

## **SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Southern Ute Indian Tribe to Manage Ignacio Health Clinic**

On October 1, 2009, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe assumed management and oversight of the Southern Ute Health Center in Ignacio, which has been operated by the federal Indian Health Service (IHS) and provides health care to Southern Ute tribal members and other local Indians.

The Tribe had initially proposed such a transfer to IHS as early as in 2005 under the Indian Self-Determination Act, or ISDA, a federal law that seeks to “assur[e] maximum ... participation [by Indian tribes] in the direction of ... Federal services to Indian communities so as to render such services more responsive to the needs and desires of those communities.” The IHS declined the Tribe’s initial proposal, which led to protracted litigation. Recently, the Tribe and the IHS agreed to a contract under the ISDA that allowed the Tribe to begin management of the Southern Ute Health Center while still allowing for the resolution of the issues that led to the litigation.

“The Tribe has been looking forward to this date for a long time and many tribal leaders, including previous Chairmen, members of prior Tribal Councils, and numerous tribal members committed to improving our healthcare have brought us to this point,” said the Tribe’s Chairman, Matthew J. Box. “Unfortunately, it has taken us longer to get here than we had hoped but we are excited that we can now move forward with our plans for providing quality health care to our members and other Indians in the community.” Chairman Box noted that health care was a top priority for the Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council and taking over management of the Health Center was an important accomplishment for meeting that priority. “Although the changes may not be immediately seen,” Box said, “the Tribe’s management of the Health Center will ultimately mean we can be more responsive to the health care needs of our members rather than relying on the IHS.”