

# National Indian Health Board



The Red Feather Of Hope And Healing

## Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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### *U.S. Secretary Sebelius speaks to American Indians and Alaska Natives about Health Care Reform and H1N1*

**Washington, DC** – “This administration and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is committed to making all American Indians and Alaska Natives live longer and healthier lives” said Sebelius to hundreds of tribal representatives and health care professionals attending the opening ceremonies of the National Indian Health Board Annual Conference.

The evidence is the 13% increase in funding for Indian Health Service (I.H.S.) that was included in 2010 budget, which is the largest amount given in two decades. “This is long overdue and well-deserved,” said Sebelius.

In his address to Congress last week, President Obama announced his plan includes that individuals will be required to carry basic health insurance. “I want to make it clear, that this administration believes mandates or penalties don’t apply to American Indians and

Alaska Natives. You have already purchased health insurance, it is already part of the agreement we made,” said Sebelius inferring the trust responsibility the U.S. has to provide health care to AI/AN populations.

“It is critical to strengthen the government to government relationship. I believe in tribal consultation and have acted on it,” said Sebelius sharing her experience as a former Governor of a state which had four tribes. Speaking about Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, (I.H.S. Director) Secretary Sebelius said, “She leads the I.H.S., but began life as a patient of I.H.S. She now knows the system as patient, practitioner, and now as the leader.” Sebelius praised the work I.H.S. is doing and was pleased productive conversations are taking place.

Focusing on the H1N1 flu virus, Sebelius said it is presenting like a seasonal flu and seems to be a young person’s flu affecting health young people under age 24. It is also causing health risks for pregnant women or people with chronic disease. Recent clinical trials show the H1N1 vaccine appears to have a robust immune response, that adults only need one dose, and the vaccine will be



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available the first week of October. “We will have enough vaccine for anyone who wants to be vaccinated,” said the Secretary Sebelius.

Committed to assisting tribal governments with the H1N1 virus, DHHS will get specific information regarding the virus to tribal leaders and also provide bi-weekly calls so that current information is given. “We know this can change, and may look different in two weeks,” said Secretary Sebelius. She especially expressed her concern to convince children to do their part in preventing the disease.



Reno Keoni Franklin, National Indian Health Board Chair participated in the Sebelius address demonstrating a new “Flu Bump” which is done by bumping elbows with another person as opposed to shaking hands. Other preventive methods were suggested such as washing hands frequently, and coughing or sneezing into your sleeves or a handkerchief, as opposed to using your hands which could transmit the virus to others. “We need your help to keep folks safe and secure,” said Sebelius urging tribal leaders to assist with getting the information out to tribal communities.

Sebelius said in her closing remarks, “there is a Sioux saying that *we will be known by the tracks we leave behind*. We have to keep the momentum going! Let us be the first generation that didn’t pass this problem to our children and finally got health reform done.”

NIHB Chairman Reno Franklin thanked the Secretary for coming and turned to the audience saying, “After hearing what Sebelius has said, having knowledge of what it means, this reform is just around the corner. That 13% increase to the I.H.S. budget is happy to hear. If you were not hopeful, you now should be!”

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*The National Indian Health Board advocates on behalf of all Tribal Governments and American Indians/Alaska Native in their efforts to provide quality health care. Visit [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org) for more information.*



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