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Idabel Health Care Center Grand Opening

May 13, 2005
Idabel, Oklahoma

“Dedicated to the Future of Indian People”

By

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Good Morning. It is an honor to be here today to help dedicate this wonderful new health center to the service of over 7,500 members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and other Tribal members living in McCurtain County.

It is also a pleasure to be back in my home state, where I grew up and where I and my family once received our health care at IHS facilities. That experience started me on my path to where I am today, doing what I most want to do, serve Indian people. It also helped make me aware of the great health care needs in Indian country, and the need for such modern facilities as this one. Every time I get to dedicate a new facility, I feel we are getting that much closer to our mutual goal of raising the health care status of American Indian and Alaska Native people to the highest possible level.

This event today is being held to dedicate a 2-story, 4,500 square-meter, state-of-the-art health facility that will replace or supplement the existing health programs at Broken Bow. This much needed facility will provide comprehensive ambulatory medical and dental services for the isolated communities of Idabel and Broken Bow, including the addition of 2 new physicians and a dentist, new mammography, physical therapy, and optometry services, and a diabetes wellness center. The nearest alternative IHS medical facility available for McCurtain County residents is the Talihina Hospital, which requires more than an hour and a half driving time, so this new facility will obviously serve a vital function in maintaining the health and wellness of the community it serves.

The text is the basis of Dr. Grim’s oral remarks at the Dedication of the Idabel Health Care Center in Idabel, Oklahoma, on May 13, 2005. It should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.

Many dedicated people, both Tribal and IHS, have worked diligently to bring about the reality of this facility, which was designed and built in less than 16 months, which is quite an achievement. My hat goes off to the architect, James Childers, and the builder, Flintco Construction, for their part in this impressive accomplishment.

The Tribal Council of the Choctaw Nation in particular has been supportive of this Joint Venture Project, and I would like to extend a special thanks to Gregory E. Pyle, Chief of the Choctaw Nation, and Gary Batton, Executive Director of the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority, both of whom contributed greatly to the success of this project.

This facility is a result of yet another successful partnership effort between the Indian Health Service and Tribal governments. I continue to believe that working together, we can accomplish almost anything, if we work hard enough and put all our strengths and abilities into the task at hand.

The construction of the Idabel Health Care Center represents a new era of collaboration and partnership for the Oklahoma Area Indian Health Service. This \$15 million facility was constructed with Tribal funds, under a Joint Venture Project between the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and the Indian Health Service. This is a mutually beneficial partnership for the Choctaw Nation, its Tribal members, and the Federal government. The completion of this facility represents one of the successes of the Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service, and Tribal partnership, and of the enduring spirit and strength of the American Indian and Alaska Native people.

For all of those who helped advocate, plan, and construct this facility, you certainly must feel proud as you look at this new, large, modern facility and see a better and brighter future that you helped to create for your people. This facility and the health care services the Center will provide have long been needed and anticipated by this community, and I am sure it will make a real difference in many lives by improving the health and well being of your people for years to come.

Thank you for inviting me and asking me to speak at this historical occasion. This is an impressive accomplishment, and I thank all of you for your hard work and dedication, and for serving as an example of what can be achieved through the power of partnership and cooperation. We have mutual respect and trust as we strive to raise the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native people to the highest possible level.

Thank you.

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