

Protecting Our Elders

by Kathryn Dick

Traditionally, elders have held places of great respect in tribal life. Age was an important attribute in leaders because it was a sign of wisdom.

When an elder needed help or care of any kind, it came from the elder's extended family. Although this tradition continues today, like so many traditions, it is subject to change because of the stresses of modern life.

Reports of elder abuse and neglect in Indian communities are being made. Unfortunately, many of the reports indicate that most of the abuse is committed by caregivers who are members of the elder's family.

The fact that family members can steal an elder's retirement check, fail to provide food or care to an elder, or physically abuse an elder is very difficult for most tribal members to comprehend. But whether a family member or a non-family member commits the abuse, the elder must be protected.

The underlying reasons for the growth of abuse and neglect of children and elders, and for the increase in violence in Indian communities, are economic deprivation, alcoholism, substance abuse, family dysfunction, and the breakup of traditional cultural values.

Areas of abuse include bodily injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or cruel punishment that causes an elder harm, pain, or mental anguish. Emotional abuse can include intimidation, threats, and humiliation.

Exploitation is another form of abuse. This includes the unauthorized or improper use of an elder's money (retirement funds, Social Security, per capita, assets), property, or other resources, including using the elder for personal gain or child care. Many times, elders are left to care for children for days at a time, leaving them unable to do the things they would choose to do and isolating them from the company of others.

These issues were addressed at a workshop that Elouise Case and I attended in San Diego, Calif. It was very informational and gives us a base upon which we can start to deal with issues such as elder abuse.

Another Year of Wisdom Happy Birthday!

Judy Baker, 3/22	David Goodell Jr., 3/24	Delores Pigsley, 3/29
Donald Bellinger, 3/23	Gloria Ingle, 3/17	Daniel Rilatos, 3/23
Elouise Case, 3/23	David John, 3/10	Edward Rilatos Sr., 3/1
Donald Claghorn, 3/22	Andrea Kaiser, 3/18	Diane Service, 3/9
Phyllis Covey, 3/17	Arlen Kentta, 3/18	Elaine Smith, 3/12
Pat Duncan, 3/14	Alfred Lane Jr., 3/3	Ronald Strickler, 3/16
Joel Engstrom, 3/15	Gaylene Miller, 3/25	Dennis Tufts, 3/19
Howard Fleming, 3/27	JoAnn Miller, 3/10	Melvin Viles, 3/4
Gary Freeman, 3/18	Robb Pearson, 3/28	Albert Wallace, 3/18
		Richard Woods, 3/21

Elders Gathering Coming in April

The annual *Circle of Wisdom* Elders Gathering will be held April 9 at Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City, Ore. Our tribal elders host this event.

We will invite elders from many other tribes. The gathering will start with registration at 11 a.m. Lunch and dinner will be provided. This is a time of fun, fellowship, and giving to our tribal friends from afar. All elders are welcome!

Collins, Towner Featured in Photo Exhibit at Olympics

Siletz Tribal elders Eddie Collins and Gilbert Towner are part of *First Warrior*, a photographic exhibit of American Indian war veterans, which was on display in the Native American Village in Park City, Utah, during the 2002 Winter Olympics.

The mission of *First Warrior* is simple: to bestow honor upon American Indian war veterans by archiving today's "warrior" in image and story for historical safekeeping. The full exhibit of 40 to 60 gallery prints and spirited stories will unveil nationwide on Veterans Day 2002 in Washington, D.C.

Medicare Part B Update

by Judy Muschamp

The Siletz Tribal Council has set aside gaming revenue funds to reimburse tribal elders, age 65 and older, for Medicare Part B premiums. So far, 64 elders are receiving reimbursements.

Until June 1, 2002, I will continue to process reimbursement retroactive to October 2001. After June 1, we will reimburse effective the month you submit your paperwork to me.

Here are answers to some common questions:

Question: What paperwork do you need so I can receive reimbursement?

Answer: I need a copy of your Medicare card. This shows that you are covered by Part B medical. I also need a copy of your benefit statement from Social Security that shows how much per month is withheld from your check. Mail these copies to: Judy Muschamp, CTSI, P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380.

Question: The Social Security office said I would be penalized if I sign up for Part B now. Will the tribe reimburse me for the penalty too?

Answer: Yes.

Question: I want to add Part B to my Medicare. When can I do that?

Answer: You can sign up for Medicare Part B in the following ways:

- 1) When you first enroll in Medicare (your initial enrollment period). The initial enrollment period starts three months before you turn age 65 and lasts for seven months afterward.
- 2) Jan. 1 to March 31 of each year (your general enrollment period). If you enroll in Part B during a general enrollment period, it will become effective July 1 of the year in which you apply. Your Medicare Part B premium will go up 10

percent for each 12-month period that you could have had Medicare Part B, but did not take it.

- 3) If you did not take Medicare Part B when you were first eligible because you or your spouse were working and had group health plan coverage through your or your spouse's employer or union, you can sign up for Medicare Part B during a special enrollment period. You can sign up anytime you are still covered by the employer or union group health plan through your or your spouse's current employment, or during the eight months following the month the employer or union group health plan coverage ends, or when the employment ends (whichever is first).

You should contact the Social

Security Administration toll-free at 1-800-772-1213 to add Medicare Part B.

Question: When will I receive my reimbursement from the tribe?

Answer: After your initial check is processed, you should receive your regular monthly check by the last day of the month.

Question: Is the reimbursement taxable?

Answer: Yes, in some cases the reimbursement is considered taxable income. You will receive a form 1099 from the tribe. We're attempting to make arrangements to pay Medicare directly, but until then we're reimbursing elders directly. We hope to complete negotiations with Medicare this spring to pay directly.

If you have any other questions, please call me at 1-800-648-0449 or 541-444-1030.