



Clinton Indian Health Center Grand Opening

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Opening the Door to Better Health

by

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Good morning and greetings to all of you on this very exciting and happy occasion. I am honored to be here in your company and in the company of so many distinguished guests, including former IHS Director Everett Rhoades. One of the most rewarding parts of my job is to be present for nearly all of the dedications and opening ceremonies for new and renovated Indian Health Service and tribal health facilities. New hospitals and clinics help us in our quest to provide the very best health care for Indian people. I firmly believe that each new facility moves us closer to our shared mission of raising the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

As the former director of the IHS Oklahoma Area Office, I know firsthand how badly needed this new facility was for your community. Today, in this 74th year of the Clinton Indian Health Center, it is a great pleasure to open this beautiful new 58,000-square-foot health center that will enhance your medical care in many ways.

As Governor Flyingman stated so eloquently in his program comments, this new center was created through the perseverance and spirit of hope that is a special gift of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. We at the Indian Health Service are very proud to be your partner in this venture and look forward to serving you in this impressive new facility. I understand that the design of the building has a special traditional meaning because it is influenced by the appearance of your traditional winter camp at the Red Rock Canyon. Linking our Native traditions with our health care is one of the most positive and encouraging things that we can do.

The text is the basis of Dr. Grim's oral remarks at the Grand Opening of the Clinton Indian Health Center in Clinton, Oklahoma, on March 9, 2007. It should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.

As the Director of the Indian Health Service, I have strongly promoted three health initiatives to address and lessen the health challenges and disparities facing Indian people today. New facilities such as the Clinton Indian Health Center are an important part of these initiatives as they provide a huge boost to improving the health and wellness of Indian people. The three health initiatives are health promotion/disease prevention, management of chronic disease, and behavioral health. These initiatives are linked together and have the potential to achieve positive improvements in the health of Indian people.

Together, we have accomplished much with our health promotion/disease prevention initiative and its focus on Indian patients and communities. We have engaged Tribal leadership through the HP/DP Policy Advisory Committee and now they are taking this initiative to our Tribes and communities. The goal of this initiative is to reduce health disparities among American Indian and Alaska Native people by promoting healthy lifestyles and other disease prevention methods. The new Wellness Center and Assisted Living Facility currently under construction by the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes is a wonderful initiative in itself that will offer the promise of healthier lives for all age groups in your community. I also commend the Tribe's new elder program for helping with basic needs such as food and utilities.

Chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, asthma, renal disease, and depression have become increasingly prevalent in Indian communities and are placing growing demands on our health care system. The goal of my chronic disease management initiative is to restructure Indian health clinical programs to more effectively manage chronic diseases in Indian Country by linking community-based primary prevention programs with patient-centered secondary prevention efforts.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho diabetes wellness program is a very promising example of this initiative. We at the IHS are proud to work in partnership with this program and wish you all the best in your quest for national certification.

Behavioral health is also linked to my HP/DP and chronic disease management initiatives. By focusing on effective behavioral health techniques and tribal traditions and customs, we can bring proven behavioral health strategies and specific health promotion and disease prevention programs to American Indian and Alaska Native populations. We need to focus on screening and primary prevention in mental health, especially for depression, which manifests itself in suicide, domestic violence, and addictions. We know that mental health issues such as depression can make chronic disease management more difficult and less effective.

Our challenge on these three initiatives is to bring together all the partners that can help – tribal leaders, tribal organizations, federal agencies, academic institutions, private foundations and businesses —in order to improve the health of Indian people and eliminate the health disparities between American Indian and Alaska Native people and the rest of the nation.

Your new Health Center will offer a number of advantages when it is fully operating, including services for physical therapy, optometry, audiology, expanded dental services, expanded clinical services, and podiatry.

Creating a new facility such as this involves the hard work and dedication of many people. I would like to particularly thank Loretta Beaumont, a now retired staff member of the U.S. House of Representatives Interior Appropriations Subcommittee; Capt. Randy Grinnell, retired Oklahoma Area Director, Office of Environmental Health and Engineering; Bobbie Gonzales, Oklahoma City Area Project Director; and Mark Burke, IHS Office of Environmental Health and Engineering Project Manager. I would also like to commend Melvin RomanNose, the contracting officer and community development coordinator for the Cheyenne and Arapaho

Tribes, for his completion of this complex project. Finally I would like to thank architect Ed Bishop and SGS Construction for their design and construction work.

Those of you who have advocated, planned, designed, built, and even prayed for this health center can feel justifiably proud today of what you have accomplished for our Indian patients and for future generations.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today with you to share in this historic occasion.

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