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And the Drum Beat Goes On: Urban Native American Institutional Survival in the 1990s

JOAN WEIBEL-ORLANDO

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1935, the Los Angeles County-based Indian Centers, Inc. (ICI) had provided a number of federally funded social services to the Native American residents of the Los Angeles Basin since the Johnson administration initiated its War on Poverty programs in the late 1960s. By the mid-1970s ICI consisted of a headquarters in downtown Los Angeles and satellite offices in Huntington Beach, Culver City, and San Gabriel Valley. It was described in 1977 as "the most widely known Indian institution in Los Angeles" and as having "existed longer and [being] more of a focal point of sentiment among [Los Angeles] Indians than any other Indian organization, past or present."[1]

Los Angeles was already a venerable institution in 1967 when the founding families of the Orange County Indian Center (OCIC) began to store their collections of food and clothing for distribution among "our less fortunate Indian friends and neighbors in Orange County" in and from John and Louis Knifechief's Stanton, California garage.[2] While both

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ICI and OCIC had begun to receive federal employment and training funds and other federal social service grants at about the same time (1968-69), the Los Angeles-based organization had always been the more heavily and diversely funded. U.S. census figures certainly influenced the initial and unequal allocation of funds to these agencies. The 1960 census count indicates that eight times as many Native Americans lived in Los Angeles County as in Orange County[3]—a difference that, although reduced to a four-to-one ratio by 1990[4] continues to characterize the proportion of Native American residents in each county.[5]

The comparatively modest, strictly volunteer, and relatively recent beginning of OCIC contrasts sharply with its meteoric rise and dramatic success as a regional ethnic social services institution in the last decade. In 1986, amid charges of fiscal mismanagement and unethical administrative procedures, the Los Angeles Indian Center, Inc. officially closed its doors. The largest, multifunctional Native American social service center in Southern California, its demise constituted a major community crisis. The means by which the largest urban Indian population in the United States and its representatives interacted with funding and service agencies at all levels of government had been truncated.

Until 1986, the Department of Labor's major Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) grant earmarked for Native Americans in Los Angeles had been awarded to ICI to administer. The ultimate success of the Orange County-based Native American service organization in the competition between the Los Angeles City/County American Indian Commission and OCIC to become the repository for this grant contributed greatly to OCIC's growth. In 1987 the organization changed its name to Southern California Indian Centers, Inc. (SCIC) to reflect its regional, as opposed to Orange County-specific, service territory. Starting in 1987 and with the Department of Labor's decision to place the Los Angeles JTPA grant with SCIC, the organization significantly increased its social service funding portfolio. With satellite offices throughout the region, by 1996 Southern California Indian Centers had become the largest, most comprehensive social service program for urban Indians in Los Angeles and Orange County.

The decade since the closing of ICI-LA and the emergence of SCIC as the area's primary Native American social service organization has been a time of continuous socioeconomic upheaval for the Los Angeles and Orange County Native American community. An initial period of organizational retrenchment was followed by political realignments and stabilization, only to be followed by further retrenchments in response to the dramatic cuts in social service grants generally and in urban Indian set-aside funds specifically after the results of the 1990 census were published.

Throughout this period of fiscal instability SCIC has demonstrated an extraordinary aptitude for institutional survival. How is it that, starting in 1995, after suffering yearly and devastating cuts in its funding portfolio, SCIC seems, like the fabled phoenix, to be able to rise from its ashes and continue to serve? How does SCIC manage to keep its social services drumbeat alive? Could an analysis of SCIC's perception of its institutional survival strategies provide an operational model for other and equally threatened urban Indian community organizations? These were the issues I had in mind when I contacted John Castillo, the longtime executive director of the Southern California Indian Centers, in October 1996.[6]

ETHNIC COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE FUNDING SOURCES IN THE 1990S

John Castillo is of Apache parentage. Born and having spent most of his life in Southern California, he earned a bachelor's degree in ethnic studies at California State University, Fullerton in 1979 and a master's in social work from UCLA in 1981. A former Kellogg Institute fellow, he was working on a Ph.D. at the Fielding Institute in Santa Barbara, California when we met on January 22, 1997.

John began building his career in the urban Indian community as a social services provider within a few years of receiving his master's degree. From 1984 until it was defunded in 1986, he administered the ICI JTPA program. For the next three years he served as a planner and assistant executive director of SCIC. In October 1989 he was appointed the executive director of SCIC—the post he filled at the time of the interview.

Paula Starr, then SCIC assistant executive director (and now executive director), joined John and me for the meeting. She is an enrolled member of her mother's tribal group—the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. Her father is of Chippewa and Sioux parentage. Paula moved to

Los Angeles with her parents from Oklahoma when she was still a child. She received a bachelor's degree in theater arts from the University of California, Irvine and went on to do graduate work in theater arts at California State University, Long Beach. Education, rather than theatrical performance, however, has been Paula's dominant career. As early as 1983 she was a substitute teacher in both the L.A. Unified school district and for ICI.

Paula has served the Southern California American Indian community for at least as long as has John Castillo. From 1984 until 1987 she was the American Indian Free Clinic's health education project director. In 1987 she was employed by SCIC to supervise the JTPA program at its North Hollywood site. In 1989 she moved to the SCIC Garden Grove headquarters to work as a program planner and grants administrator. With John Castillo's appointment as executive director of SCIC in October 1989, Paula, within two months, became the organization's assistant executive director.

In a casual, conversational interview that continued almost three hours, these two well-educated veterans of urban Indian organizational life shared their front lines-earned understandings as to what accounts for SCIC's impressive survival profile. The following survival strategies outline is theirs. The discussion and analysis sections are syntheses of the thoughts of the three of us about the relative utility of such strategies and their place within larger, more abstract models of organizational process and maintenance.

Both John and Paula spoke frankly about the budget reductions SCIC had faced during the past two years. John explained that the federal government's balanced budget rhetoric of the last few years had created a climate of fiscal retrenchment which eventuated in attempts to "downsize"[7] perceived vulnerable or flabby social service programs throughout the nation. Localization of funding decision-making, as a consequence of the block grant funding policy of the past decade, had created a further disruption of their organization's well-established network of national and state funding agency relations.

The unexpected under-reportage of Native Americans in Los Angles and Orange counties in the 1990 U.S. census count, however, was the most profound setback in the attempt to "grow the SCIC." John went so far as to assert that the results of the 1990 census were, in effect, a social services "double whammy."[8] The Los Angeles and Orange County Native

American population figures were considerably lower than anticipated—45,508 for Los Angeles and 12,165 for Orange County.[9] These figures represent a loss of Native American population in the two counties in the decade between 1980 and 1990.[10]

A second and equally devastating finding of the 1990 census, John Castillo informed me, was the comparative rise in socioeconomic status of those Native Americans in the two counties who did fill out and return their census forms. After a yearlong campaign by an all-Native American census task force to encourage Native Americans to fill out and return their census forms so "that our voices be heard,"[11] those Los Angeles and Orange County residents who did so were predominately from the upwardly mobile, educated, middle-class, politically aware, and active segments of the urban Native American community. The community members who would have benefited most by filing a census report were not approached by census workers, did not see the purpose in filling out the form when it did arrive, or held such antipathy for and/or suspicion of all U.S. government agencies that refusing to fill out a census form became the equivalent of a political statement and protest. As a consequence, Los Angeles and Orange County Native American individuals and families who would have been deemed below the poverty line and in need of the services SCIC provides were underrepresented in the 1990 census.

John Castillo explained that most federal funding agencies make their distribution decisions based on a formula that includes population size and documented need among their several allocation indices. The 1990 census profiles of the Los Angeles and Orange County Native American populations were apparently interpreted by federal and state funding agencies as indicating a shrinking ethnic community with fewer needs for publicly funded social services. The forces of urban migration and acculturation, as far as the social services funding agencies could determine, had worked their economic and assimilative magic for the Native American population in Southern California.

The 1990 census findings were made public in July 1992. Subsequently SCIC (as did many other social service agencies in ethnic communities) experienced sweeping cuts across most of its programs starting with fiscal year 1995. In 1997, SCIC was operating with a budget that had been reduced approximately 40 percent since 1994. Although its staff uniformly presented a confident and well-directed posture to its community, SCIC was still reeling from a continuing series of blows to its fiscal stability.

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES RUNNING A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATE TIGHT SHIP

John and Paula were convinced that solid organizational structure and sound managerial practices were crucial factors in the success and survival of SCIC. Interested in learning about SCIC's administrative style, I asked John how the relationships among the board of directors, the staff, and him worked. "The way it's supposed to work!" he returned with unanticipated energy. John explained that the staff worked with the community and him and through him to the board. And he worked through the direction of the board.

After the SCIC board of directors reached its decisions, Alma Rail (Seneca), the president of the board, informed John of them. He was then responsible for ensuring that those decisions were carried out by his staff. The executive director met with his staff every other week to communicate the board's decisions as well as to listen to staff members' suggestions about how to improve and/or increase SCIC services. Such suggestions usually found their way, via the executive director, onto future board meeting agendas.

"It works the way `non-profits' should be structured," he reiterated. A delineated chain of command—well-defined lines of communication up and down that chain—it sounded like pure, unadulterated, legal/rational bureaucracy to me.

John explained his rationale for adhering to formal administrative structure:

> A breakdown in the structure slows down the process of providing good services and programs. We ensure that this process of information flow and control takes place. [The board members][12] are the policy makers of the agency. My role, as an employee, is to follow their decisions. They tell me, as the major fundraiser and executive, what they want me to work on. They're not going to tell me how to do the day-to-day operation, how to manage the staff. The board provides the vision. My job is to implement that vision. The staff provides the front-line services. We understand each other's roles in the organizational structure and try not to

> circumvent or undermine them. It's another reason for the Center's success.

John is a firm believer in the rationality of clearly articulated divisions of labor. Paula proudly confirmed, "He's a great delegater!" John accepted his colleague's pronouncement. "It's important to learn to let go, to trust that the other person can do it, and to know who can and cannot [be trusted] to do [the job]." Paula added, "This is an area of John's expertise—keeping us on track, organizing us, assuring that we follow through on our own assignments and objectives." John, again, agreed with Paula's assessment of his administrative style. He mentioned that his Ph.D. dissertation will be an analysis of his (and others') theories about delegation of authority, coordination of those delegations, and group collaboration in the workplace based on his hands-on experience as executive director of SCIC.

Both of the executive directors readily acknowledged their considerable authority vis-à-vis the staff. They were equally sensitive to the social distance that the misapplication of that authority could produce among the staff.

> We don't want to be [so authoritative] that the people feel they can't approach us, walk into our office and talk with us. I moved furniture last week in our Carson office. I didn't have to do that. We have staff and participants that could have done that work. But I want to lead by example. [I want SCIC staff and members] to know that I'm not at a level where I can't move a desk or a chair. (JC)

Although John made a considerable effort not to distance himself from his staff, he, nonetheless, recognized his considerable authority as well as the choices he had in the manner in which he executed it. "I'm not everybody's friend. Wish I was. Sometimes, you can't be. I have the authority to fire people if I have to. I understand that negative reinforcement has to take place at times. But I'd rather not do negative reinforcement. I'm more into positive reinforcement. My preference is to reward people in a positive way [for good performance]."

Paula was unrelenting in her praise of John's excellent stewardship of SCIC:

> He's an example of what makes a director a good one. He's complimentary and supportive to our staff. We

> know he's always going to be there for us. He allows us to pick his brain. To make a difference in the community we have to have courage to do it the right way. We can all talk a good talk. But the proof is in the action. John is action-oriented. He doesn't just talk about doing [something for the community. He finds a way for us to] do it.

Agreeing with his leadership style and seeing parallels between it and the cultural values she learned as a member of her tribal community, Paula attempts to emulate it in her own staff and client interactions.

> A lot of people who come to us are homeless, trying to get back on their feet. [They may have problems with] alcohol and/or substance abuse. [We accept that and say], "OK, what's the next step?" We do a lot of hand holding, peer counseling. I'm never too busy to not talk with them when they come through my door. When the door is closed, they know I need to work. But when it's open, they can come to me at anytime.... We operate from the values instilled in us during our childhood—to ensure that the whole village and community is well. We try to do that by being positive with everyone.

Even the flurry of alternative management models of the last three decades—"organized anarchy,"[13] "loose-tight properties,"[14] and "informated organizations,"[15] or Osborne's and Gaebler's[16] insistence on the "bankruptcy of bureaucracy"—have not weakened a generally held belief in the managerial efficacy of legal/rational bureaucracy. Many still perceive it as "the most efficient, the hardiest and ... the most natural structure ever devised for large organizations."[17]

Strict adherence to the tenets of a legal/rational bureaucratic structure and administrative practices of not-for-profit public organization has become the SCIC modus operandi. John Castillo summarized it in this way: "We try to run a nice, clean, tight operation here. We don't want to be brought down by bureaucratic or fiscal carelessness as other urban Indian organizations have in the past. We try to do things by the book."

At SCIC, a subtle softening of the more rigid demands of formal bureaucratic structure has occurred in the name of adherence to Native American cultural values of equality, humility, and community cohesiveness and well-being. The SCIC managerial style, therefore, has evolved its own ethnically toned quality. The readiness of a Native American organization to accept and to function well within the tenets of legal/rational bureaucracy has to be understood in its historical context. A reading of Wallace's[18] description of eighteenth-century Seneca governing structure or Moore's[19] brilliant structural/functional analysis of Hoebel's[20] description of nineteenth-century Cheyenne tribal organization demonstrates that the efficacy of bureaucratization, as a governing and managerial form, was well established in theory and practice among Native American tribal groups before, and not superimposed upon Western European contact.

BUILDING AN OPTIMUM STAFF

"People decisions are the ultimate—perhaps the only—control of an organization.... No organization can do better than the people it has."[21] Both the executive and the assistant executive directors of SCIC have bachelor's degrees and have completed or are working toward graduate degrees. These academic accomplishments contrast dramatically with those of the Indian Center - L.A. directors and satellite supervisors of twenty years ago. Then, hiring criteria included Indian ancestry, high and positive visibility in the L.A. Indian community, a critical mass of friends and/or family who would "put in a good word for you" to hiring panels and boards of directors, and the fuzzy notions of "eligibility" and "qualifiability."[22]

In the early 1970s bachelor's and graduate degrees were considered rare and wonderful, but not necessary criteria for staff and/or executive placement in the Indian centers in Los Angeles. Today, academic credentials of executive directors are not isolated incidents or requirements only of SCIC's top management. Increasingly, applicants for mid-level service providers, program directors, and site supervisors are expected to have some college education when they apply for employment.

By 1997, the SCIC hiring process and sets of employment criteria had been fully rationalized. The executive directors' descriptions of SCIC staffing policies and procedures could be a model case in Wolf's[23] chapter entitled "Assembling the Work Force" in his book, *Managing a Nonprofit Organization*.

When openings at every level of authority occur, job announcements are broadcast throughout the community. There is a well-established and formalized application process. Applicants fill out questionnaires that elicit personal information about a number of basic employment background issues. Each question is weighted in that the number of points assigned to each question is based on the perceived importance of that quality, skill, or experience for a particular job. A staff member screens the answers for minimum hiring criteria compliance. John Castillo underscored the importance of checking out an applicant's stated work experience:

> I am particularly interested in the applicant's work experience when making a hiring decision. I like an employee having a B.A. or an M.S.W., but what [was that person] doing with it in the last ten years since he/she graduated? That's what's important. We check out their former places of employment. Too many times Indian programs have suffered because their boards of directors took people at their [written] word. You know, someone can write a good resume and give a good impression in a job interview. But you check their work record, and it's another thing. We're very thorough in our background checks. The best worker for the money has education, dedication, and experience. (JC's emphasis)

Paula did concede, however, that an applicant's education level has become increasingly important given the kinds of social services SCIC now provides:

> Job developers insist that our applicants have some college education for some, but not all, jobs. With the Indian Child Welfare employees we make sure they have their credentials. We encourage all the people we employ to finish their educations. B.A. or M.S.W.s are now becoming minimum qualifications for some of their job openings at the Center. (PS)

Applicants who survive the first screening are then asked to return to the Center for a panel interview. The panel members deliberate upon the various qualities of the interviewees and rank them according to prescribed criteria. The SCIC board of directors considers the panel determinations and the suggestions of the executive director when making the final hiring decision.

The days when tribal affiliation, family and/or personal connections, and community popularity were actual (although rarely stated) hiring criteria are clearly over. "We choose the person who is the best for the job. The Indian Preference in Hiring Act [allows us to advantage an Indian applicant]. But we operate under the assumption that we want the very best person for the job and hopefully, [he or she will be] Indian"[24] (JC).

Once hired, first-time staff members are subject to a series of orienting presentations usually given by their immediate supervisors. Slide shows and videotaped lessons regarding the operations of the programs in which the new staffer will participate are designed to orient the first-timer to other staff members, their names, the program's functions, and the role(s) they can expect to play in that process.

SCIC prides itself on its employees' loyalty. A number of staff members have worked at SCIC for ten or more years. There are a number of incentives to remain a SCIC employee. Bonuses are awarded to staff members who wish to continue their education. The executive directors have made it a policy to promote from within. Some staff members started as participants in the JTPA training program. By taking classes and attending various vocational schools, they made themselves eligible for employment and promotion within SCIC. Paula underscored the sagacity of this employment strategy by stating, "We have always seen education as a solution for our people."

VOLUNTEERISM, COMMITMENT, AND THE DEDICATION FACTOR

"I have never seen anything being done well unless people were committed."[25] Volunteerism has always been a SCIC mainstay. The philanthropic impulse of Delmar Nejo, a Diegueno, much decorated World War II veteran and tribal spokesman, and his circle of Indian friends in Orange County back in 1967, eventuated in the official formation of OCIC on February 25, 1969.[26] Today, that same impulse prompts more than four hundred Native Americans to continue to pay their SCIC membership dues and provide volunteer services to the organization each year.

Both Paula and John underscored certain altruistic and psychological factors that also contribute to SCIC's continuing viability as a social services organization. They view the continuing high level of the SCIC members' personal commitment to group goals and their willingness to volunteer time and energy toward that end as particularly critical human resources in this period of fiscal retrenchment. Board membership, for example, is an entirely voluntary endeavor. "Most [of the board members] are elderly and retired. So they have the time to do board work. Plus they have been with it since the beginning. They have a vested interest in what we do and how we do things here. They have commitment" (PS).

John Castillo concurred. "The biggest thing is that all of the board members are committed. They don't get paid. They take all of this flak from some of our community people. They take it because they care."

Volunteerism extends itself into all aspects of SCIC activity. "Ninety percent of the people involved with ongoing activities at the center are volunteers of some form or another. Even paid staff will sometimes volunteer extra time on a center project without getting paid for it. [I call it] the dedication factor" (PS).

The SCIC volunteerism spirit is most fully expressed during preparations for its annual powwow. Every member has a role to play in this activity—the largest fundraising event of the year. Once again, the roles are clearly defined.

> The Orange County Powwow has been going on for 29 years. [The executive directors'] role is to make it better, make it grow. Our board (and ours [the directors'] at the same time) is responsible for keeping it traditional so that it doesn't become a commercial thing that has no meaning. [The executive directors'] responsibility is to put the organizational elements into a powwow so that it runs smoothly and to allow more people to attend, to raise funds for our programs in a time when there are a lot of cuts in our grants. We [provide] the organizational abilities and skills.... Our board and our powwow families are involved to maintain the traditional values of our powwow. (JC)

PERSONAL JOB SATISFACTION

Both John and Paula spoke of the members' personal commitment to the Center as a major component of its continuing success. John and Paula's levels of personal commitment to SCIC equaled those of its most loyal members. The responsibilities of

SCIC executive leadership, for years, had resulted in fifty- to sixty-hour work weeks for both John and Paula. Their days usually began around eight a.m. and were supposed to end at five p.m. But staff, committee and board meetings, grant deadlines, legislative crises, weekend community activities, and "take home" work dictate involvement in Center business long past the traditional five o'clock end of the work day and Friday afternoon end of the work week.

Personal job satisfaction is the motivational factor and experience that keeps the directors and their staff at their desks long after five p.m. As John Castillo put it: "I look at it [this] way. The things that we both do help people eat, help people get jobs, help our kids get educated—that's what I'm here for. That what we are both here for. That's what the Indian Center is here for—that drives us."

Paula concurred.

> John and I [love to attend] the graduation of our GED and continuation high school students. It is a real ceremony with diplomas, a procession, [we all wear academic] robes, the dean of the school leads the procession. [There is an] invocation. We have a[n] [Indian] drum. And hearing [the students'] testimony about getting through and how many times it took them, the care [SCIC gave them]—that's what gives us the energy back, ignites us. And when we see foster children get reunited with their families, a person getting a job, [a woman] who was homeless and who now has her own apartment—that's what keeps us going.

I asked how they handled the stresses of their executive responsibilities and the threat of burn-out. John's strategy was to ignore, to rise above the negative stuff. "If you let it get to you, then it's time you stepped down and let someone else take over. You can't [lead] when the fire is gone."

Paula looked to SCIC's long-term involvement in the personal successes of its clients to fan the flames of her dedicatory fire.

> I'm glad you brought that up. I've been trying to figure out if I have been going through burn out? But a couple of

> weeks ago I ran into a woman who was homeless, an alcoholic, living on skid row when she came to us for help. She [had already gone] through one program at UAII [an alcohol and drug intervention program on [L.A.'s skid row]. From there she came to JTPA at the L.A. office. She got into our GED program. [She] got back on her feet [with the help of the] Indian Center. Now she runs a county [social services] program.… We're talking about a whole process of three years or more. We make long-term commitments to our clients. For her it paid off. When I see someone who has gone from being a skid row alcoholic to running a program for the county, I realize that this is a great process to be involved in.
>
> "[To be successful, organizations] need three things: opportunities, competence, and commitment."[27]
>
> "The psychological rewards—sense of self-satisfaction, personal altruism and community membership associated with being involved in social services provision as either volunteer or paid staff can be as equally rewarding as is the monthly paycheck [that may or may not result from that involvement]."[28]

More practical analysts than organizational theorists, Drucker and Wolf, nonetheless, both underscore the importance of social and psychological dimensions in the formation of institutional cohesion. Sections of their books are devoted to discussions of such ephemeral conditions as "organizational mission"[29] and "personnel commitment."[30] Whether or not SCIC's executive directors ever read Drucker or Wolf, they have, through experience and insightful observation, come to the same conclusions.

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS IN HIGH (OR THE RIGHT) PLACES

"Fund development is *people* development. You're building a constituency ... understanding ... support" [Drucker's emphasis].[31] Networking and information exchange at local, state, and national levels of policy development and social service funding are critical institutional survival strategies. With each new account of a budget cut we talked about how SCIC has been able to survive such an insult to its fiscal integrity. The executive directors pointed to their abilities and untiring attempts to build bridges of communication between SCIC and its funding sources as essential elements of their organization's fiscal and executive survival. In the last decade, and especially with the escalation of the mandated balanced budget rhetoric, there has been continuous debate and rumor in Washington, DC about the discontinuance of ethnic minority program set-asides. John credits, in part, his lobbying skills and knowledge of whom to approach for help in Washington and Sacramento for having saved the urban Indian component of JTPA from being folded into the national job training budget lines.

As SCIC's executive officer, John regularly telephoned, faxed, or went to call on pro-Indian legislators to deliver the following message:

> Training programs that do not acknowledge and respond to the special needs of ethnic minority JTPA participants are not culturally sensitive. Indians learn best when involved in an Indian-fostered educational environment. If the U.S. government believes its own rhetoric (all welfare recipients and, by extension, all Indians need to be brought to self-sufficiency), then those people who are not now self-sufficient must be given the educational and technological skills necessary to make them competitive in the current job market. Employment is at the root of self-sufficiency. Political rhetoric has to be consistent with program interventions. It doesn't make sense to have cut the Indian employment programs not once but twice in the last two years and expect that Indians will still be able to gain self-sufficiency. (JC)

Apparently Castillo's continuous attempts to educate and convince legislators of the shortsightedness of the proposed amalgamation of several programs paid off. SCIC has never been threatened by total defunding of its JTPA program.

John and Paula were in touch with their contacts and supporters in Washington, DC and Sacramento at least weekly. During periods of a bill vote or when threatened by program cancellation, however, the executive directors were on the phone daily to their legislative contacts. Both of them have presented white papers or delivered speeches to the state and federal legislators on behalf of proposed or threatened Indian set-aside programs. They attended information-sharing conferences at local, state, and national venues at least two and often more times a year. They dealt with legislators, program directors, and attorneys on a daily basis.

> It's a[n educational] process. [We] provide the linkages [between SCIC's board of directors] and the legislators. It's our job to build this network. We keep [the legislators and SCIC board] informed about issues and concerns. We also provide suggestions to them [about] programs we offer or things that are coming up that we'd like to see for our community. We try to keep them as informed as possible. (JC)

Paula offered a detailed description of the way in which John responded to the information that the Bureau of Indian Affairs no longer wanted to fund urban Indian components of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

> John said, "Okay, it's time to do some letter writing." We contacted the attorneys for the Senate Select Committee and said, "Here's a memo from the BIA that says they want to take that money and turn it into conference fees, training conferences. That's not in line with what the senators had agreed upon. They had passed the bill specifically for the urban Indian populations." If it hadn't have been for John's ... letter ... and that he faxed it around, none of the urban programs would have gotten any money.

Networking, they both conceded, is a never-ending process. The California State Assembly is especially vulnerable to network breakdown.

> California's new limited term appointments are [a case in point]. Every time there is a change of legislator or staff we have to go back in there and reeducate the new legislators. Richard Katz is retiring this year. A speaker for the California Assembly, he has always been a very strong supporter of Indian programs. He's leaving office this year because of the limited terms [proviso]. There are other individuals as well. So we have to continually go back, reeducate, establish a new rapport. (JC)

The SCIC executive directors are both reactive and proactive in their attempts to maintain their far-flung network of political supporters. An Indian education bill was due to be debated on the U.S. Senate floor sometime during the 1997 spring session.

> [We] Indian educators met a week or so ago [and decided] "Let's pool our moneys, [call a] strategy meeting, [do some] fact finding, [find out] who's friendly with whom, talk to the person who is going to introduce the bill on the senate level." Yes, you have to have friends. We have to be the ones to say, "This is our concern. This is what we are worried about." [The legislators] need [to be] educated by us about the special needs of American Indians because they really don't know. (PS)

BEING POLITIC AND "PLAYING THE GAME"

These networking strategies (identification of potential advocates in position to shape policy, the implementation of strenuous lobbying efforts, and ongoing re-education) little resemble the American Indian Movement's (AIM) property-destroying occupation of the BIA offices in Washington, DC and its several politically motivated "camp-ins" and "takeovers" of the late 1960s and early 1970s.[32]

John Castillo, clearly, is an advocate of artful persuasion rather than strong-armed, ethnically toned, political confrontation.

> In order to get to [a desired] goal, you just don't go in there and knock a door down. There are other ways to go about it—and be sophisticated about it. Other ethnic groups have done that and have achieved certain goals. [Now] we just have to be even better [at it]. (JC)

> I just call it "playing the game."... The game is knowing who's friendly with whom, who's educated [about Indian affairs] and knows that there is a history [of U.S. and Native American political relations], that we're dealing with treaties and peoples' histories. And we have to play *their* [Starr's emphasis] game. (PS)

> The fifth general basis of power derives from access to those who [control] the other four (resources, technical skills, a body of knowledge and the rights or privileges to impose choices).[33]

Networking, information dissemination and retrieval, and alliance building are essential building blocks of power, control, and institutional viability. The SCIC executive directors had raised the practice of these skills to high art. The lesson to be learned here is that no service institution can survive in isolation. "Getting the message out" and "making friends in high places" are vital survival strategies and are best learned through their continuous practice.

DOING ALMOST AS MUCH WITH SUBSTANTIALLY LESS

"For the last four years since the findings of the 1990 census were fully realized we have been in a defensive posture. We dug in, moved back, did not hire other people when staff left. We consolidated [our efforts]. We prepared ourselves for the time when the monies would be less" (JC). SCIC's initial response to the funding cuts of 1995 was to reduce its physical plant and service locations. The board of directors agreed to consolidate the Van Nuys facility into the L.A. office early in 1996. Around mid-January 1997, the Carson site was closed and its service programs relocated to the Commerce office. "This way SCIC still provides some services to the South Bay area without the luxury of having an office there," John explained.

Other overhead reduction strategies have included the search for "free" space (city and county facilities, churches, peoples' homes) around the basin and especially in the South Bay. Historically, and because of the dispersed residential patterns of the Southern California urban Indian population, the Indian centers have maintained a number of "easy access" equipped vans. The expense of maintaining this resource has prompted SCIC to advocate the use of public transportation by its members and program participants and to reduce its van fleet.

The decision to reduce its physical plant allows SCIC to use the larger portion of its reduced budget for direct services. Cutting costs, however, did not end with physical plant reduction. The directors and their staff researched alternative (less costly) education venues for their clients.

> [The people enrolled in our] employment training programs might not go to the schools with three to five thousand dollars tuition to which we normally [sent them before the funding cuts]. We [are now working with] schools like the Regional Occupational Program or the Federal Skills Centers. We still provide the education but not at the same expense as before. It may take a little longer [for the student to complete his/her education], but they're still getting [it as well as work] experience. We're looking at more cost-effec-

> tive processes to help our people.... Actually we are servicing, more or less, about the same number of people, we just cut our overhead. (JC)

Although the executive directors valiantly tried to put a positive spin on their current service delivery capabilities, it was clear that the system was being stressed. The funding agency rhetoric encouraging social service programs to find ways to do "more with less" seems cruelly overly optimistic and simplistic. In actuality, SCIC can now do only almost as much with substantially less.

YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW WHEN TO HOLD 'EM AND WHEN TO FOLD 'EM

The current funding climate forces SCIC to make hard decisions about the cost effectiveness of continuing to offer certain underfunded programs and grants.

> There is so much bureaucratic hassle dealing with [a certain government funding agency that shall remain nameless]. For the amount of money we get from them we get more headaches than we do running a larger program run by the federal government's Department of Labor.... They monitored us so much,... [there was] so much paperwork, we said, "Take your grant back." It just got to be cost-ineffective for us to continue to provide the insufficiently funded services. (PS)

SCIC used to receive Federal Emergency Act (FEMA) grants and federal Indian shelter funds. These monies provided supplies but no funds for administering the program. John explained, "With a million dollar cut in our budget we don't have the luxury of doing 'freebies' for the government anymore. Doing vouchers for hotels when dealing with two counties took a half-time staff position. It wasn't cost-effective to continue this service. We still provide some shelter when we have the funds, but not as before."

DOING THE POSSIBLE: SHIFTING FROM SERVICE PROVIDER TO SERVICE FACILITATOR

No SCIC program component was as drastically reduced as was the BIA Indian Child Welfare Act funding. At one point

SCIC received more than two hundred thousand dollars in ICWA grants. Currently, SCIC receives a quarter of that amount. To continue to offer these critical community services SCIC uses the funds the BIA provides in conjunction with a patchwork quilt of grants from eight other funding sources to continue these much needed social services.

In the 1970s urban Indian service organizations made "separate but equal" service facilities for ethnic minorities their political mantra. In this period of retrenchment the notion of urban Indian social service organizations as cultural liaisons, gatekeepers, and service facilitators in conjunction with mainstream providers has surfaced as an expedient, rather than an ideal, social services delivery structure. Programmatic flexibility and accommodation now dictate service provision decisions.

> We coordinate and direct applicants to other, mainstream programs and services. We attempt to build on each other. For example, we have [established] a collaboration with La Plaza [a local service agency with a large Latino clientele]. We subcontract with them to do "family preservation".... Sometimes that doesn't work and children have to be placed in foster homes. Originally we thought that Indian children should only be placed in Indian foster homes. Well, today, how many foster homes do we have that are Indian? Maybe twenty. But there's over three hundred Indian children who need foster home placement. The board voted to let us train non-Indian [foster] families to be culturally sensitive. So, this way, we can place Indian children in homes where there is some sensitivity to their cultural backgrounds, expectations, behavior and needs. We have to take such steps these days. [Otherwise] these kids [would stay] on a waiting list for Indian foster homes that are not there anyway and [they would eventually] go into non-Indian homes with no cultural sensitivity training. (PS)

Doing the possible is accomplished by knowing how to make use of available general resources in creative ways. "We do a lot of referrals. With the defunding of the American Indian Free Clinic by IHS, there was a void. So we [began] to refer [community members who needed medical treatment] to the Irvine Medical Center and to clinics [run by] various Southern California tribes." (PS)

The executive directors have increased their networking activities with local service providers and suppliers. The food and toy distribution programs are examples of SCIC's increasing associations with local commercial and industrial benefactors. SCIC ensures its continuing relationship with local and, often, non-Indian groups through an efficient redistribution program.

The food collection efforts of SCIC's Supportive Services staff are often overzealous. Routinely, surpluses are donated to churches and other charitable organizations that serve non-Indian populations.

> We have a computer list of service centers throughout the counties that can make use of our surpluses. They can call us if they are having an event. We can give them our day old bread and other surpluses [which] they use for their dinners. That way it doesn't get wasted. And [the surpluses don't go] just to Indians. That's important and a part of our outreach to the larger community. (PS)

As with thousands of both public and private organizations and corporations across the United States, downsizing has been the perceived panacea to institutional survival in the 1990s. Downsizing took many forms. SCIC chose to maintain services, as much as it was possible, at the expense of maintaining its developed infrastructure and physical plant. The notion of entrepreneurial government[34] (and, by extension and association, social service organizations) has been introduced recently as an alternative to dependency on public funds for organizational survival. John Castillo candidly offered that "we run SCIC like a business." This operational standard has eventuated in the hard-nosed downsizing decisions just described and the creative ways in which the SCIC administrators have gone about locating new operating capital.

EXPANDING THE RESOURCE BASE

"We're at a place now where we can begin ... to build again. We've protected, as much as possible, the service structure we had. Now we can be aggressive in securing additional funds and staff and services" (JC). As SCIC's principal fundraisers, John and Paula have made a concerted effort to locate nontraditional forms of funding.

> [Our] funding strategy mode right now [is] to go beyond being dependent upon government grants and programs

> that have been established for Indians. We are transitioning into private and foundation monies, personal, commercial and industrial contributions. We even are [being funded by] the United Way and its donor designation grants. People can donate, through their place of employment, to the United Way with the stipulation that the monies are to go to the Indian Center. SCIC is now a United Way agency. (PS)

John concurred. "Four or five years ago, we didn't have any foundation money. Now we receive grants from ten foundations."

SCIC 2000: OF COSTS, CONFLICTS, COALITIONS, AND CAMPAIGNS

Urban Indian social services institutions face an uncertain future. While in 1997 SCIC was poised to take aggressive steps and innovative approaches to institutional preservation and alliance building, old and new complications and conflicts continue to impede the process.

Rural/tribal versus urban/pan-Indian program rivalries continue to thwart any potential of a rural/urban Indian united front when mounting challenges to federal and state funding policy proposals and decisions perceived as antithetical to Indian community needs. The SCIC directors continue to network with both funding agencies and rural Indian groups in attempts to maintain or develop future coalitions. They argue that 62 percent of the American Indian population now lives in urban settings. If legislators and foundations wish to have services provided to an optimum number of Native Americans, they must distribute their grants accordingly. Most legislators and foundation staff understand and are sympathetic to this argument.

Rural tribal entities, however, continue to flex their political clout. Urban and rural programs are in direct competition for an increasingly diminishing "limited good."[35] The SCIC administrators have attempted to persuade the rural tribal groups of the logic of cooperation and mutual support. They argue, "Your extended family is here in the city. And we're servicing them. We need some portion of the available social service funds to do it." Their efforts to effect a rural/urban Indian coalition, to date, have been met with limited acceptance among rural tribal groups.

Castillo saw a greater potential for alliance building with other urban Indian groups in California—a process he was able to bring to fruition around the issue of the next census count. He was adamant about the importance of convincing all Native Americans, whether in rural or (and especially) urban areas, to complete and return the census forms in the impending 2000 A.D. census count.

> All Indian groups in California should work together to get the figures up in the next census. Population figures form the basis for grant allotments. I was able to develop a coalition of California urban Indians two years ago. Two people from other Indian centers up north will be coming down in February [1997] to strategize with us about our roles in the 2000 census. (JC)

His purpose in encouraging statewide cooperation among Indian groups was twofold—to reverse the notion of urban Indian outmigration and socioeconomic self-sufficiency as suggested by the 1990 census figures and to thwart the efforts to use census figures and demographics to deny ethnic minority groups access to federal and state funding consideration.

From the executive directors' perspective, however, the more insidious threat to urban Indian social services centers in the twenty-first century is the block grant system. Federal and state funding agencies no longer fund local programs directly. Rather, grants and contracts are awarded to regional administrative agencies which then allocate funds to local service units. Service programs now have both state and county bureaucracies and more middle management requirements with which to deal as well as a larger pool of grant recipients with whom to compete for diminishing pools of money. As a result, less provision of direct services to specific ethnic communities is predicted.

The SCIC directors view the present public funding structure as both temporary and processual. With further reductions in public funding of social service programs, it is only a matter of time, Castillo and Starr fear, before full privatization of social service delivery is instated. If concerted efforts are not mounted swiftly to oppose the shift from a public to private social services venue, John predicts that for-profit social service delivery programs will be the only alternative. There is talk in Indian country about the Indian Health Service resorting to such a scheme. "They're starting to do that with the JTPA money already. There's a program like that upstairs. I was floored when I heard that it was a for-profit operation. To make money on needy people is outrageous," Paula exclaimed. John and I, shaking our heads in disbelief, signaled our shared moral indignation. At the time of the interview, the SCIC executive directors had not developed their response to the perceived for-profit services funding trend.

CONCLUSIONS

In the decade between 1987 and 1997 Southern California Indian Centers, Inc. (SCIC) developed and perfected a number of operational strategies for continuing to provide needed social services to its constituents in both Orange and Los Angeles counties despite diminished resources and increased attempts by public funding agencies to devalue and (ultimately) to defund ethnic-specific social service programs. While a number of Los Angeles-based Native American social service organizations were forced to close for lack of funding during this period, SCIC managed to sustain services to its urban Indian clients. Focal community redefinition, institutional reorganization, leadership and staff skills development, creative approaches to securing funds, building new alliances, and maintaining loyal advocates are among the institutional survival strategies which have established and sustained SCIC as one of the most successful regional social services providers and an urban Indian institutional survivor. In 1997, SCIC was characterized by its maintenance of a stable, well-delineated hierarchical structure; an able, informed, and equally stable administration;[36] a handpicked staff of capable and committed paid and volunteer community members; and an emphasis on the comprehensive delivery of needed services to a widely dispersed community.

While SCIC has successfully adopted the legal/rational organizational structures and processes demanded of block grant recipients, it retains, in important and cohesive ways, its traditional Native American community character. Respect of one's elders and their experience-derived wisdom is still a cultural imperative as illustrated by the mentor/facilitator relationship of the SCIC board of directors and its executive directors. The belief that the health of an organization (community) is the responsibility of all of its members is another dynamic of Native American community relations that remains a driving force in the maintenance of SCIC institutional integrity.

Nowhere is the subordination of individual desires to group needs more clearly demonstrated than in the SCIC members' donation of thousands of hours of service to ensure the success of their annual powwow.

Despite dark predictions about a clear and calculated shift of social service delivery to minority communities from the public to the private sector in the next decade, the SCIC executive directors optimistically continued to forge new funding campaigns and program initiatives. In January 1997 they, at the direction and sanction of their board of directors, were both involved in building a comprehensive legal aid program at SCIC. Additionally, SCIC, in alliance with other urban Indian agencies throughout California, was already planning its strategies for maximizing the number of Native Americans counted in the 2000 A.D. census. In early 1998 SCIC initiated a mobile health survey, assessment, and referral program. And in May 1998 SCIC board members, directors, staff, and volunteer members were all mapping out strategies to ensure that the 1998 powwow would be their best organized and most well-attended outreach event ever. And the drumbeat goes on....

NOTES

1. Wayne G. Bramstedt, "Corporate Adaptations of Urban Migrants: American Indian Voluntary Associations in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977), 93.

2. This information has a number of sources. In an initial phone conversation with her in November 1996, Southern California Indian Center's board president, Alma Rail, introduced me to the early history of the Orange County Indian Center. Two articles were also helpful in constructing this historical background. They include: "SCIC'S First President: Delmar J. Nejo," *in Southern California Indian Center, Inc.'s 28th Annual Powwow Program* (Garden Grove, CA: SCIC, Inc., August 2, 1996): 39, Reprinted (in part) from the *Orange County Register*, February 20, 1968, n.p.; and "History of SCIC," in *Southern California Indian Center, Inc.'s 30th Annual Powwow Program* (Garden Grove, CA: SCIC, Inc., July 31, 1998): 10.

3. United States Bureau of the Census and Department of Commerce, "Table 28: Characteristics of the Population, For Counties: 1960" in "Characteristics of the Population, Part 6 California,"*Census of Population: 1960* 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 1963), 6-196-197.

4. United States Bureau of the Census and Department of Commerce, "Table 5: Race and Hispanic Origin: 1990" in "General Population

Characteristics, California, Section 1 of 3," *1990 Census of Population* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 1992), 28-29.

5. The 1960 census indicated that 8,109 and 730 Native Americans lived in Los Angeles County and Orange County respectively (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963), 6-196-197. When the census was taken the following decade, the federal Urban Relocation Program had been in effect for seventeen years. It had had dramatic repercussions in the Native American populations of these two counties. By 1970 the Los Angeles American Indian population had tripled (24,509), and the Orange County Indian population had quadrupled (3,920) (United States Bureau of the Census, Social and Economic Statistics Administration and Department of Commerce, "Table 34: Race by Sex, For Counties: 1970," in "Characteristics of the Population: Part 6 California, Section 1," *1970 Census of Population* 1 [Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 1973], 6-310-11). In a decade the proportion of Los Angeles to Orange County Native American residents had dropped to six to one. By the 1980 census the in-migration of Native Americans to Southern California had slowed and perhaps even plateaued. There were only twice as many (47,731) Indians in L.A. as there had been when the 1970 census was taken. Interestingly the Native American population of Orange County tripled (12,282) during that period (U.S. Bureau of the Census "Table 50: General Characteristics for Selected Racial Groups for Counties: 1980" in "Characteristics of the Population, General Population Characteristics, pc80-1-B6 California," *1980 Census of Population* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 1983), 6-678, 6-681). By 1980 the proportion of Indians in L.A. to Indians in Orange County had been reduced to four to one. For the first time in four decades the 1990 census indicated no increase in Native American population in either county. In fact, there were slight losses when compared to the 1980 census figures (L.A. County = 45,508 and Orange County = 12,165).

6. John Castillo and Paul Starr generously provided most of the information about SCIC structure and operating practices during our January 22, 1997 conference, thanks to the generous acceptance of this project by Alma Rail, the president of the SCIC board of directors, and its members.

7. The quotation marks here indicate that this word is jargon used by the community of social service providers and both public and private contracting and granting institutions.

8. Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations from this point on in the article are those of John Castillo or Paula Starr. They are taken from a transcript of our conversation on January 22, 1997. In the interest of time and space, all quotation authorships will be acknowledged either in the text or by the initials of the speaker at the end of the quotation.

9. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992, 28-29.

10. See endnote 5 for the comparative population figures.

11. This phrase was the slogan of the Native American Special Task Force on the census and appeared on its community outreach materials prior to and during the 1990 census-taking period.

12. Words that paraphrase or complete a sentence when the speaker's answer was either overly convoluted, ambiguous, or incomplete are bracketed so that the reader will know that these are not the exact words of the speakers.

13. Michael D. Cohen and James G. March, "Leadership in an Organized Anarchy," *Classics of Organization Theory,* 4th ed., eds. Shafritz and Ott (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1974), 385-399.

14. Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, "In Search of Excellence: Simultaneous Loose-Tight Properties," *Classics of Organization Theory,* 4th ed., eds. Shafritz and Ott (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996, 1982), 508-512.

15. Shoshana Zuboff, "In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Limits of Hierarchy in an Informated Organization," *Classics of Organization Theory,* 4th ed., eds. Shafritz and Ott (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996, 1988), 547-560.

16. David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, "Reinventing Government: Introduction," *Classics of Organization Theory,* 4th ed., eds. Shafritz and Ott (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996, 1992), 529.

17. Elliot Jaques, "In Praise of Hierarchy," *Classics of Organization Theory,* 4th ed., eds. Shafritz and Ott (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996, 1990), 245.

18. A.F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Random House, 1972).

19. Alexander Moore, *Cultural Anthropology: The Field Study of Human Beings* (San Diego, CA: Collegiate Press, 1992), 303-309.

20. E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Cheyennes: Indians of the Great Plains*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977).

21. Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 145.

22. The quotation marks here, again, indicate that these words are jargon used by the community of social service providers and both public and private contracting and granting institutions.

23. See Thomas Wolf, "Assembling the Work Force," *Managing a Nonprofit Organization* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1990), 57-82.

24. The SCIC financial comptroller and Indian Child Welfare coordinator are the two non-Indians among a staff of thirty-five full-time and seven part-time employees.

25. Drucker, 1990, 7.

26. See the articles in the 1996 and 1998 SCIC annual powwow programs cited in endnote 2.

27. Drucker, 1990, 8.

28. Wolf, 1990, 70.

29. Ibid.,1-52; and Wolf, 1990, 290-292.

30. Drucker, 1990, 3-8.

31. Ibid., 97.

32. James S. Olson and Raymond Wilson, *Native Americans in the Twentieth*

Century (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984) still offer some of the most colorful descriptions and incisive analyses of the Native American militant movement and activities of the 1960s and 1970s.

33. Henry Mintzberg, "The Power Game and the Players," *Classics of Organization Theory,* 4th ed., eds. Shafritz and Ott (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996, 1983), 413.

34. See Osborne and Gaebler, 1996, 1992, 532-34.

35. George Foster's concept of "the limited good" is particularly salient here. The term stands for the peasant perspective that views all resources as finite and all humans as in competition for those scarce goods. Native Americans certainly view themselves in competition not only with each other (rural versus urban and county versus county cleavages), but now, with the block grant system in place, with all other recipient constituencies for dwindling public service funds. See G.M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67 (1964): 293-315.

36. In December 1998 I was informed that SCIC President Alma Rail had passed away and that John Castillo had left the SCIC. Paula Starr is now the executive director of SCIC.