

REPRESENTING YOU IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



At the Meeting with the President

Aaron A. Payment, MPA
Tribal Chairperson
“Representing All
Members Everywhere”

I cannot tell you how honored and pleased I am to represent you as Chairperson during our recent visit to Washington, DC. Our delegation included Tribal Board Secretary Cathy Abramson, Keith Massaway (Unit 3), Jennifer McLeod (Unit 1), Legislative Director Mike McCoy and Meghan Starling ~ our Washington based government liaison.



Cathy Abramson, Chair
American Indian Health Board

I believe we did a great job as a team, but I wanted to highlight the excellence and impassioned work and leadership of Cathy Abramson. During the last several years, we simply have not had this kind of leadership from the Chair’s office nor the dedicated resources to represent our Tribe in DC. Despite this, Cathy has done a wonderful job by becoming appointed the Chair of the American Indian Health Board and working with our Tribal Member ~ Stacy Bolan who is the Executive Director of the American Indian Health Board. I witnessed Cathy’s ease of relationship with key officials in the Indian Health Service.



Neera Darling, BIA
Executive Assistant
and Potawatomi
friend.

Not since George Nolan’s role with the National Indian Housing Board have we had such advocacy of our issues. She is perfectly suited for this role and I appreciate her work. Thank you Cathy.

While I am addressing the issue of health, I would also like to recognize our health division team expertly lead by Bonnie Culfa and operated by Joel Lumsden, Tony Abramson, Jackie McLean, Dr. Wagner, Dr. Anderson, and Dan Frye and many others. Last month, an article suggested that the health division nefariously hid an amount in the budget presumably to have funds as a sort of slush fund. Not only is this characterization unfair, it is patently false.

When I became Chair the first time, I tasked Health Director Bonnie Culfa with increasing our third party revenues (insurances) in order to decrease our Tribal dollars spent on health. Bonnie worked with Jackie McLean and all health team members to raise third party revenues from \$1.5 million to a projected 2013 amount of \$7 million. So not only is the health division not costing us any Tribal support funds, they have pulled through to balance our budget by generating more than a million dollars. Rather than publicly condemn these folks for their excellent work, we should honor them. I appreciate the work they do as they lead us forward with the many challenges the *Affordable Care Act* will represent.

Since I have returned as Chair, Director Abramson and I pushed hard to establish a regional health Board to advocate for more Indian Health Service funding

for our people. We hosted a special United Tribes Health Summit to discuss what opportunities we will have including offering some level of coverage to ALL Members. While other complain and stall, we’ll continue to lead. In fact, we recently introduced a resolution to create a Tribally Designated Health Entity to allow our health division to operate more autonomously and entrepreneurially to expand and reinstate health access to areas like Escanaba, Marquette, Detour/Drummond, Kinross, and for new creative ways to expand clinic hours in partnership with hospital like the Mackinac



Work Group on Health, Education and Youth. My
friend Phyllis Davis, Gun Lake Councilwoman



Of the 566 Federally Recognized Tribes, over 250 attended. It was an awe inspiring and moving event. Here I was trying to get leaders to do a American Indian Movement Fist raise. Jimmie Mitchell met the challenge. Also shown is Phillis Davis of Gun Lake and Bob Kewaygoshkum of Grand Traverse Band.

Chi McGwitch, Negee, Aaron

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Navajo Code Talkers and Color Guard Jingle Dress Dancers who were also military veterans in their own right. We were honored.

Straights hospital and other hospitals for after hour care. More to come.

During this DC trip, we met with Congressional members: U.S. Representatives Dan Benishek, John Dingell, Sandy Levin, Dave Camp, Fred Upton, Hansen Clark, and Senator Debbie Stabenow and a staffer from Senator Carl Levin’s office. We heard from several U.S. Cabinet leaders like Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Deputy Treasurer Secretary Neal Wolin, Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank, Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary Tom Vilsack, Secretary Ray LaHood, Secretary Hilda Solis, Assistant Secretary and BIA Director Kevin Washburn, Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Director of Indian Health and JoAnn Chase, Director of the American Indian Environmental Office who has pledge to help us figure out how to fix the pollution issue in the St. Mary’s River north of Sugar Island.

I am pleased to have met and shook hands

with the President. I am so proud to see our fellow tribal leaders from across the country working together to advocate for our people. If we could adopt this focus back home, we would have more to show for ourselves. Let’s work toward that goal.



JoAnn Chase, Director
American Indian
Environmental Office

Finally, the photo to the top right is the of Navajo Code Talkers. They were like rock stars at our meeting. I felt privileged to meet them. During this holiday season, remember peace and good will toward man but also thank a veteran for the right to exercise our freedoms.

Merry Christmas!
Please join me at the New
Years Eve sobriety pow
wow. Be safe, Negee!



Jackie Pata, Executive Director
of the National Congress
of American Indians