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Indian Health Service Press Release

IHS and the Notah Begay III Foundation form partnership to address obesity in Native youth

The Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Notah Begay III Foundation (NB3F) are collaborating on activities aimed at preventing childhood obesity in American Indian and Alaska Native youth. The partnership will include sharing best practices in implementation of community-based activities directed at addressing childhood obesity in Indian Country.

The collaboration, initiated Nov. 12, 2013, was developed in support of the *Let's Move! In Indian Country* (LMIC) program, which is part of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative. The LMIC seeks to advance the work tribal leaders and community members are doing to improve the health of Native youth.

"Today's partnership is an important step towards helping Native American youth lead healthier lives," said Sam Kass, executive director of *Let's Move!* and White House senior policy advisor on nutrition. "With the LMIC, we've seen tribal leaders engage their communities by creating food policy councils and reintroducing sports like lacrosse into schools, but we know there is more work to be done to ensure all our children have the healthy futures they deserve."

Obesity is a significant problem in Native communities. It is a risk factor for many chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, which are among the leading causes of death for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

"Tribal leaders have asked us to focus more on prevention efforts, especially with our youth," said Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, acting director of the IHS. "Our new partnership with the NB3F gives us an opportunity to identify and share best practices from all of our prevention efforts, including the successful activities and outcomes of our Special Diabetes Program for Indians grantees, to help in the fight against childhood obesity in the communities we serve. We are excited to partner with them as they establish a new national center focused on these issues."

With a mission centered on reducing the incidence of type 2 diabetes and childhood obesity among Native American children, NB3F has developed community-driven, scalable, and replicable prevention models that



**Notah Begay III and Acting IHS Director
Dr. Yvette Roubideaux sign a Memorandum
of Understanding at the White House.**

have seen statistically significant outcomes among child participants in the areas of reduced body mass index or BMI (a measure of weight proportionate to a person's height), increased self-confidence and endurance, and enhanced understanding of nutrition knowledge. In August of this year, NB3F launched a national initiative, Native Strong: Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures that functions as a national center focused on strategic grant making, research and mapping, capacity building, and advocacy to combat type 2 diabetes and obesity among Native American children.

“This unprecedented partnership between the Obama administration, the IHS, and the NB3F demonstrates the critical importance of leveraging partnerships and resources to tackle the health crisis facing Native American children,” said NB3F founder Notah Begay III. “With 1 out of 2 Native American children expected to develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime, it is vital that effective strategies and best practices are accessible for all Native communities, so together we can turn the tide on childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes.”

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About the Indian Health Service: The IHS provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.1 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who are members of federally recognized Tribes. The IHS is the principal federal health care provider and health advocate for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and its mission is to raise their health status to the highest level. For more information about the IHS, visit www.ihs.gov

About the Notah Begay III Foundation: In 2005, Notah Begay III established the Notah Begay III Foundation (NB3F), a 501c3 non-profit organization to address the profound health and wellness issues impacting Native American children and to empower them to realize their potential as tomorrow's leaders. The mission of NB3F is to reduce the incidences of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes and advance the lives of Native American children through physical activity and wellness programming. To this end, NB3F develops community-driven, sustainable, evidence-based, and innovative wellness programs designed by Native Americans for Native American children that promote physical fitness, wellness, and leadership development. For more information on Notah Begay III and NB3F, visit: www.nb3foundation.org.