

Idaho Business Review, Friday, July 1, 2011 – by Jennifer Gonzalez

Couer d’Alene Tribe to build new medical center

The [Coeur d’Alene Tribe](#) will be kicking off construction this month on its \$17 million community medical center. The 50,000-square-foot [Benewah Medical and Wellness Center](#) on the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation will double the size of the facility in use now, a six-building complex that opened in 1990 in Plummer. It can no longer accommodate increased patient registration and service use, according to CDA Tribe Legislative Director Helo Hancock.



Approximately 8,000 tribal and non-tribal patients (50 percent Indian and 50 percent non-Indian) use the clinic each year, a number that exceeded initial projections when it was built. About 40 percent of its patients have no insurance, with a third below federal poverty guidelines. Services are available to everyone, regardless of ability to pay, and include medical, dental, pharmacy, lab and x-ray, community health, and counseling. BMC employs 125 people.

CDA Tribal Chairman Chief Allan said discussion of building a bigger clinic started

almost immediately after the first clinic opened. “This is important because we are a rural community and we have grown out of our space,” Allan said.

The new clinic will be about a mile away from the site of the clinic being used now. Allan said apart from BMC, the nearest medical services to people in Benewah County are in Spokane, Wash., Coeur d’Alene, or Saint Maries, between 40 minutes to an hour away. “It’s quite the trek and the roads are windy, so this offers people a place to go,” he said.

Construction is scheduled to begin in July and finish in October 2012. Walker Construction of Seattle is the general contractor and NAC Architecture of Spokane is the architect.

The project is being paid for with a \$11.8 million grant federal health care grant, \$3 million from the Tribe, and \$2.5 million from BMC. Allan said Idaho Sen. Mike Crapo was instrumental in helping secure some funding for the new clinic. Crapo spokesman Lindsay Nothern confirmed the senator pushed for over \$260,000 in fiscal year 2009 for new equipment for BMC, and also been involved in maintaining funding for Indian Health Centers programs and for the Community Health Center Program.

“Senator Crapo and others in the state delegation were involved in letter writing to help us, which has been a good blessing,” Allan said.