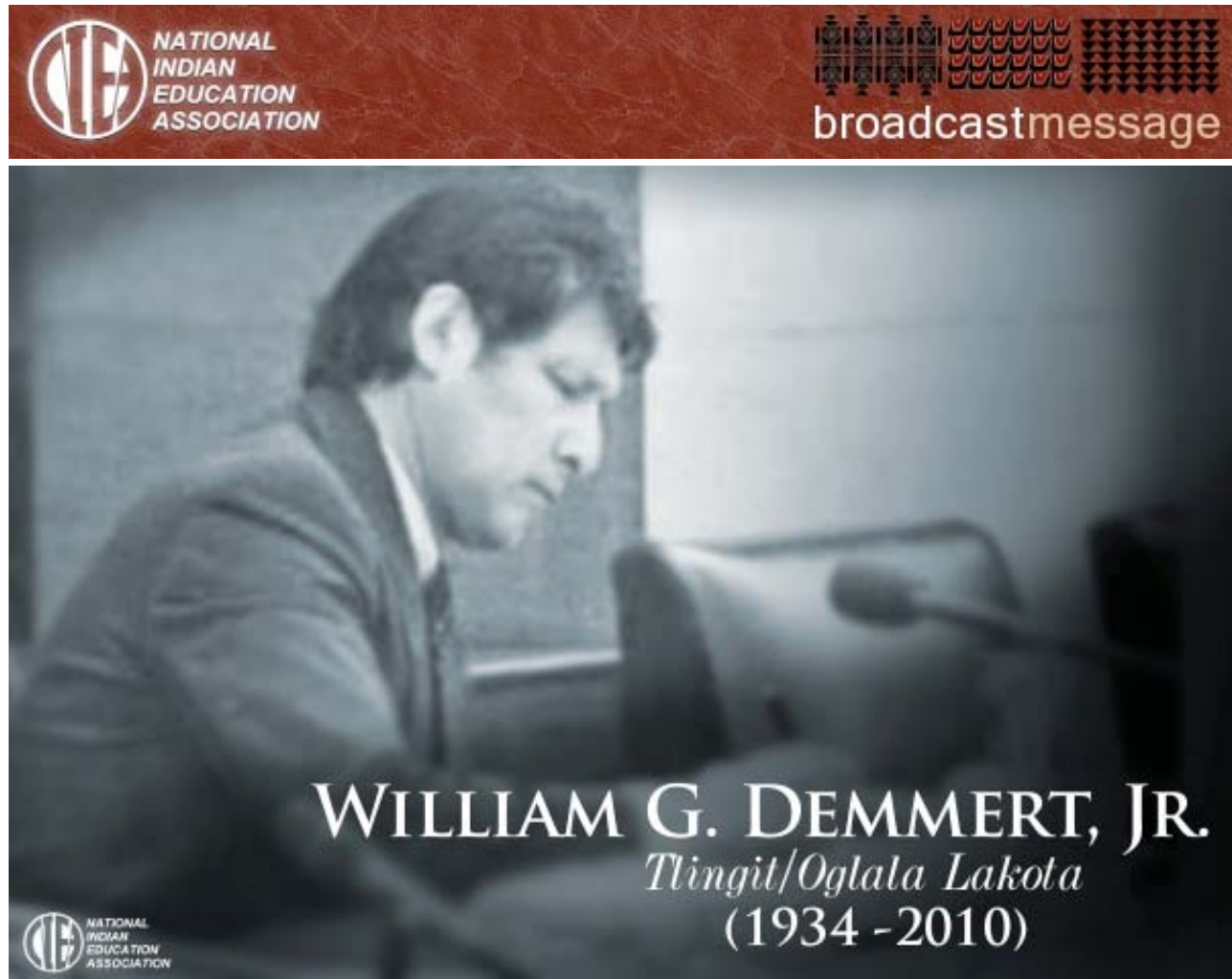


NIEA Founder, Dr. William G. Demmert, Jr. (1934-2010)

Date: 01.21.10

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On January 19, 2010, Dr. William G. Demmert Jr. (Ed.D., Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1973) Tlingit/Oglala Lakota passed onto the spirit world. NIEA is deeply saddened by the loss of one of our organization's founders and the nation's leading researcher on Native language immersion and culturally based education.

Dr. Demmert, Jr. served as a professor of education at Western Washington University. Professor Demmert is one of the original founders of the National Indian Education Association (the idea was conceived at the First Convocation of American Indian Scholars, Princeton University, in March 1970). As a member of the first Board of Directors, he designed the current NIEA logo on his way from a meeting in DC to Boston while attending Harvard University.

Dr. Demmert worked on the original Indian Education Act (P.L. 92-318) while a student at Harvard; worked on the legislation reorganizing the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Indian Education (including direct funding of schools, local hiring of faculty, and the formula that is still used for allocating funds); and was instrumental adding a Native language priority to Title III (during the time

it was known as the Bilingual Education Act), commonly known as the Puerto Rican Provision (he worked closely with Pila Wilson and Bob Arnold).

Dr. Demmert was the first U.S. Deputy Commissioner of Education for the U.S. Office of Indian Education, in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; Served as the Director of Education for the Bureau of Indian Affairs; held the position of Commissioner of Education for the State of Alaska; served President Clinton’s education transition team helping set the tone for Indian education during the Clinton administration; and worked closely with Dr. David Beaulieu who was the Director of the Office of Indian Education and Jim Kolmous, who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education on the original Presidential Executive Order. Dr. Demmert served as a member of the Independent Review Panel created by the U.S. Congress to undertake a national assessment of Title I, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments (ESEA), and other federal programs in the U.S. Department of Education, 1995-2001. He was appointed by the U.S. Department of Education (along with former Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell) as co-chair of the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force and served as the primary writer for the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force Report published in October, 1991, by the U.S. Department of Education.

He worked with the RAND Corporation on a review of the research literature on the education of Native America, an analysis of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data targeting Native American students and the Longitudinal Study of Early Childhood education. In addition, he has worked with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory as a partner on a proposed National Study of Indian Education which includes a review and assessment of the quantitative research available on the influences of language and cultural programs on the education of Native American students; a feasibility study on whether such a study is possible to carry out; and the design of such a study. Implementing the design has included a unique partnership of five Native Language immersion schools as well as a number of other culturally based education school programs along with institutional research partners. He was actively working on this effort when he passed away.

Dr. Demmert’s international activity was extensive and included serving as a co-chair of a coalition of the Ministers of Education in northern nations and has helped plan and implement a series of education seminars in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Greenland, Russian Federation, Alaska, Nunavut Territory, Northern Quebec, and the Yukon Territory in Canada. These seminars focus on ways to improve educational opportunities for indigenous students in the far north. Dr. Demmert also worked with a number of Native American schools, organizations, and tribes on ways to improve schools and schooling for Native American students. Most recently, Dr. Demmert was working with the Ministry of Education in Greenland as an advisor and overseer of their school reform effort in elementary and secondary education, as well as in restructuring their university system.

NIEA is extremely grateful for the research, dedication, and commitment of Dr. Demmert to advancing the education of Native students and thanks his family for sharing him with us for so long. Thank you Dr. Demmert- we will miss you!

