

## TESTIMONY

Senate members my name is Caitlin Baker, I am 16 years old and live in Norman Oklahoma. I am a member of the Muscogee Creek nation. For the last 4 years I have run an outreach program that works with Native American communities spreading the message that diabetes can be prevented through physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices. I have traveled to communities across the nation. My message is prevention. I feel that my generation has been raised with the continual message that diabetes is rampant in Native communities. My peers many times feel that diabetes is inevitable. They tell me that they know they will get it eventually because their parents, grandparents and other family members have diabetes. This feeling of inevitability can cause them to not take prevention seriously. This in turn affects the success of programs put in place to prevent diabetes. I feel that one major change that needs to be made in the programs is a shift from inevitability to PREVENTABILITY. Stress to youth that diabetes is preventable. Inform them how to avoid diabetes and then follow through by giving them the tools needed like access to physical activity and healthier food options. Tell youth and communities what needs to be done to prevent diabetes and then work with them to provide what is needed.

I stress to youth how important it is to use their voice and speak to the leaders of their communities. Not just health professionals who are working in diabetes prevention but also tribal leaders. Go to them with what they feel they need to make good lifestyle choices. Their voice is a powerful weapon. I also ask their leaders to listen. Youth want to be heard and respected. I have been in communities where youth have asked for simple things like a say in their lunch menus, a soccer field, a pool, to have drinking and smoking banned in their public parks. These are what youth want. Involve your kids; let them have ownership of healthy changes being made in their community. I once visited a jogging trail that was the vision of the local school kids in the small town of Davenport, Oklahoma. The students decided they wanted one so they raised money, got grants and built it. When I visited it a year later there was no trash, no graffiti. The local kids were

proud of it and respected it. No offense to any grownups but I felt like if the adults had been handling it, they might still be discussing how to get it built and arguing what to name it. My point is not that adults aren't needed or can't get things done; just that including the youth is a positive thing. Encourage them to be involved in planning and carrying out those plans. This will give them pride in themselves and their communities.

I also stress partnerships. I would not be able to do the work I do without my partners. I hope that more organizations, both tribal and non-tribal will work together. Diabetes prevention goes hand in hand with heart disease and tobacco control. The organizations working in these areas should be open to working together. Breathing problems and heart disease cause poor circulation, which in turn causes complications in diabetes patients. It seems that all these areas should be working together to get the message across of prevention and be aware of the work each other are doing. Share ideas and funding so that no one is duplicating programs.

Also, know your community. I have spoken with kids in New York, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Arizona. Everywhere I go there is a different issue with their youth. The diabetes programs I work with ask me to address prevention and physical activity but also to tailor my message to what their community is struggling with. Each community is different, take time to ask and learn what issues there are. Don't approach this with a one answer for everyone attitude.

I don't mean through my testimony to give the impression that programs aren't working. I can only speak about programs I have been involved in and all have been positive experiences. My thoughts and ideas come from seeing the way those programs are working.

In closing, many times people compliment me on the work I do. I always appreciate words of encouragement, but I also tell them that every community has kids like me. Find and encourage them. The topic today is "the way out of the diabetes crisis in Indian country." In my opinion the best way out is to include all members of our communities. Ask and listen to your youth. We are living the

crisis of diabetes. We don't want to live with diabetes. Let us work with you to find a way out of the crisis.

Thank you for inviting me today to join in your discussion.

# Caitlin Baker Testimony

**Submitted to the  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
Oversight Hearing on  
“A Way Out of the Diabetes Crisis in Indian  
Country and Beyond”**

**June 2010**

For the past four years I have run an outreach program, CAITLINB, that works with various partners to provide Diabetes Prevention programs to Native American communities.

The following written testimony provides a look at the different programs I have partnered with.

### **OKLAHOMA CITY INDIAN CLINIC**

Established in 1974 the OKCIC services the greater Oklahoma City Native population. My involvement has been with their Diabetes prevention program TURTLE CAMP. This program works with children ages 7-12 teaching them healthy nutrition, physical activity and cultural awareness. Over 650 children have experienced Turtle Camp since 2007. My experience has been overwhelming positive.

I personally feel this is a program that should be duplicated in every Native community. Turtle Camp teaches children through fun activities and family involvement. Children attend the Turtle Camp and learn about making goals for themselves. One kid in particular camp to camp overweight and led a sedentary lifestyle. Now at 14 years old, he has qualified for US Nationals in Freestyle Wrestling. He learned the importance of setting goals and increasing physical activity to improve lifestyle. Attached are more statistics on the positive outcomes of Turtle Camp.



Turtle Camp is...

## A Lifestyle Intervention Program



Geared toward:

- decreasing the progression of overweight and obesity in AI youth
- providing them the necessary skills to make healthier lifestyle choices

Accomplishing these goals through nutrition, physical activity, and diabetes education.



Turtle Camp is included in several other programs at the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic. One program looked at physical activity for diabetes prevention among youth as a best practice.

**B2: Best Practice: Physical Activity for Diabetes Prevention and Care**

*B2.1: Target Population:* OKCIC patients with or at-risk for diabetes and their families.

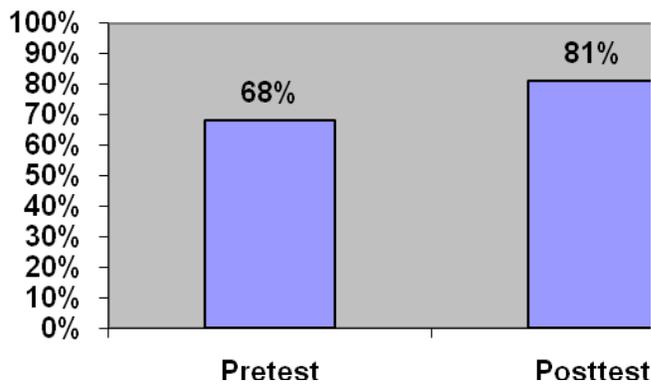
*B2.2: Goal:* Provide support for lifestyle changes in physical activity and nutrition.

*B2.3: Objectives/Measures for Best Practice*

**Objective 1:** To increase by 10% diabetes and diabetes prevention knowledge of American Indian children ages 7-12 years old who attend a youth wellness camp, Teaching Urbans Roads to Lifestyle and Exercise (TURTLE) Camp, by the end of third day camp.

**Measure 1a:** Evaluate pre- and post-test scores within one month of each event.

**Pre and Post Test Scores**



This graph above is one example of the significant improvement seen in knowledge at Turtle Camp. Every camp has similar results with significant improvement in knowledge.

Below are statistics for BMI from 2007 and 2008 for Turtle Camp.

## **Comparing BMIs of 2007-2008 TURTLE Camp and TURTLE Camp Reunion**

<b>Camp - Reunion</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>t Value</b>	<b>Pr &gt;  t </b>
<b>Mar07 Camp- Sept07 Reunion</b>	11	10	1.11	0.2927
<b>Jun07 Camp – Jan08 Reunion</b>	18	17	-1.70	0.1070
<b>Jul07 Camp – Jan08 Reunion</b>	20	19	-4.53	0.0002
<b>Oct07 Camp – Apr08 Reunion</b>	19	18	-2.99	0.0079

**Above shows a graph that represents 50% of the kids that participated reduced their BMI.**

As part of the Turtle Camp program, several other programs have been developed and implemented.

**Project POWER:** Of the 34 kids that participated since the fall 2009 in the after school program, over 85% reduced their BMI % at the end of 8 and 12 weeks.

**Youth Fitness Program:** currently have 50 kids enrolled in the program. The kids, 8-17 participate in bi-monthly bike events. Each bike night, the kids ride 8-10 miles. The parents are also encouraged to attend. Several bike or walk during the evening bike program. We have also partnered with Chesapeake Energy and Rock town to host several kayaking and indoor climbing events. This program encourages physical activity.

***Turtle Camp was funded in previous years, but now Turtle Camp is NOT funded. Through partnerships and community support, we are able to provide the children with small programs. Funding is necessary to continue improving the lives of many more Native youth.***

# Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Eagle Series Books

The CDC provides a series of 4 books written on a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level. These “EAGLE SERIES” books deal with diabetes prevention, on a level children can understand. The books also encourage a return to traditional ways including physical activity and healthy eating. The books feature native children being taught by wise animal characters.

The CDC Native Diabetes Wellness Program has a travelling exhibit of the original artwork. I have participated in their Eagle Series events providing role modeling and physical activities.

The locations that I have traveled to with the CDC include; the Pueblos of New Mexico and New York City. In the Zuni Pueblo we had approximately 800 students ages 3-12 participate.





**Because the books are available free of charge they are a great resource for me to use when I visit Native communities. I have done personal visits to; Sissiton, South Dakota, Tucson, Arizona and various locations in Oklahoma. While there I hand out the EAGLE BOOKS and talk to students about making healthy choices.**

**A great example of a program was held in Sissiton, South Dakota. The Indian Health Services invited me to come and visit their local schools. While there I met with students at the public school, the Tribal school, the tribal head start and a small rural school. Being able to meet with students face to face and engage them in conversation is very important.**

# The Eagle Books: Stories about Growing Strong and Preventing Diabetes

The Eagle Books are a series of four books which are brought to life by wise animal characters Mr. Eagle and Miss Rabbit and a clever trickster, Coyote, who engage Rain That Dances and his young friends in the joy of physical activity, eating healthy foods, and learning from their elders about health and type 2 diabetes prevention.

The Eagle Books were authored by Georgia Perez of Nambe Pueblo, and illustrated by Patrick Rolo, Bad River Band of Ojibwe, Wisconsin and Lisa A. Fifield, Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, Black Bear Clan.

The first book, *Through The Eyes of The Eagle* introduces the characters of Mr. Eagle and Rain That Dances, the American Indian boy he befriends. Mr. Eagle reminds the young boy of the healthy ways of his ancestors.

In *Knees Lifted High*, the second book, Rain That Dances introduces Thunder Cloud, his best friend, to Mr. Eagle who encourages the boys to be physically active every day.

The third book, *Plate Full of Color*, introduces Miss Rabbit and the boys' friends, Little Hummingbird and Simon. Miss Rabbit teaches the value of eating a variety of colorful and healthy foods. *Tricky Treats*, the final book in the series, introduces the character of Coyote, a trickster, and encourages children not to be tricked by coyote when choosing foods to eat.

The Eagle Books are available through:

**CDC**

Free single copies of the Eagle Books are available from CDC by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

**American Indian and Alaskan Native Programs**

For programs serving Native American children, the Eagle Books are available through the Indian Health Service <http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Diabetes/RESOURCES/Catalog/rde/index.cfm>

**Public Health Foundation**

The books are available for a cost-recovery fee from the Public Health Foundation by calling 877-252-1200, or visit [www.phf.org](http://www.phf.org).



# Diabetes Primary Prevention among American Indians and Alaska Natives

## *An Overview of CDC's Native Diabetes Wellness Programs' Projects*

### **Eagle Books**

☑ The Eagle Books are a series of four books brought to life by wise animal characters who engage a young boy and his friends in the joy of physical activity, healthy eating, learning about traditional ways from elders, and preventing type 2 diabetes in Indian Country.

☑ Several years ago tribal leaders guided CDC to focus on youth. Leaders recommended an emphasis on:

- Stories about diabetes—the disease was almost unknown among American Indians and Alaska Natives before the 1950s, so there were no stories about diabetes.
- Traditional culture as a source of health and reaching children with messages about the healthy foods and activities of their people, involving elders in the teaching and integrating the messages through schools.

☑ Following the guidance from tribal leaders, CDC's Native Diabetes Wellness Program collaborated with the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee and Indian Health Service to create the Eagle Books.

☑ The series was written by Georgia Perez who lives in Nambe Pueblo, NM and was a community health representative for 19 years. The artwork is the product of Native artists Patrick Rolo (Bad River Band of Ojibwe, Wisconsin) and Lisa A. Fifield (Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, Black Bear Clan).

☑ Over 2 million books have been disseminated in Indian Country and the rest of the U.S.

- Bulk supplies of the books are free to American Indians and Alaska Natives through IHS
- Single copies of the books are free to everyone through the CDC Web site or 800 number
- The books have been translated into Native languages, including Chickasaw, Paiute, Shoshone, Spanish, and the Creek Council is currently translating the books into Creek.

☑ Original artwork from the books is currently traveling the country in an exhibition entitled:

*Through the Eyes of the Eagle: Illustrating Healthy Living for Children.*

- The tour kicked off at the Smithsonian's Nation Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC and New York, NY.
- I participated in outreach to school groups and families at two venues, including the Smithsonian and the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in New Mexico.

☑ Eagle Books Community Campaign materials are available to interested tribes such as Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (Ojibwa) in Michigan and Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in New Mexico, who have already hosted community and school events.

☒ A K-12 school curriculum, *Health is Life in Balance* Diabetes Education in Tribal Schools (DETS) was released in 2008, and the Eagle Books are part of the K-4 curriculum. This project was led by the National Institutes of Health, supported also by CDC and Indian Health Service. Eight Tribal Colleges and Universities developed the curriculum which is being adopted by many schools across the country.

## Traditional Foods Grants

☒ In 2008, The CDC's Native Diabetes Wellness Program awarded Traditional Foods grants to 17 tribes.

☒ The five-year grant is titled *Using Traditional Foods and Sustainable Ecological Approaches for Health Promotion and Type 2 Diabetes Prevention in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities Project*.

☒ The grants focus on issues tribal leaders identified as priority areas:

- Preventing type 2 diabetes in youth;
- Encouraging renewed interest in traditional ways, including stories about health; and
- Sharing stories about health.

☒ CDC is working with tribes to support their efforts to emphasize traditional foods and physical activity because traditional culture is a source of health.

- Foods such as berries, squash, beans, corn, and fish are healthy foods and the related physical activity in gathering, harvesting, and preparing these foods goes hand in hand.

Young boy learning to cut arrow shafts from rough leaf dogwood

☒ In many communities, elders are working with youth to teach gardening and other traditional activities, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering berries and wild plants.

☒ The tribes are growing and gathering foods using traditional ecological approaches with a long view towards sustainability.

JUNE 2008

Department of Health and Human Services Indian Health Service Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention

<http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/diabetes/>

## Diabetes in American Indians and Alaska Natives:

### Facts At-a-Glance

#### U.S. AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE POPULATION

3.3 million	Number of American Indians and Alaska Natives in 2007 (according to the U.S. census)
561	Number of federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes

#### DIABETES IN AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES

16.3%	Percent of American Indian and Alaska Native <b>adults</b> who have diagnosed diabetes (compared with 8.7% of non-Hispanic whites)
1,758	Number of American Indian and Alaska Native <b>youth</b> under the age of 19 who have diagnosed diabetes (2005)
68%	Percent increase in diabetes from 1994 to 2004 in American Indian and Alaska Native youth <b>aged 15-19 years</b>
95%	Percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives with diabetes who have <b>type 2 diabetes</b> (as opposed to type 1 diabetes)
30%	Estimated percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives who have <b>pre-diabetes</b>
2.2 times higher	Likelihood of American Indians and Alaska Natives to have diabetes compared with non-Hispanic whites
58%	Increase in diabetes prevalence among American Indians and Alaska Natives aged 20–29 from 1990 to 1998, as compared with 9.1% in the U.S. general population
3 times higher	Death rate due to diabetes for American Indians and Alaska Natives compared with the general U.S. population (2004)

# Make a Splash

As a competitive swimmer I saw the benefit that swimming can provide Native Americans. I believe swimming offers communities the opportunity to have fitness programs for all age groups. Also, the need for swim lessons is important due to Native Americans having the second highest drowning rates of any minority. I have numerous swim clinics that incorporate exercise, eating healthy and staying tobacco free.

USA swimming offers resources to communities that help them implement water safety programs.



*Make a Splash* is a national child-focused water safety initiative created by the USA Swimming Foundation to save lives.

The *Make a Splash* goal: for every child in the US to learn to swim.

This initiative exists because nine people drown each day in the U.S., and in ethnically-diverse communities the youth drowning rate is 2-3 times higher.

It works by aligning the nation's top learn-to-swim resources in an effort to save lives. *Make a Splash* educates parents through a national awareness campaign, saves lives by joining forces with grassroots learn-to-swim programs and reaches thousands of children each year.

In its first 3 years of partnering with local swim lessons providers, *Make a Splash* has created a network of 222 Local Partners in 42 states.

Those 222 partners have enrolled more than 350,000 children in their lessons in the first 3 years.

*Make a Splash* dollars have provided scholarships for over 16,100 children into those lessons.

Because the Native American population is one of the least represented by percentages in swimming, we have begun to network in the Native communities. USA Swimming Diversity Membership Specialist, Manny Banks, attended the National American Indian and Alaska Native Child Care Conference, Tribal Child Care: Recognizing Our History, Honoring Our Achievements, Preparing Our Future (May, 2010 in Anaheim), and the 2010 CAN-AM Native American Swimming Championships just this weekend (June 26-27, 2010 in Hardin, MT).

Swimming is a family sport that can be enjoyed by young and old alike and promotes a healthy lifestyle which can mean lower rates of diabetes, obesity and heart disease. And finally we realize there are few Native Americans involved in competitive swimming in the US and Canada.

Children who have a swimmer as a role model are twice as likely to become swimmers themselves. Olympic gold medalist Cullen Jones has made a huge impact in the African American community. We hope to identify and encourage promising Native American swimmers to become role models and go on to become future members of the US and Canadian Olympic swim teams. We want Native American swimmers on our Olympic swim teams.”

While competitive swimming is a great sport, it is only one avenue for kids who learn to swim. Caitlin Baker is a phenomenal ambassador for youth fitness in the Native Community. She understands that learning to swim is not only a life-saving skill; it can lead to a lifetime of fitness. We applaud her efforts and look forward to partnering with every community she has the opportunity to reach, so that the Make a Splash water safety initiative can support all children in learning to swim.

By joining efforts and working together, we can make a difference in the drowning statistics and rates of diabetes and childhood obesity.

# PATHSTAR

In 2009 I participated in PATHSTAR'S annual swim from Alcatraz Island to Shore. San Francisco Pediatrician, Nancy Iverson developed the PATHSTAR program to bring Native Americans from the Pine Ridge Reservation to San Francisco. While in the program participants are taught how to eat healthy and exercise. The week long program ends with the 2 mile swim from Alcatraz Island to shore. Below is more information on this wonderful program.



## MISSION

PATHSTAR is committed to revitalizing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health among Native American individuals, families, and communities by inspiring practices that contribute to self reliance and well-being.

We do this through our intensive week-long educational and experiential San Francisco-based Alcatraz swim program, through support and advocacy in overcoming geographic, economic, and political obstacles for culturally relevant and sustainable community practices regarding diet and lifestyle choices on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, and through programs leading to mentoring and role modeling that reinforce the benefits of meeting challenges and inspiring healthy change.

## VISION

Imagine Native Americans, both on and off reservations, living healthy lives of meaning and purpose, reclaiming the best of indigenous traditional practices, augmenting these with the cultivation of wholesome 'new traditions' and serving as a catalyst for inspiring self-reliance and optimism among families and communities. Imagine individuals and families demonstrating the resourcefulness that grows from the experience of having personally met challenges and accomplished goals while embracing their cultural values and wisdom and contributing to education and community development.

Imagine the incidence of diabetes and heart disease among Native populations being as low as it was when the Northern Plains Indians were regarded as the healthiest in the world. Imagine every child completing high school, whether in reservation or non reservation schools. Imagine support systems strong enough that individuals, families and communities meet adversity with dignity and self-reliance.

That is the PATHSTAR vision.

# Native Nations Sports Association

The Native Nations Sports Association is a program that incorporates mentorship. I believe this program will continue to grow and be a positive influence in Indian Country.

## Business Plan

Building a multi-generational legacy of change in a family and/or community structure starts with a strong foundation reinforced by the sustained hopes and dreams of the younger generation. The perception of hopelessness has hindered their ability to dream. Perceptions need to change. NNSA – Hero Development Organization (NNSA-HDO) is poised to change that dynamic.

*We develop and manage programs that foster, encourage, develop, enable, promote and monitor Native American student athletes who have (and seek) the merit, passion and dream for a higher degree of learning; to compete and succeed at the collegiate level.*

NNSA-HDO believes visible and interaction with local heroes is critical to sustained community development. Heroes inspire Hope; Hope fosters Dreams; Dreams motivate individuals; Individuals achieve success. NNSA-HDO is primarily a youth development organization, to provide the resources necessary for student athletes to pursue and achieve success at the college and professional level.

*We lead an innovative alliance partnership of professionals and providers, accountable to: the advancement of student athletes' higher standards of self-worth; the development of a sustainable resource network to strengthen family unity; and building skilled leaders for a stronger community.*

NNSA-HDO is developing a sustainable partnership network; to implement and manage integrated academic, athletic and social programs that focus on student athlete advancement as well as the external social issues impacting Native American communities. NNSA-HDO understands the importance

of numerous experts working together and its initial role to orchestrate the alliance but we realize it is the family that makes a home and homes are the foundation of a strong community.

*We support scholarship participants' continual development and assessment through a coordinated network of education, athletics, health & nutrition, vocational, life skill and career mentorship programs that stimulate multi-generation community involvement opportunities for sustainable economic development.*

The community service and interaction of local NNSA-HDO heroes are the windows for others to see a positive view of the future. Participants in the programs shall incorporate the importance of maintaining culture and heritage on and off of tribal lands while pursuing dreams for success.

The concept of sustained Hero interaction in conjunction with a national alliance partnership network is the first of its kind for Native Americans youth, families and their communities.



# TOBACCO CONTROL

I have worked closely with various tobacco control programs, such as; SWAT (students working against tobacco), Cleveland County Tobacco free Coalition and Tobacco Free Kids. I feel strongly that diabetes prevention and a tobacco free lifestyle need to be working hand in hand. I have included some basic statistics about the connection of diabetes and tobacco use.

- The evidence shows that people who smoke are more likely to get diabetes. According to a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, smoking 16 to 25 cigarettes a day significantly increases your risk for Type 2 diabetes.
- Smoking also causes other health problems that are known to cause diabetes, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure.
- Nicotine consumption not only increases blood pressure, but it also increases the amount of bad fats circulating in the blood vessels and decreases the amount of good fat available – another factor that increases a person’s likelihood of getting type 2 diabetes.
- For those who already have diabetes, smoking greatly increases their risk of related health complications.
- For example, having diabetes or pre-diabetes puts you at increased risk for heart disease and stroke. And smoking further increases that risk. In fact, smoking 1-5 cigarettes per day presents a significant risk for a heart attack. Higher blood pressure—a result of smoking—requires that the heart pump harder in order to overcome the opposing pressure in the arteries. This increased work, much like that related to increased heart rate, can wear out a heart faster.
- Diabetes is the most common cause of kidney failure, accounting for nearly 44 percent of new cases. But smoking further increases a person’s risk of kidney damage because the higher blood pressure caused by smoking can also cause organ damage where blood is filtered, such as in the kidneys.

Sources:

- <http://www.diabetes.org/news-research/research/access-diabetes-research/quitting-smoking-may-raise.html>,
- <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0264.pdf>,
- <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/stroke/index.htm>
- <http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/160/2/158>