



You're Invited to the Premiere
Native American Health Documentary
“Walking Into the Unknown”

Miigwech Nimishoomis gakina gegoo gaa-izhichigeyan noongom.

Miigwech adizookaanag gaa-ganaweniminingwaa.

Miigwech nookomisinaan.

“Thank you, grandfather, for everything that you do today.

Thank you, spirit helpers who look after us.

Thank you, grandmother.”

I said these things as I offered my tobacco. I am thankful for many things on this day. I am still watching the inauguration of our 44th president, Barack Obama. Who could ever have believed this day would come? My wife is of African descent on her father's side and our 10 year old son held the banner that led the Martin Luther King, Jr. march in Duluth, Minnesota yesterday. He carried his end of it for the entire march. He has a good heart and we are proud of him. When he was just a few days old, an elder held him and looked into his eyes for a long, long time. “He has a very old spirit.”

In addition, the Fond du Lac Reservation Business Committee (RBC) just gave their enthusiastic approval for us to go ahead with the premiere of the Native American health documentary we've been working on for the last 2 years. It's called “Walking into the Unknown.” It's been a long process, but it's finally finished.

This film project started at around the time I first thought of writing these articles. I have a very strong family history of diabetes, heart disease, alcoholism, stroke and suicide. This is the family history of many of my patients. When I first started working as a physician on the Fond du Lac Reservation in Cloquet, Minnesota in 1997, my wife announced that I was going to go to a doctor for a physical. I protested that I didn't have time for that and managed to put it off. Once she became pregnant

with our son, the pressure increased. Eventually, I did go in for the physical and everything was fine, but my cholesterol was up a little. I was off the hook.

Only a year later, she was after me again to go in for another physical. I protested that I had just gone for one and that everything was fine. I managed to put that one off for almost 3 years and used my busy schedule as my primary excuse. In the years that followed, I spoke at men's groups, at the medical school, at events for new parents, for elders groups and multiple other events. All the while, I was trying to get people to address their own health care and come in for exams. I was increasingly frustrated with people, mostly men, not wanting to be screened for diabetes, heart disease and cholesterol. Prostate exams and colonoscopies were out of the question for many of them. These are MEN, they do not allow anyone to stick a finger or a scope into their rectum (the actual phrases used were a little more colorful).

I watched several of them die because they wouldn't get screened. I watched them die from things that could have been prevented or taken care of if they would have come in early enough. I watched several die because I missed getting them screened because we were too busy taking care of other, more acute problems. I watched some die because they didn't

Movie Premiere *Continued*

understand what they needed to do. I watched some die because they were afraid to address their health issues.

Then, in January of 2007, my younger brother Kelly had a stroke. He was only 46 years old at the time. He had uncontrolled diabetes and had always refused to take care of it. He blamed his doctor for not getting it under better control. He smoked. He drank. He bought ten pounds of bacon just a few days before his stroke. He was always bigger and stronger than me when we were growing up. His constant anger made him a great football player. They called him “Freight Train” in high school because nothing could stop him.

His stroke did. He still can’t move his left arm and he falls easily because his left leg is weak.

Is anyone starting to see me as a hypocrite? You picked up on it faster than I did. I finally had to come to the realization that this wasn’t just me and a motorcycle anymore. I’m a husband. I’m a father. I’m a doctor taking care of my people. I couldn’t continue to hide from the same things I was seeing others suffer from. I owed it to my wife and son to make sure they didn’t have to take care of me because of something I could have avoided. I was afraid because of my family history. The film follows my journey through the health screenings all of us need. I was in a unique position to do this as a physician, as a patient and as a middle aged Native American male in denial.

Nate Maydole is a bright and rising filmmaker and our paths crossed early on. Nate immediately saw the impact this film could have and was on board from the start. The Special Diabetes Grant from the Indian Health Service provided enough money to get started. The physician I chose is a partner of mine. Even though he is not Native, I gave him tobacco, cloth and metal as gifts when I asked him to be my doctor. We went to a sweat ceremony together to start things properly. Everyone in the film volunteered their time to make sure this has maximum impact and benefit to Native people. It addresses diabetes prevention and the changes needed to live a longer, healthier life. It

has stories of loss from others.

It’s a powerful film. Not because of me, but because of what it teaches. President Obama said we need to be involved in things that are bigger than we are to effect change for our children. This film is much bigger than the people in it and we will be sending it out free of charge to all 355 American Indian Special Diabetes Programs funded by the Indian Health Service across the country. We want as many people as possible to see this film and have access to it in their clinics. We will set up other screenings of the film as needed, but this is the big one.



This I learned from our new president:

He can change the future.

I can change the future.

You can change the future.

We can change the future.

Is a future president with one of you right now? I hope so. But we need to be the change that makes it happen.

Dr. Arne Vainio

Step Out: Walk to Fight Diabetes

Date: March 28, 2009

Location: Miller Hill Mall

**For more information—1-888-DIABETES or
[http://www.diabetes.org/support-the-cause/
participate-in-an-event.jsp](http://www.diabetes.org/support-the-cause/participate-in-an-event.jsp)**

Registration Opens: 7:00 a.m.

Event Start Time: 8:00 a.m.

You could:

- Create a Team (*involves fundraising*)
- Join a Team (*involves fundraising*)
- Register as an Individual (*involves fundraising*)
- Sponsor a Walker
- Make a Donation

The diabetes team will not be creating a team, but you may see some of us walking with other teams.

Why I Want to Help

By Patricia Staine

One hot morning in July 2006, I was in my office working. I received a phone call from an aunt. She told me that my father was in the hospital and things did not look good for him. The flood of emotions from the past years hit me at that moment. I had watched my father struggle with the complications of diabetes most of my life. I heard him tell stories of low blood sugars and loss of consciousness. I remember so much. I had so many emotions rush over me because he was so young...I thought my daddy would be there to walk me down the aisle, I thought he would watch his grandson and granddaughter grow and graduate high school. I wanted him to be proud of me...proud of my family. I lost my father that month. He was 56 years old.

More recently, my father's twin brother had also struggled with complications of diabetes. After father had passed away, I felt my uncle slowly following...I felt him needing to be with his twin. But it came too soon. It happened too fast. It happened so fast that I didn't even know he was gone until it was two days too late for me to say goodbye. I had to read his obituary in the local newspaper before I even knew he was gone. My uncle lost his battle with diabetes too.

My family has a vast majority of people with diabetes. Sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and myself. I was diagnosed with diabetes in September of 2007. At first, given the struggles I witnessed, it was a death sentence to me. I was devastated and didn't know what was happening. It took a lot of comforting and education from our diabetes team at CAIR to help me understand that complications can be avoided, that early death is not the end for me. The diabetes team has meant so much to me. They have given me tools and have taught me how to make changes in my own life. Now I can help my children prevent diabetes in their lives, and help others to find a cure.

I don't want to lose any more people I love, but mostly, I want to help others. These are the reasons that I want to help. These are the reasons that I want to Step Out.

I realize that my story is not too "special" or "different" than a lot of Native American people. However, I believe that more Native people should help with the fight against this disease in Indian country. I believe that we can all do something to help our families, our communities, and our children cope with and eventually find a cure for diabetes.

Thank you—Trish



Trish and her dad

Living In Balance Newsletter

Fond du Lac Human Services

Jennifer Hall—Medical
927 Trettel Lane
Cloquet, MN 55720



www.fdlrez.com/HumanServices/medical/diabetes/main.htm



ENJOY MORE!



People with diabetes are often told to eat less and cut back! This is not the case with vegetables. You can eat more...especially more of the non-starchy vegetables like celery, peppers, tomatoes, green beans, cabbage, radishes, lettuce, cucumber, onions, spinach, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower and mushrooms. Try filling half your plate with these vegetables to help manage your diabetes.

- One cup of cooked or two cups of raw non-starchy vegetables are “free foods” because they contain so little carbohydrate and will have a minimal impact on your blood sugar levels.
- Starchy vegetables like corn, peas, lima beans, potatoes and squash contain about 15 grams of carbohydrate for 1/2 cup. You can still enjoy them...but need to watch your portion size and think of them as the bread or starchy part of your meal.

TIPS:

- For a quick “free” dish, stir fry broccoli, zucchini, or green beans with just a bit of cooking spray along with thinly sliced onions and either garlic, lemon pepper or ginger in a non-stick skillet.
- Store vegetables in a visible place in your refrigerator. Keep washed, cut, raw vegetables on hand.
- Pile sandwiches with lettuce or spinach leaves, chopped cabbage, onion, cucumbers, tomatoes and bell peppers.
- Top a baked potato with salsa or stir-fried vegetables.
- Stir raw or lightly cooked vegetables into pasta, rice, and omelets.
- Add chopped vegetables to soups, stews and pasta sauce.