

# National Indian Health Board



*The Red Feather Of Hope And Healing*

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For Immediate Release

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## *Cathy Abramson joins the National Indian Health Board*

**Washington, DC** – As hundreds of American Indians and Alaskan Natives visited the nation's capitol to engage in the discussion about health care reform, Cathy Abramson of the Saulte Ste. Marie Chippewa Indians was introduced as the newest member of the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) during the NIHB 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Consumer Conference in Washington DC September 14-18, 2009.

Cathy Abramson is a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa Indian, but she will be representing the Bemidji Area Tribes (Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota) on the NIHB Board. Abramson has a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, and was elected to the Sault Ste. Marie Tribes Board of Directors in 1996 representing unit 1.



“The greatest gift that creator has given me is my family,” said Abramson who has demonstrated a strong commitment to her community serving on her tribe’s traditional living and foods program planning committee, the Sault Ste. Marie culture committee, high education committee, conservation committee, and served as an advisor of the Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa Tribal Youth Council.

Abramson served as a moderator in this year’s conference for a session on Contract Support Costs - about how chronic funding has starved the Indian Health Service delivery system; and the difficulty that tribes face when they are required to come up with administrative costs support to access funds through the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

“We are excited about Cathy’s appointment to the NIHB Board. She brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the NIHB Board, and understands the difficulties tribal programs have in accessing funds to provide for the basic health care needs of their people,” said Stacy Bohlen, Executive Director of NIHB. “Her service on the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee has benefited Indian country through formulating recommendations to address this critical health issue.”

All NIHB Board members attend quarterly meetings and carry out assigned duties which may require traveling. It is important to note that all travel that NIHB Board members take on behalf of the organization is fully paid by NIHB. This is accomplished under strict federal (GSA) guidelines. Of course, local duties take priority in the schedules of all Tribally-elected leaders, so there are frequent occasions where Ms. Abramson may request that other NIHB Board members participate in an event so that she can tend to local business for her Tribe as needed.

During a town hall meeting held September 14, 2009 with Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Director of Indian Health Service and 180 AI/AN leaders, Abramson stood and spoke. She voiced recommendations for



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IHS and suggested that tribal consultation policy should include a requirement for all IHS staff to receive mandatory training about the trust responsibility that the U.S. has to AI/AN populations. Abramson expressed that once people truly understand the relationships of sovereignty, then they begin to honor the need for consulting with tribes.

The National Indian Health Board advocates on behalf of all Tribal Governments and American Indians/Alaskan Natives in their efforts to provide quality health care. For more information, please feel free to visit [www.nihb.org](http://www.nihb.org).

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