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Groundbreaking Ceremony Held for New Tribal Facilities

Winnebago, NE – The Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and the Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System (WCHS) are proud to announce the successful blessing and groundbreaking of a new Tribal facility that will serve as the central hub for our Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Community Health Representatives (CHR), Motor Vehicle Operators (MVO), and the Winnebago Fire Department. The ceremony took place last week on June 13th, 2024 in Winnebago, marking a significant milestone in the community’s development and dedication to improving emergency response services.

The new building will cover a substantial area, providing ample space to house the full-time staff of the Medical Services Division, including the Medical Services Director and the three divisions underneath: MVO, CHR, and EMS. Additionally, the Fire Department will be based here, alongside a dedicated room for the Tribe's Emergency Manager. The facility will also accommodate all fire department trucks, EMS ambulances, and GSA vehicles for CHR/MVO operations. Construction is expected to be completed within the next two years, marking a significant milestone in the community’s growth and resilience.

“The new facilities are more than just buildings; they symbolize the strength and dedication of our first responders, who are often the unsung heroes of our community. To honor this, the site will include a walking path, providing a serene environment for first responders to reconnect with nature and find solace after difficult calls. This feature highlights our commitment to the well-being and spiritual health of those who protect and serve us,” said Mona Zuffante, Chief Public Health Officer of WCHS.

Along with WCHS, Winnebago Tribal Leaders and the Tribal Council have been instrumental in moving this project forward. The project is utilizing funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) to enhance the community’s response capabilities.

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About the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska

The Tribe’s ancestral lands are located in central Wisconsin and northern Illinois. In the 1620's the Winnebago fought an inter-tribal war with the Potawatomis'. After this war, small pox and measles epidemics reduced the population of the Tribe from about 25,000 people to only about 150 people.

The Winnebago signed their first treaty with the United States in 1816 and signed boundary and cession treaties in the 1820's and 1830's. These treaties resulted in the loss of most of the tribal land. The Tribe was moved from what is now northeast Iowa, to Minnesota to South Dakota, and finally to their current location in Nebraska where the Winnebago Indian Reservation was established by treaties of 1865 and 1874. Following this displacement to the treeless plains of



South Dakota, a nocturnal gravitation occurred during which many of the dispossessed Winnebago, under cover of darkness, traveled down the Missouri River to rejoin remnants of their tribe in Nebraska. The General Allotment Act of 1887 resulted in the loss of about two thirds of the Reservation by 1913. Both population and economic opportunities were lost through the 1960's.

In 1975, the Tribe was awarded \$4.6 million by the Indian Claims Commission for the land it had lost in the 1837 land cession treaty with the federal government. The tribal council decided to use much of the award to develop three programs: land acquisition, credit and a wake and burial program.

The tribe is federally recognized and organized under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. The 1936 constitution and bylaws were amended in 1968. The Tribal Council is composed of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and five other members. All officers are elected to a one-year term, while the remaining council members are appointed (Tiller, 1996). In 1986, the Tribe reestablished its sovereignty in the area of its legal system.

About Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System (WCHS)

WCHS is dedicated to creating and sustaining a healthy community in Winnebago and all the populations we serve. Our organization provides an integrated approach to medicine by offering care services that are compassionate, innovative, and culturally-centered. Our goal is to lead the nation in health for indigenous people by challenging the culture of healthcare for the 10,000 Native Americans who live on the Winnebago Reservation and in the surrounding region. The rural healthcare services we provide include renowned acute care hospital services, a robust primary care clinic, and impressive prevention programs designed to educate, encourage, and support the mental, environmental, social, and physical wellness needs of the Winnebago community. Visit www.wchs.health to learn more.