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USCA to Honor Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Communities at Opening Plenary and “*Celebration of Life*” Event

September 26, 2007 – Washington, DC – The **National Minority AIDS Council** (NMAC) hosts the annual **2007 United States Conference on AIDS (USCA)**, “*One Family, One Voice, One Spirit*” set for November 7-10 at the Palm Springs Convention Center in Palm Springs, California and focuses on communities in the United States heavily impacted by, and at high risk for, HIV/AIDS.

“In recognition of the importance and value of Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities in the fight against HIV/AIDS, USCA partners with tribes in the local area to enhance the conference experience and invites tribal leaders to address participants at the Opening Plenary. This November, we feel particularly honored to be holding USCA in Palm Springs, on the land of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians,” says Paul Kawata, NMAC Executive Director. Mr. Kawata explains, “The Grand Entry planned for the Opening Plenary will alert our participants to the rich traditions of Native peoples, and the need for increased HIV/AIDS awareness in Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.”

“This Opening Plenary is an opportunity to celebrate our rich diversity as well as to increase awareness of this critical issue in our community,” says Warren Jimenez, member of the Chumash Tribe, Coastal Band and the Executive Director of the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center (NNAAPC). “We are excited to partner with NMAC, the Red Circle Project at AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), and the local host committee to be part of this celebration.”

The USCA Opening Plenary, planned in partnership with NNAAPC, the Red Circle Project at APLA, and the local host committee, will take place on Wednesday, November 7, 2007 at 8:30 am. It will honor Native and indigenous communities with a Grand Entry procession. Native and indigenous peoples are respectfully invited to join us in opening the conference in traditional and/or cultural regalia/attire during the Grand Entry. Participants can meet prior to the procession in the “Green Room” at the convention center. Arrangements to participate may be made by contacting Elton Naswood at 213-201-1311 or by email: NativeUSCA2007@gmail.com.

The local host committee will host a “*Celebration of Life*” event on Friday, November 9, 2007 at the O’Donnell Golf Course from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Spiritual communities will

come together to celebrate life, honor individuals living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, and highlight spiritual diversity and the strength of healing. Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian cultural leaders and individuals from various religious denominations will participate with a tribute. Native and indigenous peoples are invited to join us in joyous celebration.

If you are interested or have additional questions, please contact Elton Naswood 213-201-1311, NativeUSCA2007@gmail.com; or contact Jay Macedo of NNAAPC at jmacedo@nnaapc.org.