

# PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

## Change Perceptions...Go Beyond Expectations

Presenter Name & Credentials: Jessica A. Rickert, DDS

Email: [jarickert@charter.net](mailto:jarickert@charter.net)

Type of Presentation: Keynote with Audio-visual aids.

Topic: Celebrate Jessica A. Rickert DDS' pathway to becoming the 1<sup>st</sup> female American Indian dentist.

### **Three Learning Objectives**

1. Learn the definition of courage and how greatness is measured
2. Expect an improved future for all humankind through the accurate understanding of American Indian history.
3. Celebrate people and their talents, perspective, experiences and cultures, as evidenced in Jessica A. Rickert DDS' personal history as a Pottawatomie Indian.

### **Presentation Narrative**

Rejoice with Jessica A. Rickert, DDS and her triumphant path to become an accomplished dentist and a powerful role model for all youth. The circuitous route began in the 1820's, when the white man arrived in S.W. Michigan. Her admirable American Indian heritage and culture is enthusiastically covered through the history of the Pottawatomie and Ojibway. Sad and arduous was the Pottawatomie Trail of Tears, having been forced to walk to Kansas. Her grandparents' trek back to Michigan is the definition of courage.

As the eldest in a family of 9, attending a small public school in the 1960's, Dr. Jessica A. Rickert excelled. She desired to attend the University of Michigan, but did not understand how this could happen. Through scholarships and perseverance, she arrived at U of M in 1968, often the only girl in her math and science classes. Accepted in the Dental School, 99% of the DDS students were white, privileged males. She did graduate in with a Doctor of Dentistry degree in 1975.

Blessed with a family who encouraged all members to excel through diligent work while giving to others, she could draw from many excellent examples in the Whitepigeon family. Attaining success in the dental profession opened many opportunities for her. Hers and her husband's dreams came true, with their wonderful, remarkable family whose success will touch generations to come.

### **Biography**

Dr. Jessica A. Rickert attended the University of Michigan from 1968 to 1975. In 1975 she established a private dental practice. From 1975 to 1982, she was the director of the dental clinic at the Children's Aid Society, a private agency for foster-care children; there she initiated programs in preventive dentistry and orthodontia as well as providing general dental services. From 2007 to 2010, she has provided general dental services for the Department of Corrections in the State of Michigan. In 2011, she was a general dentist with the My Community Dental Clinics on a full-time basis. Currently, she is a clinical dentist at the Family Health Care Organization in Michigan.

Dr. Rickert has authored a book, Exploring Careers in Dentistry, published by the Rosen Publishing Company. Her published works are many, including the Journals of the Michigan Dental Association, Society of American Indian Dentists, Association of American Indian Physicians, American Association of Women Dentists, Arizona Dental Association, DENTISTRY TODAY JOURNAL, the Prairie Band Potawatomi News and the Northern Michigan University Press. Native News Online, values her as its health advisor, consultant and frequent columnist.

She has had the honor of speaking for state and national annual sessions, professional conferences, libraries, and educational groups including universities, tribes and women's groups for over 15 years. Pleased & satisfied clients are the American Association of Indian Physicians; Northern Michigan University; University of Nebraska; A.T.Still School of Dentistry; State of Michigan; Michigan Indian Educational Council; Chicago Public Schools; Poke'gnek Bode'wadmi and other tribes; Inter-Tribal Health Board; Multi-Cultural Oral Health Alliance; Modern Dental Assisting; Michigan Women's Hall of Fame.