

NCAI President Garcia's Statement on Election of Barack Obama as Next U.S. President

WASHINGTON (Nov. 5, 2008) – National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) President Joe A. Garcia released the following statement on the election of Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) as the next president of the United States.

"On behalf of Indian Country, I offer heartfelt congratulations to President-Elect Barack Obama on his historic victory. As a candidate, Sen. Obama included issues important to Indian Country as part of his detailed agenda on First Americans. He came to our communities and reservations to see for himself the state of affairs and great challenges Indian nations face on a daily basis. I am confident that as our

next president, Mr. Obama will remember his visits to Indian Country and the pledges of support he made throughout the course of his campaign. As an agent of change, I have faith that Mr. Obama and his administration will work closely with Tribes as this country moves in a new direction.

I believe Indian Country should be encouraged by Mr. Obama's staunch support of Indian self-determination and his pledge that the federal government must honor its treaty obligations and fully enable Tribal self-governance. Mr. Obama is also a proponent of better health care for Native Americans and as Tribal leaders

we will work closely with his administration and the new Congress to finally enact the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

I would also like to congratulate Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) on a hard-fought race. We are grateful for his years of commitment to Tribal nations. We value our strong relationship with Sen. McCain as he continues his work to strengthen Tribal sovereignty and advocate for strong Tribal governments.

NCAI and Tribal governments look forward to working with Mr. Obama's transition team to ensure qualified and dedicated Native people have a place in the new administration.

May the Great Spirit be with President-Elect Obama as he embarks on this historical journey."

Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the country. NCAI advocates on behalf of Tribal governments, promoting strong Tribal-federal government-to-government policies and promoting a better understanding among the general public regarding American Indian and Alaska Native governments, people and rights.

Teaching Tools Foster Science and Diabetes Education in American Indian Schools

WASHINGTON – Schools across the country now have free access to an innovative set of teaching tools designed to increase the understanding of science, health and diabetes among American Indian and Alaska Native students from kindergarten through the 12th grade.

The comprehensive new curriculum, called "Health is Life in Balance," was launched in November at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

The curriculum, a product of the Diabetes-based Science Education in Tribal Schools (DETS) program, integrates science and American Indian traditions to educate students about science, diabetes and its risk factors, and the importance of nutrition and physical activity in maintaining health and balance in life.

Applying an inquiry-based approach to learning, the curriculum builds research skills in observation, measurement, prediction, experimentation and communication. The project was developed in collaboration with eight Tribal colleges and universities and several American Indian organizations, with funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Diabetes, a major cause of heart disease and stroke and the most common cause in adults of blindness, kidney failure and amputations not related to trauma, now afflicts nearly 24 million people in the United States. Type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease, is linked to older age, obesity, physical inactivity, family history of the disease and a history of gestational diabetes. In the last 30 years, the incidence of type 2 diabetes has been steadily rising.

Diabetes Rates

The rate of diagnosed diabetes in American Indians and Alaska Natives is two to three times that of non-Hispanic whites. Nearly 17 percent of the total

adult population served by the IHS has diagnosed diabetes.

After adjusting for population age differences, diabetes rates vary from 6 percent among Alaska Native adults to 29 percent among American Indian adults in southern Arizona. Once seen only in adults, type 2 diabetes is increasingly being diagnosed in youth, especially in American Indian and other minority populations.

"Many people don't know that type 2 diabetes can often be prevented by losing a modest amount of weight through diet and regular physical activity," said Griffin P. Rodgers, M.D., director of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), which contributed most of the funding for the project. "We hope that this innovative, well-tested curriculum will reduce the rapidly rising incidence of type 2 diabetes in Native Americans by teaching young people about diabetes prevention."

Alvin Windy Boy, former chair of the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee, a group of elected Tribal officials who advise the Indian Health Service on diabetes topics, voiced the need for the curriculum at a 2002 meeting of the Diabetes Mellitus Interagency Coordinating Committee (DMICC), which coordinates federal research and activities related to diabetes. The materials were designed and extensively tested by staff in eight Tribal colleges and universities, who worked with 63 teachers and 1,500 students in schools across 14 states.

"This curriculum is an important step in educating American Indian and Alaska Native youth about preventing type 2 diabetes. The materials are understandable, tailored for students at different grade levels and make the concepts relevant to our lives and families," said Windy Boy.

"We're pleased that our Native youth will now be learning how to prevent type 2 diabetes early in life and in their own schools. We hope some of these students will be inspired to become health professionals to help us in the fight against dia-

betes and other chronic diseases," added Buford Rolin, who now chairs the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee.

The curriculum units provide accurate, culturally tailored materials and lesson plans for use in more than 1,000 Tribal schools on reservations and in public schools that have a sizable number of American Indian students.

"This curriculum can change perceptions and attitudes about diabetes and empower young people to adopt healthier lifestyles," said Kelly Acton, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention of the IHS, which will oversee distribution to schools.

To order printed copies or CDs of the curriculum free of charge, see the IHS website www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Diabetes/.

"The DETS curriculum represents a true collaboration between Tribal colleges and universities and federal partners dedicated to promoting health and preventing diabetes in future generations. We applaud this partnership and collective commitment to the health and wellness of American Indians and Alaska Natives," said Ann Albright, Ph.D., director, CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation.

CDC, through its Division of Diabetes Translation (www.cdc.gov/diabetes) funds 59 diabetes prevention and control programs across all states, U.S.-affiliated territories and island jurisdictions, and 11 Tribes and Tribal organizations.

The kindergarten through fourth-grade lessons in the DETS curriculum incorporate the four-book Eagle Books series for children. The original art for Eagle Books is featured in an exhibition, "Through the Eyes of the Eagle – Illustrating Healthy Living for Children," at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian until Jan. 4, 2009.

For More Information

The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP), co-sponsored by NIH and CDC, provides diabetes education

to improve the treatment and outcomes for people with diabetes, promote early diagnosis and prevent or delay the onset of diabetes.

In its "Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent Type 2 Diabetes" campaign, the NDEP is reaching out to people at risk for type 2 diabetes with the message that they have the power to turn the tide against this disease. For more information about preventing type 2 diabetes, see www.ndep.nih.gov/.

The IHS is the primary source of health care services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. It provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 1.9 million of the nation's estimated 3.3 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. For more information, see www.ihs.gov.

The DETS program also was supported by the NIH Office of Science Education, which coordinates science education activities for the NIH and develops model science education programs for grades K through 12 and the general public. For more information about OSE and free educational resources at the NIH, see <http://science.education.nih.gov>.

NIDDK, part of the NIH, conducts and supports basic and clinical research and research training on some of the most common, severe and disabling conditions affecting Americans. The institute's research interests include diabetes and other endocrine and metabolic diseases; digestive diseases, nutrition, and obesity; and kidney, urologic and hematologic diseases. For more information, visit www.niddk.nih.gov.

The NIH – the nation's medical research agency – includes 27 institutes and centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.