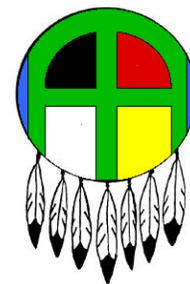


Four Directions



Native American Indian General Service Office

Winter 2005 Volume 4, Issue 1

Mitakuye Oyasin

Greetings to all my relations! I am honored to have the opportunity to serve Native Americans in recovery by editing the Four Directions newsletter of the Native American Indian General Service Office. I pray that the Great Spirit will guide this effort and that this newsletter will be a spiritual tool for all of the Circle to use in helping suffering Native American alcoholics.

Four Directions is the voice of the people. It is good for this voice to be heard. It cannot be heard, however, if it is not spoken aloud. 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.

Some Topic Suggestions

Native American Recovery Events
Home Group Happenings
Personal Recovery Stories
Treatment Facilities Committees
Correctional Facilities Committees

Twelve Steps
Twelve Traditions
Twelve Concepts
Spiritual Experiences
Poetry and Songs

Artwork is also needed so that our newsletter can be attractive. Any graphics with a Native American or recovery theme can be submitted. These can also be submitted via email to newsletter@naigso-aa.org.

Please submit original writings and artwork only. Do not submit any copyrighted materials.

In This Issue

Page 1	Mitakuye Oyasin	Letter from the Editor
Page 2	All My Relations	The Relationship Between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-anon Family Groups
Page 3	Current Events	11th Annual North Carolina Native American AA Convention
	Upcoming Events	General Service Conference of Alcoholic Anonymous for North American Indian Nations
Page 4	General Service Conference	Agenda – NAIGSO Goals and Service Activities

All My Relations: The Relationship Between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups

Alcoholics Anonymous recognizes that alcoholism affects not only the alcoholic, but also the family, friends, and co-workers of the alcoholic. This is evidenced by the titles of three of the chapters in our book *Alcoholics Anonymous: "To Wives", "The Family Afterward", and "To Employers"*. The chapter "Working with Others" says,

"Though an alcoholic does not respond, there is no reason why you should neglect his family. You should continue to be friendly to them. The family should be offered your way of life. Should they accept and practice spiritual principles, there is a much better chance that the head of the family will recover. And even though he continues to drink, the family will find life more bearable." (Reprinted from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Fourth Edition, page 97 with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)

The Native American Indian General Service Office (NAIGSO) is aware of the importance of family in Native American culture and life. NAIGSO in the past has demonstrated this by attempting to join both Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Group. This effort has been well intentioned. The two Fellowships, Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, cannot be joined because they have different and conflicting primary purposes.

"As the primary purpose of the A.A. group is to help the sick alcoholic to recover and the primary purpose of the Al-Anon Family Group is to help the Al-Anon to live with herself or himself, as well as with the alcoholic, it was suggested they not be combined but remain separate groups. This will enable both Fellowships to function within their Twelve Traditions and to carry their messages more effectively." (Reprinted from "A.A. Guidelines: Relationship Between A.A. and Al-Anon" with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)

The "Al-Anon Guidelines: Cooperation Between Al-Anon and AA" states: "Tradition Six specifically states that Al-Anon is a separate entity. Therefore, in keeping with this Tradition, there can be no combining, joining, or uniting which would result in the loss of identity of either fellowship. Separateness rules out affiliation or merging, but it does not exclude cooperation with AA or acting together for mutual benefit." (Reprinted by permission of Al-Anon Family Group Headquarter, Inc.)

There are ways to include family members in the alcoholic's recovery while honoring the two separate Fellowships. One suggestion is to have open meetings rather than closed meetings. Closed meetings are for alcoholics only. Anyone may attend open meetings although only alcoholics can participate. A second suggestion is to hold "couples" meetings. The A.A. Guidelines regarding the relationship between A.A. and Al-Anon comment on this: "...if A.A.'s and their nonalcoholic mates wish to meet together on a regular basis, it is suggested they consider these gatherings 'meetings' and not A.A. groups." (Reprinted from "A.A. Guidelines: Relationship Between A.A. and Al-Anon" with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.) A third suggestion is for couples to sponsor a similar couple with the caution that the alcoholic spouses be of the same gender.

There is no doubt that there are many other ways to include the family of a recovering alcoholic. Perhaps having read this article, some of you may be willing to share suggestions of how you have included your family in your recovery from your experience, strength, and hope. These suggestions will be published in a later newsletter.

11th Annual North Carolina Native American AA Convention

November 11-14, 2004 **Cherokee, North Carolina**

The 11th Annual North Carolina Native American AA Convention in Cherokee, North Carolina, is now history until next year at which time we get to do it all over again. People traveled many miles coming from many different Indian nations to attend the Convention. There were speakers, talking circles, dancing, a banquet, a pow wow, a sobriety count down. There was no indication of any separation of activities e.g. we did the AA part and now we'll do the Indian part... it was all AA. The announcer indicated that there were over 3000 years of continuous sobriety counted in the sobriety countdown.

Knowing that all truth is in parallel I leaned my heart to see if I could discern why this convention just oozed recovery and health to the Native Peoples and Associates in attendance. First off I was pleasantly surprised to find out that every thing was included in the registration fee and there were no additional charge for anything. Volunteers were plentiful to do the tasks needed i.e. make fry bread, bring in the food, wash dishes, etc. Bottomless coffee pots and snacks were located at one end of the large convention room with tables along side for serving meals. Numerous circular tables and chairs were positioned for the peoples to sit, have a cup and visit. The circles seemed to expand and contract as the folks visited back and forth from one circle to another. Meals were served with the Elders honored first to eat. On one morning the circles expanded into two very large talking circles, one for men and one for women. Each person took his or her turn in sharing from the heart while holding an eagle feather. Numerous times during the convention the facility was smudged and each individual was given the opportunity to smudge. Ceremonies were held honoring the nations, the veterans, and the sobriety... And when it came time to dance the people danced with all their might.

We came home with something good seeded deep into our souls. This convention confirms to our heart that we were seeing and actually being an active part of a vision of service unparalleled in the history of AA. This deeper concept of "unity and service" rattles my soul. This is indeed AA's new frontier.

We understand while talking to a couple of the committee members that this Cherokee Convention started with very little resources and lots of AA love. We look forward to seeing you next year at Cherokee or maybe at an AA Convention/Campout/Event that your nation may be considering.

Don W. and Sylvia W. from California

Current Events

January 30, 2005 The very first General Service Conference of Alcoholic Anonymous for North American Indian Nations is scheduled to take place in San Diego, California, on January 30, 2005. The location of the conference will be at the Many Nations in Recovery facility, 3928 Illinois Street. The time is set for 12 o'clock noon. If you will be attending this historic conference, please notify us here at the NAIGSO. We need this information for planning purposes and to supply you with advance information on the conference session. See NAIGSO Organizational News and Comments section for further information.

General Service Conference

NAIGSO Goals and Service Activities

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).

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 member 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.