



Indian Health Service Press Release

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Indian Health Service Announces New Chief of Staff

The Indian Health Service is announcing the appointment of Clayton Fulton, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, as the new chief of staff. In this position, Fulton is responsible for overseeing the coordination of key agency activities and supports the Office of the Director in a broad range of duties related to the development and implementation of IHS initiatives and priorities.

“We are excited to have Mr. Fulton join the Indian Health Service, and welcome his leadership and expertise to our agency,” said IHS Acting Director Benajmin Smith. “His experience working at the intersection of policy and program development between tribal nations and the federal government will only strengthen our government-to-government relationships throughout Indian Country.”

As someone raised in Indian Country, Fulton has always been shaped by the close connection between tribal communities and their lands. His work reflects a commitment to building strong communities and creating opportunities that grow from the ground up. His passion for Indian Country economic development began during an internship with Cherokee Nation Businesses, where he saw how tribal governments use thoughtful investment and careful planning to help Native communities thrive.

“I believe that lasting change begins at the community level,” Fulton said. “My approach centers on equipping grassroots leadership, supporting local capacity, and creating steady, intentional growth that strengthens families, culture, and the community at large.”

Fulton earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance and a Master of Business Administration in Native American Enterprises from Northeastern State University. He went on to earn his Juris Doctor from the University of Michigan Law School, where he served on the national board of the National Native American Law Students Association. While in law school, he twice earned the annual Doolin Prize for Scholarship in Indian Law Student Scholarship.

After law school, Fulton returned to Eastern Oklahoma to work with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Office of the Attorney General as an assistant attorney general. He supported the nation in developing practical frameworks to strengthen community programs, expand economic opportunities, and align regulatory efforts with long-term growth. His work included supporting the development of tribal utility infrastructure, code drafting, and close collaboration with the

Office of Self-Governance and the Grants Department. Fulton developed a specialty in civil regulatory authority, intergovernmental cooperative agreements, and complex commercial matters, ensuring that tribal programs and initiatives were backed by strong legal and operational structures.

The Indian Health Service, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](#) in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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