared, and made me a rough, inaccurate map to the one meeting he knew about in San Carlos (Actually, there were 4 weekly meetings in San Carlos, that the Globe group was unaware of).

The following Sunday afternoon, I motorcycled my way to San Carlos, following Sergio's map as far as I could... to a small general store in the heart of San Carlos... but no one I asked could direct me to the meetings. Frustrated, I shoved the map in front of a total stranger, saying, "Maybe you can help me". The stranger laughed, saying that he *could help* me... he had **started** the 3 existing noon AA meetings at San Carlos, and could direct me to the 7:00 PM Wednesday night meeting location as well. The stranger's name was Vince J., a Shoshoni with many years of sobriety... 29 or 30, as I recall. Maybe more.

After meeting Vince, I began attending the meetings at San Carlos on a regular basis, and, Monday night, the Wellness center at San Carlos would provide a van which carried all AA members from San Carlos, who wished to go, to the Monday night meeting in Globe.

I also made a map to the two meeting locations on the reservation and several other Globe members began attending the meetings on a regular basis.

As October was approaching, Vince began making announcements for a third, "Sacred Circle AA Alcothon", which, in it's two previous years, had been held at the Apache Gold Casino, located on the reservation. The announcement was met with little enthusiasm by the Globe group.

With the alcothon only weeks away, an individual who had been largely responsible for the first two alcohons, cancelled it without notice to either the group in Globe or the Sacred Circle (Wednesday night) group in San Carlos. A very disappointed Vince made the announcement to the Globe group; there would be no alcothon this year.

My position was and is, that no individual may hold such power or authority within AA, as to cancel any event which involved and benefited so many for two years running. These decisions needed to be made by group conscience, and by steering committees... not by individuals.

Few disagreed with me, but few were prepared to attack the issue. The reasons were several: One... the Globe group did not see the issue as an AA issue, since they had played (and been asked to play) only a supportive role in an alcothon which was essentially Native American, and two... that to try to correct matters was to interfere directly with Indian affairs on the reservation.

I didn't disagree with the latter; the individual responsible for canceling the alcothon was also a counselor at the Wellness Center and she was Native American, with matriarchal authority. Many had to deal with her in their day-to-day affairs and no one wanted to incur her "wrath".

On the other hand... I owed no favors, and had made no enemies on the reservation. Conversely, I had made friends, and had been "adopted" by the tribe. Furthermore, I saw the issue as being "AA" and not "Indian". So I rolled up my sleeves, and set about to create a steering committee who's responsibility would be to resurrect the alcothon... not for the year, 2005, but for 2006 and God-willing, for all the years to come... a committee was formed, consisting of Vince J. (Shoshoni), me (veteran AA "white-boy" with 24 years of sobriety), Mark S., another veteran Caucasian, Mike N., Apache, Nanette, Apache, and several others from the Globe group who helped with printing and posting of the event... later.

The woman who had cancelled the alcothon had all of the alcothon's money (almost \$1000), from the two previous alcothons, as well as raffle-tickets, mailing lists, sign-up lists, alcothon shirts, and other needed materials, and was refusing to meet with the (new) committee. It became necessary to meet with the Wellness Center director, who had to order that counselor to meet with us, who also ordered that she relinquish all materials and money belonging to AA, and the alcothon. To the Wellness Center director, she agreed to comply; to us, she continued to refuse to comply.

Suddenly, this Wellness Center worker, appointed another woman, a friend of hers, to be the director of the alcothon (for 2005), turning all of the group's resources over to her, instead of the steering committee. The new director made it clear to all of us on the new steering committee that the Sacred Circle alcothon was **Apache**, that the Sacred Circle had existed for "hundreds of years", did not involve "whites", and was **not** "AA". The steering committee collapsed on the spot; it no longer existed. We could only defer.

Then... a miracle happened. Two weeks after the director's appointment (and "speech" to us), she approached the steering committee, and said, after much reflection and soul-searching, she realized that she could not host the event "alone", but needed the help of the steering committee, and, most of all... AA. The event was "on"... for 2005.

The steering committee agreed to let her keep the lead. After all... we only wanted to see San Carlos' "Third Annual Alcothon." It wasn't important who was running things, as long as everything that needed to get done in time for the event, was accomplished.

We had lost our important Saturday time-slot, due to the Wellness Center's employee's cancellation of the event; we got stuck with a Friday (workday) to hold the event. To compensate, the group did a saturation mailing, with funds donated by members of the Globe group. I got on-line and tracked down every Tribal Council, and Bureau of Indian Affairs in three states, every AA Intergroup office in Arizona, and also contacted N.A.I.G.S.O., which has been extremely supportive and enthusiastic of all of our efforts to host this third Alcothon. We placed both, group and individual N.A.I.G.S.O membership forms on our registration table, and it is my understanding that the "BackDoor" AA group (3 noon meetings a week) is now registered with N.A.I.G.S.O.

It is my heartfelt belief that the Alcothon at San Carlos was meant to continue. Despite the Friday time-slot, our attendance was in excess of 300, representing 7 different tribes from as far away as CA and NM. Our raffle was a great success, and we even managed to get Alcothon t-shirts printed in time for the event. And the Casino has since given us back our Saturday time-slot.

Of note: This was the first time, in the now, three year history of the Sacred Circle Alcothon, that there was no involvement of agencies outside of AA, the alcothon has "come of age", as it were.

I work in the movie industry, and have since moved from the Globe-area, and now reside in Ehrenberg, AZ; I will not be involved in this year's Sacred Circle Alcothon... to my regret; I will be on another movie. But I have no doubt that there will be a Fourth San Carlos Annual Alcothon, and a 5th, because of the efforts of all who rescued last year's alcothon from cancellation, as well as to the efforts of all of those who participated in the first two alcothons as well. I'm happy to have been a part.

George J.



EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH & HOPE



My name is Sparrow. I have disease called alcoholism. I am honored to share with you just a little glimpse into my life as an alcoholic - what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now.

What It Was Like

I have tried to write this over and over again, and it is so hard to tell you what I was like before ism took over because I believe the isms were present from the day I was born. I could tell you about my family, but the family I came from has absolutely nothing to do with my alcoholism. Let's just say that before I was introduced to the effects of chemical emotions, I was self-will run riot 100% of the time, but I was happy and innocent. Even before school age I was attracted to the "bad boys". My friends were as wild as I was. I believed in family and Santa Claus, and I really don't recall giving God any thought even though I attended Catholic classes on Saturdays. In 4th grade I was enrolled in Catholic School where I attended until the end of 8th grade. It was at the Catholic school that I started to ask questions, to give the concept of God any conscious awareness - only to be punished for questioning the teachings. The only thing I got out of the priest's sermons was that everything was a sin and that I would never ever be able to be that good and I was going to hell for certain if there really was a God. It was about this same time that I was made acutely aware of racism. One day my good friend brought some little red pills to school, telling us that her brother sold them to his friends. I really can't remember the exact circumstances that lead to us to trying the little pills, but I remember that I immediately liked the way they made me feel.

In 1969 my world was shattered. Somebody, can't remember which parent, told us that Mom and Dad were getting divorced. At that time 5 of the 11 children remained at home, me being the second to the oldest at the age of 14. We were devastated. The entire experience was like a nightmare. The world as I knew it no longer existed and I was severely traumatized. Up to this point my drug use had been purely recreational. I had not even tasted alcohol yet. My mother poured me my first drink - or I should say drinks. From the very beginning I drank like an alcoholic. I had a black-out that very first night and continued to have them almost anytime I drank.

During the violent divorce, chemical elation became my escape from a reality that I could not handle. I was scared, it made me forget the fear. I was sad, it made me laugh. Add alcohol to a wild child and what do you get, a completely insane person. I had no self-control whatsoever. I stayed out all night or for days at a time; I went from being a good student to hardly ever being at school. I became a liar, a cheat, a fake and a total mess. My Aunt and Uncle tried to help, asking if I was doing this because my mother had begun drinking - I said no, I was like this because I had been drinking.

Continued page 5

In 1969 I was kidnapped on my way home from a two-day binge. I know now that I was sold to a group of bikers. Long story short - my friend and I looked at each other and without saying a word agreed to take or drink anything we could get our hands on so that we would not have to live the nightmare fully conscious. Once again alcohol became my savior. So you see, the destroyer once again became the savior. Only I did not know this until I was 30 years old.

In 1984 I came to at a stranger's house. This was not the first time this had happened, and this was not the first time that I had been scared because of it. Only this time I remembered that I was going to stop at the bar for just one drink - and now it was the next day and I knew that I needed help. I called AA (not sure how I knew about them, but I called) and a woman took me to my first meeting. I realized that I had no control over my drinking, even though I had tried many times to stop and or cut down. I sent my son to live with his father, and I had nobody to take of but myself. I attended meetings for 30 days and then was back on a two- year binge. During those two years I had lost all self-respect, all my friends, any glimpse of the dignified lady that I wanted to be. I traded my body for drugs, and lived on a merry-go-round that I couldn't stop. I used men like I did drugs, when one quit working for me I tried a new one. What I had become I was ashamed of. The best way for me to explain what happened is to share with you the visual that I see in my heart and soul: God came with this giant hand and pulled me right out of the pit that I had dug for myself. Of course I did not know this until much later in the program.

One night, in 1986, I was all dressed and ready to go to the bar. Why this night was any different can only be described as a spiritual war over me. One voice told me that if I went to the bar, life would never be the same. See, I still had a job and was pretty good at acting like I had morals, but I knew the truth. Because I had a job, had a good car, and looked like I was normal, I was able to hide the fact that I was an alcoholic - but I could not hide it from myself. I had long ago come to realize I was a drug addict, but because I was functioning, I was able to stay in denial about alcoholism. But not that night- I looked at where I had come from and where I was headed. I argued with myself - "no, I don't want to go to a meeting alone", "but you go to the bar alone" and for some reason unknown to me at the time, I attended a meeting in my old neighborhood. I was scared, and as I looked around the room, I realized that I looked just like some of the people I saw there, scared, tired, defeated.

The hand of AA was held out to me by an old school buddy that attended that meeting. I gave him a ride home that evening and he gave me hope.

What It is Like Now

1. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that "I am powerless over alcohol" and that my life will become unmanageable if I take a drink. Today my life is manageable. Not organized, but manageable.
2. I'm not certain that I was ever sane in the first place. But there is a power greater than myself, and for that I am so very grateful. That power keeps me in check, helps me in every aspect of my life. I did not find this concept difficult to believe, after all, alcohol is a power greater than me if I let it into my body and soul. Likewise, God, Creator, whatever name that Power is, if I let him/her into my body and soul, the power is in me.

3. I can't say I made a conscious decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God. God was there even without my permission. The difference now is that I pray and open the door on a regular basis, making it easier for me to turn my will and life over
4. Now, when I make a moral inventory - I find a moral person. Yes I make mistakes, but I am fearless about making an inventory because I know I can count on God to help me.
5. I no longer, cheat, steal, lie. But, there are days that my tongue and attitude are not in check, and when I am wrong, I make immediate amends, otherwise the guilt eats at me and I have no peace.
6. I am ready for all my defects to be removed. Sometimes I am unaware of the defects rearing their ugly heads, but when I become aware, I ask for help.
7. I don't ask for help very often, but God helps me anyway. Seems I only ask for help when I am desperate - which these days is not very often.
8. Making amends is a humbling experience. Because of the program I don't have to make amends very often, but I don't hesitate to do it. I have no control over the harmed one's acceptance of my amends, but I feel better when I do make amends. However, amends mean nothing if I don't intend to work on the shortcomings so that I don't continue any negative behaviors.
9. Humbly I ask God to remove all my shortcomings - all the while knowing that I will never be perfect, but I will ask, and ask and ask so that I can be a source of light and not of harmful darkness. My tongue can be sharp and bitter or it can be smooth and sweet. I humbly ask that only kindness rises from my thoughts.
10. I am willing to make amends. I no longer have a list of persons I have harmed, because the program works and I don't harm people very often - so it is easy to know who I have harmed without making a list.
11. Continuous personal inventory - daily, moment by moment, feeling good about myself because at the end of the day I can honestly say that I did my best and that I was kind, caring and giving.
12. I walk my talk. I practice the principals in all my affairs. I put principals before personalities, this helps me put out my hand to what others would consider untouchable. I carry the message not so much in words but in the way I live. I am open about my alcoholism - anonymity to me is not a necessity because I can hold my head up and say that I have been there and I don't want to go back. I share openly from the heart without fear. I have made spiritual progress and continue to do so, yet I am not proud of myself but grateful that all those years ago I listened to God and not myself.

Thanks for letting me share.

Please join the circle and send us news of what is happening in your area. Share your experience, strength and hope with the NAIGSO-AA family.

Four Directions is the voice of the people.

Share your experience and your wisdom with the Circle. Please submit articles of interest to Native Americans in recovery from alcoholism by emailing them to: newsletter@naigso-aa.org

Your original artwork is also needed. Any graphics with a Native American or recovery theme can be submitted.

Please do not submit any copyrighted materials.

How to contact the Native American Indian General Service Office (NAIGSO):

NAIGSO

P. O. Box 1253, Lakeside, CA 92040

<http://www.naigso-aa.org/>

951-927-2626

generalmanager@naigso-aa.org

newsletter@naigso-aa.org

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/naigsoaafamilycircles/>

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You can even have one sent to a friend as gift!!

NAME-----

ADDRESS-----

PHONE-----

Make check payable to: "Naigso-AA"

Mail to: Native American Indian General Service Office

PO Box 1253

Lakeside, CA 92040



**Native American Indian Alcoholics Anonymous
Registration Form for Individuals**



I am an individual who is willing to be a point of contact to carry the message of AA to the alcoholic who still suffers. I authorize my name and information as I have recorded it on this form to be included in the Native American Indian Alcoholics Anonymous Directory. In order to be included in the directory NAIGSO must receive your original signed copy of this form.

To help us be self-supporting it is suggested that each member on his or her sobriety birthday contribute one dollar per recovery year to NAIGSO.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail address: _____

Tribal Affiliation: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return the completed form to:

NAIGSO, P.O. Box 1253, Lakeside, CA 92040
Telephone (951) 927-2626 E-mail: generalmanager@naigso-aa.org

**Native American Indian Alcoholics Anonymous
Group Registration Form**

Group name: _____ Date group was started: _____

Meeting location: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP Code: _____

Reservation: _____ Nation: _____

Meeting day:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Meeting time:							

Contact for the group

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail address: _____

Tribal Affiliation: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return the completed form to:

NAIGSO, P.O. Box 1253, Lakeside, CA 92040
Telephone (951) 927-2626 E-mail: generalmanager@naigso-aa.org



NAIGSO'S 2nd GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

Chet Hunt Room, Many Nations in Recovery

3928 Illinois St., San Diego, CA. 92104

29 January 2006



OPENING. The conference was opened with traditional smudging. The faculty was smudged and the sage was passed around the circle for each person to smudge. Sylvia W. prayed in both English and Native American. Robert V. sang a Native American prayer song. Pot Luck followed this.

INTRODUCTIONS were made around the room.

7TH TRADITION basket was passed. The amount contributed was \$44.85

OPENING REMARKS made by Don W. (Facilitator).

The NAIGSO goals and service activities were reviewed to help focus the thoughts of the conference. They are as follows:

The General Service Conference will focus on serving the Native North American People. The NAIGSO goals and service activities we desire to implement and improve on are as follows. You will be asked for your input and asked to take the good news of the conference consensus back home to share.

GOALS

1. To help our Indian people obtain sobriety through the 12 steps and 12 traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).
2. To be a helping hand to alcoholics anonymous general services office, New York, NY and alcoholics anonymous world service, New York, NY as an information source and referral service.
3. To provide traditional/cultural means of representation from the AA individual/group level to the AA world services level.
4. To induce Native American Indian AA groups and peoples to work closely and confidently with general services office and world services in AA.
5. To support the Native American people in obtaining sobriety through their own culture.
6. To provide service in concert with the Native American's traditional gathering(s).

Continued page 11



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SERVICE ACTIVITIES

1. Provide and distribute AA information and materials to members. Publish newsletter and maintain web site containing sobriety meeting and event information.
2. Conduct, coordinate and facilitate sobriety events including pow wows, camp meetings, encampments, conventions and conferences.
3. Provide guidance on how to establish and facilitate AA groups with Native American members while maintaining the twelve concepts, traditions and steps of AA, yet incorporating the Indian's traditional way of life and spirituality. This will also involve the linking of Indian alcoholics of different tribes, in cities, on reservations and in prison settings, in such a way that will be comfortable and compatible for members. These concepts extend to the structural organization of NAIGSO, which means adapting the AA hierarchical system into a circular system to better serve the Indian customs.
4. Provide a path within AA for Indians to voice needs, from individual members to the world service level of AA. Meet requirements for Indian delegate to be seated and represent Indian nations at the world service meetings of AA. Sponsor a General Service Conference from which issues will merge to be brought before the world organization.
5. Provide NAIGSO representatives at sobriety gatherings, to meet members and determine better ways to provide services.
6. Provide directory of persons available to help individual Indian alcoholics.

Continued page 12



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MINUTES



There were sixteen people present with lots of food for everyone.

Robert V. opened the meeting with a warm welcome to everyone. Then turned the meeting over to Don W.

The minutes of last year's conference were read.

Don introduced the new stick-on labels with the shield and website address.

Don introduced the editor of the Four Directions newsletter, Gary C., and asked him to share his feelings. Gary shared his gratitude for the blessings of the Creator, who has supplied ample material to use in the newsletter.

Don discussed the upcoming AA mini-forum. He has written a letter to Greg M, AA General Service Office manager and Phyllis H., Pacific Regional AA trustee, asking for an opportunity to provide a presentation on NAIGSO at the mini-forum.

Don W. explained the purpose of NAIGSO and read the AA Preamble.

Ken read the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Don read Earl L.'s "Vision of Service to AA and the Native American Indian."

Again everyone was asked to introduce him or herself. As the sharing circled the room, the atmosphere started to fill with the "Language of the Heart."

Don opened the discussion to the subject of, "How do we achieve our goal?"

Mark stated the need to establish more meetings with a Native American format. That AA needs NAIGSO.

Gary C. read the essay on the third legacy of service from "AA Comes of Age," the need to "Carry the Message," our responsibility to still suffering alcoholic in the Indian world. We need to take responsibility for getting to the reservations. And that it is time to send out a new letter to the heads of the nations asking them to cooperate with NAIGSO.

There was much more sharing on the obstacles facing NAIGSO because of the cultural difference of AA tradition and Native American tradition.

The meeting was closed with a traditional Indian prayer.