
BAY AREA AMERICAN INDIAN TWO-SPIRITS

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May 29, 1999

Club Officers

Eugene
Hightower, Ph.D.
Spokesperson

Laura Oropeza,
*Associate
Spokesperson*

Kenneth Harper,
Treasurer

Darren English,
*Corresponding
Secretary*

Morningstar
Vancil,
*Associate
Corresponding
Secretary*

Mr. Geoffrey Hayes
Project Director
Vanguard Public Foundation
383 Rhode Island, Suite 301
San Francisco CA 94103

Dear Mr. Hayes:

Please find enclosed Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits' (BAAITS) grant application requesting project support from the Vanguard Public Foundation to organize the Twelfth Annual International Two-Spirit Gathering (The Gathering) for 1999.

Since its inception in 1988 in Minneapolis, the Gathering has become the premiere opportunity for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Native Americans, their families and friends, from the United States and Canada to meet in a supportive environment. The Gathering is an annual cultural event in a non-urban setting rooted in Native American traditions. The Gathering occurs in the Fall and its location alternates between the United States and Canada, with local community-based organizations serving as hosts.

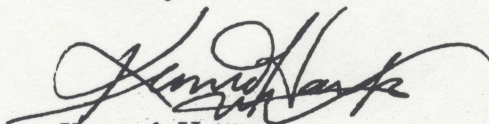
This year the continuation of this unique event is being threatened. Initially, the Twelfth Annual Gathering was to take place in the state of Nevada, outside Las Vegas; unfortunately, late last year, due to illness, the chief organizer of the Nevada Gathering was forced to resign. When it looked as if the event would not be organized at all, Eugene Hightower (the current Spokesperson of BAAITS) volunteered to assume the leading role in assembling an organizing committee in California for the Gathering in order to preserve the continuation of this unique Native American tradition.

As you can imagine this left an enormous challenge for the San Francisco-based organizing committee to confront when it first met in January of 1999. For all of us, the magnitude of this project - to organize an international event - is the first one of its kind in our lives; it has called us to do things which we have never done before now. Nevertheless, this project is one that all of us have given our hearts to. Moreover, this

project and the circumstances that inspired our involvement caused us to reflect and prompted us to use this challenge as an opportunity to form a new organization. We hope to continue to be a resource nationally and locally for Two-Spirited people and in that way for all of American society.

We are confident that we can successfully complete these aspirations with the support of people and organizations like the Vanguard. Financial and moral support from institutions like the Vanguard play a crucial role in BAATTS' ability to organize a rich cultural event and to provide scholarships for those with demonstrated need to attend, especially those from rural communities (local and national) and their families. Therefore, it is with these intentions that we, Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits respectfully request from the Vanguard Public Foundation a grant of \$10,000.00 in 1999 to organize the Twelfth Annual International Two-Spirit Gathering.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kenneth Harper".

Kenneth Harper
Treasurer

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The day I saw a poster declaring the existence of an organization of Gay American Indians, I put my face into my hands and sobbed with relief. A huge burden, the burden of isolation and of being defined only by one's enemies, left me on that enlightening day. I understood then that being Gay is a universal quality, like cooking, like decorating the body, like singing, like predicting the weather. Moreover, after learning about the social positions and special offices fulfilled by Indians whose tribes once picked them for the tasks of naming, healing, prediction, leadership, and teaching precisely because they displayed characteristics we call gay, I knew that Gayness goes far beyond simple sexual/emotional activity. What Americans call Gayness not only has distinct cultural characteristics, its participants have long held positions of social power in history and ritual among people all over the globe.

Judy Grahn, Another Mother Tongue

A. History

Mission Statement

Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits (BAAITS) is a community-based volunteer organization committed to offering culturally relevant activities for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered individuals of Native American ancestry and their friends. Many Native American people believed that Gay, Lesbian and Transgendered individuals possessed and manifested both a male and a female spirit. This was thought to make them "WAKAN" (Navajo) or sacred. BAAITS is committed to restoring and recovering the role of Two-Spirited people within the American Indian community by creating forums for the spiritual, cultural and artistic expression of Two-Spirited people.

Organizational History

Late last year when the leading organizer for the Twelfth Annual International Two-Spirit Gathering (the Gathering) fell ill, Eugene Hightower volunteered to lead the effort to organize the Gathering in the San Francisco Bay Area. BAAITS formed out of Eugene's efforts to organize a planning committee for the Twelfth Annual International Two-Spirit Gathering. BAAITS began meeting as a community-based organization in January of 1999 with a dual goals of organizing the Gathering and working toward becoming a new and independent organization in its own right. The Gathering provides a unique occasion for community organizing and sustains and reinvigorates individuals as they return to their respective communities to continue their work. As a place for healing, education, and sharing among people from diverse tribes and locations, the Gathering positively reinforces individuals' cultural and sexual identity and contributes to their overall well-being by enabling them to do things as simple as being and learning about themselves in community.

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Need Statement

Colonization nearly wiped out the teachings that explain and support the presence and participation of Two-Spirits in our communities. Often finding no support in our home communities, nor in the alienating bar-oriented gay setting, GLBT Natives have few options to affirm our common identity and history. Since urban and rural Native American communities, by and large, are scattered with few centralized concentrations, there are no support organizations that meet the needs of the Two-Spirit population. The Gathering affords an opportunity to learn about ourselves, celebrate our customs and share experiences. In doing so, the Gathering provides us with a fuller understanding of ourselves and releases us from the isolation that many Two-Spirit Natives feel.

The importance and benefit of events like the Gathering cannot be overestimated. In the wake of centuries of catastrophic events brought about by colonialism and programs of removal to reservations, American Indian peoples and their cultures have been threatened with extinction. Aside from disease, genocide and discrimination, which crippled indigenous people, Two-Spirited people have suffered even more than their other tribal brothers and sisters. Under the onslaught of homophobic missionary ideology, Two-Spirit people have been and continue to be the subjects of discrimination both within their own tribal communities and outside.

Nevertheless, discrimination within the Native community is a phenomenon that is not intrinsically rooted in American Indian cultures. In fact, the opposite is true. At one time, over 350 North American tribes recognized alternative gender roles involving cross-gender and same-sex relationships. It is recognition of this fact of hidden history within many tribes today that has enabled the development of an independent Two-Spirit movement.

Despite efforts in the national gay movement, many Indians continue to feel alienated; only in the past decade has the push for inclusion been effective, largely as a result of efforts by groups such as Gay American Indians (GAI) in San Francisco. Sadly, many of the gains made through such organizations like GAI were greatly reduced due to the devastation caused by AIDS. Among all minority groups Native Americans have the highest incidence rate of HIV infection and AIDS per capita with an average of 80-% occurring among Gay Native Americans. Added to the already epidemic levels of substance abuse and widespread poverty within American Indian communities, the ability of the Two-Spirit community to survive was greatly diminished. Ironically, the same devastating epidemic has also given rise to AIDS prevention and education and community organizing efforts that has enabled a new generation of Native leaders and activists to emerge. The Gathering is important as a way to galvanize these grassroots forces.

Furthermore it is more important than ever that these grassroots community members are fostered, because recent statistics on the national state of Native American health perennially confirm the opinion that Native Americans are locked in a struggle for survival. Ron Rowell, Executive Director

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of the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center in writing about the health status of Native Americans, noted that, "the health status of Native people is lower on virtually every indicator than the U.S. population as a whole... it is estimated that Alcohol and Drug abuse account for the majority of mortality and close to four out of ten Native people die before the age of 45." These facts also illuminate the fact that of all minority groups the cumulative rate of AIDS cases per capita among Native Americans is higher than any other group with 80% occurring among MSMs (i.e. men who have sex with men)[Source: CDC Statistics.] For us this sad pattern of facts (i.e., the high rate of death and disease among GLT Native Americans) reflects the impact of discrimination on members of an historically disenfranchised population. The source of its oppression is racism and homophobia and its effects manifest themselves in the compounding phenomena of widespread substance abuse and risky sexual behavior that results in early death.

It is in these dire circumstances that we the remaining Two-Spirits find ourselves. The task is to reconstitute ourselves as individuals and as a community. First, we must bring ourselves a deeper understanding of ourselves. From that point we can then begin to share this understanding, beginning within our own communities and then extending outside to those with whom we also share this continent. We as Two-Spirited people find ourselves on the margins of American society and in order for us to re-begin our journey toward inclusion we must begin by assessing our needs and our strengths in order to address the problems we face.

The members of BAAITS are committed to a mission that we believe will enable our community not only to survive, but also, to thrive. Our mission engages the Native Community from the inside and seeks within its own Native traditions the power to overcome those obstacles to the health of our community by providing opportunities in chemically free environments to learn and express our shared cultural identities as indigenous people. Events such as the Gathering, have at their core the belief that in order for communities to thrive, we, as a community, must promote access to "safe places." Safe places are locales providing the opportunity where we can address issues that contribute to our destructive behaviors. Safe places are places where we can express our innermost feelings without fear of reprisal. The Gathering constitutes one of these safe places and provides the starting point for the establishment of sustaining relationships. At the Gathering our participation in the chances to learn about ourselves, our customs, and our history, gives a fuller understanding of our identity and releases us from the isolation that many Two-Spirit Natives feel by placing us in touch with spiritual resources.

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B. Structure

Consensus decision making has traditionally recognized throughout tribal histories. Volunteer Officers of BAAITS in communication with other volunteer steering committee members have chosen consensus as the means of decision making for planning the 12th Annual Two-Spirit Gathering. Consensus does not require unanimity but a significant minority two or three.

The Volunteer Board of BAAITS, is composed of : Spokesperson, Associate Spokesperson, Treasurer, Corresponding Secretary, and Associate Corresponding Secretary. A written statement detailing the duties of these Officers will be forthcoming as part of our effort to incorporate. BAAITS meets weekly in open meetings to plan the activities of the organization. Membership is based on participation in the group's activities. Currently BAAITS has 20 members (please refer to section C. Constituency for more information.)

C. Project

Summary of Project

The Twelfth Annual International Two-Spirit Gathering (The Gathering) will give Two-Spirit American Indians and their invited guests the opportunity to come together to socialize, share and network. Cultural activities will be held, including a Pow Wow, a talent show, a giveaway, talking circles, and sweat lodge ceremonies. The Gathering will be held during the Labor Day weekend, September 2nd through 5th, 1999 in Saratoga, California, at Walden West, a retreat center located south of San Francisco.

The individual registration costs of the event will be \$150 for the weekend for non-scholarship participants, and will include cabin-style group lodging and three meals a day. We anticipate that a minimum 100 people from throughout North America will attend the Gathering.

The Gathering is a rich cultural event. Workshops and ceremonies have been specifically designed to address contemporary Two-Spirit issues, including: Workshops on: 'Two-Spirit people,' 'Traditional Teachings,' 'Aboriginal Lesbians,' 'Living and loving and Surviving AIDS,' 'Cross-Cultural Partnerships,' and 'Homophobia.' Together with the Pipe ceremonies, Sharing circles, Traditional giveaway, Sweatlodges and Memorial services.

Staffing and management responsibilities are implemented by BAAITS Officers and other volunteer members . Other staff will be drawn from the pool of scholarship recipients. There are no paid staff members of the Two-Spirit Gathering.

This year's gathering will highlight the importance of spiritual resources in our everyday lives as a resource for support. To help us stay connected spiritually if not physically. Our aim is to encourage

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those who attend the gathering to learn how to incorporate spiritual practices learned at the gathering into their daily lives. Our workshops will also increase the awareness in the workshops' key areas.

Recent Accomplishments

Since our first meetings in January of 1999, BAAITS' volunteer members and officers have been laying the groundwork for the Gathering. We are proud that we have accomplished so much in a short time solely through volunteer efforts and amid our many other commitments to our jobs and families. Accomplishments to date include:

1. Obtained a meeting place to conduct our weekly meetings through the local Metropolitan Community Church.
2. Assembled and elected a group of committed volunteer Officers.
3. Contacted members of previous organizing committees for assistance and information on previous Gatherings, including program materials and previous sources of funding.
4. Secured a site for the Gathering, Walden West in Saratoga, California. This site was chosen for the following reasons: It is a retreat center outside an urban Area; it is amenable to the ritual purposes of the gathering with space to build a sweatlodge and hold indoor and outdoor meeting spaces; it is conveniently accessible to local residents and near local airports for attendees outside the region, and its cost is low(\$150 for 4 nights and including 3 meals per day) therefore making it affordable to more people.
5. Created a website to publicize BAAITS and the Gathering.
6. Through contacts in other local Native American Organizations we have assembled a national mailing list of individuals and organizations of over 300 and a regional mailing list of 400 individuals and organizations.
7. Received a grant of \$2,000 from the Native American Culture Center to fund our first event, an exhibition of Native American performing arts and crafts and social dance which will also be a fund-raiser for the Gathering.
8. Arranged to have booth at the San Francisco Lesbian Gay Pride Celebration
9. Applied and awarded status as a donation partner to receive proceeds from the profits from the San Francisco Lesbian Gay Pride Celebration.
10. Successfully solicited in-kind donations from private individuals and local community-based organizations to assist in the publication and advertising for our fund-raisers and Gathering.
11. Sent out our first mailing publicizing our first fund-raiser and the Gathering including the development of the necessary registration and scholarship materials and forms.
12. Secured the National Native American Prevention Center, an incorporated 501(c)3, to be our fiscal agent.
13. Successfully solicited the partnership of the Multicultural AIDS Resource Center of California to provide technical assistance in the future programming of the Gathering (Letter of Intent forthcoming.)
14. Applied and granted our own Employer Identification Number (EIN).

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15. Created a Fundraising plan relying on diverse sources (See budget / revenue section).
16. Began the initial planning for future fund raisers
17. Submission of grants to the Gill Foundation and Horizons Foundation

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Timeline/ Current Goals

June:

- Hold/participate in two fundraising events (June 4 event; Pride Celebration)
- Solicit donations from individuals
- Continue soliciting scholarship applications (began soliciting in May)
- Continue mailings to potential participants (first mailing occurred in May)
- Determine schedule of events for Gathering weekend (first draft)
- Continue soliciting speakers and presenters (began soliciting in April)

July:

- Hold three fundraising events (Eagle Beer Bust; 330 Ritch Street; Poetry Reading)
- Solicit donations from individuals
- Review scholarship applications
- Collect registrations from non-scholarship participants
- Finish solicitation of speakers and presenters
- Finalize schedule of events for Gathering weekend
- Create program booklet for Gathering weekend (including information on scheduled activities, orientation to the Gathering site, and evaluation forms)

August:

- Hold one fundraising event (Will Roscoe)
- Solicit donations from individuals
- Notify scholarship recipients of their selection
- Collect registrations from non-scholarship participants
- Print program booklet

September:

- Prepare the site (set up sweat lodge, music equipment and meeting spaces)
- Welcome and orientation for participants (September 2)
- Hold Gathering (September 2-5)
- Post-Gathering evaluation

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D. Alliances

The National Native American AIDS Prevention Center in Oakland has agreed to be the fiscal sponsor for BAAITS. Native American AIDS Project has provided office support. The Multi-cultural AIDS Resource Center of California (MARCC) has offered to provide technical assistance in program planning and evaluation ;and MARCC provided the postage for over half our 1st mailing. Project Open Hand (SF) has donated office supplies and telephone usage to assist in our grantseeking. Currently, we have contacted and are in the process of soliciting letters of support and intent from over 30 national and local Native American and Non-native organizations.

E. Constituency

Currently, BAAITS has an estimated local (Northern California, Fresno and Above) constituency of 200 individuals and organizations; Of the individuals we estimate 90% are American Indian; 35% female and 65% male (derived from mailing list.) BAAITS' mailing list currently identifies 700 individuals and organizations, total. 400 of the 700 are located outside California and 50 are located outside the U.S.(Canada.) BAAITS has a Board of five multiracial [i.e. Native American and +Black (one), +Asian (one), +Latina (one), + White (one) and +Asian/Latino/White (one) Volunteer Officers, 2 lesbians and 3 gay men. It has a total volunteer staff of 20. The majority of the local constituency, 90% come from low income levels, (less than \$30,000). Our Volunteer Board reflects our local constituency in gender, orientation, tribal affiliation, ethnic background, and income. Currently BAAITS has a constituency of five core officer members which meet on a weekly basis to navigate and plan for the Gathering. Community support for the event appears to be high. On both a national scale and local scale, we have received numerous inquiries about the gathering via website, e-mail and telephone. As BAAITS starts to host fundraising events for the Gathering we will be in a better position to assess local community support for the Gathering.

F. Evaluation

Evaluation questionnaires will be given to all Gathering participants within their program packets during their orientation. Participants will be asked to complete the survey before they depart. After the Gathering, BAAITS will review these questionnaires to determine participants' views of the Gathering . The success of the gathering will also be determined by the number of participants who attend. A successful gathering will draw minimally 100 participants

All participants, (staff, and community) will participate in the evaluation process. We also have

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spoken to Chris Sandoval, Project Director of the Multicultural AIDS Resource Center of California to offer technical assistance in the evaluation process. We intend to use the information to inform our own and other organizations that do work in and for our community: Health Departments; Community Clinics; academic groups; and the organizers of the next Gathering.

G. Affirmative Action

BAAITS is an organization which believes firmly in the principles of Affirmative Action. We are as yet unincorporated and do not have a specific policy regarding affirmative action. We intend to include a statement in support of Affirmative Action Principles within our Articles of Incorporation.

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III. Attachments

H. Leadership

Key Volunteers

Eugene Hightower, Ph.D. (Choctaw)

Spokesperson

Ph.D. in Psychology

California Licensed Psychologist

Lecturer, University of California at Berkeley

Laura Oropeza (Navajo)

Associate Spokesperson

Legal Assistant, 12 years experience

Former Program Assistant, National Native American AIDS Prevention Center

Active community volunteer since 1994

B.A. in Psychology, University of Southern California

Kenneth Harper (Cherokee)

Treasurer

Finance Assistant to Chief Financial Officer, Project Open Hand

Former Executive Assistant, National Task Force on AIDS Prevention

Former Program Assistant, Native American AIDS Project

Active volunteer in Gay and Lesbian and Native American organizations

since 1992. Former Co-Chair of the InterTribal Student Council, and

Gay Men's Social, U.C. Berkeley.

Completing Honors Thesis toward a B.A. in Religious Studies, U.C.

Berkeley.

Darren English (Wyandot)

Corresponding Secretary

Artist/Designer, including HTML and web page design, including desktop publishing, design, t-shirt printing, illustration and airbrush

Treatment Advocate, Native American AIDS Project, 1998 to present

Cultural Coordinator, Wyandot Nation of Kansas, 1994 to the present

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Morningstar Vancil (Lenape)

Associate Corresponding Secretary

Artist/Sculptress

Active community organizer for 8 years

Attended Arapahoe Community College with a Cooperative of the Adams County Detention Facility, Brighton, Colorado, Developed a 240 hour detention curriculum (equivalent of attending a policy academy)

Currently, BAAITS efforts are directed toward this year's goal of hosting the Two_Spirit Gathering which itself is an event that has in the past been a formative experience in the lives of practically all Two-Spirit leaders.

The Multi-Cultural AIDS Resource Center of California has also offered as part of its technical assistance, a program for organizational development. We have also made inquiries with the Support Center here in San Francisco, which provides support to non-profits in many capacities, including leadership development.

I. References

Ron Rowell, MPH

Executive Director, National Native American AIDS Prevention Center

134 Linden Street

Oakland, CA 94607

(510) 444-2051

Chris Sandoval

Project Director, Multicultural AIDS Resource Center of California (MARCC)

390 - 4th Street

San Francisco, CA 94107

(415)777-3229

Beverly Littlethunder

Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force

Native American Community Activist and writer

Co-Founder of the International Two-Spirit Gathering

(612)690-3600

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J. Funding

<u>Awarded</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Applied/ Applying*</u>	
<u>Amount sought</u>			
Native American Cultural Center	\$2,000.00	Gill	\$3,000.00
Individual Donations	\$300.00	Vanguard	\$10,000.00
MARCC	\$130.00	Horizons	\$ 5,000.00
IN-KIND DONATION (VARIOUS)	\$200.00	*McKesson	\$5,000.00
SFLGBT Donation Partner (proceeds from- San Francisco Pride Festival)	Est\$1,500.00	*Tides	\$ 5,000.00

We are also in the process of soliciting contributions from corporations as well as local community foundations and in-kind donations from local businesses. We have planned to hold a number of fundraisers in the next months as well (see budget.)

The grant funds will be used to pay for the programmatic expenses of the Gathering itself (insurance, refreshment, program booklets, giveaway, music, sweatlodge totaling, \$6,500 [from budget]) and the scholarship fund.

We wish to provide 50 scholarships. Each Scholarship is worth \$150.00. This fund is particularly important for many reasons. First, this fund allows those without money to attend this event by their own means to do so. We believe that those who do not have the financial means are also those in our community who are the most vulnerable. It is important that these people attend. Many of those with financial hardships often also come from rural communities whose health statistics from the CDC and Indian health service both agree have the the highest rates of disease and mortality. It is important that this Gathering also draws participants from many groups and areas to address the multi-ethnic nature of American Indians themselves; diversity is a value we uphold. The fund will also pay for the registration costs for those who staff the event. One of the criteria for scholarship awards will be the willingness to work to staff the event. The scholarship fund will also be used to pay for the lodging and food of the presenters, facilitators and, most important of all ,elders, who are necessary to educational purposes of the Gathering.

We intend to guaranteed for attendees a safe, materially rich, cultural experience. Food and lodging, which is not here considered a 'programmatic expense' will be paid for through registration fees and the retreat site will only charge BAAITS for \$37.00 per person per day (including 3 meals)[4 days X 37 = 148; registration is \$150.00.)

If only a portion or none of our request is funded we will examine our budget and make the necessary adjustments to program expenses. We also intend to aggressively solicit donations from private individuals through our mailing lists, as well as in-kind donations of the materials and supplies list to off-set any funding deficits.

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Vanguard's full support will be acknowledged in our program materials in our list of major sponsors. Vanguard support: 1. acknowledges the diverse needs of the local GLBT community; 2. contributes to the Gathering's material richness; 3. Provides scholarships to promote the necessary diversity and quality of the program 4. increases Vanguard's moral richness by demonstrating its commitment philanthropic diversity; 5. Encourages future funders to consider funding our efforts; and 6. helps the Native LBGT / Two- Spirit Community reestablish its presence as a cultural resource.

The future funding of this event will be the responsibility of the next organizing committee in Canada. A record of our efforts this year will be provided to the organizers of next year's Gathering. BAAITS will also continue to raise some money to seed the planning of next year's event.