



## Indian Health Service Press Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Indian Health Service Announces Dr. Christopher Poole as Bemidji Area Director**

The Indian Health Service (IHS) announces the appointment of Dr. Christopher Poole, as the new Bemidji Area Director. In his new position, Dr. Poole is responsible for providing leadership in the administration of a comprehensive federal, tribal, and urban Indian health care system for American Indians and Alaska Natives, primarily members of the 34 federally recognized Tribal nations and six urban Indian health programs located in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The Area Director also provides oversight of three federally operated service units in the Bemidji Area and maintains a close working relationship with the local tribal health board.

“Dr. Poole’s longstanding contribution to providing advocacy and the highest possible quality health care to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and others makes him the ideal person to lead the Bemidji Area,” said IHS Director Roselyn Tso. “Dr. Poole’s exemplary leadership will benefit not just those within the Bemidji Area but across the agency as a whole.”

Dr. Poole, an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, has served as the acting director of the IHS Office of Direct Service and Contracting Tribes for the last year. He also served as the director of Tribal and Urban Services for the Bemidji Area Office. Dr. Poole has also been serving as the Bemidji Area agency lead negotiator and contract proposal liaison officer for eight years. As such, he holds the operational responsibility for implementing Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act through managing Area tribal contracting and compacting activities. Previously Dr. Poole served as the Bemidji Area Behavioral Health Consultant.

“It is both an honor and a profound privilege to have been selected to serve as the Bemidji Area Director,” said Dr. Poole. “I am dedicated to supporting American Indians and Alaska Natives on their journey towards achieving the highest level of health. Together with Tribal leaders, urban leaders, and IHS leadership, we will nurture the strength of our Tribal communities, honoring traditions while forging pathways to wellness and vitality.”

Prior to joining IHS, Dr. Poole served as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Liaison at Ft. Bliss, Texas. As an MTF Liaison, he worked with both the Department of Defense and the VA to facilitate and coordinate the transition of wounded, injured, and ill soldiers to the VA for health care and community reintegration.

In 2009, Dr. Poole was appointed to the Army’s Wounded Warrior (AW2) program as an advocate. As an AW2 advocate, he provided assistance, advocacy, and case management services to the most severely wounded, injured, and ill soldiers returning from combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dr. Poole holds a bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Texas at El Paso, a master's degree in social work from New Mexico State University, a master's degree in business administration, and a doctorate in health administration from the University of Phoenix.

The IHS, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](#) in 37 states. IHS is the 18<sup>th</sup> largest public health care system in the nation. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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