

# [Press Release: NCUIH 2016 Recognition Dinner Honors Native Health Leaders](#)

Category: Press Release

written by NCUIH | May 5, 2016

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San Manuel Band of Mission Indians' support helps recognize practitioners using culturally grounded approaches in collaboration with modern health practices

ALPINE, CA—The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians has awarded the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) a grant to support the 2016 Pendleton Blanket Recognition Dinner, to be held on May 12, at the 18th Annual NCUIH Leadership Conference, Viejas Casino & Resort in Alpine, California. This generous contribution from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians enhances NCUIH's ability to address key health issues facing American Indian and Alaska Native people living in urban areas, and helps NCUIH recognize Native health leaders.

The NCUIH will recognize American Indian and Alaska Native health leaders and medical practitioners who exemplify effective use of culturally grounded, strengths-based approaches and interventions, in collaboration with modern practices of health, education, and medicine, to improve the health and well-being of urban Indians. This year's honorees are Donald Warne, M.D., director of the Master of Public Health Program at North Dakota State University, and Joe Bulfer, CEO of the San Diego American Indian Health Center. By recognizing Native health leaders and their contributions to the well-being of urban Indians, the award acknowledges the importance of integrating traditional and culturally competent practices with overall health strategies to treat the whole person. These holistic approaches to addressing mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and well-being are proven to have the best outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native patients, but are not fully embraced by modern health care systems.

"One of the most important aspects of Urban Indian Health Programs is our cultural strength," says NCUIH Board President Donna LC Keeler. "At a recent meeting and workshop the discussion of 'what is culture' became very dynamic and powerful. It is very hard to actually pinpoint a definition of culture - it is more powerful to view the concept of 'how' you provide culturally sensitive care, rather than 'what' you provide. To me culture competency is like the wind—you can't see it, but you feel it; you know when it is there and when it is not. It is hard to describe but you know it is real."

Increasing awareness and educating health care providers and funders about the benefits of traditional, knowledge-based approaches are crucial to promoting their increased use and encouraging greater federal funding to incorporate them into health delivery systems

## **The Honorees**

**Donald Warne, M.D., M.P.H.**, the national honoree, is the director of the Master of Public Health Program at North Dakota State University and senior policy advisor to the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board. Dr. Warne is a member of the Oglala Lakota Nation from Pine Ridge, S.D., and comes from a long line of traditional healers and medicine men. He has a proven commitment to

advancing American Indian and Alaska Native wellness through his advocacy for using science and ethics to improve Native public health; incorporating traditional holistic practices that treat the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual condition; and focusing more investment on preventive care to keep people healthy rather than waiting to treat them when they are sick.

**Joe Bulfer**, the local honoree, is CEO of the San Diego American Indian Health Center and has 30 years of experience promoting quality American Indian and urban Indian health care. Under his leadership, San Diego's urban program has nearly doubled the number of clinical visits provided each year and increased the number of patients served by 60 percent, while consistently serving a majority of Native patients. Mr. Bulfer has been a NCUIH board member for the past three years, and has been a strong advocate for Native health during federal budget appropriation committee hearings on tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and Indian Health Care Improvement Act amendments.

### **About NCUIH**

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is a national 501(c)(3) organization devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally competent health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives living in urban settings. Members include urban Indian Health organizations and providers across the country. One member organization, Native American Lifelines in Baltimore, was recently featured in two news pieces that recognize the unique experiences urban American Indians face in today's society.

An article in the Native Health News Alliance, highlights Lifeline's youth programming as a way for youth to heal from the toxic stressors they face in urban communities. Lifelines was also featured in PBS's Frontline's story, "Chasing Heroin: How the Heroin Epidemic Differs in Communities of Color." Lifelines provides positive cultural experiences, including indigenous gardening and adult mentoring, to combat cultural loss and renew self-identity, delivering trauma-informed care specific to and informed by the unique experiences of urban American Indians