

Changing Woman Initiative Founder to End Tenure in December

September 2023



Nicolle Arthun to Leave Changing Woman Initiative Under an Innovative Decentralized Leadership Structure

The Changing Woman Initiative (CWI) has become a deeply influential and much needed nonprofit organization within Native American reservations and urban communities of New Mexico and Arizona. The work CWI brings in providing direct services in maternal and reproductive health, in renewing and reclaiming cultural birth knowledge and practices, providing nutrition to our clients, and for becoming leaders and innovators in global health policy work has allowed us to grow for the community.

Nicolle Arthun (néé Gonzales) dreamed CWI into fruition eleven years ago while working as a Nurse Midwife in her community. She observed too many Native American women struggle with navigating Western medical healthcare systems. She also saw the lack of acceptance of traditional Native American medicine/birth practices at the same time. Nicolle knew there could be a better way to center the needs of a birthing person and their families without assimilation, racism and unacceptance when bringing a loved one into this world. So she created CWI, making a powerful statement that confirms and upholds culturally supported ceremonial ways in a birth that is representative of the community they come from.

The CWI Board of Directors (Board) is a group of Native American/Indigenous leaders who have worked alongside Nicolle to create a unique and innovative organizational model that is new in the nonprofit world. However, the model is not a reinvention rather it is based on how our own tribal/Indigenous communities function and govern themselves. The CWI Board also recognizes the growth of CWI into several programs that focus on the holistic needs of a birthing family. The growth has been incorporated into the shared leadership organization model at CWI.



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As Nicolle is announcing her transition as the leader and Founder of CWI, she passes on the responsibility to the Board who have been tasked to work in tandem with the CWI Program Directors in furthering the dream of CWI. The work of CWI has greatly grown, far beyond what one person can handle; and from what we see requires a team of individuals who have a vetted responsibility for their communities. The Board and Program Directors are excited for Nicolle's journey into a new chapter in her life. In her absence, we remain committed to create a sustainable and innovative organization that always remains centered on the needs of the communities we serve.

We understand that there will be changes as Nicolle fully transitions out; however as we look ahead, CWI knows we have faith in the support, medicine, and beliefs that surround CWI. We also look forward to the new working relationship between Nicolle and CWI - a bond that is unbreakable. Thank you to our community for continuing to be in solidarity and support as we transition.

Changing Woman Initiative Board of Directors

- President - Shayai Lucero (Acoma/Laguna)
- Vice-President - Shatta Mejia (White Mountain Apache)
- Secretary - Christy Waterman (Seminole Nation/Muscogee Creek)
- Treasurer - Nicole Johnny (Dine)
- Board Member - Dr. Monica Lucero DOM (Mexica/Indigenous Mexican/Apache/Dine)

Changing Woman Initiative Program Directors

- Midwifery Director - Carolina Nkouaga, MPH, LM
- Operations Manager - Jodene Nerva-Chee (Kewa/Kwatsan), BA, MJ
- Community Engagement Director - Shannon Fleg (Dine), BS, MS



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FIRST BLOG POST

The Impacts of Racial Discrimination on Native American Birth and Midwifery

UNCERD Hearing Statement- By Nicolle L Gonzales
Founder & Midwifery Director of CWI





BIRTHING NEW REALITIES



