

## **Nomination of Pam Thunder for the 2016 Indian Health Service Environmental Health Specialist of Year**

### **Introduction:**

Mrs. Pam Thunder has been a Sanitarian for the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Health for 14 years. Over that time, she has consistently shown herself to be an exceptional employee and co-worker. Mrs. Thunder's present duties and responsibilities include a wide range of public health inspections and investigations; she is the Public Health Accreditation Coordinator and is currently the Safety Officer for Ho-Chunk Nation's seven AAAHC accredited healthcare facilities.

### **Professionalism:**

Mrs. Thunder's leadership, dedication, mentoring and professionalism have substantially elevated the quality of the environmental health program for the Ho-Chunk Nation. She has risen to a lead role in various health initiatives for the Ho-Chunk Nation, such as working to achieve public health accreditation, health clinic accreditation, and environmental sustainability and resilience within tribal communities. Mrs. Thunder's technical abilities are evident through the quantity and quality of her work. She has a Bachelor's of Science degree in Environmental Health and is a professionally registered Sanitarian. She is a Certified Child Passenger Safety Seat Technician and a Certified Pool Operator. She is a well-respected and trusted leader and co-worker; who many in the Bemidji Area IHS look to for guidance and advice. She is a motivated employee who takes initiative with projects and diligently works to accomplish set goals.

### **Special Accomplishments:**

Mrs. Thunder has been the Public Health coordinator since 2010 and has set the ground work for public health accreditation for the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Health. She has made countless key contributions to the accreditation process to include: conducting numerous staff trainings, creating & overseeing twelve domain work groups, conducting community health improvement planning events, and coordinating the community health assessments. She was responsible for creating & implementing the workforce development plan; coordinating the creation of the performance management & quality improvement plans; conducting numerous organizational self-assessments; chairing countless meetings and writing & receiving numerous public health accreditation grants totaling approximately \$20,000. This has been recognized as a model process and program for Tribes throughout the Nation. In 2016 she presented this body of work at the National Tribal Public Health Forum in Spokane, Washington. She has also provided leadership and guidance on a State and National level through her involvement with the Wisconsin Tribal Public Health Accreditation and Quality Forums. This has been instrumental to other Tribes undergoing this rigorous accreditation process. Mrs. Thunder's steadfast pursuit

of Public Health Accreditation has led up to the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Health's commitment to submit their application to the Public Health Accreditation Board in January of 2017.

Mrs. Thunder's broad scope of environmental health work requires her to implement the many facets of the public health approach (assessment, policy and assurance). In addition to Mrs. Thunder's accreditation officer duties and responsibilities, she routinely conducts various public health inspections in food establishments, hotels, swimming pools, Head Starts, daycares, and mass gatherings. She is called upon to respond to public health complaints pertaining to mold, vectors, human health hazards, and radon. During 2016, she provided support to the Ho-Chunk Housing Department by assessing and documenting mold and moisture issues in numerous homes. This ultimately resulted in \$600,000 of HUD remediation funding. Mrs. Thunder coordinates the five annual rabies vaccination events for Ho-Chunk Communities, resulting in over 200 animals being vaccinated each year. She provides annual training on blood-borne pathogen, hazard communication, Life Safety Code, and fire safety to over 200 Health Department and Head Start staff. She is currently the Safety Officer for two ambulatory health clinics and four satellite health offices which are all accredited through the AAAHC.

Mrs. Thunder leads and manages the Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention Program, which is funded and supported by multiple agencies to include: the IHS TIPCAP, Bemidji Area Project Awards, Ho-Chunk Highway Safety Program, and Ho-Chunk Nation Police Department. In 2016, this program was recognized at the Wisconsin Governors Conference on Highway Safety as the Child Passenger Safety Program of the Year and received the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Tribal Excellence Award.

**Summary:**

Mrs. Thunder has exemplified dedication, motivation, and professionalism throughout her 14 year career as a Sanitarian for the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Health. She has shown outstanding leadership through her efforts to establish public health accreditation for the Ho-Chunk Nation Health Department and maintaining the AAAHC in the ambulatory health clinics. She consistently accomplishes all of her duties and responsibilities with the primary focus on providing a safe and healthy environment for all members of and visitors to the Ho-Chunk Nation. The Bemidji Area IHS, DEHS and the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Health proudly nominates Mrs. Pam Thunder for the 2016 Indian Health Service, Environmental Health Specialist of the Year.