

STEPS

to better health

A Newsletter from the *Pick Your Path to Health* Campaign

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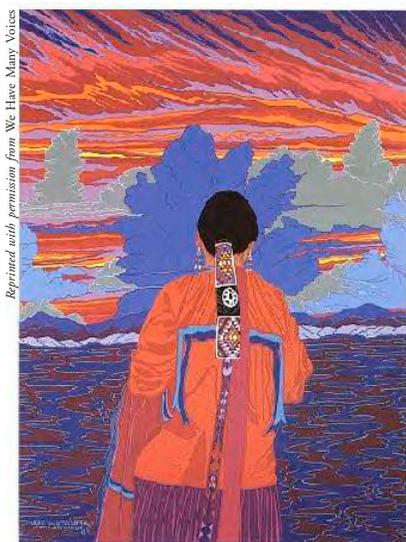
We Have Many Voices, a bi-monthly Native American online magazine, has agreed to publish *Pick Your Path to Health* articles. *We Have Many Voices* is a well-respected source of information in the Native American community. The online magazine is widely distributed via the Internet and reaches tribal offices in the U.S. The articles are also picked up by newspaper and newsletter operations throughout the country. To subscribe to it, visit the Web site at www.turtletrack.org/ManyVoices/. The first article printed by *We Have Many Voices* has been reprinted below for our readers.

Pathways to Better Health

What is the One Sure Sign of Spring for You?

by Cathy McCarthy
Anishinaabe-Metis (non-status)

I asked my friend this question on the phone the other day. She lives on a Rez up north, where the snow and ice don't melt until well into May. "The smell of burning grass," she said and then proceeded to tell me about the Burning Grass ceremony that our people, the Odawa, celebrate every year. She told me that throughout the community, families gather to bless the earth and burn off last year's dead grass so that the new grass will find the sun.



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upbringing was in the city where burning grass was not allowed. My sure sign of spring was when the city workers would dynamite the ice on the river to start it moving up into the St. Lawrence. This was high entertainment in my family and we celebrated with a tailgate picnic on the shore.

When I told my friend this, she laughed and said, "Same thing eh."

Many of us, especially at this time of year, would like to see spring take hold in our hearts and in the hearts of those who are important to us.

Although my friend and I share a common culture, a lot of my

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New Web Site Coming Soon!

This Fall, the Office on Women's Health will unveil its new *Pick Your Path to Health* Web site at www.4woman.gov/pypth. The site features a user-friendly navigation bar with retitled buttons that reflect more accurately the campaign's components. When you select any of the buttons you'll find a rich array of content that is organized in a practical manner. New features of the site include:

- *Pick of the Month*, a monthly focus that may include surveys, quizzes, recipes, national health observations, and other fun health tidbits.
- *Pick of the Day*, which randomly selects from the site's resources to highlight an element of the site.
- *Interactive health calendars* that allow the user to design their own calendar, or use the template provided, based on the health tips for that month. The calendars will have the same look and feel as the *Pick Your Path to Health* pocket planners and can be easily printed.

The new site will also include Campaign Resources, Campaign Partners, and Community Programs. So remember, come this fall, log on to www.4woman.gov/pypth and check out our new site. *Pick Your Path to Health*—it now is easier than you think!

National Women's Health Week an Overwhelming Success

Communities, organizations, and individuals throughout the country showed overwhelming support by joining with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to make the 2002 National Women's Week the most successful ever!

The outstanding level of participation proves that whoever and wherever you are, there are many ways to become involved. The week also coincided with Mother's Day. Here are just a few examples of the events:

- More than 100 governors, mayors, and tribal leaders proclaimed May 12-18 as National Women's Health Week in their geographic area. To see a list of all proclamations, go to www.4woman.gov/whw
- *Prevention Magazine* ran a 26-page special report on women's health in its May issue, and *Ladies Home Journal* ran an article on Women's Health Week events
- Businesses, national and community organizations, churches, health organizations, academic institutions, and more came together to sponsor activities
- FDA kicked off their *Take Time To Care about Diabetes Campaign*—an issue that is important to women and their families
- Health walks and runs and fitness workshops taught women the fun and importance of adding physical activity to their lives
- Workshops on yoga and mediation encouraged women to take care of their mental health
- Health fairs, information booths,

workshops and lectures by experts on different topics related to women's health provided women with valuable information for women to make informed choices about their health

- Join us by spreading the word about women's health and let's make next year's National Women's Health Week stronger than ever!

Radio Programs Help the Nation Celebrate Women's Health

This year, National Women's Health Week took to the airways to reach as many women as possible and was promoted on numerous media outlets, including several radio programs.

Native America Calling, a daily call-in show, aired *Checking Up on Native Women's Health*. The program airs on AIROS, a national network of 53 affiliate radio stations that broadcasts to the diverse Native American communities. The show included two experts—

Dee Ann DeRoin, M.D., and Cynthia Lindquist-Mala of the University of North Dakota School of Medicine—and received many telephone calls from listeners. People from all over the country were able to listen on their local station or via the Internet. *Native America Calling* enjoys a large listening audience and is held in high regard in terms of its content. The executive producer's decision to devote the entire show to National Women's Health Week was quite a coup for women's health. To

learn more about this radio program, please visit www.nativeamericacalling.org.

Consultorio Comunitario (The Community Clinic of the Air) in the Washington, DC metropolitan area also promoted National Women's Health Week on 1540 WACA AM Radio América.



Consultorio Comunitario is a daily, live call-in Spanish-language radio talk show hosted by Dr. Elmer Huerta, a nationally known and well-respected cancer prevention specialist. National Women's Health Week was promoted on three different days on *Consultorio Comunitario* and as a result, the National Women's Health Information Center experienced an increase in call volume to the 1-800-994-WOMAN telephone number. Listeners had the option of listening to the program on the radio or via the Internet at www.prevenccion.org.

Salud Para la Vida (Health for Life) also dedicated the entire show to National Women's Health Week.

The show aired on KNOG 91.1 FM in Nogales, Arizona. Maria Gomez-Murphy, president & CEO of The Way of the Heart: The Promotora Institute and a member of the Office on Women's Health Minority Women's Health Panel of Experts hosts *Salud Para la Vida*.



Community Clinic Promotes Preventive Health Screenings

Pap Smears and Mammograms Top the List

The Maria de los Santos Community Health Clinic, located in Philadelphia, is busy year-round serving its many patients, 85% of whom are Latinos. As a community clinic, Maria de los Santos faces the many challenges that come with trying to provide better health opportunities to community residents.

National Women's Health Week provided an excellent opportunity for the clinic to do something special, and so the planning began for Women's Health Day. Anahis Gonzalez, a Cuban-born doctor and the clinic's health educator, headed up the initiative. Women's Health

Day was a day-long event created to reach out to women over 40 years of age who had not undergone mammograms or received a Pap smear within the last 12 months, reports Gonzalez.

The clinic's staff set everything in motion by analyzing 375 patient charts. The 220 women who met the criteria were sent letters inviting them to the Women's Health Day, and 87 of those also received telephone calls for reinforcement. The clinic's staff's hard work paid off and a total of 60 women attended the event. During Women's Health Day, each woman received information regarding Pap

smears, self breast exams, and mammograms, as well as participated in interactive health education sessions and watched videos promoting overall wellness.

"Women's Health Day at Maria de los Santos was an unqualified success," reports Gonzalez. She credits her staff's effective planning. Prior to the event, other community partners were also invited to participate. Meetings were held with representatives from the American Cancer Society, La Fortaleza Wellness Center, Kensington Hospital, the Family Planning Council, the Region III Office on Women's Health, and WHYY (the local public television station), to coordinate the day's events and to determine what resources would be available to women, in particular those without health insurance.

Gonzalez reports that using the National Women's Health Week framework largely contributed to the success of Women's Health Day. Gathering ideas and organizing all of the details carefully within this framework was extremely beneficial. Securing donations for the event proved to be difficult, reports Gonzalez. However, this obstacle has not put a damper on the clinic's eagerness to provide a wide range of health services for women. Planning for a follow-up event, Healthy Pregnancy Day, is well underway and will be held in early August 2002, says Gonzalez.

Secretary Tommy Thompson Pitches One for Women's Health

To celebrate National Women's Health Week, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) partnered with the Chicago Cubs during a home game against the Milwaukee Brewers to help draw attention to women's health and a new Food and Drug Administration campaign *Take Time to Care... About Diabetes*.

Secretary Tommy Thompson kicked-off the afternoon by throwing out the first pitch of the game as the announcer promoted National Women's Health Week. Following his debut on Wrigley Field, the Secretary visited the WGN radio booth where he met with former National League All-star Ron Santo and WGN game announcer Pat Hughes for an on-air conversation about women's health.

HHS representatives from the Chicago office distributed women's health information to fans in an effort to encourage women, who spend much of their daily lives caring for others, to recognize the importance of caring for themselves.

What is the One Sure Sign of Spring for You? *(continued)*

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But sometimes it just seems like it is impossible to shake loose from winter's icy grip.

As Indian women, we know that everything is related with everything else. So a heavy heart, sadness, and depression are signs of the bigger disturbances surrounding us. Many of these disturbances are beyond our abilities to fix. Many more lie in the poverty of body and spirit that follow us everyday. And while we may not be able to change these things quickly, we do control our response to them.

In the spirit of being in control of the response, here are some possible ways to start burning the grass and dynamiting the ice to get things moving toward spring.

From the outset it is important to acknowledge that our strength lies in the power of family and community. At the center of this power is women's wisdom and deeds. We are the ones who make things happen. We are the ones who can improve our situations.

The old way of dealing with an issue was to gather all who were affected by it in a talking or healing circle. Everyone had a chance to speak and all opinions and points of view were weighed in offering a solution to the problem. When an answer was finally decided upon, it was something everyone could agree with.

Today the talking circle and the healing circle concepts are again being used in both city and reservation settings to help solve a variety of problems. You could even argue that it is another one of those Indian traditions that has been co-opted into mainstream health care, where it's called "Group Therapy."

So one way to start the grass burning might be to organize a healing circle of friends and family for a loved one; or maybe join one that is already going strong at the local community center or tribal health facility. It is always hard at first to entrust strong feelings and emotions to other people, but this might be all that is needed to start the fire.

If you have access to the Internet either at home or through a local library, school, or community center, you might want to check out the White Bison Inc. Web site at: <http://www.whitebison.org>.

White Bison is an American Indian owned non-profit organization dedicated to bringing the message of sobriety and physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness to Native communities. They provide information on organizing healing circles and wellbriety programs in your community. This year they are focusing on healing Native women and children through the "Sacred Hoop Journey III." White Bison has also created its own healing circle in the form of discussion groups and an online chat room. If you don't have access to the Internet, you or your

organization can contact them for written materials at:

White Bison, Inc.
6145 Lehman Dr. Suite 200
Colorado Springs, CO, 80918
Phone: 719-548-1000
Fax: 719-548 9407

If something a little more proactive, like dynamite, is needed to get things rolling again, you may want to think about seeking professional help.

In the past, the only kind of professional help people could afford was the emergency room, and that only as a last resort. If you did manage to see a mental health care worker, chances were that he or she didn't have a clue about treating Indian people.

Nowadays, the situation has greatly improved. It is becoming more common for Indian community centers in the city and for tribal organizations and health care facilities on the Rez to have a Native counselor on staff. These people are there either to provide culturally sensitive counseling themselves, or guide patients to the right services. Often, the Native counselor is already working with local social workers and psychologists to set up support systems that speak to the culture and experience of the Native community. So chances are, anyone starting their search for services at these places will be pointed in the right direction.

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What is the One Sure Sign of Spring for You? (continued from page 5)

Whether you or someone close to you needs to burn off a little grass or dynamite some thick ice, there is somewhere safe out there for doing it. All it takes is a phone call to the right person or a visit to the right place.

Here are some Internet links and contact information for Native American Mental Health Services:

United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) http://www.unityinc.org Mailing address: P.O. Box 800 Oklahoma City, OK 73101 Physical address: 500 N. Broadway, Suite 250 Oklahoma City, OK 73102 Tel. 405-236-2800 Fax 405-971-1071	37688 Tulaby Lake Drive Waubun, MN. 56589 Tel. 218-743-2298 American Indian Health Council http://members.tripod.com/~AIHC1998/index.html Voice Mail: 818-464-6852 ext.1127 Fax: 561-619-6353
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Healing of the Nations
<http://www.healingofthenations.com/>

Upcoming *Pick Your Path to Health* Themes and Action Steps

September – Prevention: It’s better than a cure.

- Eat a well-balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, it can help prevent osteoporosis.
- Ask your local pharmacist where to get a flu shot.
- If you are over 40, ask your doctor about mammograms.
- Schedule your pap test and pelvic exam.

October – Violence Prevention: Empower yourself.

- Make a list of safe places you can go to protect yourself from abuse.
- Empower yourself! Sign up for a self-defense class.
- Keeping abuse a secret does not help anyone. Call 1-800-799-SAFE.
- Help a friend in danger.

November – Tobacco Use: Smoking—costly to your LIFE and your wallet.

- Find a support program in your community to help you stop smoking. Call 1-800-994-WOMAN.
- If you haven’t started smoking, don’t start.
- Create a no-smoking rule in your house.
- Ask your health provider about methods to help you quit smoking.



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