



AUG 28 2002

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am writing to inform you about the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson and Canadian Minister of Health Anne McClelland, and to seek your views on how we can best use this opportunity to improve the health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The collaboration between the Federal Governments of Canada and the United States will be most effective if we also work directly and cooperatively with Tribal Governments.

The MOU (copy enclosed) was signed on May 13 at the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland. It emerged from conversations between the U.S. Indian Health Service (IHS) and the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada. These two organizations have the primary Federal responsibility for providing health services to the Indigenous people of their respective countries.

Based on internal observations and ideas shared by Tribal Leadership in both countries, the Directors of these two Federal programs requested Cabinet-level support for the initiation of a 5-year collaborative effort. The goals of the effort are to explore ways in which shared information, technical assistance, community capacity building, and training might improve the services provided to Indigenous people along the borders and throughout the populations served by these two agencies. Secretary Thompson and Minister McClelland have committed the resources of their respective Departments to support this effort.

Since the MOU was signed, the two Federal entities have discussed some general areas of interest: access to care concerns, traditional practices, behavioral health, and research. The MOU is not limited to the Indigenous programs of the two governments, and other Federal health components have indicated an interest in participating. These include the National Institutes of Health and the Canadian counterpart (especially in developing Native researchers and scientists as well as Tribally controlled research efforts), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the United States.

Before we develop a formal work plan under this MOU, we would like your views and suggestions about 1) issues that are most important to your people that might be aided by actions under the MOU and 2) activities that might be useful under the MOU in improving the health services available to your Tribe. Please send your views and suggestions by October 1 to Attention: Mr. Leo Nolan, Special Assistant for External Affairs, 801 Thompson Avenue, Suite

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400, Rockville, Maryland 20852- 1627. The draft work plan (we will provide you with a copy) and the specific activities to be undertaken will be guided by your recommendations. We would like to move forward early in the new fiscal year.

We look forward to your participation. We believe the collaboration between our two countries will prove very useful to American Indians and Alaska Natives, and to the First Nations and Inuit people of Canada.

Sincerely yours,

/Charles W. Grim/

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

Enclosure