



George W. Bearpaw **Acting Director** **Tucson Area** **Indian Health Service**

George W. Bearpaw, a native of Oklahoma and a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, is the Acting Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS) Tucson Area. He began his career with IHS, an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, in May 1999 as the Executive Officer for the Tucson Area.

As the Executive Officer for the Tucson Area Office, Mr. Bearpaw is responsible for the Area's financial programs and management, acquisition programs and management, human resources management, property and supply management, and business office programs and management.

The Tucson Area provides primary and community outreach programs for health services to the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona, as well as providing urban health care services, by contracting with the Tucson Indian Center. The Tucson Indian Center provides community health outreach, education, prevention, and referral services, including case management, advocacy, and transportation services. The Tucson Area health services are centered at the Sells Service Unit, with three satellite health centers in Santa Rosa, San Xavier, and San Simon. Health care services in the Sells Service Unit are a combined effort of the IHS and the Tohono O'odham Health Department, providing a comprehensive health program of inpatient, ambulatory, and community health services. The Sells Hospital, a modern 37-bed facility with JCAHO accreditation, is the central component of the Sells Service Unit, providing general medical and primary care on an inpatient and outpatient basis and some emergency services. The other Tucson Area service unit is managed in partnership with the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. Services are rendered directly and indirectly through an innovative system of contracts and subcontracts.

Previous to his position as the Tucson Area Executive Officer, Mr. Bearpaw worked for the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma as an accountant in 1976. In 1979, he was the comptroller for the Osage Tribe in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. In 1981, Mr. Bearpaw worked for an international company in Parsons, Kansas, as their corporate accounting and payroll manager. Mr. Bearpaw returned to work with tribal governments in 1985 as the accounting manager for the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Mr. Bearpaw held positions of increasing responsibility with the Cherokee Nation such as Community Development Director and Executive Director of Tribal Operations. During his tenure with the Cherokee Nation, he was directly involved in the self-governance compacting for programs and services with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the IHS. In 1995, Mr. Bearpaw worked for the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma as the Executive Director, where he continued his direct involvement in the self-governance compacting for programs and services with the BIA and the IHS. Mr. Bearpaw held that position until coming to work for IHS.

Mr. Bearpaw earned a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting and business administration from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He served in the United States Army Special Forces, with a tour of duty in Southeast Asia. Among his awards and commendations are the Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medals for his service in a combat zone.