

Gaining direct services a neverending process



**CATHY ABRAMSON, DIRECTOR,
UNIT I**

Over the past years, I have actively engaged policy makers and boards as part of my commitment to improving programs and services and the environment for Native American people generally and specifically on behalf of our Sault Tribe members and commu-

nities.

As an active member of the National Indian Health Board, and in particular as chairperson, I have been in an excellent position to strive to improve the health policy enactment and proactive involvement with federal legislation impacting tribes and in the implementation of federal law at the state level, health issues that have the ultimate outcome of directly affecting our membership. This is truly the case when it comes to the Affordable Care Act.

Before the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed, many tribal leaders nationwide, including myself, provided countless hours of input into the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) that was included in the ACA. This was Indian Country's opportunity to make sure that Congress reauthorized the IHCIA

so that we would have the federal government recommitment to honor our treaty rights, specifically in health care, for good. With the passage of the ACA many changes in the structure of health care delivery systems in the U.S. are anticipated, however controversial at the partisan level. While some parts of the ACA are being challenged the implementation continues with a goal of affordable health care coverage to all.

With the signing of this law, President Obama made it mandatory that states actively get input from tribal governments. At first, this was not happening in Michigan. When we tribal leaders met with Governor Snyder several months ago, this was one of our issues. He publicly apologized for his oversight and since that time he has committed his staff to working with us to make sure that Michigan tribes' input is

written in Senate Bill 693. Please read the article in this month's edition of our tribal news.

I have to say that this has been an exciting journey to be involved with from federal to state to tribal. I think it is important that you understand how much work and time it really involves to bring benefits to you directly as a tribal member. However, this journey is long from being done. There is still a lot of work to do and we are up for the job. Directors Malloy and Bouschor are working with me so that we make sure that this makes it all the way to fruition. It has been my goal that we ultimately have paid healthcare insurance to our members in Michigan. However, there are a number of obstacles we will need to overcome. There is a federal court case in June of next year. United States elections are coming up as well as Michigan legislators.

Again, I wanted to inform you of just how much work goes into bringing you direct services. A friend just said to me, "If you want to make a home run, you gotta get up and swing the bat." Wish us well in our efforts to get that home run and please know that I continue to work hard for you and am doing my best as I have promised you.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

It's Christmas time and our troops are coming home! Being together with family is, I believe, the most precious gift that can be given at this time. Most importantly, we all must remember that Jesus is the reason for the season! God bless you all! Thank you for all your prayers, support and understanding! Miigwech!

Cathy Abramson
(906) 322-3823
cabramson@saulttribe.net