

Region 10 Seventh Annual Tribal TANF Directors Workshop
August 18 – 19, 2005
Coeur d’Alene Tribal Resort Hotel
Worley, Idaho

Thursday, August 18, 2005

The Coeur d’Alene Tribal VFW Post opened the meeting with the posting of the colors. Jim Sijohn, Tribal Elder, conducted the opening prayer. Leta Campbell, Tribal Council Secretary Treasurer, offered a welcome from the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and noted that the Tribe has been rich in resources and that the gathering of all the tribes for the conference brought a richness of resources in knowledge and experience from all present. She acknowledged the vision of the elders in shaping their approach to the TANF Program operation and noted that the bottom line is self-sufficiency. Judy Flett, Director of the Spokane Tribal TANF Program, welcomed the participants and talked about the timeliness of the conference given the questions of how reauthorization might impact programs. Steve Henigson, ACF Region 10 Regional Administrator, offered a welcome to the tribes and noted the remarkable growth of the Tribal TANF conference over the years, especially the milestone of holding the meeting at a Tribal site. He thanked the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and the Spokane Tribal TANF Program for hosting the event. He also thanked Jannette Taylor and Charlene Sijohn for all their work in planning the conference and organizing resource tables, activities, and accommodations for conference participants.

Judy Flett gave a brief overview of the Spokane Tribal TANF Program. The program covers six counties and serves all Native Americans in that area. This includes individuals from 57 different tribes, most of which are associated with the Spokane, Colville, and Blackfeet Tribes. The program currently has 90 employees at two sites, 93 percent of whom are Native American. Their work participation rate is 65 percent. They have a special emphasis on youth-related activities.

A former TANF recipient, Dorinda Buck, spoke about what the Spokane Tribal TANF Program has meant in her life. After a series of personal challenges left her without resources, Dorinda, an Apache Tribal member, went to the Spokane Tribal TANF Program office for help. Her grandmother had taught her a quilting technique that was known as “Apache Stars,” and Dorinda wanted to carry this gift of her grandmother forward, thinking it might be the way for her to do work that could both support her and also hold special meaning for her. Dorinda figured out how much it would cost to get materials for several quilts, and the TANF office was able to provide these “start-up” funds to her. She immediately sold her first quilts (one to a staff person at the Tribal TANF office!), and the response people gave to the beautifully pieced and vibrantly colored star quilts convinced her that she was on the right track to a successful business. Dorinda brought seven of her unique quilts to the conference; thus, participants were able to experience for themselves the beauty of her product. She spoke of being so busy with her quilt business that she was looking into expanding and bringing others in to help her. The tiny initial grant from the

Spokane Tribal TANF Program office, together with Dorinda's hard work, talent, and lessons from her grandmother, has grown into a business that might soon provide jobs for others.

A conference participant from northern Alaska purchased a striking "Apache Star" quilt with very warm and strong colors. She explained that she was going to hang it on her wall during the very long and dark winters in her town, as it was like bringing the sun back home with her.

Debbie Moller, the facilitator, asked conference participants to introduce themselves and share what they most hoped to gain from the meeting. Participants were generally interested in learning "best practices" from other tribes, as well as how other tribes were responding to challenges in the areas of child support, negotiations with States, youth services, barrier removal, and reporting. Participants also mentioned interest in reauthorization issues, start-up advice for new Tribal TANF programs, and differences between 102-477 and non-102-477 plans. Several participants commented that they were pleased that Ray Apodaca and other resource people were available for questions. Debbie commented that most of what participants had covered had been anticipated by the agenda, and that the resource people attending the meeting could probably address other areas.

Debbie then talked with conference participants about how the agenda for the meeting had been planned and that turnout was greater than had been expected. Debbie asked the group to be aware of how the size of the group marked both a great success for the Tribal TANF meeting and a potential challenge to the format that the group had used in the past. Although a conversational approach to sharing among the tribes and talking with resource people at the meeting had been used for years, getting everyone at one table was simply not possible with such a large group. She emphasized that she would look to the group to let her know what was working or not working with the seating arrangements and meeting format, and that she was willing to reorganize seating, the agenda, or anything else in order to make sure that meeting participants got full value from their time at the conference.

Charlene Sijohn, Spokane Tribal TANF Program, welcomed the tribes and talked about her role in planning the conference and her desire to make sure that the meeting worked for the people in the room. Jannette Taylor, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, reviewed some of the resources and activities at the conference, and told the group that there would be a fashion show during lunch, showcasing how Goodwill Retail Stores helps families dress well for work, school, and play on a limited budget. Jannette mentioned that this was a way to demonstrate just one of the many service partnerships operating between the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and other agencies in the community.

A Tribal discussion on current challenges and best practices opened the meeting. Ricard Tupling, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, mentioned a focus on homelessness and their program's progress in addressing the issue. Participants from the Spokane Tribal TANF Program talked about youth employment and training initiatives, and how the youth work four days per week providing repair and renovation services to homes on the reservation, and then attend training one day per week. Steve Watts, Quinault Indian Nation, also spoke of a focus on youth programs and on a successful job-shadowing program that the Tribe had initiated. Deborah McCarter, Tanana Chiefs Conference, talked about their use of youth opportunity coordinators who hosted meetings for families. She also mentioned how they have set up a system where

youth can earn and spend “money,” which was created to help them learn banking and finance principles. Others spoke of after-school tutoring and summer reading programs, with incentives to complete various tasks. Many tribes offer new school supplies and backpacks for some form of “back to school” assistance. Sharon Olsen, Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, mentioned that high school students had previously had trouble passing standardized tests, but that they had made great progress in helping the students pass the tests through the purchase of the “Fast Forward” software program. This program provides individualized, computerized “tutoring.” They have set up the program with small groups and tutors, and have enjoyed great success.

Some schools had inappropriately disciplined students and had inadequately responded or assisted parents, the result of which was that the students were unsuccessful in their studies. Several participants shared about this problem and how new programs had grown out of efforts to solve the problem. Hilding Ohrstrom, Coeur d’Alene Tribe, talked about the approach they had taken with local schools in order to get action on tribal concerns and to increase the retention of their young people in education. Participants described both school systems that were relatively responsive to partnering with tribes and those that were very resistant. Participants shared a variety of approaches they had taken to breaking down these barriers. Most noted that results came when schools used culturally appropriate strategies when helping youth from Tribal communities.

Cecile Greenway, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, talked about providing special college tours for youth who take these tours both at the beginning of freshman year of high school and at spring break during the junior year in high school. They take all of the youth on the tours, not just those that are TANF-eligible. The school incentive program is based on attendance only, not on grades or other performance.

A fashion show, sponsored by the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, was held during the lunch break. One aspect of this event was to showcase the partnership between Goodwill Retail Stores and the TANF Program, demonstrating how families could be ready for school, work, or play on a very limited budget—if they shopped at Goodwill.

The tribal discussion continued after the lunch break. Darrell Pickett, Quinault Indian Nation, talked about the “Birth to 18 Years” program and the child advocacy services they provide. Incentives include a gift card for passing the driving test and arrangements for youth to receive college credit for tutoring younger Tribal members. Cecile Greenway, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, noted that their youth have been responsible for organizing and putting on a potlatch with the Port Orchard Schools since the early 1990’s. Several tribes use a Child Support pass-through, making sure the custodial parent receives the first \$100.00 (or other amount) of child support collected. Frank Quinto, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, discussed a reading program for children at the TANF offices where parent volunteers read to them.

Gerry Joireman, Statistician, and Ray Apodaca, Program Specialist, DTTM, discussed with the Tribal participants various issues from the Federal perspective. Ray discussed the PRIDE bill and the provisions in the bill that most interested the tribes. A focus on preventing family break-up is an important part of the bill, as well as achieving employment objectives. Tribes would be able

to receive marriage grants if domestic violence programs were in place. There would be two million in research for Tribal programs. Both reauthorization bills indicate that tribes must consult with States in plans and vice versa.

Ray discussed what is specified in the bill and what may be at the discretion of program operators. He noted that while certain amounts of money may be authorized in bills, only actual appropriation means that an amount of money linked to certain activities will truly be available. Under HR240, the focus on healthy marriage will also continue, with 50/50 matching grants available. Carryover policy would remain the same, and the regulations for consultation between States and tribes would also remain the same. Tribal TANF funds will be for current TANF tribes only. Ray indicated that his opinion at this point is that final reauthorization may be closer to HR240 than to PRIDE.

Ray provided participants with a packet of financial reporting forms, and asked for comments and input from the tribes on these forms. He asked tribes to talk with Gerry about data reporting because penalties will begin for tribes that do not meet the work participation rate. At this time, Ray estimates that a high percentage of reporting is still inaccurate and that tribes need to continue to focus on improving these systems. In three situations, penalties for TANF funds may be levied if funds are improperly used: intentional misuse, fraudulent misuse, and non-standard participation rates.

Participants shared with Ray and Gerry some of their challenges and provided suggestions for improving the Federal reporting systems, Federal technical assistance, and other aspects of the Federal/Tribal relationship. Joe Johnson, Nooksack Tribe, acknowledged the extensive assistance received from other tribes as they had worked to build their Tribal TANF Program, and encouraged the people from the Federal agency to support such peer-to-peer approaches.

Ray emphasized that there must be consultation with tribes when new regulations are proposed, if such consultation is “practicable.”

The group discussed the ongoing issue of resolving population counts between Tribal programs and State officials. Ray noted that the Federal position was that population counts and service area changes must be agreed upon by both the State and the Tribal entity involved.

Ray encouraged tribes to approach program spending from the perspective of funding limitations, to be strategic about providing very nominal assistance in a month (if that will eliminate an entire month of the 60-month limit for a client), and to focus on employment and participation requirements as a base.

Pat Contraro, Region 10 Program Analyst (Financial), spoke with the tribes about audit requirements and the importance of good record keeping in being prepared for audits. Pat provided a general overview of the process and ways that she could be helpful to the tribes in preparing for and participating in the audit process. Pat gave participants written materials that answer some of the most frequently asked questions about audits and audit findings.

Jan Jensen, Region 10 Program Specialist, shared information about the Tribal Child Support program. She reported that three tribes have started the Child Support program since December 2004. She noted that the website, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse, provided information for tribes on various aspects of the Child Support Program. In response to a question, Jan noted that, if the State is collecting child support on a Tribal client, the money should be sent to the Tribal program serving that client. Jan noted that the distribution rule stated that the money must go to the current collection if owing, and then to arrears if child support is assigned to the tribe. Tribal TANF programs can only get the tax refund through State IV-D program and the funds can be applied to arrears only.

Marilyn Olson, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, said that she had a draft proposal about Food Stamps/Medicaid and announced that interested tribes could meet on Friday morning from 8:00am – 8:30am to discuss this.

Friday, August 19, 2005

Tribes with 102-477 plans began the meeting by talking about what they saw as the challenges and benefits of having a 102-477 plan. Staff from Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, and Tanana Chiefs Conference all spoke to their experience of operating under a 102-477 plan. Cecile Greenway, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, explained why they had not gotten a 102-477 and talked about the flexibility they have achieved by using other approaches. Nate Kotch, Maniilaq Association, talked about their experience with a 638 plan and working with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Participants from various tribes asked specific questions of those tribes with more experience with 102-477 plans. Marilyn Olson, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, suggested that each tribe must look closely at its own circumstances and then decide what is best for their own tribe.

Questions followed regarding the allocation and release of funds. Ray Apodaca noted that money is available quarterly in cases where the grant is over \$1,000,000.00. Participants noted money issues and how carryover of funds worked. Dean George, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, said he had not noticed a great deal of difference between the two approaches in terms of carryover.

A discussion followed concerning subsistence issues and how to best approach subsistence. Staff from Cook Inlet Tribal Council discussed how subsistence activities related to participation rate mandates. Pat Freeland, Bristol Bay Native Association, detailed how participants were meeting activity requirements through assisting elderly or disabled Tribal members through subsistence activities, by performing volunteer work in school, and by cleaning up the community in general. The mature Alaskan programs shared a variety of ways to approach subsistence in a TANF program, and how subsistence activities could relate to participation counts. They discussed challenges of supporting long-term, self-sufficiency and subsistence approaches.

Jannette Taylor, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, noted that other activities supporting traditional, cultural practices could also be incorporated into countable activities. She described a project with electronic scrap booking, including gathering information and interviewing members to capture

tribal experiences and personal history. Members also initiated other creative activities. A grant from The Kellogg Foundation for leadership training provided assistance with some of these projects.

A Tribal discussion followed concerning family issues. Participants shared ideas on how they were promoting healthy marriages and on the challenges of providing programs related to marriages. Ed Parris, The Tulalip Tribes, noted that, if the emphasis could be kept on “healthy,” rather than just “marriage,” this would help ensure appropriate services.

Participants talked about caretaker-only cases and about the expanding role of grandparents in raising grandchildren in many areas. Mark Hiratsuka, Bristol Bay Native Association, shared approaches that might be taken to assist grandparents who are raising grandchildren; he noted that many grandparents might not know that help is available or ask for it. Tribes described various ways of dealing with providing financial support to families headed by grandparents.

Gerry Joireman shared with tribes the importance of being very careful in specifying what rates and hours are required. He noted that it was much better to send in a report by the due date—even if it had mistakes—than to miss the due date. He said mistakes could be corrected in a follow-up report. Gerry emphasized his desire to be very available and helpful to the tribes as they work through reporting issues; he provided his personal contact information to facilitate easy access.

Gerry noted that the rate at which a Tribe would be penalized is annual, not monthly—monthly fluctuations are expected. Cecile Greenway, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, said that even exempted or excused clients in her program are strongly encouraged to participate in appropriate activities. The theory behind this is that everyone is able to do something and that this can be helpful in keeping going the momentum for progress.

Cynthia Jackson, Spokane Tribe of Indians, spoke about the assistance she could provide to tribes as they set up their programs and started Tribal TANF services. She noted that the Spokane Tribal TANF Program had been challenged during start-up with trying to provide services and to set up systems all at the same time; she shared that other approaches would save wear and tear on tribes that are just starting up their programs. Several participants noted the help that Cynthia and others had given to them as they set up their Tribal TANF programs.

Debbie noted to participants that past meetings had included a group debrief and an evaluation, which were used to assist in planning the next year’s meeting. Because of the size of the group and time constraints, she requested that participants use “dot voting” to complete an evaluation from questions outlined around the room on flip charts. As a closing activity, Debbie asked each person to talk about something that had been valuable to them during the meeting. Many people mentioned the value they placed on gathering with other Tribal TANF directors and staff and on discussing their programs with each other. Deborah McCarter, Tanana Chiefs Conference, noted that the ideas shared would help her in planning the GILA meeting. Steve Watts, Quinault Indian Nation, mentioned that it was good to see how much the meeting had grown, and how hearing from others emphasized how versatile Tribal TANF can be. Marilyn Olson, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, said that meeting with Federal officials face-to-face held value. Several people

spoke about how the discussion on 102-477 plans had been particularly valuable. A number of people talked about how much they appreciated the words of others, and the exceptional care and hard work that the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Spokane Tribal TANF Program had invested in making the meeting a success for all. Others echoed Ricard Tupling, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, in noting that having the tribes host the event had made a real difference to the participants.

Jim Sijohn, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, gave a very moving closing and blessing. Following this blessing, the Coeur d'Alene VFW retired the colors and the meeting ended.