

HONORING OUR PAST: PREPARING FOR OUR FUTURE

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

Ahneen, BooZo, Negee:

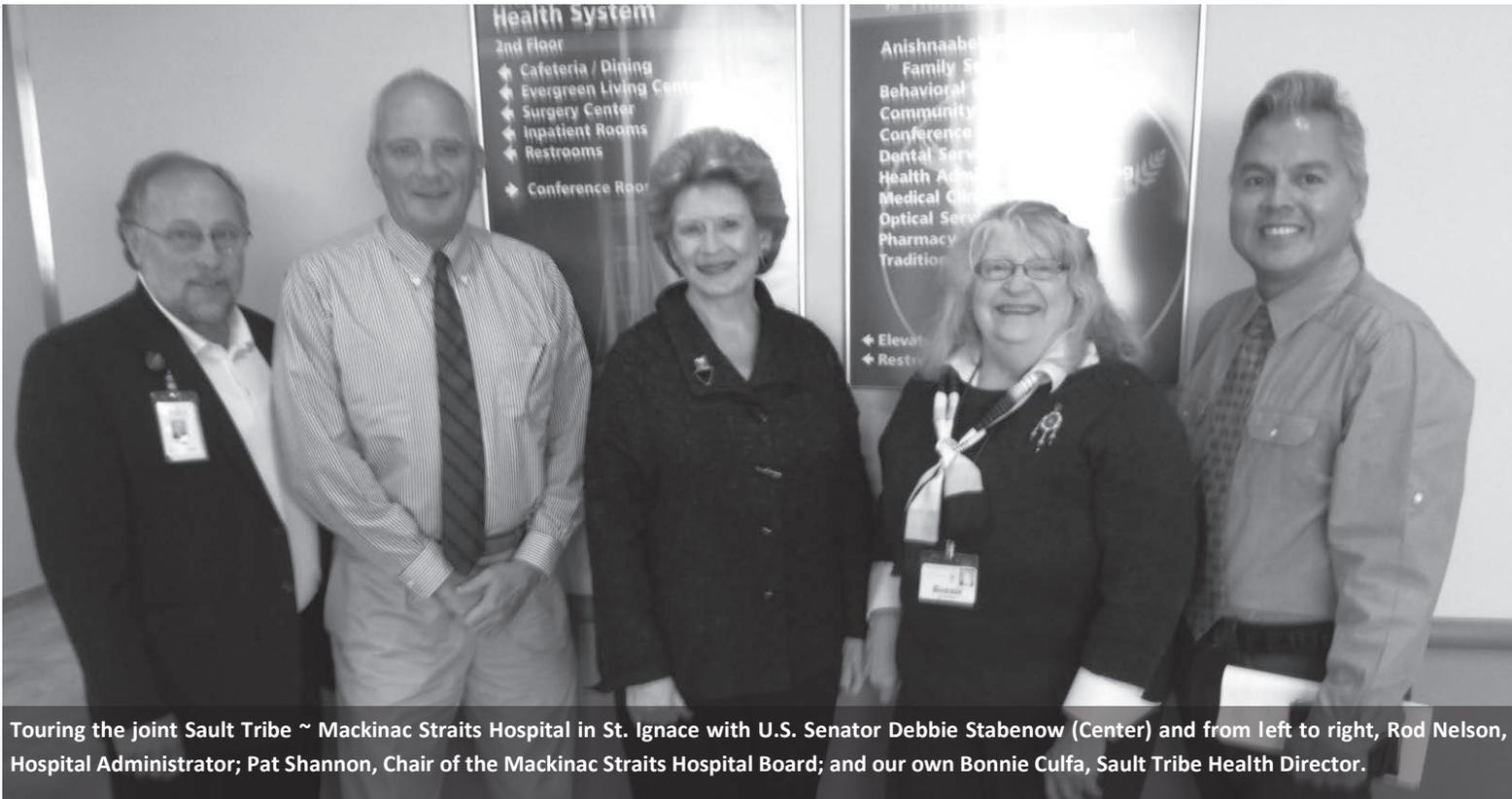
As I go about representing our Tribe by meeting with various State and Federal dignitaries, I have been a bit nostalgic about our past. Recently, I had the occasion to meet with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow to advocate our issues. The next day, I was invited to a reception by the Chippewa County Democrats where the Senator shared issues in the U.S. Senate and pledge her support for Indian Country issues. The next day, I did a walk through at the Mackinac Straits hospital with the Senator and our Health Director Bonnie Culfa who has raised our third party revenues from \$1.5 million to and estimated \$8 million this year. The Senator found this amazing given our IHS allocation in our annual funding agreement is \$18 million. The Straits hospital and subsequent agreements came about under the leadership of Bonnie Culfa. The Senator was impressed given health care is a key issue for her.

I was also asked to address and issue of a grant received by the Chippewa Luce Mackinac Community Action Board. As you may know, I serve as the Vice Chair for the CLM Community Action Board. The Senator pledged to help resolve some bureaucracy to finalize this project.

Some may not know our history with the CLM Community Action Agency. Our long time friendship came



about when Rosemary Gaskin served as a cook for the agency along with working as an Indian Education worker at the Sault Schools. Rosemary's work at the agency led to the Director, Ron Calery,



Touring the joint Sault Tribe ~ Mackinac Straits Hospital in St. Ignace with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (Center) and from left to right, Rod Nelson, Hospital Administrator; Pat Shannon, Chair of the Mackinac Straits Hospital Board; and our own Bonnie Culfa, Sault Tribe Health Director.



understanding the blight in our community. In turn, Mr. Calery brought our first vaccinations to our community (before we had IHS funding) and orchestrated funding from the Sault Ste. Marie City Commission for a playground on Shunk Road.

Rosemary created a neighborhood association to bring attention to the conditions in our community including no indoor toilets. (She is pictured

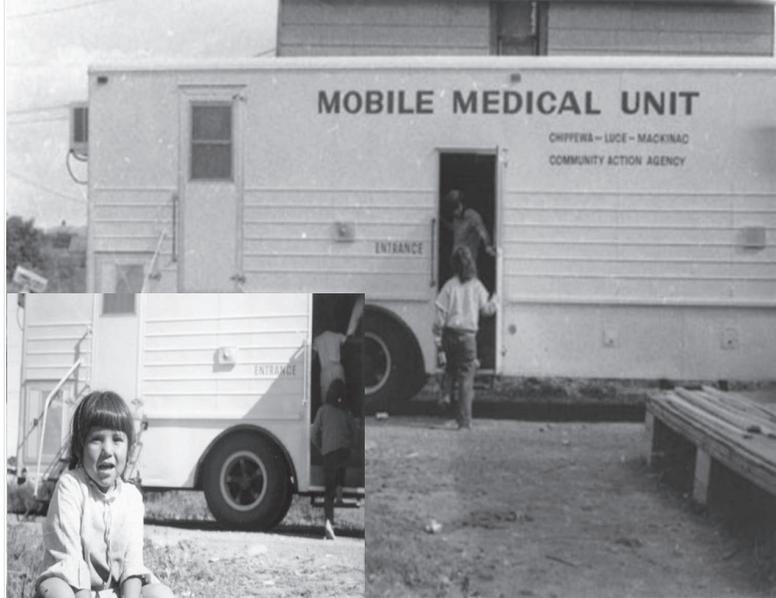


above in front of the Mar-Shunk Neighborhood Center.) Rosemary is one of my heroes. This is why I created the Rosemary Gaskin Memorial Scholarship. Please contact the Sault Tribe Education

Department, (906) 635-6080, for information on how to apply for this scholarship.

Born in 1965 and raised in poverty, I am grateful for the Great Society programs that created a pathway to opportunity for me. I credit my successes to the intervention in my life of the Upward Bound Program, Indian Education, federal programs that provide outreach through the Community Action Agency, and through the generous spirit of folks like Ron Calery. Still, the rhetoric at the national level to get the dead-beats off welfare is so mean spirited that it is endangering funding for the continuation of programs that reach through the poverty to lift folks up.

It is amazing to me how things come back around. When I first became Chair, a woman who was a Youth Corp Worker in 1972 sent me a compact disk with the black and white photos including in



this report. They were taken when I was 6 years old and show the generosity of spirit of these youth workers bringing some hope to the otherwise desolate community in which I was raised. The photo to the far left is where my Uncle Chester Cook lived. The dimension were no more than 12 feet by 8 feet with no water, toilet, etc. At that point, Shunk Road had no culverts as we had no sewage infrastructure. The photos above are of the Shunk Road playground being built. The young kids helping to unload the equipment are my cousin Maria (Lou Lou) Parr and me. The final black and white photo is of my cousin Lou Lou and me at the celebration we had at the playground next to Rosemary Gaskin's home.

No one does it alone. Having benefitted from the intervention of great people



and great society programs, I am committed to fighting to protect these programs for others.

Chi McGwitch, Negee!

