

# Comprehensive Health and Social Services Plan Community needs tapped for health planning

by Cynthia Stowell

For the first time since Oregon State University surveyed the human and natural resources of the Warm Springs Reservation in the 1950's, a comprehensive look at this community's health needs has been completed.

Only this time, Warm Springs is taking its own temperature. Sal Sahme, prime mover of the "Comprehensive Health and Social Services Plan," feels that one measure of the plan's importance is that it was born of community involvement. Another fact that distinguishes this latest research is the community's ownership of the plan.

Months of interviewing, gathering statistics, observing and analyzing have produced not only an in-depth report on existing needs and services. They have also pointed a direction for the community in planning for its future. Sahme sees the health plan as just a beginning, a "foundation... to the obviously constant evolving and changing health and social services needs of the Warm Springs community."

Completion of the comprehensive health plan also earns Sahme a Master's degree. But unlike much thesis-related research, where "people subjected to the student's research usually have little control or practical use for the thesis," Sahme feels his project is a "meritorious exercise for the Tribes as well."

### More input from the Tribes

Central to the plan is the assumption that the tribes will in the coming years play a larger role in the planning and provision of health and social services on the reservation. Passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (PL-93-638) in 1975 opened the door to tribal contracts with HEW for the provision of services currently handled by the Indian Health Service. The Indian Health

The history of health care on the reservation has been characterized by a lack of tribal "control or accountability" states the report. Even as the Tribes have begun providing their own social and mental health services in the last ten years, "growth has been dictated in accordance with funding availability." Crisis orientation and short term planning have plagued existing programs and there has been little attempt to standardize treatment methodologies. And lastly, the "natural care system" found in the Warm Springs community has not been recognized and incorporated into programs.

What has been needed, says the report, is longrange planning based on identified health and social service needs "as defined by the community." The Comprehensive Health and Social Services Plan was designed to form the basis for a "model health care system appropriate to the Warm Springs Confederated Tribes."

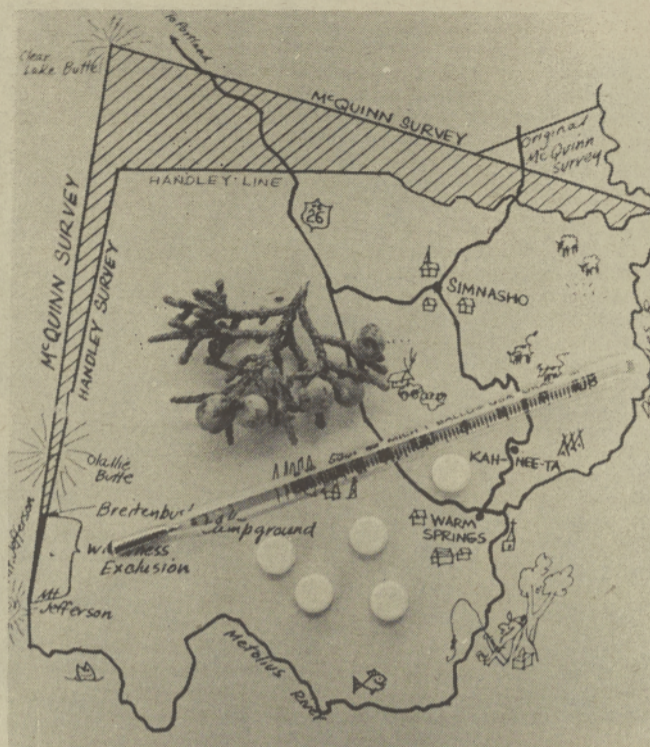
### Nine months of consciousness-raising

Sahme was hired by the Tribes in 1978 as a health planner and given nine months to wade through a dizzying list of 18 objectives, with the health plan as the primary product.

At the core of the health plan is the survey administered to a random sample of the reservation population, all tribal members.

But first, Sahme began bringing the community into the process by staging a health legislation workshop last October. The workshop introduced participants to the major pieces of recent health legislation and how they might affect the Tribes' relationships with a number of state and federal agencies.

Then began the collection of "raw data" from the programs currently serving the reservation, including the Indian



**DIAGNOSIS -** The reservation is taking its own temperature and prescribing a new approach to health care, incorporating traditional and modern methods of treatment.

Spilyay Tymoo Photo by Stowell

their awareness of and rate the services offered by the various health and social service programs; prioritize perceived health needs of children and elderly; comment on their knowledge of Indian medicines as well as prescription medicines; define ill health and its causes; and suggest improvements in the health delivery system in Warm Springs.

Responses were analyzed on the basis of simple frequencies, with more complex cross-statistical analysis to come later. Several results stand out in Sahme's mind.

### Natural care and self-reliance

Most outstanding was the support lent to the notion that Warm Springs has a strong and viable "natural health care system." When asked where they go for advice and why, well over half the respondents said they go to friends or relatives because they trust them and find them to be understanding. "We have to be aware of and utilize this system," said Sahme, but recognize that drawing a lot of attention to it and disrupting "delicate, natural balance" could cause it to break down.

Sahme was also struck by people's positive response to a question about self-reliance. People would like to rely on their own resources, according to their responses, a philosophy already in practice within the Tribal Health and Social Services Branch.

Also notable were people's ratings of existing services which tended to cluster in the "fair" zone. To Sahme this indicated a lack of exposure to a variety of other services as a basis of comparison. "People need to know what quality services can be available," he remarked.

In terms of service needs, people listed easier access and less waiting time at the top of the list. With 89% of the respondents going to the

Indian Health Service Clinic for their physical health needs, it is significant that over half have experienced more than 60 minutes of waiting to see a doctor and two-thirds would like to see the IHS move into new larger quarters.

### People were asked to indicate their awareness of services offered, prioritize perceived health needs, comment on their use of Indian medicines, define ill health, and suggest improvements.

People also indicated a need for drug and alcohol education for children as well as increased culture education and recreation. Many saw a need for increased cultural awareness among staff. Others suggested more home care and better transportation for the elderly. A large percentage said they would use a budget assistance program if it was offered.

### Launch pad of recommendations

Based on people's responses and the information gathered from existing programs, Sahme assembled a list of recommendations that serve as a launch pad for the comprehensive health plan. Some of these recommendations are:

- Make adequate space available for provision of direct services. Specifically, the construction of a new health services complex is recommended.
- Dental services must be accessible and optometry and audiology services must be consistently available.
- A professionally staffed Emergency Medical Service Program is needed.
- All human service providers should take part in a comprehensive continuing education program.

- A health resource guide for the reservation should be developed and continually updated.
- A feasibility study should be conducted to determine whether the Tribes should exercise self determination in respect to local IHS programs.
- A time clock study of IHS clinic operations should be completed.
- Warm Springs' natural care system should be sanctioned and incorporated into health delivery.
- The health planning function should continue and a longitudinal study should be launched to evaluate the longterm effectiveness of the Tribes' plan.

### Converting needs to action

The Comprehensive Health and Social Services Plan converts these recommendations to goals, objectives and action steps, offering a time frame, suggesting responsible persons or departments and estimating costs involved. The plan is designed to address a ten-year time frame.

The most immediate action will center on the securing of funds for fiscal years 1981-1984 for improved services and construction of a health services complex. In the meantime eight different objectives are recommended for inclusion in the Health Branch's 1980 budget, ranging from 24-hour emergency care to training staff.

### Central to the plan is the assumption that the Tribes will in the coming years play a larger role in the planning and provision of health and social services on the reservation.

Care Improvement Act of 1976 further commits the government to encouraging the participation of Indians in health planning and management. It was this that enabled Warm Springs to embark on the development of a comprehensive plan, the plan in turn giving the community the "tools necessary for real participatory impetus to their health status."

But the health plan does not presume the implementation of P.L. 638, noted Sahme. Rather, it is the groundwork for looking at the feasibility of the Tribes exercising self-determination in the area of health services. "This document will speak to the process of cooperating with the Indian Health Service... and moving toward a human services umbrella, away from territoriality," said Sahme.

Health Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and numerous departments in the Tribal Health and Social Service Branch.

### Surveying the community's needs

While this information was coming in, Sahme and the Health and Welfare Committee launched the community interviews, in consultation with experts from the University of Oregon's White Cloud Center. Nine interviewers were selected on the basis of their employment in the tribal Health and Social Service Branch and their tribal membership. From the tribal rolls, 165 people were selected for the survey sample, with 108 completing the interview.

Subjects were asked in confidential interviews to indicate

This fall, a time clock study will be conducted by the I.H.S.'s Office of Research and Development to monitor elapsed time during patients' visits to the clinic. It is expected that findings will indicate the clinic is being used to capacity and that its four examination rooms cannot handle current patient load, according to the director of the project.

Perhaps most importantly, the Comprehensive Community Health Plan will foster a holistic approach to the preservation of this community's health. Sahme explains holistic as the treatment of the mind, body and soul as one, not separating physical and mental health.

In a broad sense "holistic" might also describe the plan's implied trend toward more cooperation between tribal and governmental services, creating a "human services umbrella" for the reservation.

Copies of the Warm Springs Community's Comprehensive Health and Social Services plan are available from Sal Sahme 553-1161 ext. 225 or the Health and Welfare Committee (553-1161 ext. 258).

Next: What are Warm Springs' identified health needs?