DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Indian Health Service
Rockville MD 20852

FEB 2 7 2003

Dear Tribal Leader:

I would like to acquaint you with an initiative the Indian Health Service (IHS) will undertake shortly that will benefit your Tribal members and the status of Indian health in our country. I intend to recommend to the Secretary of Health and Human Services that he support the establishment of an organization to be known as the Indian Health Service Foundation.

As I know you are aware, the funding available for Indian health continues to lag behind the ever-growing need of Indian people for health care. The population eligible for IHS services is ever-expanding and increasingly elderly. The IHS budget available to meet the health care needs of Indian people is subject to congressional appropriations that are projected to remain fairly constant over the next several years. Likewise, our forecast of the collection of third-party resources such as Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance indicates that this source of revenue, as in the past, will only partially address Indian health care needs in future years. Although we have made strides in partnering with other Federal agencies to increase resources available for Indian health care, the unmet health care needs of our Indian beneficiaries will continue to remain significant for the foreseeable future.

Through grants and endowments from individuals, philanthropic organizations, and corporate donors, the Indian Health Service Foundation would be able to expand health services to Indian people and advance innovative community programs and research beyond the current scope of the IHS health care delivery model. The Foundation's resources could be used for a variety of activities. One example would be engaging health experts to focus on acute and chronic medical and public health conditions affecting Indian communities. Similar foundations now exist: The Bureau of Indian Affairs has the National Indian Education Foundation; and within the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health have been successful in augmenting their missions through the establishment of foundations.

In the near future, I will move forward with the support of Secretary Thompson to obtain the appropriate legislative authorization for the establishment of the Indian Health Service Foundation. I am requesting your support for this worthy endeavor. I assure you I remain committed to upholding the responsibility of the Federal Government with regard to the provision of health care to Indian people. The creation of the Indian Health Service Foundation will not diminish the IHS's responsibility to provide health care to your members or to advocate for increased appropriations on your behalf.

I look forward to talking with you further about this initiative and promise to keep you informed of the Foundation's progress.

Sincerely yours,

Charles W. Grim, DDS

Charles W. Grim, D.D.S., M.H.S.A.
Assistant Surgeon General
Interim Director