



# IHCRC 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

November 27, 2006

Tulsa, Oklahoma

“Indian Health Care Resource Center: 30 Years of Care”

by

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Good evening! I am honored to be here as your guest speaker on this special evening. There’s much to celebrate tonight as we reflect on the remarkable and successful 30-year history of the Indian Health Care Resource Center of Tulsa (Center). The story of the Center is an inspiration to many Indians and others in Oklahoma and throughout the nation. Your steady expansion and standards of excellence provide a model for many health programs.

I’ve been asked to recount tonight many of the highlights of the Center over the past 30 years. That’s not an easy job, I can tell you. Because of the time allotted here, I can only cover a portion of your significant accomplishments. There are many, many additional noteworthy achievements that I could include.

After a survey confirmed that the health needs of Tulsa’s American Indians were not being met, the Center emerged in 1976 with just four employees. The Native American Coalition of Tulsa is to be commended for championing this effort. During this early period, I’m happy to say that an Indian Health Service (IHS) contract provided the Center’s first outreach and referral services.

Of course, I’d be remiss if I didn’t stop here to point out that one of those four employees in 1976 was the indomitable Carmelita Skeeter. Carmelita began as the Center’s Resource Coordinator and later supervised all clinic operations and personnel as Clinic Administrator. Starting in 1989 she began serving as the Center’s Executive Director and later assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer. Please give a round of applause for Carmelita and her 30 years of vision, leadership, and hard work!

*The text is the basis of Dr. Grim’s oral remarks at the Indian Health Care Resource Center’s 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on November 27, 2006, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This text should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.*

In 1977 the Center began offering Tulsa Indians direct health care and moved its operations from 31st and Sheridan to 8th and Denver. The Women, Infants, and Children nutritional food program was added in 1977 through a contract with the Cherokee Nation. The current entity that we know as the Indian Health Care Resource Center of Tulsa, Inc. was established in 1978 as an Oklahoma nonprofit organization at the recommendation of the Health Committee of the Native American Coalition Board.

In 1979 the Center's success once again necessitated a move, this time to 915 S. Cincinnati where it operated for the next 20 years in a 12,000-square-foot downtown building. Just a year later in 1980, an Indian Family Services program was added and "family break-up" prevention services were offered via contracts with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of Human Services. Mental health services were initiated that same year.

Dental care was added to the Center's scope of services in 1981, and a Community Gardening program was offered to promote nutrition education and economic self-sufficiency.

An Early Childhood Development program was added in 1984 to Indian Family Services. New diabetes education classes, evening clinic hours, outpatient alcoholism counseling, and a volunteer program also made 1984 an active year.

The IHS designated both the Center and the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic as national urban demonstration programs in 1985. Mental Health Services became a full-time program and the Center developed a national model program for high-risk Indian adolescents in 1985.

Optometry and hearing screening services were added in 1987, as well as new fetal alcohol syndrome counseling, prevention services, and the expansion of the Indian Family Services program to include a Child Court Advocate.

Since 1987 the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services awarded an annual contract for the Center to provide outpatient substance abuse treatment. The Center's HIV counseling and adolescent self-esteem programs flourished, and in 1989 were selected as Oklahoma State model programs.

In 1995, the Center received in 1995 a national Fannie Mae Foundation grant for a women's prenatal health program and a U.S. Conference of Mayors' grant to offer youth leadership and HIV prevention programs. Also that year the Oklahoma Health Care Authority launched the new SoonerCare Medicaid managed care program, and the Center became a SoonerCare network provider.

Starting in 1997 and continuing annually since then, the Center has received grants from the IHS to support the Indian Family Services program, which provides a family-based alternative to child removal in cases of abuse, neglect, or other supervisory needs cases. In 1998 continuous funding for the Center's expanded diabetes prevention and care programs began through a Special Diabetes Programs for Indians grant from the IHS.

A new modern medical facility for the Center was envisioned in 1998 after many years of planning. Groundbreaking for the new building occurred that year with a medicine wheel blessing. Tulsa's new health center for American Indians was formally dedicated on June 7, 1999.

In 1999 the Center formed a partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Health and eight Oklahoma Indian Tribes to reduce the risk of diabetes, heart attacks, and strokes among Oklahoma Indian people.

A 7- year, \$1-million per year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched the Oklahoma Native American REACH 2010 project to promote physical activity through culturally appropriate activities.

The Center received national accreditation in 2002 from the Accreditation Association of Ambulatory Health Centers. In 2003 the Center received a 2-year IHS grant to address the growing obesity epidemic. The next year, in 2004, the Center received an IHS \$330,000 per year grant to conduct a Cardiovascular Disease Risk Reduction Demonstration Project. This "Hearts in Harmony" program promotes cardiovascular nutritional and physical activity activities for American Indians living with diabetes. The grant includes partnerships with the Northeastern Tribal Health System in Miami and the IHS Claremore Model Diabetes Program.

The Center established an Indian Youth Program in 2005 with funding provided through three new grant programs from the Administration for Native Americans, the IHS, and the Centers for Disease Control. Also in 2005 the Center received a 3-year, \$327,000 per year "Circles of Care" community planning federal grant from the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration to develop plans for a system of care of American Indian children, adolescents, and young adults with behavioral health needs.

This year the Center received a 3-year IHS Health Promotion and Disease Prevention grant and a 3-year IHS Children and Youth Projects grant to address the obesity epidemic in Indian country. Future growth of the Center also is being addressed this year with plans for an expansion of the clinic that could double its size. Finally, in 2006 technology investments were made to upgrade the dental department to use electronic health records and a fully digital imaging system.

Your Indian Health Care Resource Center history is a remarkable account of strategic ongoing efforts to meet the health needs of Tulsa's American Indian people. I know that many individuals, tribal and State officials, and national organizations recognized your needs and potential. We thank all of them for 30 years of steady growth and success. I wish you many more decades of improving the health and well being of American Indians in Tulsa.

Again, congratulations on your accomplishments and thank you for allowing me to be a part of tonight's celebration.

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