



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN PHYSICIANS

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Dear AAIP Membership,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to lead the Association of American Indian Physicians over the next two years. I'm humbled and excited to be your President as we celebrate AAIP's 50th year. On August 19th, the first meeting of the new AAIP Board of Directors, we voted to hold the 2021 annual meeting and 50th year celebration in Tacoma, Washington, provided we are safe to congregate again by August of 2021. This special meeting shall highlight our accomplishments and bring forth ideas from our membership as to how we may best serve our communities for the next fifty years. With these thoughts in mind, I'd like to share a few priorities I hope to focus on over the two years.

First, and foremost, I will work hard to address the invisibility of Native people and our health concerns by reaching out to media sources and national organizations to inform them of the work of AAIP and physician members. What better way to do so than by announcing AAIP's 50th anniversary in as public a way as possible. I hope to harness the ideas of our membership and with the help of the public relations and marketing committee, develop a very strong public profile for our organization. Additionally, as an organization of Native physicians, we frequently are asked to speak on current health issues in Indian Country. I plan to call on board members and our membership to help increase national awareness of the health of our communities by answering as many of these requests as possible. Now more than ever, when Native communities are suffering disproportionately from the impacts of COVID-19, AAIP must address invisibility

Secondly, I think AAIP must broaden the size of its community. Our small size limits our visibility. By collaborating with other national Native organizations, AAIP can more effectively bring attention to the health status of Native communities. Further, as health care providers, we know about social and structural determinants of health and the necessity of developing

broad networks of social services and agencies to ensure that our patients have food, housing and safety. To this end, I hope to lead us in developing strong working relationships with other national Native organizations to improve the health and wellbeing of Native populations. We need not be restricted to solely health professions. We have a relationship with the National Indian Education Association. We could and should also collaborate with the American Indian Higher Education Council. We could and should collaborate with organizations addressing the economic status of our communities. We could collaborate with institutions that address housing needs in our committees. In short, we can and I think we should broaden our collaborations to better serve the health needs of our communities. I hope to invite some of these organizations to join us at the national meeting.

Finally, I think that we must increase the number of Native students on the path to becoming doctors, researchers, and medical academics. And now is the time to do so. We have a window of opportunity that we've never had because of the social and civic unrest the nation is experiencing following the murder of George Floyd. I think AAIP should approach AAMC, AMA, and other major organizations to help us develop regional pathways programs to increase the numbers of Native students excelling in school and considering a health professions career.

For AAIP to continue to grow, we need to be strongly united----more so than ever. I have a couple of ideas to help us become stronger together. First, let me remind you that our board meeting notes are now available on-line for review. As AAIP board members we will continue to make our work as transparent as possible. The AAIP Board of Directors will meet with membership every two to three months. This will allow us to not only hear ideas and questions from the membership but for us to query the membership on topics that we're considering at that time.

We also intend to have a half year business meeting in January 2021. We haven't had a mid-year business meeting in the past, probably largely because of the expense but the virtual annual meeting cost very little and placed relatively minimal demand on AAIP staff. Finally, all board meetings are open to our membership. You only need to contact the AAIP office to receive a zoom invite.

Most importantly, I am looking to our membership for help in meeting the goals outlined above and to help the AAIP board and office as we prepare for our fiftieth anniversary. I'd like to call out to our membership and encourage anyone who is passionate about growing the visibility of AAIP, in serving our physician membership and Native communities. Committees will meet at least once monthly, ideally twice monthly, or as needed to accomplish their goals. Some committees will obviously be busier than others. For instance, the public relations and marketing committee is critical right now to increase the visibility of AAIP and as importantly to increase national awareness of Native American health issues. Another critical committee is finance. We've had some great ideas but we need the person power to make them happen. For instance, an idea that has been suggested is a locums service of Native physicians with a portion of the proceeds going to AAIP. Finally, the AAIP board just created a physician wellness committee. Committee ideas that are already being floated include on-line retreats similar to the women's retreat held the evening before the recent annual business meeting.

These are only a few ideas for us as we move forward. We are smart, driven and committed to our communities. If we harness the expertise within our membership, I'm convinced that we can move us into the next 50 years stronger than we've ever been. We can and must help sustain AAIP. But we must do it together. So, I'm asking for your help to join committees and to join us at quarterly and semi-annual meetings to share your expertise.

For the next month, you will see the new AAIP Board of Directors with photos and short descriptions on each of us as well as the committees that each chairs. Your AAIP board and I look forward to meeting all of you in person to celebrate our 50th anniversary.

Gunalcheesh!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary J. Owen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mary J. Owen, MD (Tlingit)
AAIP President