

I would like to thank President Kohanen for hosting this meeting and all of the Tribal Chairs, officers and council members for the invitation to speak with you today. This is the first time I have met with this group on a reservation. In the past we have met at the Governor's Residence and a hotel in St. Paul. I am happy to be here today. I would like to speak with you today about three topics:

- Health care disparities,
- Tourism, and
- Tribal-state partnerships.

First, health care present many difficult challenges.

Like caring for people without health insurance or who are underinsured.

Or caring for people who, because of their ethnic heritage or economic status are at greater risk for certain health problems.

Although we have proposed several initiatives to build a better health CARE system, we know that people's health is not just determined by the systems that deliver care.

In fact, health is determined by things like environment and personal choices-NOT whether or not we have insurance coverage.

That's why you'll -see a strong dose of prevention in our plan. We believe there's wisdom in the old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Also, in our plan, you'll see an emphasis on quality. we simply have to do a better job of measuring and improving health quality and providing consumers with better information so they can make informed decisions about their care.

We also need to do a better job of engaging the public in our discussions about health. We need the public to help us shape our future health system AND to understand the implications of their personal choices on our health system.

And we need everyone to play a role. Government alone cannot ensure a viable health system for Minnesota. We need the cooperation of non-profit organizations, businesses, faith communities, tribal governments and INDIVIDUALS.

You won't see quick fixes in our plan. You'll see thoughtful, long-term strategies designed to ensure healthy outcomes, spend our health dollars smarter, and promote shared responsibility.

My budget invests more than 100 million dollars to improve the health of all Minnesotans and to make sure we have a health system that can serve us well over the next 50 years.

I can't think of a more important investment than that.

A recent study indicates that the rate of diabetes of American Indians in Minnesota and Wisconsin is 600% higher than whites.

The infant mortality rates in African American and American Indian populations are two to four times as high as any other racial/ethnic group in the state, and the infant mortality rate among American Indians is increasing.

That is unacceptable.

My goal is to decrease the gaps in related health disparities by 20% over the next 5 years. To that end, my agencies want to work in partnership with your tribal governments, the local public health and community-based organizations to bring those numbers down.

One of the things that I am proposing in my budget is: \$500,000 in each of the next two fiscal years in formula based grants to Tribal Governments to support efforts in identifying and implementing culturally-based community interventions.

Another health issue that bothers me is the teen pregnancy rate.

Teens who become pregnant are less likely to graduate from high school, are more likely to be single parents, to live in poverty, to have experienced sexual abuse and to depend on welfare more than women who give birth at an older age.

The children of these teenage mothers have poorer health, lower cognitive development, less education and higher rates of behavior problems than children born to older mothers.

Because there is no one solution to the teen pregnancy problem, I have proposed several different types of grants to be given to community-based organizations or tribal governments to support local efforts to address the problem.

I am asking for your cooperation and partnership to address the various healthcare disparities that exist.

Instead of the State trying to find a one size fits all solution to these problems, I want to challenge you to identify and implement whatever you believe will be the best solution in each of your communities.

Before we can enter into this partnership, we need to get this bill through the legislature. As you know, the legislature doesn't like bills that simply give grants to groups and let them figure out the best way that money should be put to use for a given problem.

The legislature likes to dictate not only who gets the money, but also exactly how it should be used.

Therefore I am asking for your assistance in contacting your state legislators and encouraging them to pass this bill.

There are several other initiatives in my budget that address healthcare disparities and other areas I believe you may have particular concern about.

These initiatives include using educational loan forgiveness programs to attract and retain health providers in rural communities, improving the immunization rate of our kids, and attempting to reduce the suicide rate through increased suicide prevention and mental health promotion efforts.

Some people say that if you have your health you have everything. I don't know if that is completely true, but

By working together the tribes and the state can make that industry grow even more in the future.

People today want something unique, but yet they love to look to the past. Native Americans have a heritage that is unique in the world.

Many tourists today want to know more about the culture, history and art of Indians in Minnesota.

One of the issues for each of you to decide, is whether or not you wish to encourage that interest in your history and art for your communities and tribes

It is a difficult question, some people say you must market and take advantage of whatever opportunities you have and that to do so helps to keep the culture alive. Others will say that doing so is selling your heritage. This is an issue for Native Americans to decide, not state government.

If you choose to showcase some of your culture and crafts the State can work with you in publicizing what you have to offer. Some of the opportunities that exist include nature guiding, sharing your history through story telling or historical re-enactment's, selling your crafts, opening restaurants that specialize in Native American foods, or running a language immersion camp. The possibilities are endless.

I encourage you to work amongst each of your tribes, with all other Native Americans in Minnesota, the communities near your homes and the State of Minnesota to expand the possibilities of tourism in our great State.

My new director of tourism, John Edmund, is very interested in working closer with Minnesota's tribes to promote tourism. He believes that tourism is an economic development that should be available to ALL Minnesotans.

This year's Governor's Conference on Tourism, held just last month in Bloomington, focused on promoting Minnesota's historical and cultural tourism. No one has more to offer in this category than you do.

I have asked John to meet with you on this issue. He wants to partner closely with you on developing tourism in Minnesota.

You have heard me this morning talk about some of the ways that the State and Tribes can work together for the health and welfare of our citizens.

I have also encouraged you to work with the State and non-tribal communities in Minnesota in order to promote tourism for everyone's benefit.

Healthcare and tourism are not the only areas in which Tribal people and the State can work together.

I am sure that if we think about it, there are numerous additional areas in which we can form partnerships.

Today I encourage each of you to go back to your Tribal Councils and review your programs, skills and resources and come-up with ideas about how the Tribes and the State could develop partnerships that would benefit both parties.

As you know, a true partnership involves an equal exchange from both sides, it is not something to be bought. I am not interested in ideas that simply add money to the budget.

I am interested in ideas that can save both the Tribes and the State money, that improve the lives of all Minnesota citizens and that are innovative.

Imagine how the federal government would react if the State and the Tribes started jointly submitting applications for federal funds for various projects.

By working together, we may be able to bring back to Minnesota more of the money we have been sending Washington.

That money can then be used to better the lives of ALL Minnesotans.

I will direct my Commissioners to have their staffs review any such proposals that are brought to them, and I will encourage them to move forward with any that appear to be in the best interests of all parties concerned.

Governor Jesse Ventura  
Prairie Island Indian Community Reservation  
Prarie Island  
February 5, 2001



5

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

---

I will also direct my Commissioners to ask their staffs to develop any such proposals they may be aware of, and to bring them to your attention.

In closing, I would like to say miigwitch for inviting me today.

I'd be happy to answer questions.