

**REPORT ON ATNI TANF WORKSHOP HELD AT BELLINGHAM, WA FEBRUARY  
17-18, 2014 – Jim Thomas, Chair**

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board of the Affiliated Tribes of NW Indians; Honorable delegates from our many Nations who are here gathered. The TANF Committee of ATNI sponsored a major and unusual Workshop that consisted of 1.5 days during this conference. I wish to acknowledge the Executive Board and Director Terri Parr for allowing me to have a full day session on Tuesday. I assured Terri that my Workshop participants would not normally be at ATNI and would therefore not impact your morning plenary session. While this Northwest Tribal TANF Workshop could have been held at another time and not during ATNI's Winter Session, there were two major reasons for our desire to meet here and at this time.

1. Because we have become a strong voice in educating ourselves as TANF leaders both in administration and in elected officials, some of our own tribal people who are enamored with the state began to spread the word among our tribal TANFs that to attend ATNI with TANF funds was illegal because ATNI was a political organization. My well attended TANF Committee meetings began to dwindle. So instead of calling it a committee meeting I put together a complete Workshop for the full training of and exchange of information for TANFs from our 7 States. The agenda became such that we ended up being a national meeting as much as a regional meeting. Tlingit and Haida sent 8 people, including President Edward Thomas from Juneau, Alaska. Their presentations were exciting and powerful. Cook Inlet Native Association sent two delegates from Anchorage and we had representatives from 5 of our 7 seven states and two delegates from the very first TANF east of the Mississippi, the Penobscots from Maine, were registered but could not attend at the last minute. I have been invited to address them in July. My friend Virginia Hill, A Seneca Indian who is Tribal Administrator for the Lipay Nation of San Ysabel in Southern California, paid her own expenses up here to assist me in this Workshop.
  - a. Every committee of ATNI is designed to share information to keep our programs fresh and responsive to our tribal people at home, and to protect our services and funding so that we do not lose the precious services that provide to our clients.
  - b. Every TANF committee meeting refreshes the TANF directors in approaches, provides best practices and advises on national and regional office directives of the Administration on Children and Families and yes, states too.
  - c. I assured all our Workshop participants that attending ATNI Conferences and committee meetings is NOT political activity but fits the required training of personnel as provided by literally all program scopes of work and operations.
2. I wanted to help raise just a little extra cash for ATNI through our workshop. We had over 40 participants register for the workshop directly, and another 15 of regular ATNI attendees. But I required that all our TANF Workshop group to register through ATNI and pay the full conference fee.

- a. Because I was aware that the main hotel was sold out immediately, and after Terri had arranged for overflow hotels, I did most of the negotiations for rooms and the meeting room at the Hampton Inn for the TANF group so as not to burden Terri and Ina – who had been very open and helpful to me to make this happen.
  - b. After payment of the cost for the meeting room and some meeting material costs, I think we might have contributed in excess of \$5,000 to ATNI. It's not a big number, but every little bit helps in a volunteer non-funded organization like ours. ATNI is a precious instrument of our nations in the West and we're often the ones who are fighting the biggest battle for all tribes in Indian Country.
  - c. We extend our gratitude to the Lummi Employment and Training Center under the direction of Topsey Kinley for providing our superb catered lunch on Tuesday. Our agenda was so full, we worked through lunch.
  - d. The hospitality of the Hampton Inn was especially keen, since the manager of the hotel is a Seneca Indian.
3. The interest of the body was so high, the room remained full throughout the entire workshop of 1.5 days.
  4. "Powerful" was the best description provided by our attendees. We opened our Workshop with prayer songs to the Great One by Smitty and Lutie Hillaire, Lummi Spiritual Leaders. They were in my choir when I taught choir at the Northwest Indian College. Our participants will go home and tell how their session was opened by two marvelous people who had sung for and prayed with the Dalai Lama and who had sung for and prayed with the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope.
  5. It took our TANF group, from all over the nation – ten years – yes, ten years to be allowed time on the agenda of the general assembly of the National Congress of American Indians. Glen Bosconcillo of California and I made presentations- **finally**, at Tulsa, Oklahoma. And now, at this small TANF Workshop group, we were addressed by the **President of NCAI** as a keynote. This is the very first time, any President of NCAI has ever addressed tribal TANF.
  6. SOMETHING GOOD IS HAPPENING FOR OUR CHILDREN. Through our efforts at ATNI TANF and the Coalition of California Tribal TANFs, we are working toward combining our strength with ICW and NICWA, to surround our precious babies, our beautiful children and youth with strong wide wings to work with each other to use our professional, caseworker, national organizations and tribal leaders to squeeze every ounce of love out of our funds to save our children. FINALLY, AT LAST. We had a tremendous presentation by NICWA and we have assured them that we're opening our minds to this direction – not just cooperation, but by grasping each others' hands and marching forward together.

NO MORE LIPS – NO MORE WAGGING TONGUES - - LET'S GET SERIOUS AND START SAVING OUR INDIAN CHILDREN - - - AND THEIR MOMS AND DADS.

HOW DAH AWEH, - NOW IT IS FINISHED.