

Abramson invited to tribal nations conference



CATHY ABRAMSON, DIRECTOR, UNIT I

November was an extremely busy and exciting month for me. Because I serve as the Bemidji area representative on Secretary Sebelius' Tribal Advisory Committee, I was among the tribal leaders who were invited to the 2013 White House Tribal Nations Conference in Washington, D.C. I am always quite honored to represent our Anishinaabe nation at these national meetings. Whenever I have the opportunity to speak, I do so on behalf of our ancestors, our elders, our present citizens and those future generations.

On Nov. 12, Chairperson Payment and I met with Senator Debbie Stabenow regarding a number of issues, and, in particular, contract support costs. After that, I returned to the National Congress of American Indian (NCAI) preparatory meeting for the Tribal Leaders Summit. NCAI produced a short film in regards

to the mascot issue. Make sure you check it out.

By special invitation, I attended the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signing ceremony between Notah Begay of the Notah Begay III Foundation and Dr. Yvette Roubideaux of Indian Health Service (IHS). They are collaborating on activities aimed at preventing childhood obesity in American Indian and Alaska Native youth. Sharing of best practices on the implementation of community-based activities directed at addressing this issue will be included. While in attendance, I had the opportunity to share with them the great success of our Chi-Nodin Running Club. It is my hope that we can revive this very popular and successful club.

After the MOU signing, I attended the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs listening session. This was the most emotional and powerful session I have ever attended. Tribal leaders described the harsh effects of sequestration brought upon their communities. A tribal chief cried as he told his story on behalf of his people. It was obvious that our spirits were with us in this room. Our Native people there were refueled with conviction and strength to carry out our mission that our ancestors fought so hard for.

On Nov. 13, I attended the White House Tribal Nations Conference and got to shake hands with President Obama. I was very happy to hear him say that they will be working on the

contract support costs issues. This is the first time he has publicly stated this. I am hoping that this is a good sign. As many other tribes, our tribe is owed approximately \$4 million in contract support costs. This has been a long-standing issue and one I hope comes to a resolve soon.

While at the summit, I attended the IHS listening session. I presented the effects of sequestration, the importance of advanced funding and the continued need to hold IHS harmless from any future sequestrations. I, also, had the distinct honor of meeting Secretary Sally Jewell of the Department of Interior.

On Nov. 14 and 15, I attended the Health and Human Services Secretary Tribal Health Advisory Committee meeting. This is a time when tribal leadership meets face to face with the various heads of agencies such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), IHS, Administration for Children and Families (which includes Head Start), Administration for Community Living (Administration on Aging), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Health Resources and Services Administration and National Institutes for Health.

Issues I brought forth before Secretary Kathleen Sebelius was the need to keep Indian Health Services held harmless in case of another sequestration, advance appropriations for IHS, the need for a tribal liaison in the Office of Management and Budgets and a Tribal Advisory Committee to advise OMB. Another issue brought forth was the concern with continued cuts in Head Start, which would make the standards impossible to meet.

I would like to take this time to thank our board of directors for their support and understanding with the work I do on our people's behalf at the national level. I am from the Wolf Clan and my job is to protect our people and our way of life. I am doing so



Memorandum of understanding signing ceremony between Notah Begay of the Notah Begay III Foundation and Dr. Yvette Roubideaux of Indian Health Service (front, left and right).



Left, Senator Mike Crapo, ranking member of the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee and member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. Cathy Abramson (center), Chair of the National Indian Health Board and Sault Tribe Unit I board member. Right, Congressman Mike Simpson, chairman of the House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Committee, a member of the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Committee and the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Both members are completely supportive and are pushing our issues. Congressman Simpson was especially supportive of Education.

by being an active participant so that we may prevent any more inequities and travesties that have already been bestowed on our people.

I would also like to take this time to say chi-miigwech to all of you (especially my family) who have supported me throughout these years. We never accomplish anything by ourselves. We accomplish what we do because

of the presence of our ancestors and the continued prayer from our people.

With that said, I wish you all peace, love and happiness during the Christmas season. Remember always, Jesus is the reason for the season!

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at cabramson@saulttribe.net or (906) 322-3823.



Cathy Abramson (left), chairperson of the National Indian Health Board, getting a report from Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and the director of Indian Health Services.