

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
NATIVE MINISTRIES
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ANNUAL CONFERENCE NATIVE MINISTRIES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

I. VISION

- A. The church is the body of Christ, called together by God, to share in God's redemptive work. Paul's instruction to the churches in Galatia remind all who are baptized in Christ that, in Christ, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*"

Galatians 3:28 NIV

The Creator acknowledged the diversity of the whole creation as good (Genesis 1:31). Native peoples are among those for whom the "year of the Lord's favor" is proclaimed (Isaiah 61) and fulfilled (Luke 4:16 – 21). The Apostle Peter was challenged by God to embrace a vision of inclusiveness, because, nothing in God's good creation is to be considered unclean (Acts 10:1-11, 18), "God shows no partiality, but in any nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34 – 35)

We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who brings special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons."

"Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world. Thus, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination."

"The mark of an inclusive society is one in which all persons are open, welcoming, fully accepting, and supporting of all other persons, enabling them to participate fully in the life of the church, the community, and the world. A further mark of inclusiveness is the setting of church activities in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities."

"In the United Methodist Church inclusiveness means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of The United

Methodist Book of Discipline in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place. . . . “

Section VI. Called to Inclusiveness

¶ 138, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2004*

“... Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God’s grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy. Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origins, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement. The concept of itineracy is important, and sensitive attention should be given in appointing clergy with physical challenges to responsibilities and duties that meet their gifts and graces. . . .”

¶ 430, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2004*

This vision of the inclusive church is that of the family of God, where all are welcome, accepted, and revered as the children of God.

- B. In this vision of the church, inclusive as God’s love, we also see the unique value of each person, and the special and distinctive gifts of each culture and traditions. While affirming our oneness in Christ, we at the same time celebrate our diversity, and seek to preserve and strengthen the many strands that are woven into the common fabric. *“We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life.”*
¶ 162.A, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2004*
- C. The distinctive understandings of Methodism allow for Native people to interpret the dynamics of the Christian Gospel within their own culture. We affirm that Native people are free to participate in traditional ceremonies.
- D. Native American Ministries Sunday Offering. *“The annual conference shall retain 50 percent of the receipts to develop and strengthen Native American ministries within the annual conference, to be administered by the annual conference committee on Native American ministry”*
¶ 264.6A, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2004*

II. DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis of our Conference's commitment to inclusiveness may be revealing as we address the following statistics:

Within our Annual Conference area the following Native populations are recorded: (2000 U.S. census figures)

Colorado: 79,689 out of a general population of 4,301,261

Utah: 45,445 out of a general population of 2,233,169

Wyoming: 15,012 out of a general population of 493,781

This results in totals of 140,146 Native persons out of 7,028,211 persons in the general population. Yet only 31 individuals were defined as Native persons within local United Methodist churches.

1. Morale: Annual Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (ACCONAM) responsibilities are to our Native community (ies), to Creator, to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and to Mother Earth. We recognize and affirm that to bring the "Circle of Life" into Euro-American church structures, traditions and mentality will require a change of heart, not just toleration. The church has not known or understood the indigenous peoples of this hemisphere and we have both been impoverished as a result
2. Itineracy/Appointive System: As of the 2000-04 quadrennium there are no Native clergy within the Rocky Mountain Conference.
3. Inclusive membership churches: According to the *Journal* of the Rocky Mountain Conference has 31 members who self-report Native American Indian heritage and no Clergy.

III. METHODOLOGY

The Rocky Mountain Conference is obligated to find, encourage and support educational opportunities for Native leadership and help emerging Native fellowships and / or congregations find resources. The conference calls on the Church and American Indian communities to affirm, encourage and provide the necessary resources to address our need to explore new models of church, ministry and leadership in our communities.

A plan of action is to be revised and “owned” by the Annual Conference and the ACCONAM.

The Rocky Mountain Conference committee on Native American Indian Ministries

- Shall have realistic expectations
- Shall have a diversity of tribal culture, customs
- Shall affirm that Christ enhances tribal traditions, not negate them.
- Shall affirm that celebrations are central to Native culture so the United Methodist Church must share in and learn about the social context of traditions and celebrations.
- Shall be committed to building trust with Native individuals and Native communities
- Shall be committed to building bridges of understanding and healing of the wounds of the missionized past.

A. MANDATES

1. Paragraph 653 of *The Book of Discipline* (2004) states that there shall be an “annual conference committee on Native American Ministry”, henceforth known as “ACCONAM”. Under the direction of the District Superintendents, local churches will be encouraged to engage in pulpit and choir exchanges, and other learning opportunities.
2. Further, the Native American Ministries Sunday (see ¶ 822.6 *The Book of Discipline*, 2004) serves to remind the church of the gifts and contributions made by Native people to our society. Every local church at their charge conference shall designate...a minimum of one person...to represent the need for better awareness of native contributions in the local church. These names...are to be given to the Annual Conference Committee on Native American Ministry. (ACCONAM).

B. ORGANIZATION

The ACCONAM shall have

- Up to 2 Native (*) persons from each of the districts of Rocky Mountain Conference. They shall be members of the United Methodist Church and identify with and have a relationship with their local Native American Indian community
- Two non-Native members of United Methodist Church from local church level, with one being a lay person and one being a clergy
- Native persons and non-Native representatives from sister denominations and traditionals.
- Conference staff
- District Superintendents
- Additional resource persons as appropriate

The voting representation shall be at least 51% native persons. The committee members shall have a commitment to the work of the committee and to their Native American Indian community, where appropriate. *(meetings are open to anyone and input is welcome)*

C. CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Developing and supporting existing and new “ministries”.

ACCONAM calls on the Church and American Indian communities to affirm, encourage and provide the necessary resources to assess and analyze our needs and to explore new models of church, ministry and leadership in our communities.

ACCONAM shall strengthen existing Native congregations, ministries and fellowships. In partnership with the New Ministries committee, the Rocky Mountain Conference cabinet, and the ACCONAM shall develop Native fellowships, ministries and congregations from new creative models.

Whenever possible, minority/ethnic leadership will be preferred for leadership and clergy for Native fellowships, ministries and congregations.

() Within a cultural definition Native identity is person who maintains ones culture with a relationship to community, has a history with their tribe and or native community, speaks or has knowledge of their tribal language, knows of and practice some traditions of their tribe and has knowledge of or practice their tribal spirituality, values and customs.*

D. DENOMINATIONAL PRESENCE

ACCONAM urges local congregations to engage in dialogue with a Native community to begin a journey of understanding the Native perspective of unresolved issues of identity, community, hostility and empowerment.

- Develop methods for creating dialogs among and between Native communities and local congregations.
- Develop an infrastructure to maintain communications with all connections necessary to uphold our mission and mandates
- Monitor policy and proceedings that include or affect Native people directly.

E. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

ACCONAM is obligated to find, encourage and support educational opportunities at all levels for Native leadership and help emerging Native fellowships and /or congregations find resources.

- Recruit persons for higher education for church service, and seminary education, and encourage schools of theology to provide Native course materials.
- Develop seminars for all Native people who wish to be sensitized by the knowledge of our common spiritual pursuits.
- Provide leadership-training opportunities for Native United Methodist people to become leaders in our church, communities and Conference.

- Provide communication lines to keep individuals, communities, conference and local churches informed of Native issues, opportunities, and information.

F. NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

ACCONAM affirms the value and role of tradition and culture. Therefore, interpretation of the Gospel within indigenous cultures using metaphors, stories, and value structures, participation in traditional ceremonies, and integration of Indigenous understandings along the Euro-American understandings of Christianity, is expected.

ACCONAM understands its challenge to build mutual respect between traditional persons and Native Christians with a commitment to dialogue.

ACCONAM members will commit themselves to develop in the four directions: physical, mental, moral and spiritual.

ACCONAM will encourage traditional spiritual leadership. We will discourage non-Indian appropriation of traditional ceremony and spirituality. We will identify and shed light on exploitation of Native cultures and persons.

G. COMMITMENT TO AND FOR NATIVE CLERGY

ACCONAM will function as a conduit for information, recruitment, support and nurturing for Native Clergy within Rocky Mountain Conference. This applies to both ordained and licensed individuals.

ACCONAM will advocate for salary equity and empowerment for Native clergy within the Annual Conference.

H. JUSTICE

ACCONAM will inform and advocate about social, political, and economic justice issues as defined by the United Methodist Church Social Principles.

Job Description for Local Church Designee for Native American Ministry

Authorization and Purpose from *“The Book of Discipline, 2004”* ¶653:

“There shall be an annual conference committee on Native American Ministry or other structure to provide for these ministries and maintain the connectional relationship..

*“**Every local church** at charge conference shall designate by nomination and election a minimum of one person per charge (without regard to race or ethnic origin) or a designated member of an established church committee to represent the need for better awareness of Native American contributions in the local church. These names are to be submitted to the district superintendent at charge conference to be given to the annual conference committee for Native American ministry.”*

Suggested Duties:

- **Be the contact person** to receive and communicate to the local church information, concerns and schedules of events related to Native American ministry from the Conference Committee on Native American Ministry (CONAM) and from conference staff.
- **Secure the calendaring** of and contribute to the planning, promotion and resourcing for and production of the annual Native American Ministries Sunday with special offering with native American participation if possible (the third Sunday of Easter or at another time.)
- **Encourage awareness of and appreciation** for Native American history, traditions, culture, contributions and presence in the nation, state and Church (especially The United Methodist Church.) This can be done through studies (bibliography of books and videos available from the Conference CONAM and from United Methodist Communications). Native American speakers/teachers, exchange events (sings, revivals, youth meetings, dialogue sessions, etc.), work teams and by other means.
- **Provide the Conference CONAM with contact information:** name, address, phone number and email address of any person(s) who identifies as Native American in the local church.
- **Provide brief report/plans to Charge Conference / Conference CONAM** on local church Native American Ministries Sunday celebration with offering and other activities, program and events and Advance giving to Native American Ministries.

Designed by the Rev. Dr. Robert Mangum, North Carolina Conference UMC

2007 ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE RESOLUTION

GC 55 GOVERNMENT FAILURE TO FULFILL TERMS OF TREATIES WITH NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Amend Category V The Political Community: Political Responsibility of *Book of Resolutions*

ACTION TO BE VOTED ON:

Whereas; The United States government has failed to honor its obligations in treaties adopted by Congress with Indian tribes; and

Whereas; Treaty agreements are solemn promises and must be honored; and

Whereas; The United Methodist Church has long been a champion of American Indian rights;

THEREFORE; Be it resolved, that the United Methodist Church calls on the United States government to review treaty obligations and determine a course of action to be taken to honor the promises made to our Native American Indian People.

PASSED

**Rocky Mountain Conference Consultant for
Native Ministries, Issues and Advocacy:
Susanne Aikman (303)477-8442 susanne@rmcumc.com**

We are indebted to our TASK FORCE CONTRIBUTORS:

Class of 2003-05

Phylls Bigpond (Yuchi)

Cynthia Kent (Southern Ute)

Richard Silversmith (Navajo)

Susie Silversmith (Navajo)

Terry Battiest (Choctaw)

Nancy Niero

Maxine Travis

Reverend Ron Hodges

Nancy Butterfield

Walt Gehring

Susanne Aikman (Eastern Band Cherokee)

Conference Committee for Native Ministries

Class of 2008-09

Rev Jerry Boles III (Navajo)

Helen Darrow

Dave Grass (Cherokee)

Donna Jacobs (Chairperson)

Butch Kornegay (Choctaw)

Sara LaBounty (Nez Perce)

Donieta McIntire

Nancy Niero

Eulala Pegram (Choctaw)

Kate Rose

Miriam Sljeko

Leaan Williams

Rev Skip Strickland (Conference Staff)

Susanne Aikman (Eastern Band Cherokee)

January 2009