



Four Corners Regional Health Center Grand Opening

April 4, 2007
Red Mesa, Arizona

A New Beginning at Four Corners

by

Charles W. Grim, D.D.S., M.H.S.A.
Assistant Surgeon General
Director, Indian Health Service

Good morning and greetings to all of you on this very exciting and happy occasion. I am honored to be here in the company of so many distinguished guests. One of the most rewarding parts of my job is to be present for many of the dedications or grand opening ceremonies for new and renovated Indian Health Service and tribal health facilities.

New hospitals and clinics help us in our quest to provide the very best health care for Indian people. I firmly believe that each new facility moves us closer to our shared mission of raising the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

I know that the opening of this new Four Corners Regional Health Center is a huge step forward for the well being of your community. This magnificent 118,000-square-foot facility will enhance your medical care in many important ways. The many new services that this center brings to your community include an eye clinic, emergency room, 24-chair dental clinic, pharmacy, and physical therapy clinic.

We at the Indian Health Service are very proud to be your partner in this venture and look forward to serving you in this impressive new facility. I understand that the design of the building has special meaning in Navajo culture because the lobby dome represents a traditional hogan with eight cedar panels. Additionally, the main lobby floor incorporates the four sacred colors in its design, and the building's entrance canopy supports are faced in sandstone to recall

The text is the basis of Dr. Grim's oral remarks at the Dedication of the Four Corners Regional Health Center in Red Mesa, Arizona, on April 4, 2007. It should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.

the Red Mesa. We hope that these familiar cultural references will provide comfort and hope to all who pass through these doors. All of our new clinic designs, created by working in partnership with the Tribes, have resulted in some of the most functional as well as beautiful clinics in the nation.

As the Director of the Indian Health Service, I have strongly promoted three health initiatives to address and lessen the health challenges and disparities facing Indian people today. New facilities such as the Four Corners Regional Health Center are an important part of these initiatives as they provide a huge boost to improving the health and wellness of Indian people. The three main health initiatives of the IHS are health promotion and disease prevention, chronic care management, and behavioral health. These initiatives are linked together and have the potential to achieve positive improvements in the health of Indian people.

We have accomplished much with our health promotion and disease prevention initiative and its focus on Indian patients and communities. By engaging tribal leadership to help us reduce health disparities among American Indian and Alaska Native people through promotion of healthy lifestyles and other disease prevention methods, we are making critical progress for the future. Chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, asthma, renal disease, dental caries, and depression have become increasingly prevalent in Indian communities and are placing growing demands on our health care system. The goal of our chronic care management initiative is to restructure Indian health clinical programs to more effectively manage chronic diseases in Indian Country by linking community-based primary prevention programs with patient-centered secondary prevention efforts.

Behavioral health is also linked to the other two initiatives. By focusing on effective behavioral health techniques side-by-side with tribal traditions and customs, we can bring proven behavioral health strategies and specific health promotion and disease prevention programs to American Indian and Alaska Native populations.

Our challenge on these three initiatives is to bring together all the partners that can help – tribal leaders, tribal organizations, federal agencies, academic institutions, private foundations and businesses —in order to improve the health of Indian people and eliminate the health disparities between American Indian and Alaska Native people and the rest of the nation.

Creating a new facility such as this involves the hard work and dedication of many people.

- I would like to particularly thank Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr.; Vice President Ben Shelley; and all the former Tribal Leaders who contributed to the fruition of this project.

- Thanks also goes to the Navajo Nation Division of Health Executive Director Anslem Roanhorse; the Office of Planning at NDOH, including the planner, Gloria Harrison; and members of the Navajo Nation Council and the Navajo Nation Health Board, particularly members of the Health and Social Services Committee, former chairperson Jerry Freddie, and current Chairperson Thomas Walker, Jr.

- We also extend gratitude to members of the Four Corners Regional Health Center Steering Committee; the local Chapters in the Four Corners Region; IHS Navajo Area Director John Hubbard, Jr., and his staff in Planning and in the Office of Environmental Health and Engineering who contributed to the planning, design, and construction of the new facility and the staff housing. I'd also like to thank the IHS staff from our engineering services office in Dallas, Texas.

- Former Navajo Area Project Officer Bill Smith also deserves our thanks, as does the Shiprock Service Unit staff under the leadership of Dr. George Baacke, the Acting Chief Executive Officer; Dr. Ann Vaughn, Clinical Director of the new health center; and Chuck Atcitty, the Acting Administrator of the Four Corners Regional Health Center.

- For the design and construction of this beautiful facility, we thank Weller Architects; Johnson, Smittipong, Rosamond and Associates; Bovis Lend Lease; and Hunt Building Company.

- We would like to recognize the extraordinary generosity of those who donated the land for this new health center. They are the late Jim Oldman; Bessie Oldman; the late Jack Oldman; Grace Oldman; Lucy Yellowman; the late Mary Kitseallyboy; Gladys and Charley Begay; Casey Oldman; Susan Begay; Harrison Clark; Lee Clark; and Mary K. Clark.

Thanks to all of you for participating in today's event and making it such a success. I appreciate the opportunity to share in this historic occasion for the Four Corners Region.

* * *