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**THE OKLAHOMAN****OUR VIEWS**

## Teaming up

### Tribes join state to fight diabetes

**E**VIDENCE of American Indian tribes' influence in Oklahoma is everywhere. Casinos continue to expand. The MG car plant planned for Ardmore likely will be built on Chickasaw Nation land. Two tribes are developing tribal colleges, adding to one such school already in operation.

Now comes news this week that the Chickasaw and Choctaw nations will spend millions toward finding treatments and a potential cure for diabetes. We can't imagine a much better expense of tribal money to benefit the citizens of Oklahoma and tribal members in our state.

Diabetes is a growing problem nationwide. The disease is a particular problem in Oklahoma and affects American Indians at twice the rate of other Oklahomans.

Combined, the tribes plan to contribute \$3 million for faculty positions involving diabetes research and clinical care at the Oklahoma Diabetes Center. Higher education's endowed professorships program could match those donations, further growing the center's research capabilities.

The center has been a pet project of University of Oklahoma President David Boren, who learned last year that he suffers from diabetes. He has been controlling its effects through diet and exercise, but not all those with diabetes are so lucky. Severe cases can leave patients with kidney failure, amputation and blindness.

One of the Choctaw Nation's endowed faculty positions will focus on pediatrics. That's good news, considering statistics that show the incidence of diabetes in young children has been growing, subjecting them to complications once reserved for adults.

"This is a day that will go down in the history of our state because it's a day when Oklahoma begins to assume national leadership in the fight against diabetes," Boren said in announcing the gifts Monday. Indeed. Of equal historic importance is the ability of the state and tribes to work together in ways that improve the lives of all Oklahomans.