

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON NATIVE
AMERICAN MINISTRIES (CONAM)

INTRODUCTION

The 2016 Book of Discipline, Paragraph 654, page 491, state “There shall be an annual conference committee on Native American Ministries or other structure to provide for these ministries and maintain the connectional relationships.” The purpose of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Native American Ministries Committee is to start and strengthen the Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CCONAM) in the ten conferences of the Northeastern Jurisdiction. At this time, nine of the ten have been established. In order to keep them sustained, continued training and relationship building are needed.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PURPOSE OF THE CONAMS

Each CONAM should be aware of the issues, needs, gifts, and talents of the Native people, tribes, organizations and communities within their Conference. In this way, the Committee is able to work with Native peoples and communities as well as the Conference and the general church.

1. Committee Composition

Committee membership should include United Methodists and Native people within the boundaries of the conference. The majority of the membership must be Native Americans. It is important to have as many Native people on the committee as possible regardless of religious affiliation. If possible, include youth and young adults. Pastors of Native American churches regardless if they are native or non-native should be invited to the meetings. A representative from the United Methodist Women (UMW) should also be invited to the meetings as they work on issues related to families, women and children. It is important to have conference staff attend the meetings, such as the Director of Connectional Ministries (DCM), the treasurer, and at least one District Superintendent (DS), especially from district(s) with a large Native American population. The DCM or the conference could designate a liaison between the conference and the committee; the Treasurer could share how much money from Native American Ministries Sunday (NAMS) was raised, how much was kept, and what amount was sent to the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCF&A) and the DS could give updates to the other DSs at the Cabinet meetings. The Bishop should always be invited to attend the meetings.

When first established, the CONAM should be approved as a standing committee at an Annual Conference and then follow the nominating process of the Conference to update the membership of the Committee.

2. Advisory Group

An advisory group could include both Native and non-native people who are supportive and willing to help, but do not wish to be a part of the committee. They could assist with relating to other organizations, fund raising, and providing expertise in skill areas such as technology and publicity.

3. Meeting Sites and Frequency (Meeting sites for the Committee)

Ideally, the Committee should meet every other month with a minimum of four meetings per year. Some meetings should be held at the Conference office to keep the conference staff informed regarding the work of the Committee as well as the issues, needs, gifts, and talents of the Native people in that Conference. Other meetings should be held in the Native community, at a United Methodist or other Indian church, Indian Center, Tribal facility, campground or historical site. If held in a non-native community, consider the use of a Library, restaurant, community center, or other denominational church. One of these meetings should be a retreat in order to plan for the next year, but at the same time, it is a time for fellowship, nurturing and relaxation.

4. Committee Purpose

The primary responsibility of the Committee is to be a resource to the Conference regarding Native American Ministries Sunday (NAMS). The Committee should have resources available for the churches to utilize. This could be done through developing worship materials, setting up a Speakers Bureau, and linking churches to available resources.

The Committee is responsible for the approval, distribution, and utilization of NAMS funds raised in the Conference.

The Committee is also responsible for insuring there is a Native American Representative on the leadership form that is completed at each Church/Charge Conference (The 2012 Book of Discipline, Paragraph 654, page 492). These names are to be submitted to the Committee to enable the Committee to have a contact in each local church for NAMS and other Native events. The committee should bring those persons together for training and to share information with them.

The Committee should review the Book of Discipline to understand its purpose, develop and periodically review its mission statement, and develop a plan of action. To do this they could invite resource people to their meeting and attend appropriate meeting and training events. They should know their sources of funding, such as NAMS funds, conference, grants, fund raising, donations, etc.

The Committee should work with the Conference staff and District Superintendents to make sure pastors fill out the form that relates to the ethnic composition of the

congregation (annual statistical report) to foster a pastor's awareness of Native Americans in their own congregations and to encourage inclusion of native Americans on District and Conference committees. The Committee should also gather statistical information about the Native population in the Conference area. They should be aware of and address the issues and concerns of Native people in the conference, such as mascots, sacred sites, justice issues, language, etc. They should be aware of the resources of the General Church that could be of assistance to them.

The Committee should work with other racial ethnic groups of the Conference and participate in group meetings or retreats when possible. This would be an opportunity to share issues and concerns, learn from one another, focus on resolutions that relate to all or a specific group, share display space and expenses at District and Conference gatherings, and most of all to learn about each other's cultures through the sharing of food, stories, music, etc. Similar activities could be planned with Interfaith and Ecumenical groups.

5. Committee Activities

---Place meetings and activities on the Conference calendar. Send meeting minutes or summaries to the supporting District Superintendent(s), DCM, and connectional table.

---Work to start and strengthen existing Native American UMCs/ministries/fellowships and outreach programs.

---Work to support Native pastors and lay servants within the Conference as well as Native people who are interested in becoming pastors or lay servants. Work with UM Seminaries in the area for resourcing and training purposes.

---Develop resources such as a brochure, resource packet, power point presentation, DVD, webpage, etc. for use on Native American Ministries Sunday and other Conference events.

---Develop a Speakers Bureau. Train individuals to speak on Native American issues and ministries at churches, District Superintendent meetings, and Methodist groups such as UMWs.

---Write articles for the conference newsletter.

---Have a Booth/Table at Annual Conference.

---Train and work with Conference entities like VIM teams, youth groups, UMW, UMM, camping ministries, etc. on how to work with and/or include Native people in their activities.

---Make a list of the Native American organizations within the Conference such as Indian Centers, Tribe, powwow committees, etc., with whom the Committee could work.

---Nominate Native people to be on Conference, Jurisdictional and National Boards and Agencies.

---Have Native people attend Conference, Jurisdictional and National events as speakers, leaders, and participants.

---Develop strategies to include Native American youth and young adults.

---Review resolutions in the Book of Resolutions which are relevant to Native Americans and develop ways to share them with Conference committees. Write and submit resolutions if applicable.

---Communicate with Native groups both within and beyond the Conference (e.g., NACP, NEJ, NAIC).

---Inform Native American individuals, churches, and groups of available scholarships and funding through NAMS and other grant programs.

---Utilize Conference Resources such as newsletters, online news, resource center, technical support, etc.

---Work with the Conference on specific ways to implement follow-up activities developed as part of the 2012 Act of Repentance.

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