

# Oneida Nation

Post Office Box 365

Phone: (920) 869-2214



Oneida, WI 54155

## BC Resolution # 02-27-19-C

### Supporting Dental Therapy as a Solution to the Oneida Nation's Oral Health Challenges

- WHEREAS,** the Oneida Nation is a federally recognized Indian government and a treaty tribe recognized by the laws of the United States of America; and
- WHEREAS,** the Oneida General Tribal Council is the governing body of the Oneida Nation; and
- WHEREAS,** the Oneida Business Committee has been delegated the authority of Article IV, Section 1, of the Oneida Tribal Constitution by the Oneida General Tribal Council; and
- WHEREAS,** there is a present high unmet need for dental care, particularly within the American Indian/Alaska Native population, due in part to the lack of enough dentists available to serve Tribal reservations and the off-reservation American Indian/Alaskan Native populations; and
- WHEREAS,** American Indians and Alaska Natives have a higher prevalence of dental decay and untreated tooth decay in all age groups compared to the general United States population, with many Native children experiencing dental caries before the age of two; and
- WHEREAS,** poor oral health issues persist disproportionately for the American Indian/Alaskan Native population such as:
- Over eighty percent (80%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native children aged 2-4 years have dental caries;
  - Eighty-three percent (83%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native children between 6-9 years of age had a history of decay in their primary or permanent teeth, compared to forty-five percent (45%) of children in the general U.S. population;
  - Almost half of 6-9 year-old American Indian/Alaskan Native children, forty-seven percent (47%), had untreated decay. This compares to seventeen percent (17%) of 6-9 year-old children in the general U.S. population;
  - Despite a trend toward a reduction in tooth loss in the U.S. population, older data indicate twenty-five percent (25%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native people aged 35 to 44 years have fewer than twenty (20) natural teeth;
  - Among all persons aged 55 years and older, nearly seventy-five (75%) have fewer than twenty (20) natural teeth;
  - Fifty-nine percent (59%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native adults have periodontal (gum) disease;
  - Seventy-eight percent (75%) American Indian/Alaskan Native adults 35 to 44 years and ninety-eight percent (98%) of elders 55 or older have at least one tooth removed because of decay, trauma, or gum disease; and
- WHEREAS,** these disparities can be attributed to a lack of enough dental health professionals in the Indian health system in which Indian Health Service (IHS) dental providers have a patient load of 2,800 patients per provider, while general population providers have approximately 1,500 patients per provider and the IHS experiences a very high dental provider vacancy

rate, with estimates that twenty-six percent (26%) of the dental positions within the IHS are vacant, which contributes to the lack of access to dental health services; and

**WHEREAS,** at Oneida Dental, patient wait times for hygienist are typically around 6-7 months, while wait times for dentists are approximately 4-5 months; and

**WHEREAS,** the IHS has a benchmark of 1200 users per dentist above an initial 800 user population and Oneida Dental has a user population of 28,148, which equates to 6,077 users per dentist. The patient-to-dentist ratio is five times greater than IHS standards; and

**WHEREAS,** in treaties, health care was guaranteed by the federal government in perpetuity in exchange for Tribal land and peace; and

**WHEREAS,** poor dental care is often a life sentence to poverty, as it is accompanied with a decline in self-confidence and often a loss of academic and economic opportunities due to social perceptions of poor dental hygiene, contributing to cyclical generational impoverishment in Indian Country; and

**WHEREAS,** Dental Therapists have been in existence in Alaska Native communities since 2004 and thoroughly evaluated for safety, quality, and appropriate scope of practice with the Alaska Native patient population in collaboration with the IHS; and

**WHEREAS,** Dental Therapists work as part of the dental team under the supervision of dentists and have received high results and accolades from patients, health care professionals, and community leaders in the U.S. and in over fifty (50) other countries; and

**WHEREAS,** Although IHS, which fulfills the treaty obligation to provide health services to Tribes, is a federal agency, current federal law states that IHS can only utilize dental therapists working under the Community Health Aid Program (CHAP) if a state legislature agrees; and

**WHEREAS,** Wisconsin passing legislation to allow for the hiring of Dental Health Aide Therapists would permit federal U.S. Indian Health Service funding to be used by Tribes to utilize Dental Therapists as part of the dental team; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Oneida Business Committee supports legislation authorizing Dental Therapists in Wisconsin to empower Tribes and the Indian Health Service to provide desperately needed dental care to our communities.

#### CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, as Secretary of the Oneida Business Committee, hereby certify that the Oneida Business Committee is composed of 9 members of whom 5 members constitute a quorum; 7 members were present at a meeting duly called, noticed and held on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2019; that the forgoing resolution was duly adopted at such meeting by a vote of 6 members for, 0 members against, and 0 members not voting\*; and that said resolution has not been rescinded or amended in any way.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa Summers, Secretary  
Oneida Business Committee

\*According to the By-Laws, Article I, Section 1, the Chair votes "only in the case of a tie."