

TOIYABE INDIAN HEALTH PROJECT, INC.  
250 SEE VEE LANE  
BISHOP, CALIFORNIA 93514

May 7, 2020

ADMINISTRATION  
(760) 873-8464  
(760) 873-3935 FAX

FISCAL  
(760) 873-6111  
(760) 872-8152 FAX

CONTRACT CARE  
(760) 873-6111  
(760) 873-7601 FAX

OPTICAL  
(760) 873-6111

BISHOP MEDICAL CLINIC  
(760) 873-8461  
(760) 873-3908 FAX

PHARMACY  
(760) 873-4721  
(760) 873-6127 FAX

DENTAL  
(760) 873-3443  
(760) 873-3889 FAX

COMMUNITY HEALTH/  
NUTRITION/ELDERS  
(760) 872-2622  
(760) 873-6362 FAX

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE  
(760) 873-8851  
(760) 873-4922 FAX

FAMILY SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
(760) 873-6394  
(760) 873-3254 FAX

DIALYSIS CENTER  
(760) 873-7611  
(760) 873-3361 FAX

WIC PROGRAM  
(760) 872-3707  
(760) 873-6362 FAX

LONE PINE COMMUNITY CLINIC  
1150 S. GOODWIN LANE  
P. O. BOX 186  
LONE PINE, CA 93545  
(760) 876-4795  
(760) 876-5624 FAX

COLEVILLE CLINIC  
73 CAMP ANTELOPE RD.  
COLEVILLE, CA 96107  
(530) 495-2100  
(530) 495-2122 FAX

Toiyabe Indian Health Project Board of Directors  
Statement on Pharmacy and Providing Quality Health Care

My name is George Gholson and I'm currently Chairman of the Board for the Toiyabe Indian Health Project. I have served on this board for nine years, once as Secretary and then Chairman for the last two years. I was also Chairman of the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe for 10 years and currently serve on the Tribal Council. Speaking for the collective Toiyabe Board, we want to assure our patients and the public that our highest priority is providing safe, quality health care for our patients.

The Toiyabe Board and management have taken seriously the complaints of protestors. We are taking everything under consideration and we welcome input from all of the nine communities Toiyabe serves from Bridgeport to Death Valley. The best way to communicate concerns is to write to our management, not to hold public protests during a deadly pandemic. We have a responsibility to protect our patients and staff, many of whom are Tribal citizens. Toiyabe's staff is 54% Native American.

The community, the Board of Directors and the clinic have never faced a national pandemic and it has been very challenging for all of us. The entire time I have been on the board the main focus has always been on providing the best healthcare possible for our communities. We have been experiencing growing pains, which was expected with the new clinic. There are a number of issues being corrected that were present prior to this administration and have been occurring for several years. The current CEO inherited a lot of these issues and the board directed her to make corrections.

The Board of Directors is frequently updated about the pharmacy issues. TIHP is taking corrective measure required by the State and the Federal Government concerning the pharmacy. We hear rumors about the staff and the Board, but we have and continue to make decisions based on facts, policy and documentation. The Board is a policy board and is not involved in the day-to-day operations. The Board is comprised of experienced tribal leaders, including two Tribal chairs, who would not allow Toiyabe to be mismanaged.

Toiyabe has transformed in recent years from a small clinic to a much larger clinic and with that growth, the cost of operating has increased. TIHP went from paying \$132,000 a year on leases to the Bishop Paiute Tribe to paying \$660,000 a year for the new clinic, to the USDA with additional money for the ground lease to the Bishop Tribe. Changes have to be made in order for TIHP to survive. These changes include tightening and enforcing policies to benefit

FT. INDEPENDENCE INDIAN RESERVATION  
INDEPENDENCE, CA

BIG PINE PAIUTE TRIBE OF  
THE OWENS VALLEY  
BIG PINE, CA

LONE PINE  
PAIUTE-SHOSHONE RESERVATION  
LONE PINE, CA

ANTELOPE VALLEY INDIAN COMMUNITY  
COLEVILLE PAIUTE TRIBE  
COLEVILLE, CA

BISHOP PAIUTE RESERVATION  
BISHOP, CA

KUTZAD KA' PAIUTE TRIBE  
LEE VINING, CA

TIMBISHA SHOSHONE TRIBE  
DEATH VALLEY, CA

UTU UTU GWAITU PAIUTE TRIBE  
BENTON, CA

BRIDGEPORT INDIAN RESERVATION  
BRIDGEPORT, CA

our patients. The board is optimistic that TIHP is moving in the right direction. I ask the public to be patient during these uncertain times.

Regarding the statements of staff terminated from the pharmacy, we wish to correct the record with facts. We value all our employees and termination was a last resort when the pharmacy staff walked off the job and did not return to work, with no one managing the pharmacy. Toiyabe Administration had to find qualified pharmacists to quickly step in; the pharmacy reopened the next day. Prior to walking off the job, pharmacy staff did not file grievances or follow procedures for complaints.

An independent audit two years ago raised red flags and a second recent audit mandated corrective action. The audit is standard for the organization and was not targeted at the pharmacy. In fact, after speaking with the California Rural Indian Health Board and IHS, unlike what was stated by former employees, there had never been a pharmacy-specific audit by IHS or anyone in the last 20 years. We are disappointed that established grievance protocols were not followed to resolve conflicts.

Finally, we are asking everyone to please abide by the emergency public health orders issued by the State of California, Inyo County and your Tribal governments to stay at home and avoid public gatherings. These orders are to protect our communities and those at high-risk from exposure. A recent protest held by several people at Toiyabe's Bishop clinic violated all emergency health orders and disrespected the safety of others. As a medical facility, we must ensure our patients and staff are not exposed by careless actions. Our staff serve on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis daily and must not be further jeopardized by groups defying emergency orders.

We appreciate your patience during the COVID-19 public health emergency; it has put some constraints on our operations and staff, but we continue to serve patients by appointment. We're proud that during this pandemic, Toiyabe's 176 employees are still working, some from home, to serve our patients on seven Indian reservations and two Native communities. We are here to serve our communities.

Respectfully,

George Gholson, Chairman  
Toiyabe Indian Health Board of Directors

For more information on this article, please contact Susan Lovelace at 760.873.8464 or [susan.lovelace@toiyabe.us](mailto:susan.lovelace@toiyabe.us).

