



A Talking Leaf

The Newsletter of Queer Oyate - the Two-Spirit Native American Coalition of POCAAN

Suite 25, Seattle, WA 98144 1.206 [redacted]

FEBRUARY 1997 VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

Moon of Wicáta wi

Happy New Year! Queer Oyate recently received a grant of \$5000 from Broadway Cares, in NY which was shared equally with POCAAN. The new grant helps the Two Spirit Coalition be solvent in 1997. *Pilamiye oyatin* to both Broadway Cares and to POCAAN who wrote the grant for us. The grant provides a quarterly X-rated storytelling series with NW Coast Master Storyteller and Shaman, Johnny Moses. Johnny's stories provide laughter and Coast Salish teachings. Queer Oyate will provide Snag Bags and Safer Sex information. The first gathering will be on Valentine's Day, Friday, February 14th. Also coming up is a public forum on the State of HIV/AIDS in Native American Communities, scheduled for Tuesday, February 25th at POCAAN. Start 1997 with Native American culture and HIV/AIDS prevention. *Wáste Yelo!* Greg Redfox, Project Director

SNAG BAG

by Greg Redfox

What's new for '97? POCAAN received a shipment of Trustex Flavored Condoms and LIXX Latex Barriers (*that's dental dams to you*) from Line One Laboratories, manufactured in Malaysia and Los Angeles.

The flavored condoms are lubricated and have tastes of cola (like The Real Thing), banana (like, well, bananas), grape (like grape pop), and chocolate (like a candy bar wrapped in latex!).

The LIXX Barriers are 6 x 7-3/4" squares of a thin pinkish latex with a strawberry flavoring coated on them (one per package). They seemed to be really thin, but after placing it on the back of my hand and then biting and sucking on it, there were no rips or tears. These little dams should hold up under normal one time useage.

The strawberry flavor wasn't overpowering and wore off like an old piece of gum. As it is, I prefer

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Peacemaker Medicine Society 440-7407
Sweat lodge Ceremony - 3rd Sunday each month, Noon
Even numbered months - Women Only Swats
Odd numbered months - Men Only Swats

February

1 - Mason Pow Wow 6PM, Mason Middle School, Tacoma, 206 [redacted]

8 - Muckleshoot Mini-Pow Wow 6-11:30PM, Muckleshoot Tribal Gym, Auburn, 206 [redacted]

14 - Johnny Moses tells X-Rated Stories, a Benefit for Queer Oyate, POCAAN Conf. Room, Seattle, 7PM.

15 - Peacemaker Medicine Society Women's Swat, 12 Noon, 206 [redacted]

25 - Native Community AIDS Forum
The State of AIDS in the Indian Community
Sponsored by POCAAN, 206 [redacted]

March

1 - Mason Pow Wow 6PM, Mason Middle School, Tacoma, 206 [redacted]

7 - Native American Indian Peoples' Conference, Port of Seattle, 2D-East conference room, Port of Seattle headquarters, Seattle, 206 [redacted]

8 - Muckleshoot Mini-Pow Wow 6-11:30PM, Muckleshoot Tribal Gym, Auburn, 206 [redacted]

15 - Peacemaker Medicine Society Teaching Circle - Fire and the Inipi Ceremony, 12 Noon, 206 [redacted]

April

12 - Muckleshoot Mini-Pow Wow 6-11:30PM, Muckleshoot Tribal Gym, Auburn, 206 [redacted]

19 - Peacemaker Medicine Society Field Trip to gather new willows and reeds, 12 Noon by the Yakima River, 206 [redacted]

20 - Peacemaker Medicine Society - Building the new lodge, 2PM, 206 [redacted]

HIV Vaccine Research— Why Get Involved?

by Ellen Blackstone, Health Educator, University of Washington

The news of treatments for AIDS is promising nowadays. Still, these treatments are very expensive for most people—and totally out of the question for the people of the third world. The best hope for most of the world is a preventive HIV vaccine.

HIV affects people of color to an unusual extent. AIDS is now the #1 cause of death in African American and Hispanic men, 25-44. Nationwide, 30% of AIDS cases are African-American; 17% are Hispanic. Black women are 15 times as likely to have AIDS as white women.

The AIDS Vaccine Unit at the University of Washington is trying to find a vaccine which will prevent HIV infection. In order to understand the effects of the vaccines before their widespread use throughout the world, we must study the vaccines in people of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Medications often work differently in different ethnic groups. The treatment for high blood pressure is different for African Americans than it is for Caucasians. Alaskan Natives frequently have allergic reactions to drugs commonly used in other ethnic groups. The Hemophilus B flu vaccine had to be completely changed to be effective in Native American children. In the face of the AIDS epidemic, it's important that we understand these differences. The last thing we need is a vaccine that works for only one segment of the population.

People find many ways to become involved with the vaccine project. Kevin Harris is a member of the Community Advisory Board of the vaccine unit. "I like being involved on a personal, social level," he says. As project coordinator, community

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is published 10 times a year by
Queer Oyate
the Two-Spirit Native American
Coalition of POCAAN

We welcome comments and submissions, especially via email or in Mac Word on a floppy disk. All submissions will become the property of Queer Oyate and will be edited for content, grammar and readability.

MISSION STATEMENT

Queer Oyate is a support group for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender Native Americans that provides community building, leadership skill building, and health education and awareness around HIV/AIDS through resources, referrals, social and spiritual activities.

Queer Oyate's mission is to establish a positive Native identity and a positive sexual identity by acknowledging Native spirituality as a focus for healing the physical, emotional and mental needs of our two-spirit community throughout Turtle Island.

QUEER OYATE COUNCIL

Facilitator/Project Director
Greg Redfox
A Talking Leaf Editor
Helen Night Raven
Financial Accountant
Neal Graves
Youth of Color Coordinator
Terry Wright

COMING

OUT

Queer Native Stories

When I was seven years old, I can remember walking down the street past the bus station in downtown Los Angeles with my mother. Standing next to the building outside the station was a womyn dressed in men's clothing. Her hair was cut short and combed neatly back in the style we then called a ducktail. She was smoking a cigarette and just watching people pass. She noticed that I was looking at her as my mother and I walked by and she smiled at me. I could not help but notice that she had the most beautiful green eyes. I could not take my eyes off of her. I asked my mother why the womyn was wearing men's clothes and she told me that the womyn was probably a homosexual or someone who did not want to be a womyn. To this day, over forty years later, I can still see her smile and I think of her whenever I pass the same street in Los Angeles.

Throughout my growing up, I knew that there was something different in the way that I felt towards womyn in my life. I experienced several crushes and kissing sessions with other womyn in my teen years. Still, I felt shame at these encounters. In an attempt to be *normal*, I got involved with a man and got married. Five children later and several men later, I began to understand that I was like the womyn we had seen on the street. Only by now I knew that it had nothing to do with not wanting to be a womyn, but rather, it was about wanting to love another female.

I had until this time been very involved in the Native American Movement and the ceremonies of my people, the Lakota. The things that I heard said about gay and lesbian people stopped me from telling anyone about my feelings. My fear was that I would be banned from all ceremonies and involvement. The shame I felt was constantly in my mind and I tried so hard to push my feelings away. I prayed hard for the resolution of these feelings. I asked to have the feelings taken away or to have someone come into my life who was also Native, who had children, and who was willing to follow the red road as I did.

My answer came in the form of the sister of a friend. After a year of being just friends, she revealed to me that she too had feelings for me. So we became lovers. I would love to say that we went on to live happily ever after, but there is another side of every answered prayer. She was very abusive, both physically and emotionally. I left her after nearly four years of pain and heartbreak.

When we came out to the Native community, some of the reactions led me on yet another path. I was told that as a two-spirit womyn, I was no longer welcome at the ceremonies I had participated in for over thirteen years. Since the Lakota Sundance had become the very center of my life, I was hurt and upset over the response from womyn I had seen as friends. On the advice of two elder womyn, I prayed about the ceremony for over a year.

I was given a dream which led me to begin the Womyn's Sundance in Arizona. After a few years I was forced to leave the ceremony there because of my need to take care of myself and put space between myself and the abusive situation in which I had allowed myself to continue. With the support of a few other Native two-spirit womyn, I continued to sponsor the ceremony elsewhere. At this time, we continue to honor the womyn who have passed before us and prepare the way for those who follow in a Sundance ceremony held each year in Northern California.

I continue to work in the two-spirit community and support the efforts to build a strong, healthy, and sober example for the future generations. At fifty years of age, I find myself proud and happy to be who I am and to be a part of the community of two-spirit people who are reclaiming their roles in their nations.

Beverly Little Thunder
Standing Rock Lakota/Dakota

Please share your story! In sharing our stories, our community is strengthened as we offer encouragement to all who listen. -HNR

For more information on the Womyn's Sundance in California (July 13-20, 1997),
Contact: Sundance, [redacted] Phoenix, AZ 85006



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Cut Down: A Story by a 13-Year-Old Reservation Boy

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This is a story about a person who people labeled and cut down, because people didn't understand. The story starts at the person's home where he invited a few friends to try out some new workout equipment.

So the group was Brad, Jim, Tim and the person who invited everybody, Brad, was older. He was in high school with Jim and Tim. Well, Brad went into the room of the main person of this story and he found out that the guy's brother was gay. Well, at school being gay is looked down upon, even though there are many gays where they live. It's just that they don't tell about it.

Back to the story. Brad just blew it off for awhile, but a week or two later, Brad remembered about the guy's brother being gay and told a couple of his friends. His friends, not knowing anything

about being gay think that if the older brother is gay, so must be the little brother, right? Wrong!!! It doesn't mean that at all!!! It means the brother likes boys. Period.

Back to the story again. So, some of the boys told some other guys and so on. The person got teased and called faggot, queer, and other things, but he just took it and let it go because he knew that he wasn't gay or any of the other things they said. Because... we... it's me, the person is me, and yes, my brother is gay. It's what I've come to respect of my brother, because he's helped me and taken me places.

I love my brother, because he's not afraid to be what he is. He has been to many places around the world. He's been a lot of places people will never get to go to. So, I'm writing this to tell

Sundance

by Carolyn Hartness (Eastern Band Cherokee/Viking), 1996

Seven sacred colors dancing in the leaves,
wanbli gleska, spinning messenger of the Tunkashilas,
monitoring the strength of the prayers.

Heartbeats echoing the drum
as feet say amen on the breast of the great mother
exalted in the dance of life.

Prayers clinging to the tree,
a rainbow of color and caring,
calling the spirits in many voices.



everybody.

"I don't care what you say about me being gay, or queer, it's simply not true. But it is true about my brother, and you can't say, 'oh, I feel sorry because of your brother.' I don't feel bad for him. I feel proud of him, and I love him. I am not ashamed to say he's my brother.

Building Bridges with Native Americans

Working with a gay Native facilitator, PRIDE! (of Montana: 406-) conducted focus groups on three reservations and one urban site to begin to hear the concerns of two-spirited peoples. PRIDE! will continue to invite Indian country to be part of the lesbian/gay civil rights movement.

If You Think You're Suffering Get Up On Your Knees

by Gretchen Matilla (*Mescalero/Ojibwa*), 1996

In the Inipi
A circle of warriors
Suffering to learn humility
Through the teachings of ancestors
Through the lessons of time

Praying for peace
Praying for life to continue
In the womb of Earth
Praying to heal Earth's pain.

Waiting....
Waiting for deeper wisdom
Singing to re-member
Older voices crying out to be heard

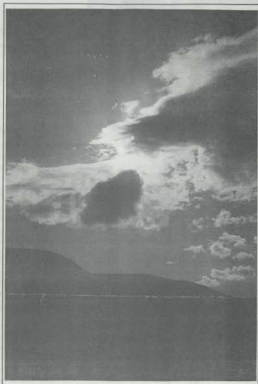
Praying for unity
Drumming in rhythm
To White Buffalo's footsteps
To Brown Mother Earth's heartbeat
Red blood pulsing strong in the veins

Purify us
Sacred Water
Blessed fire
Steam stone willow tobacco

Carry our prayers
Humbly we ask you
On to the Ancestors
And to the Creator

Let multiplicity lift our spirits
As butterfly wings
Floating on dreams
of a healthy and beautiful future
For generations
and generations to come

Aho!



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PEACEWALKER Medicine Society



Hau Kola'

Inipi (Sweat lodge) ceremonies continue to be held on the third Saturday of each month. However, at this time we are only running Women Only and Men Only sweats on alternate months. The next Women's Sweat is on February 15, the next Men's Sweat will be on May 17. In March and April, instead of the Sweats, we will

have teaching circles. Carolyn Hartness will bring out Fire Teachings on March 15 at Noon followed by a potluck feast. This is open to all who are interested in understanding the Fire and its role as part of the ceremony. On April 19, we will have a field trip to the Yakima River canyon to gather new rocks and willows. Sunday, April 20, the old lodge will be dismantled and the new one built. If you are interested in this experience, please call to get directions to the gathering site. We will meet at the river at Noon for a potluck lunch and work! The Lodge building will take place at 2PM; with a good group of people it should take about 1-2 hours to complete.

Mitakuye Oyasin.

Standing Water Eagle Woman

RESEARCH - continued from page 1

organizer and educator at POCAAN (People of Color Against AIDS Network). Kevin is deeply involved in AIDS awareness in Seattle.

"In the middle of this epidemic, the vaccine project is one of the best personal choices we have. Communities of color are usually not provided with choices, but are instead dictated to. This is not just rhetoric but a chance for those of color to actually *do* something about the problem."

Janine Johnson had volunteered for POCAAN and other service organizations. She feels she is doing still more by being a volunteer in the vaccine studies. "I'm just an ordinary person, and this is my way of contributing."

Janine heard about the vaccine studies and attended a class to find out more. "That was it," she says. "This is one more form of education, just like outreach or handing out condoms on the street corner. Education is all we have for now. AIDS isn't going away any time soon. This seems like a small thing to do, but it's actually part of a very big picture."

All of the vaccines currently being tested at the AVEU are subunit recombinant vaccines. Subunit refers to the fact that only a part of the virus is used in the vaccine. None of the vaccines contain any of the genetic material which the virus needs to reproduce itself. Recombinant means that the vaccines are genetically engineered (synthetic). This is in contrast to most childhood vaccines which use live or inactivated whole viruses. Because the vaccines are synthetically engineered, THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING HIV INFECTION FROM THE VACCINES.

Current AVEU studies involve people who are age 18-60, HIV-negative and in good health. If this sounds like you, you may be able to participate!

Studies last about 18 months, requiring 15-20 visits to the clinic. Most studies involve four to six vaccinations. Visits typically last 15-30 minutes. Over the course of the trial, a total of one to three points of blood is drawn, equivalent to donating blood up to three times.

All individuals receive an NIH identification card documenting their participation in the vaccine study. All study records are confidential. These are paid studies.

Do you want to help? HIV and AIDS are everyone's problem, and the solution will come from the entire community working together. For more information, please call 621-4179.

Navajo Nation AIDS Office Awarded Grant

reprinted with permission from Indian Country Today

WINDOW ROCK, AZ - The Navajo Nation has been awarded \$200,000 to develop culturally specific models of care for Navajo people with HIV and AIDS. On September 26, 1996, Secretary Donna Shalala of the US Department of Health and Human Services announced the award of \$37.1 million in federal funds to 19 AIDS programs under the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources emergency Act's Special Project of National Significance Program.

The Navajo Division of Health, the Health and Social Services Committee of the Navajo Nation and the Navajo Nation AIDS Office are honored to receive this grant. The award would not have been possible without the energy and advocacy of John Wilson Jr., a Navajo veteran living with AIDS. Navajo Nation President Albert Hale commended Mr. Wilson for his outspoken advocacy on behalf of the Navajo people.

"The Navajo people have a difficult time understanding AIDS," President Hale said. "There are traditional stories to help in the understanding of AIDS and HIV."

Mr. Wilson is a Navajo veteran living with AIDS. While serving in the US Army, he learned of his

HIV-positive status. Since 1982, Mr. Wilson and his family have been providing AIDS education, and advocacy for adequate health care for Native Americans living with HIV and AIDS nationally and internationally. Mr. Wilson served on a planning task force that compiled the grant proposal. He provided first-hand information regarding the complexity of living with AIDS and services and care he felt were critically needed on the Navajo Nation and in surrounding communities.

"The development of these culturally specific models can provide important information to Navajo people," President Hale said. "A problem in the treatment of people with HIV or AIDS is the general public's failure to understand the cause and nature of these diseases."

"The models being developed will provide further education to the Navajo people about HIV and AIDS," President Hale said. "They will gain a better understanding of AIDS and not be afraid of it."

The Navajo Nation AIDS Office can be contacted for more information at 520/871-6665.

Treatment Mixer

POCAAN is hosting an HIV/AIDS Treatment Mixer for HIV positive men and women of color and their caregivers. This Mixer will provide a safe environment to discuss and share treatment concerns. Dr. Sheryl Harris of Group Health will be on hand to answer treatment questions. Refreshments will be served.

Wednesday, February 12, 7-9PM
POCAAN Conference Room

Information: [redacted]
Co-sponsored by the ACTU

Neal Graves Leaves POCAAN

by Greg Redfox, photos ©1997 by Greg Redfox

Neal Graves, Quinten Welch, and Tim Ewing said their good-byes to POCAAN to venture into new employment. Neal Graves had worked at POCAAN as the primary accountant. As an active member, Neal's outstanding commitment to Queer Oyate has been as the Treasure/Accountant keeping our finances in good working order, advising us on what could be done to help Queer Oyate prosper, and never complaining about check requests. He has always handled his job professionally! Neal has worked hard for QO with long hours and evenings while we attended meetings and events. When I win the lottery I'll hire Neal on as my personal accountant. Pilamaya, Neal, and congratulations!

Right: Good-bye! Neal Graves (left), POCAAN's and Queer Oyate's Accountant, with Quinten Welch (right), Community Based Liaison, cut the cake. Are they holding hands?!!...



Left: David Lee, ACTU Treatment Specialist smiles at the prospect of working for POCAAN! Welcome!



Left: Lupe Lopez (left), Executive Director of POCAAN relaxes at the going away party. Tim Ewing also ventured on to new employment. Congratulations!

SNAG BAG- continued from page 1

the taste of latex over flavoring anytime (do I have a rubber fetish?). The LDX Barriers come with directions for use in oral/vaginal sex and oral/anal sex and information for use with any latex barrier or condom:

- Use one time only.
- Store in a cool, dry, place out of sunlight.
- If barriers feel sticky or brittle, don't use them.
- Always use water-based lube with latex.
- Oil-based lubes damage latex.

Line One Laboratories latex condoms are marketed under the Trustex label. The flavored ones are packaged in white (cola), brown (chocolate), yellow (banana), and purple (grape). The foil packets have an expiration date of 03-2001, the year 2001 - safer sex into the next millennium!

Flavored lubes on the market today would enhance the flavors, if you like food flavors and want to avoid that medical latex taste. Line One's flavored condoms and barriers will definitely enhance oral sex. Remember: *No sex is better than safer sex and safer sex is better than unprotected sex!*

Condoms and dams, when properly used will help reduce the risk of transmission of HIV/AIDS and STDs. Queer Oyate will provide these deluxe flavored barriers in our SNAG BAG Safer Sex Kits until our supply runs out.



10th Annual International 2-Spirit Gathering

The Gathering will be held August 7-9 in Minneapolis, MN. For more information, contact: Richard LaFortune

Minneapolis, MN 55407
612/ [redacted]

Wowapi - Letters

Dear Two-spirited Brothers and Sisters, Greeting! Blessings! I hope that this letter finds you doing well, in good health and traveling the Red Road in a good way.

I am sending this short letter as a proposal for an event in June, 1997. It has come to my attention that some of our two-spirited people are in need of some spiritual direction or would like to learn more of the spiritual ways; rituals to help or teach others or to use in their own lives. I realize that this isn't for everyone, but there are those of us that don't always know where to turn and we must become those teachers and guides for our people.

My proposal is this: A spiritual gathering for two-spirited people in the mountains of Colorado, June 19-29. This would happen around the Summer Solstice. There is a sacred area near Ward, CO that we have access to where we could camp and hold spiritual ceremonies for those in need. This would also be an opportunity for those wishing to *hamblesha* (cry for a vision) to have a place to do so. There are a few of us that will be there anyway. It would be good to have some of the elders and spiritual leaders from our community present to assist with these ceremonies.

I am willing to raise monies to cover food, an outhouse (honeybucket?), and maybe some transportation costs for people traveling from out of town. Visitors would need to bring sleeping bags and maybe a tent.

December 21st marked the first day of Winter and the period when some began their purification to "go on the hill." If there is enough interest in coming to Colorado for a Spirit Camp in June, I will begin the work for everything that will be needed and visitors can begin saving money or planning their trip. I will need to know if there is a strong enough interest in this. Please call, write, fax, or email me at the above numbers if you are interested. Please pass this information on to anyone else that might be interested. If there is not enough interest, I will keep this year's gathering small.

I will keep you informed with all of the pertinent details if we decide to go ahead with this.

I pray that the Creator's blessings be upon you, your loved ones and all of the works that you do.

Be Well, David Young P: 303/ [redacted]
PO Box 7523, Boulder, CO 80306-7523
E: [redacted] F: 303/ [redacted]

NOTE: The Two-Spirit Spiritual Gathering has been confirmed for June 16-27 at the Gold Lake Wilderness Area in Gold Lake, CO. On June 21st there will be a Solstice Celebration. Other activities included at the spiritual encampment include ceremonies, sweat, and hamblesha rites. Attendees are asked to bring camping gear and warm clothing for the evenings. Please send David your \$10 registration fee.

I was thrilled to receive your publication, *A Talking Leaf*. Please do keep sending it.

In the past, I have had strong ties with the local AIM chapter, (now defunct!) I was its administrative liaison, and with NAIM, having met and worked with both Vernon and Clyde Bellecourt.

Since my sister, Cahuilla Red Elk, moved away from Colorado Springs, the AIM chapter has ceased to operate and news for and outreach to that community has been poor.

From time to time, as appropriate, could we reprint articles from your paper in *Ground Zero News*? *Ground Zero News* is a non-profit newspaper for the gay and lesbian population of Southern Colorado and is produced by Ground Zero Colorado Springs, the GLBT organization in the Vatican of Fundamentalism, Colorado Springs (we call it the Belly of the Beast.) We have 6,000 readers.

I have added you to our mailing list.

Love and support to our brothers and sisters in Queer Oyate.

Frank Whitworth
Executive Director, Ground Zero
Editor, Ground Zero News
Colorado Springs, CO via email

Dear Highest Appreciated People of Color Against AIDS,

Thank you so very, very much for the much needed money. I am so grateful and also surprised. May Great Spirit keep us going strong from many more falling of the leaves seasons, and the sacred moon eclipse times and again, thank you, again, and again.

Very sincerely,
Smilie Hillaire
Ocean Shores, WA

TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality and Spirituality

Editors: Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Ph.D.

Wesley Thomas, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Sabine Lang, Ph.D.

University of Illinois Press

ISBN 0-252-02344-7

0-252-06643-6

800 [redacted]

cloth \$41.95

paper \$21.95

"Two-Spirit People makes spectacular contributions to current understandings of 'third gender' constructions in American Indian societies and in other settings, and it adds valuable data to current theorizing about the links between gender, culture, and sexuality and the interrelations among gender, sexuality, and history. This volume effectively upstages earlier notions of berdache [sic] and converts this lifeless, stereotyped image into a vast array of living, breathing, thinking, and talking people who are in no sense dependent for voice on non-Indian scientists. And it displays in positive ways how non-Indians can join with two-spirit people in substantive, informative discussion and dialogue about the two-spirit experience in American Indian societies."

-- William L. Leap, Ph.D., American University, Washington, D.C.; co-editor of *Out in the Field: Reflections of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists*

CONTRIBUTORS:

Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Ph.D., U of Washington
Jean-Guy Goulet, Ph.D., U of Calgary
Arnold R. Pilling, Ph.D., Wayne State U
Sabine Lang, Ph.D., U of Hamburg
Jason Cromwell, Ph.D., U of Washington
Beatrice Medicine, Ph.D., Lakota Nation
Wesley Thomas, Ph.D. Candidate, U of Washington & Navajo Nation
Carolyn Epple, Ph.D., Northwestern U
Terry Tafoya, Ph.D., Taos/Warm Spring Nations
Beverly Little Thunder, Lakota Nation
Michael Red Earth, Dakota Nation
Richard LaFortune, Yupik Nation
Carrie House, Navajo Nation
Doyle Robertson, Dakota Nation
Claire R. Farrer, Ph.D., California State U
Lee Kochems, Ph.D., U of Chicago
Alice B. Kehoe, Ph.D., Marquette U
Clyde Hall, J.D., Shoshone/Bannock Nation
Gilbert Herdt, Ph.D., U of Chicago
Evelyn Blackwood, Ph.D., Purdue U

Akigle Tiwabe

"family times"

*Planning meetings for the creation of a Family Center for Sexual Minorities in Seattle have been happening for several months. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to jump in at any point in the planning process; your talents and energy are invaluable. Contact the Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities, 206/323.0220.

**Strengthening Multi-Ethnic Families and Communities* - a parenting curriculum for parents, partners, social service providers, teachers or other professionals working with young people is being offered through Stonewall Recovery Services' Kaleidoscope of Families. This is a 13-week training to start January 23rd, every Thursday from 6-9PM at [redacted] Seattle. Contact Julie Homgren or Peter Myers, 206/[redacted]

*Red Eagle Soaring, a Seattle Native theater group is seeking Indians of all ages to be involved. Their current production, *Story Circles*, is an original abuse prevention, HIV/AIDS education play. Contact Lynea Forgey, 206/[redacted] or Ken Jackson, 206/[redacted]



Seattle, WA 98144

Address Corrections Requested

Deadline for March issue: February 20th