



AIANEA National Council Teleconference Minutes

Monday, May 16, 2016

11:00 pm Pacific, 12:00 pm Mountain, 1:00 pm Central, 2:00 pm Eastern

Respect, Harmony and Beauty

Council Members & Guests Attending:

President

Athena Cholas, New Mexico

2nd Vice President

Kirt Peterson, Colorado

Secretary

Melissa Sturdivant, Texas

Treasurer

Pam Crow, Texas

Bill Parrish, Pennsylvania

Midwest Regional Representative

Debe Walchuk, Minnesota

Northern Plains Regional Representative

Cameron Clark, Wyoming

West Regional Representative

Susan Looper, New Mexico

Past Presidents Attending:

Steve Durgin, Washington, DC

Millie Titla, Arizona

Guests Attending:

None

Meeting Minutes:

- a. The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm (Central) by Athena Cholas.
- b. Athena took roll call of those attending the meeting.
- c. Athena asked for additional items to the agenda, and reviewed what would be addressed this meeting, which includes:

Agenda items – Athena discussed the agenda in general, and explained that she wants to table some of the administrative items until later in the conference call, if time allows, or possibly handle these by email, in order to move more pressing items to the forefront which need action or work by the Council.

Working with other employee organizations
Improving the value of membership in AIANEA
Mentoring Program
Honoring Local Elders
Diversity Day
AIANEA Retired members
Training

- d. Working with other employee organizations. Athena indicated that she attended a conference call hosted by Melissa Drummond, NRCS National HR Director, and Drenda Williams, Acting Branch Chief for Diversity and Recruitment Branch. Each of the NRCS' employee organizations was represented and in attendance for the conference call. Athena indicated that Ms. Drummond wants the employee organizations to develop goals, and she wants to determine how NRCS can strengthen the employee organizations. Ms. Drummond indicated that there are 7 departments/branches within HR and she wants each of the branch chiefs to be paired with an employee organization so that there is direct support for the organization at the national level. Athena feels that this is an excellent opportunity for AIANEA. The AIANEA should step up and to lead some of these efforts, especially with a mentoring program.

Athena mentioned that with the next scheduled meeting, there are several items on the agenda that impact us as well. One of the items is the approval process for trainings and meetings.

Athena mentioned the need to address inter-agency options for hiring. If anyone has any suggestions to share with the NRCS HQ, please let Athena know. They plan to meet each month.

- e. Athena added that this discussion is related to our membership and the quality of our Association, and how can we improve the benefits of being a member in the AIANEA. Cameron added that AIANEA is a unique organization and offers great opportunities. Networking is one of the main advantages for being involved in a professional employee association, and he would like to be involved in this work to help advance AIANEA and the value of membership to our members.
- f. Mentoring. Athena indicated that AIANEA is relatively small when compared with other professional employee organizations, and shared that the Veteran's organization has more than 700 members. Athena reported that she shared with the leadership that AIANEA's members are unique. Kirt stated that the Mentoring lead in Colorado may be a resource that we can tap into. He said that she might be able to attend a conference call in the future to help with planning and project work with developing a mentoring program.

Susan mentioned that she just completed her involvement in a mentoring program, and she really developed a great connection and relationship with an employee. Susan mentioned that she learned a lot from this opportunity, and we should be able to use this model as a means to tie into this program. Athena mentioned that AIANEA needs a "champion" to lead this effort. Susan offered to spearhead this effort if no one else would like to do so. Discussions followed. Athena asked Susan to go ahead and start developing this. Cameron mentioned that in Wyoming, the mentoring program has struggled. Discussions followed. Susan and Cameron will work on this project. Athena asked that they work to identify a process, and to identify some goals for the year such as that the mentor and mentee will meet at least annually. Hopefully, this would help with garnering support from leadership. It might also facilitate the participants being allowed to attend national training as this would be a great time for them to have a face-to-face meeting.

- g. Honoring local Elders. Athena would like to involve local Elders to provide support to our employees, and these do not need to be AIAN or involved with AIANEA, we could involve Elders in our local communities. Athena stated that she will talk with Tanya and see about getting the Elders to attend a National Council meeting. Athena asked if anyone had been involved with working with Elders at the local level. Debe suggested that we need to define some guidelines for working with local Elders.
- h. Diversity Day. Athena wants AIANEA to develop a collection of resource materials and ideas that we can provide to employees across the country for their use. Athena asked if anyone is working with their state's Civil Rights Advisory Committee on outreach and enrichment. Athena suggested that Charlotte Pyle might be a great resource to head up this effort, and Athena said that she would get in touch with her.

Debe offered to work with Minnesota's AIAN SEPM. She added that he is new to the position and also serves as a Tribal Liaison. Athena suggested involving retired members in developing educational materials. Athena shared that she gave a presentation to her state's CRAC (in California when she worked there), and is willing to share the power point presentation.

Susan added that she is on the agenda for her state's CRAC meeting and will give a presentation about AIANEA. Cameron is willing to work on this project, too.

- i. AIANEA Retired members. Involving our AIANEA retirees. How do we keep our tenured members involved?
- j. Training. Athena asked for help with working on this. She indicated that Steve has been working with NEDC to get the training approved. Steve stated that he has a meeting planned with the NEDC POC this afternoon. Steve commented that he had originally worked with Jeff Dziedzic. "Training" is open to all employees, and that is the plan to continue to develop this training. Driving this is, "How do we make the training current and something that is needed each year? Steve stressed that we need to make sure that it is communicated that the training is on-going and changes as Farm Bill and programs change and how we deliver these to Indian Country. Steve stated that we will conduct AIANEA business and meetings after-hours and separately. Steve wants to model the national training much like the WEWAI training module is developed.

Athena commented that some of the employee organizations partner together to conduct national trainings. Athena suggested that we do something in this manner and possibly involve the Cultural Resource Specialists as part of our agenda.

Topic areas might include consultation. Athena stated that we need someone to move this forward. We need to be selecting a site for the training. Steve asked if she had contacted Herb, and Athena reported that Herb was not available at present. Herb suggested to Athena that we need to commit on the site very soon so we can get that

firmed up as soon as possible. Steve suggested that she contact Millie to see if Arizona is interested. Steve offered to help and to especially work on the long-term planning of the NEDC module, but would help someone start planning; he could not lead that effort at present.

Millie suggested that Athena contact Richard Begay who is the Tribal Liaison for AZ. Millie offered to help, but could not lead that committee at present. Discussions followed. Dates for training were discussed. Millie discussed the logistics of the timing and location to consider in the state. Steve talked about working outside those preferred windows of time to avoid the touristy time of the year, in order to get the best rates for lodging and venues. Discussions followed regarding partnering with the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) and this would be a great opportunity for AIANEA to help develop an environmental or natural resources track as part of SAIGE's national training conference. Millie discussed our work with SAIGE in past years. Athena offered to contact SAIGE and open a dialogue with them.

Debe mentioned that we also have the Intertribal Ag Council (IAC) as an option to consider as well.

Athena commented that National distributed a bulletin announcing the availability of technical trainings for employees. Athena offered some options to consider to include IAC and INCA and others as well. But, Athena suggested that if we prepared a proposal, we can submit this request for training opportunities to National and request that our members be able to attend national-level trainings to allow for networking to Tribal communities. Part of the agreement is that those attended training bring that information back and share it.

- k. Nomination of Honorary Elders. Athena stated that a nomination was received to recognize Ann Perales as an Honorary Elder. Athena commented that she needs to consult with Tanya, and that she was unable to determine how our Elders are chosen and honored as such. She commented that no guidelines are in the Bylaws. Discussions followed.
- l. How do we reach out to our retired AIANEA members? Debe suggested that we open teleconferences to all members for them to attend and not limit it to just the National Council. Athena suggested that each person should invite a member from their respective region to call in and participate. Steve added that we also need to assess whether retirees are still members or not. Some may not have been lifetime members and had a regular membership when they retired. When the person retired, he/she may have not renewed the membership. We may not have contact information for them any longer.

Once an employee retires, Steve suggested that we might offer retirees a lifetime membership at a reduced rate so that we might keep them involved and membership will be more affordable as a retiree. Bill discussed the expenses involved especially with traveling, and that this might be an issue for some folks.

Debe asked when the membership list is updated and when this is distributed. Comments followed. Susan commented on the status of her membership and stated that it is not clear if the fees are paid or not, stressing that she had paid her dues, but wanted to know how to get this information updated so that it is clearer that she had paid her dues. Athena suggested that if you want a current membership list, please contact Yvette.

- m. Minutes reviewed:
Annual Business Meeting (Dec 2015); Feb 2016, March and April 2016,— motion, Debe Walchuk; 2nd – Cameron Clark; All voted in approval and with no votes opposed, the minutes were approved and are recorded.
- n. Pam reported that we have received an additional \$9,000 for the Harold Bryant Scholarship fund.
- o. Affirmation from National Council for Melissa to serve as Chair for the Scholarship Committee. All voted in favor and affirmed her position on this committee.
- p. Awards. Millie suggested that we extend the time period for award nominations to June 10. This was approved.
- q. Athena mentioned that the Newsletter is planned to go out by the end of May.
- r. Athena reported that Patra, our South Central Rep. will not continue in this position, and has asked to step aside. Athena will reach out to Melissa and Carol and see if they know of someone can step in as this representative.
- s. Athena stated that regional reps can go ahead and identify a potential member for the complimentary membership.
- t. Closing thoughts & comments.
 - 1) Athena extended her appreciation to everyone for attending the meeting.
 - 2) Adjourn – Being no further business, Athena adjourned the National Council meeting at 2:18 pm, Central.