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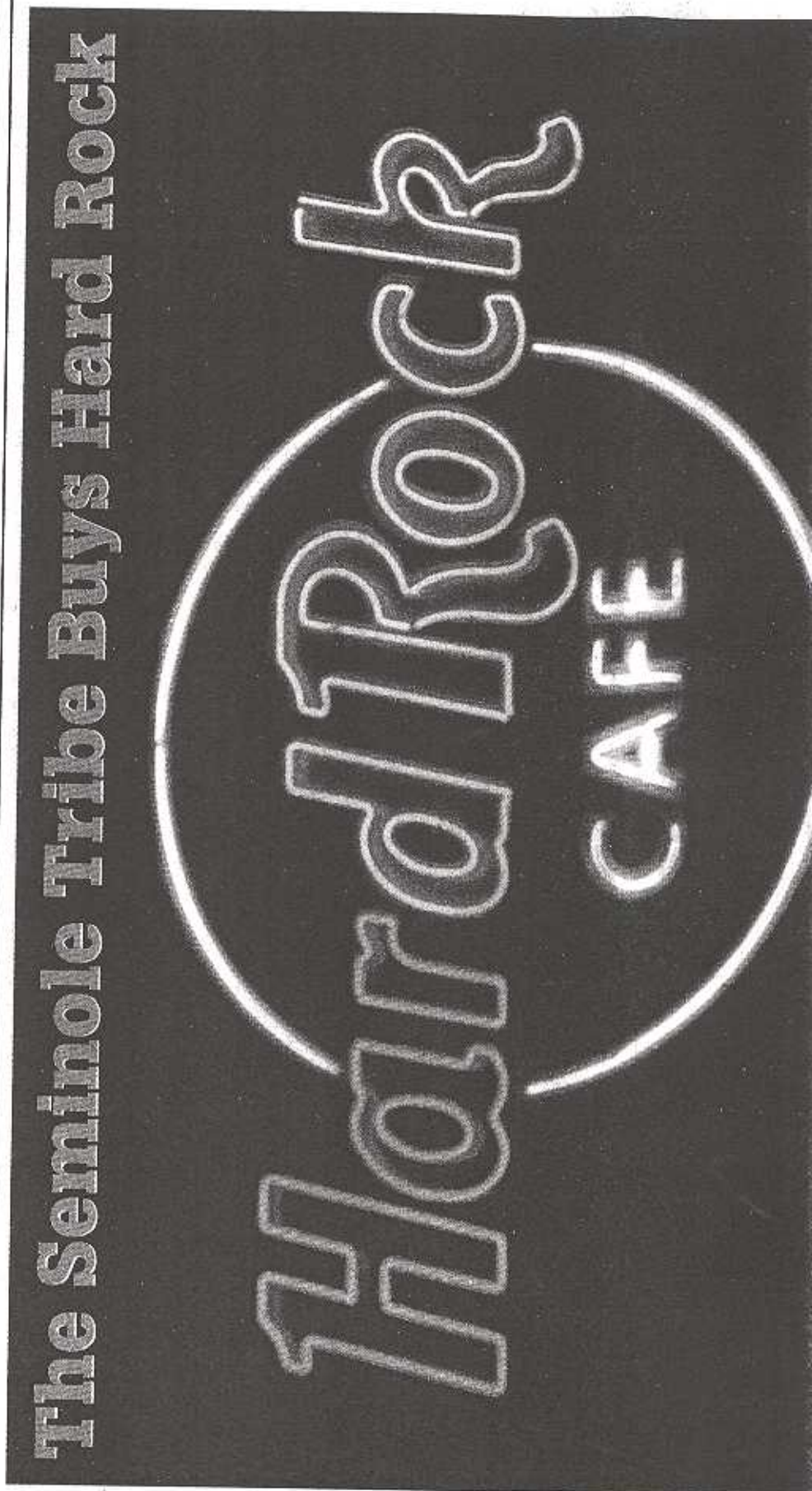
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circlempis@aai.com
www.thecirclenews.org

The Circle

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HardRock
CAFE

How the Diabetes Community Council made a difference

Almost four years ago, a new group from the Indian community was formed. It was made up of about 20 people, most of whom were elders living with diabetes. These individuals came together to work on ideas about how the Indian community could better face and fight the health disparity of diabetes. They called themselves the Diabetes Community Council.

The Council met monthly, and they learned about each other and their individual struggles with diabetes. They shared their history, their personal stories and their problems dealing with the current health system as patients, as Indian people, and as elders. Staff from the Native American Community Clinic and the Minneapolis American Indian Center was there to listen, and to learn from the Council. As a result, the Full Circle Diabetes Program was formed.

With the guidance and suggestions of the Council, Full Circle developed as a program which encourages and strengthens people to take care of their own diabetes and to take charge of their own healing and maintenance. The Council members have helped to reach out to the community by participating in events related to diabetes such as health fairs, diabetes awareness conferences,

and the annual Diabetes EXPO and Walk. They talked with students in the local schools, attended and taught the Living In Balance classes. They have helped to engage the community in activities that bring individuals to face their own health issues and to do something about them.

The Council created a video which is full of personal testimonies about their journey with diabetes. It has been distributed to all the reservations in the state, and its impact is ongoing. One Council member said he has watched it "about 20 times"; so it continues to serve as a guide and an inspiration, even to those who were in it.

One of the discoveries of the Council was how important personal sharing is for good health. Council members have repeatedly commented about how having the Council members to talk with, and to be listened to has kept them going. By feeling the respect and friendship in the group, they were better able to have a positive focus on their own health. The Living In Balance classes helped many to make and keep goals about their own health, and to be better able to make a difference in their own healing, as well as to encourage others to do the same.

The work of the Council members is an example of how health disparities will be decreased, and eventually eliminated from the Indian community. Disparities will be eliminated because Indian people can come together and identify the problems they have in maintaining health. They can share and work and reach out to others in a way that promotes and strengthens everyone. They can partner with clinics and organizations that will listen and implement their ideas, and who will encourage their continued success. Healing begins and grows as we work together and ask others to join us in finding answers. It's not the doctors, not the health departments, not the Indian Health Service who will give health to the Indian community. The Indian community will find it by sharing and listening and helping themselves and each other to take charge of their health.

The Diabetes Community Council helped to bring the Full Circle to life. Now it will be changing some by focusing more closely on how to bring more individuals to work on self-management for their health. This includes traditional healing, clinic visits and others as partners. But each individual is vital to their own healing. We look towards the future with the hope that interested Council members and others will help to make a commu-

nity-wide effort to spread the Living In Balance message all over this community. We hope to enroll hundreds of people to take the classes and to follow through with the self-management lessons, no matter what kind of health problem they may be struggling with.

We thank the Diabetes Community Council for their bold and caring steps for their own health and for the health of others living with diabetes. It has been an honor to work with them and to learn from them.

With respect and appreciation, we thank the members of the Diabetes Community Council: Gerry Auginash, Velma Bakleras, Reiko Blue Arm, Peter Boyer, JoAnn Chess, Jim Clairmont, Linda Clifford, Jay Fletcher, Louie Foote, Marcy Hart, Beverly Haskell, Mary Jorgensen, Denise Jourdain, Lola LaMont, LeMoine La Pointe, Carol Littlewolf, Joyce Littlewolf, Dave Loud, Colleen Martin, Joe Mose, Rosemary Mountain, Joan Nichols, Kevin Redbear, Margaret Shodean, Ivy Sourhard, Arnold Stand, Joan Strong, Juanita Tukrook, and Lavonne Whitefeather.

The Doctors at NACC welcome comments and ideas about health disparities for upcoming articles. Send to: NACC, 1213 E. Franklin Ave., Mpls., MN 55404. 612-872-8086

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Jan. 2-3

Book discussion group

Come to the library and discuss books! What a "novel" idea! The Winona Public Library adult book

Minnesota author's finest work.

There is no need to sign up, all meetings are open to the public. Please feel free to call at 452-4860. Winona Public Library 151 West

\$3 children ages 6-17. Free for children 5 and under. Reservations

required, call 320.532.3632.

Sounds of Blackness headlines. Also

performing is local a cappella group Aglwen. 4 pm - 5:30 pm at Ted Mann Concert Hall, 2128 Fourth St S. Minneapolis. Free and open to

an informal gathering to listen to

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe members tell their stories in both Ojibwe and English. 6:30 - 8:30pm. Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post.

ONGOING

Language Classes

Ojibwe Focus

Indian Museum and Trading Post.

Jan 15 (Deadline)