



Beyond Promises, Driving Impact

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Seattle Indian Health Board

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Our mission is to advocate for, provide, and ensure culturally appropriate, high-quality, and accessible health and human services to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB) is a federally qualified health center and public health authority through our public health division, Urban Indian Health Institute. We are also an Urban Indian Organization contracted by the Indian Health Service. We provide and advocate for the best possible care to the 76% of Native people who live in urban areas.

Urban Indian Health Institute is one of 12 Tribal Epidemiology Centers designated by the Indian Health Service in the United States and the only center with a national purview. Tribal epidemiology centers partner with tribes and urban Indian organizations on a local, state, and federal level to collect, analyze, and disseminate public health data for Native people.

Milestones in Care Access



TOM WARREN (CHOCTAW), SB ME
Chair, Board of Directors

As we reflect on the past year, we do so with deep pride—not only in what we’ve accomplished, but in how each step brings us closer to a future where Native communities thrive in health, culture, and sovereignty. At Seattle Indian Health Board, 2024 was a year of meaningful growth, grounded in our mission to serve Native people through culturally attuned healthcare, workforce development, and advocacy.

Our progress this year reflects a long-term vision—one that considers not only the needs of today, but the well-being of future generations. Guided by Traditional Indian Medicine and community wisdom, we continue to build systems that are sustainable, inclusive, and rooted in cultural integrity.

We expanded access to care through new services in naturopathic medicine, psychiatry, and addiction medicine at our Lake City and Pioneer Square clinics. These expansions are more than operational milestones—they are part of a broader effort to create spaces where Native people feel seen, supported, and empowered.

We also made significant progress on the new Thunderbird Treatment Center on Vashon Island. Set to open in 2026, this space has been shaped by community input and will offer a sanctuary for healing, grounded in cultural tradition and holistic care.

Our advocacy efforts have grown stronger in the face of systemic inequities. We continue to elevate Native voices at every level—from local media to national policy platforms. We are also laying the groundwork for deeper civic engagement, so that Native people

are not only heard, but influential in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

Everything we do is guided by our responsibility to Native people—past, present, and future. We are honored to carry this work forward with strength, clarity, and purpose.



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TOM WARREN (CHOCTAW), SB ME
Chair, Board of Directors

A Vision Grounded in Community



ESTHER LUCERO, MPP (DINÉ)
President & CEO

At Seattle Indian Health Board, our vision is unwavering: a future where all Native people live healthy, successful lives. As we grow, this vision remains our foundation—anchoring every decision, every initiative, and every step forward. Our strength lies in our consistency, our cultural grounding, and our commitment to future generations.

The development of the Thunderbird Treatment Center is a powerful reflection of this steady, strategic growth. Over the past year, we've made remarkable progress—progress that is not just about construction, but about restoring vital services to our community with care and intention.

Choosing Vashon Island as the home for the new Thunderbird was deliberate. The land itself holds healing energy, and we are honored to create a space where recovery is supported by both nature and tradition. We've engaged deeply with the Vashon community, and in September 2024, the Vashon Community Council overwhelmingly endorsed our efforts—affirming that this project is not only needed but welcomed.

Once open, Thunderbird will more than double the number of inpatient beds in King County, addressing a critical gap in the region. Rooted in Traditional Indian Medicine, this center will offer holistic, culturally attuned care that draws on generations of Indigenous knowledge. It is a bold step forward—and one we are taking with clarity and purpose.

Throughout 2024, we continued to advocate fiercely for our relatives, ensuring their voices are heard and their care needs are met—locally and across Indian Country. With every challenge comes opportunity, and SIHB remains a steady force, ready to meet the moment with strength and resolve.

I am continually inspired by the dedication of our teams and the resilience of our communities—and confident in the enduring impact we are creating together.



Our strength lies in our consistency, our cultural grounding, and our commitment to future generations.

ESTHER LUCERO, MPP (DINÉ)
President & CEO

Doubling Down on Justice



ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK (PAWNEE), MA
Executive Vice President Director,
Urban Indian Health Institute

Improving the health of Native people nationwide requires action. At Seattle Indian Health Board, we are not waiting for permission to act. We are setting the standard.

In 2024, we continued to challenge systems to ensure they no longer fail our people. We advanced the first Indigenous evaluation framework that reflects the realities of urban Indian experience—one that centers that we are a tribal people wherever we reside and culture and community are integral to that. We are not just contributing to this dialogue—we are leading it.

In order to build what's next, we must be honest about what's broken. Law enforcement has consistently failed to protect Native communities, particularly those impacted by violence. That truth led us to end our landmark agreement with the Seattle Police Department to train officers on data collection for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP). It was a bold decision—but a necessary one.

We didn't walk away from the issue. We walked toward a better solution. In the wake of that decision, we released a new resource that centers the lived experiences of MMIP families and offers actionable guidance for navigating a system that too often ignores them, in addition to continuing to sit on the Washington MMIP taskforce.

Our work didn't stop there. In 2024, we supported Indian Country through projects that decolonize data and uplift Indigenous scientific methodologies. We partnered with communities to address chronic disease and demonstrated what's possible when public health is driven by cultural knowledge and community collaboration.

We know the road ahead will be complex. But we are not afraid to disrupt what doesn't serve us. We are resilient. We are innovative. And we are ready to build a future where Native health is defined by Native leadership just like our ancestors before us.

“ We didn't walk away from the issue. We walked toward a better solution. ”

ABIGAIL ECHO-HAWK (PAWNEE), MA
Executive Vice President Director



Indigenous Knowledge Informed Systems of Care

SIHB is guided by an organizational model we developed called Indigenous Knowledge Informed Systems of Care, or IndigiKnow. Our model is unique because it is rooted in traditional health practices and places Traditional Medicine at the center of everything we do.

This model recognizes that true health requires collaboration across many areas—from medical and behavioral health to public health, policy, and more. By integrating a wide range of providers, including clinical pharmacists, nutritionists, dentists, and traditional medicine apprentices, SIHB supports holistic healing for individuals and communities. Public health efforts focus on education and prevention, while workforce development empowers future healthcare leaders with tools for economic mobility. Through policy and advocacy, SIHB works to reform systems and address structural inequities, creating lasting change beyond the clinic.

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Indigenous Knowledge Informed Systems of Care

Traditional Indian Medicine

Holding Traditional Medicine at our Center

With Traditional Medicine informing everything we do, we can be intentional in the way we approach healthcare for Native people.

Health & Human Services

Holistic care for all of our relatives

By fully integrating our health and human services, we can provide holistic care for our relatives that pays equal attention to the mind, body, and spiritual components of a person's health.

Policy & Advocacy

Advocating for the health of our people

By ensuring that the federal trust responsibility is honored, we are amplifying all Native voices when it comes to policies and funding for Native people.

Workforce Development

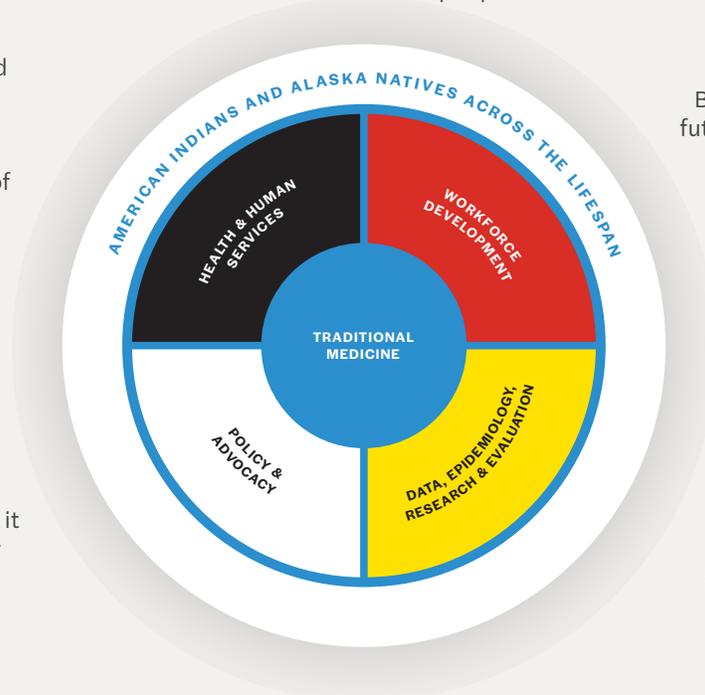
Training the next generation of Native and Native serving healthcare professionals

By investing in our staff and training future generations, we are promoting and expanding culturally attuned healthcare throughout Indian Country and beyond.

Epidemiology, Research, & Evaluation

Decolonizing data for Indigenous people, by Indigenous people

By decolonizing data, we are identifying the resilience and gaps in our communities and addressing them with techniques rooted in Indigenous knowledge.



Impact

Walking in a culture of wellness

Leading an environment, anchored in tradition, that empowers our community to walk in a culture of wellness.

For the Love of Native People



Traditional Indian Medicine At SIHB

The implementation of traditional medicine into primary care is a goal we have been working toward for many years. Follow this timeline to see significant milestones in our progress.



Rooted in Community, Guided by Tradition

In 2024, the Seattle Indian Health Board's Health and Human Services (HHS) team advanced its mission to deliver culturally grounded, high-quality care. We established formal care teams—Sage, Juniper, Sweetgrass, and Huckleberry—each symbolizing unique healing properties. The Traditional Indian Medicine (TIM) team at Seattle Indian Health Board has grown into a vibrant and dedicated group of ten, including a director, two full-time practitioners, one part-time practitioner, and six apprentices. This expansion reflects our deepening commitment to culturally grounded care.



A TIM apprentice prepares cedar medicine packets

Traditional Indian Medicine

Guided by the principle of “relatives first,” the TIM team centers its work on service, mutual support, and collective healing. Their approach is not only about delivering care—it’s about embodying community values, sharing knowledge, and honoring the teachings that have sustained Native people for generations.

Together, they are strengthening a model of care that is rooted in tradition and responsive to the needs of today.

Expanding Access to Traditional Indian Medicine

In 2024, Seattle Indian Health Board significantly expanded its Traditional Medicine Practitioner Network to deepen its commitment to culturally grounded care. All SIHB clinic locations—International District, Lake City, and Pioneer Square—achieved full Traditional Indian Medicine (TIM) coverage. This milestone ensures that relatives across Seattle have consistent access to holistic, culturally attuned care.

Our TIM services have also grown beyond clinic walls. Practitioners now provide house and hospital visits, participate in key community events, and organize cultural activities that foster healing, connection, and identity. These efforts reflect our belief that wellness is rooted in community and tradition—and must be accessible wherever our relatives are.



Layla Yamabe: Protecting Our Cultural Integrity

Traditional Medicine Director Layla Yamabe (Quinault/Quileute/Squaxin) reminds us that traditional medicine is more than healing—it’s heritage. From the misuse of willow bark in the creation of aspirin by people who are non-native to broader issues of cultural appropriation, Layla emphasizes the importance of protocol, respect, and education.

“Our cultural integrity is rooted in history—and in responsibility.”

At SIHB, we honor the diversity of Indigenous teachings. We do not promote a “pan-Indigenous” approach. Instead, we recognize that each tribe and family holds unique knowledge and beliefs.

To protect this sacred knowledge at SIHB:

- Apprentices must complete a Traditional Medicine Practitioner Application before practicing.
- Our electronic health records are carefully documented to avoid oversharing sacred or sensitive information.
- All practices are reviewed by our Traditional Practitioner Advisory Council, ensuring transparency and accountability.

“We need the elders, the spiritual leaders, to see how we’re doing things.”

Through Layla’s leadership, our work remains grounded in cultural respect and guided by the wisdom of our communities.



Our booth at Seafair Powwow



Traditional Indian medicine practitioner Mark Colson, TIM apprentice Ixtlixochitl White Hawk (Pochteca, Otomi, Tarasco), Pioneer Square gate artist Micah McCarthy (Makah) and son, TIM Director Layla Yamabe (Quinault, Quileute, Squaxin)

Community Engagement

In 2024, our TIM team deepened its presence in the community by participating in key cultural events and organizing meaningful activities that celebrate Native identity and wellness.

Highlights included partnerships at the **Seafair Powwow**, University of Washington Powwow, and the **Indigenous Peoples Festival**, where TIM practitioners shared traditional medicines and cultural teachings with relatives and allies. These gatherings provided powerful opportunities to connect, educate, and honor Indigenous knowledge in public spaces.

Our commitment to cultural engagement also extended to **Family Saturdays at the SIHB International District clinic**, where TIM-led workshops and demonstrations offered hands-on learning experiences for all ages.

TIM-Supported Organizations

Urban Native Education Alliance received smudging, medicine gifts, cedar bundles, and medicine sprays

Mother Nation received a sweat lodge, and services performed therein

United Indians of All Tribes received sweat lodge services and maintenance at Daybreak Star Cultural Center

HealthierHere was gifted medicines for the TIM Gathering of practitioners

North Seattle College hosted a cedar bundling workshop



Expanding Systems and Services, Strengthening Connections

Advancing Billing and Data Systems

The TIM billing pilot program made significant progress this year, working in collaboration with Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to develop cost projections for value-added benefits. These efforts are a critical step toward ensuring that traditional healing practices are recognized and sustainably funded within modern healthcare frameworks. As of 2024, two MCOs in Washington are offering TIM reimbursement as a value-added benefit, with more expected to do the same in 2025.

We also enhanced our data collection methods to better track the impact of TIM services. These improvements allow us to more effectively demonstrate the value of traditional care and advocate for its continued integration into health systems.

Expanding Our Reach

In 2024, our TIM program advanced efforts to integrate cultural care into broader healthcare systems while deepening relationships across Indigenous networks.

Our TIM practitioners continue to provide vital cultural care across our programs. Each month, they perform over 2,000 smudges for individuals and groups. **Smudging** is a traditional Indigenous practice that involves burning sacred plants—such as sage, cedar, or sweetgrass—to cleanse the body, mind, and spirit. It is used for healing, grounding, and spiritual connection.

Weekly smudging sessions are held six times per week and ceremonial tobacco teachings are held on a quarterly basis in our Intensive Outpatient (IOP) and Outpatient (OP) groups. These practices offer consistent opportunities for cultural connection and healing. TIM practitioners also support community events, such as the New and Expecting Parents Luncheon, by offering blessings and sharing traditional medicines—ensuring that cultural care is woven into every aspect of our services.

“Smudging is more than a ceremony—it’s a way to reconnect with our ancestors, to ground ourselves in who we are, and to begin healing from within.”

TIM PRACTITIONER
Seattle Indian Health Board



Educational and Community Partnerships

The TIM team has established strong educational partnerships, hosting workshops and cultural sharing sessions with the Urban Native Education Alliance, North Seattle College, and Highline School District. Earlier this year, Lushootseed Language Classes were offered in collaboration with the Muckleshoot Language Department.

Collaborations with Harborview have delivered Native Spiritual Teachings. TIM rotations for medical students and monthly workshops with the SIHB Elders Program continue to enhance community education. Initiatives supporting youth have included participating in Youth Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) and grief and loss sessions for staff and the community.

Building Networks and Strengthening Relationships

The TIM network has expanded to include new specialists in Traditional Foods, Language, Plant Medicine, Arts, and Culture Keeping—reflecting the diversity and depth of Indigenous knowledge systems. In October, we hosted our first **Traditional Practitioner Advisory Council Meeting**, bringing together community leaders and practitioners to share teachings and guide the future of the program.

TIM practitioners have also collaborated with cultural officers from Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) at gatherings in California and strengthened partnerships with the **Puyallup Heritage Division, Reentry Program**, and **Inner Tribal Treatment** organizations. Attendance at the **41st Traditional Indian Health Gathering** in California further enriched the team's collective knowledge and affirmed our commitment to cultural preservation.

The continued growth of the TIM team reflects SIHB's dedication to holistic care and cultural continuity. Through these efforts, we are creating pathways for healing, connection, and community-led wellness.



Traditional Medicine Practitioner Michael Buck (center) earns an eagle feather after facilitating his first Naming Ceremony near Muckleshoot

MICHAEL A. BUCK (YAKAMA), TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PRACTITIONER

IndigiKnow means we treat the whole person, taking into account a relative's spiritual as well as physical, mental, and emotional needs. It's all in a day's work for traditional medicine practitioner Michael A. Buck (Yakama). He is tasked with reconnecting relatives to their own belief systems, traditional values, and cultural heritage. "That reconnection is what I cherish in this work," he says.

During a recent consultation, Mike sang a traditional Yakama song to a relative as part of their meeting. He says singing or speaking the language has a medicinal effect, even if the relative is from a different Tribal nation. Hearing this song awakened something in this person, he recalls. "And you know what?" Mike says. "The relative left feeling better."

Traditional medicine apprentices schedule Mike's one-on-one visits for the late morning or early afternoon. For the rest of the day, he's on call, but he's still busy with other essential work: sending emails, as well as maintaining three sweat lodges, praying at celebrations, and doing home and hospital visits.

“...reconnection is what I cherish in this work.”

Each relative has an effect on Mike, just as he does on them. Each day is different, but one thing remains the same: the healing is mutual.



Members of our Behavioral Health team

Strengthening Care Through Culture and Collaboration

In 2024, the Seattle Indian Health Board’s Health and Human Services (HHS) team advanced its mission to deliver culturally grounded, high-quality care. A key milestone was the formal launch of care teams named after traditional medicines—**Sage, Juniper, Sweetgrass, and Huckleberry**—each symbolizing unique healing properties. These multidisciplinary teams, located across our International District, Lake City, and Pioneer Square clinics, include:

- Community Relations Advocates
- Medical Assistants or Nurses
- Medical Providers and Residents
- Traditional Indian Medicine Practitioners
- Behavioral Health Providers

Because we address the health of the whole person — body, mind, and spirit—sometimes it’s necessary for a relative to see both a western medicine provider and a traditional medicine apprentice during one visit. Traditional Medicine Director Layla Yamabe (Quinault/Quileute/Squaxin) recalls an occasion when an apprentice and a provider collaborated to address the physical needs and fears of a relative who didn’t want to go the western route to treat their diabetes. The apprentice and provider worked with the relative to regulate the person’s emotional state, and then the

three worked out a path on their health journey that suited the relative. Together, they embodied a holistic, team-based model that integrates cultural knowledge with clinical excellence.

This year, SIHB earned national recognition from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for quality care and vaccination efforts, particularly at our Lake City clinic. We expanded specialty services to include:

- Naturopathic Medicine
- Psychiatry
- Addiction Medicine

Notably, we hosted more Behavioral Health trainees than Family Medicine trainees, reflecting our growing emphasis on mental health. Across all services, the HHS team delivered over **9,000 face-to-face visits**, spanning nutrition, podiatry, acupuncture, case management, mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and Traditional Indian Medicine. Every team member is clinically trained, ensuring care is both culturally responsive and medically sound.





A boy receives a bike at the first annual Family Saturday bike giveaway



Children in regalia join a powwow dancer during Family Saturday bike giveaway

Family Saturdays: A Celebration of Health and Community

Family Saturdays is our monthly pediatric clinic event that brings together care, culture, and community. Originally launched in 2020 as a safer care option during the pandemic, it has evolved into a fun and vibrant, family-friendly gathering. Held one Saturday each month, the event features collaboration across departments—including Public Health Services and Family Services—and offers:

- Pediatric medical and dental care
- Cultural programming and education
- Resource giveaways and community resources

In 2024, Family Saturdays saw remarkable growth:

- **Attendance doubled** compared to the previous year
- **Medical no-show rates dropped** from 50% to 36%
- **Dental no-show rates decreased** from 78% to 42%

These events reflect our IndigiKnow model, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of health, culture, and community.

This success is rooted in our investment in cultural programming. Highlights included:

- Traditional food offerings
- Indigenous Vendors Market for Native American Heritage Month
- A drag queen story hour celebrating inclusivity

These events reflect our **IndigiKnow** model, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of health, culture, and community. By creating a welcoming, joyful environment, we've strengthened trust and increased access to care for our relatives.



Artist rendering

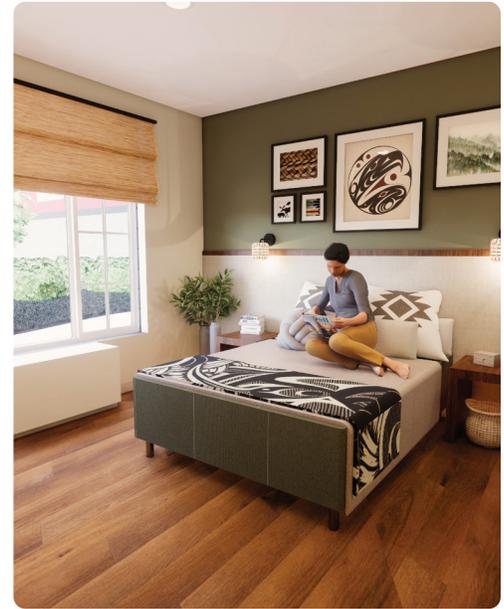
Thunderbird Treatment Center: A Bold Response to a Public Health Crisis

In 2024, Seattle Indian Health Board made transformative progress toward reopening Thunderbird Treatment Center—a vital step in addressing the opioid crisis in King County and across Washington. With a \$36 million investment, the new facility on Vashon Island will increase the region’s inpatient treatment capacity by over 50% and provide urgently needed, culturally attuned care for individuals and families navigating substance use disorder.

Throughout the year, SIHB finalized architectural plans, deepened community engagement, and advanced through King County’s permitting process. In March, we submitted the formal permit application, marking a major milestone in the project’s development. These efforts laid the foundation for final approval in early 2025, clearing the way for construction to begin. The new Thunderbird will offer a 45-day intensive inpatient program supported by behavioral health professionals, Traditional Indian Medicine practitioners, and offer access to comprehensive wraparound services—including psychiatry, primary care, and dental care.



Artist rendering



Artist rendering

Designed with healing in mind, the facility will feature private rooms, a cultural healing space, an outdoor traditional garden, and dedicated areas for community gathering and counseling.

A groundbreaking component of the center will support pregnant or parenting adults with children ages 0–5, allowing families to remain together during treatment. Modeled after a successful program in Oakland, this approach reflects SIHB’s belief that healing is most powerful when it honors both individual and family well-being. As overdose deaths continue to rise, Thunderbird stands as a bold, community-rooted solution—and a promise of hope for the future.

“ We are building more than a facility—we are building a future where Native people can heal with dignity, surrounded by culture, family, and care.

ESTHER LUCERO (DINÉ)
President & CEO

Community Endorsement for Thunderbird Treatment Center

In September 2024, the Vashon-Maury Island Community Council voted overwhelmingly—97 to 26—to endorse Seattle Indian Health Board’s Thunderbird Treatment Center. This strong show of support followed months of community dialogue and affirmed the Center’s role in providing culturally attuned, life-saving care. The endorsement reflects growing trust and partnership between SIHB and the Vashon community.

“ We are grateful to the Vashon-Maury Community Council for their thoughtful decision to support the Seattle Indian Health Board’s efforts in opening the Thunderbird Treatment Center. This is a step toward healing and wellness for all.

SHELLEY MEANS (OJIBWE/LAKOTA)
SIHB Board Member and Vashon Resident



Data, Epidemiology, Research, and Evaluation

As the public health landscape continues to evolve, so do the needs of our relatives. In 2024, our teams advanced community-centered research, expanded culturally grounded programs, and led national efforts to decolonize data. Through every initiative, we remain committed to honoring Indigenous knowledge and strengthening the health of Native people.



An Indigenous Evaluation Framework workshop

Research: Decolonizing Data, Elevating Truth

As the only Tribal Epidemiology Center with a national scope, UIHI continues to lead groundbreaking research for urban American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In 2024, we co-led a major initiative with Washington State University and the NIH to address the opioid crisis and related health disparities. This seven-year project will support Tribal and Native American Serving Organizations in conducting community-prioritized research and improving data access and quality.

We also led a study with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation titled “**Decolonizing Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance to Advance Urban American Indian and Alaska Native Behavioral Health and Wellness.**” This project is developing a new statistical weighting methodology that reflects the lived experiences and protective factors embedded in our community, ensuring that national health data begins to tell the true story of our resilience.

Epidemiology and Evaluation: Centering Indigenous Values

Our team supported more than 100 projects in 2024, working across departments and with national partners to ensure our work is rooted in love for Native people. These projects added up to more than 700 hours spent answering data requests and providing technical assistance on topics like maternal and child health, opioid overdose prevention, infectious diseases, and Alzheimer’s. Through 28 workshops and trainings, we shared our



Members of our Elders program celebrate Veterans Day

Indigenous evaluation framework with Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) and native-led organizations across the country, empowering communities to reclaim their role in the evaluation process.

National Law Enforcement Training

We provided MMIP-focused training to the San Jose Police Department in partnership with the Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley. The training addressed cultural considerations, accurate race and ethnicity data collection, and the broader impact of MMIP on Native communities.

Public Health Services: Community-Driven Care

Our Public Health Services (PHS) team deepened its connection to direct services, expanding youth and elder programs and collaborating across departments to better serve our community. This year, we hosted our annual **Youth Gathering of Native Americans (GONA)** and participated in the **National UNITY Conference**, the largest gathering of Native youth councils in the country. These events fostered leadership, connection, and healing among Native youth.

We also distributed more than 100 gun safes to ensure safe homes for youth, provided suicide prevention resources, and expanded our gender-affirming care services to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth. For our elders, we created culturally attuned spaces for connection and care, while expanding education around dementia, early detection, and stigma reduction—guided by direct input from our elder community.



Youth group attendees at the National UNITY Conference

A standout initiative was the **Food Prescription Pilot Program**, a collaboration between Public Health Services, Nutrition, and Human Services. From April to July, participants received monthly grocery gift cards to support food security and holistic health. Surveys showed improved physical, mental, and emotional well-being—including one relative who lost 76 pounds. Nearly 60% of participants accessed multiple SIHB services, underscoring the importance of integrated, culturally responsive care.

Community-Informed MMIP Report

We published *A Step Toward Justice: Community Informed Law Enforcement MMIP Websites*, a report developed with families of missing and murdered Indigenous people. It offers actionable recommendations to law enforcement for improving MMIP-related online resources and addressing the unmet needs of affected families.



Echo-Hawk named to TIME 100 Next list

Abigail Echo-Hawk was named to the 2024 TIME100 Next list, which honors 100 individuals who are shaping the future of global leadership. This recognition highlights her groundbreaking work in public health and Indigenous data sovereignty.

Policy and Advocacy

In 2024, our policy and advocacy work reached new heights as we continued to fight for justice, equity, and visibility for Indigenous communities. From advancing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) movement to securing critical healthcare funding, our efforts spanned all levels of government. This year marked a turning point, with long-standing advocacy efforts resulting in transformative wins.



Federal Advocacy Wins

Medicaid Reimbursement Includes Urban Indian Organizations for Traditional Health Services

On October 16, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the inclusion of Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) in its Medicaid reimbursement framework for Traditional Health Services. This was a major policy goal for SIHB, supported by our formal comments and bipartisan congressional backing. This win lays the groundwork for reimbursement implementation in Washington State. Once Washington submits and receives approval for 1115 demonstration waivers for TIM Medicaid reimbursement, MCOs will be able to bill Medicaid for covered TIM services, thus making them whole.

Section 1115 waivers allow states, with approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, to authorize Medicaid billing for certain demonstration projects. Waivers are submitted on a state-by-state basis and are a pathway for reimbursement for services typically not covered by Medicaid. Four states currently have such waivers approved for TIM, three of which include UIOs. This is a valuable precedent for Washington to offer TIM reimbursement and to include UIOs.

Elevating the MMIP Crisis in Congress: Congressional Testimony with Impact

We held 36 congressional meetings and testified at two key hearings before the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,

Environment and Related Agencies. Our leadership spoke powerfully about the MMIP crisis, demanding accountability and systemic change from federal agencies and law enforcement.

In May, Executive VP Abigail Echo-Hawk testified before the Subcommittee. Her testimony moved several members to tears and prompted a follow-up hearing on the Department of Justice’s shortcomings on the implementation of Savannah’s Act and the Not Invisible Act. Abigail Echo-Hawk testified before the Subcommittee again in November for the follow-up hearing.

FCC Emergency Alert System Code

Our advocacy led to the Federal Communications Commission establishing a new Missing and Endangered Persons Emergency Alert System Code. This national alert helps law enforcement respond more quickly and raises public awareness—an important step toward addressing the disproportionate number of missing AI/AN individuals.

Healthy Native Babies Program Transition

After years of advocacy, the Healthy Native Babies Program was officially transferred from the NIH to the CDC. In 2024, we met with CDC leadership to begin updating program materials, ensuring continued support for Native families and culturally relevant health education.



SIHB Executive Vice President Abigail Echo-Hawk (Pawnee), Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson, and SIHB President and CEO Esther Lucero (Diné)

State and Local Advocacy Wins

Washington State Legislative Victory

Executive Vice President Abigail Echo-Hawk continued her leadership as co-chair of the Washington State MMIWP Task Force. A major outcome was the passage of SB 6186, which improves data sharing with the State Patrol—one of our top legislative priorities in 2024.

Ending Partnership with Seattle Police Department

In 2021, we began a five-year contract with the Seattle Police Department to improve how law enforcement processes and tracks cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people. The signed agreement was the first of its kind in the country, bringing together law enforcement and an Indigenous-led organization to address the MMIP crisis. During that time, we made recommendations to improve data collection methods, particularly around tracking tribal affiliation. We were also ready to provide training to officers on interacting with Native communities.

However, we faced pushback against our recommendations. After years of unproductive collaboration, we ended our contract with SPD. This decision reflects our commitment to working

with partners who are serious about justice and systemic change.

Statewide Health Advocacy

We participated in lobby days with the Washington Association for Community Health to advocate for expanded Apple Health coverage and dental infrastructure funding. These efforts led to a \$28.4 million expansion of Apple Health and \$452,000 in new funding for oral health facilities at community health centers.

We participated in lobby days with the Washington Association for Community Health to advocate for expanded Apple Health coverage and dental infrastructure funding.



Learning about Native and SIHB cultures at Seven Generations retreat



UIHI team Appreciation Day

Workforce Development

In 2024, we deepened our investment in building a culturally grounded, resilient, and empowered workforce. Through intentional onboarding, professional development, and staff appreciation, we continue to cultivate a workplace rooted in Indigenous values and community care.

Seven Generations: Honoring Our Roots, Growing Our Future

This year, we welcomed our eighth and ninth cohorts into the **Seven Generations** program, with the tenth cohort set to launch in January 2025. This immersive, week-long onboarding retreat introduces new team members to our mission, values, and leadership. The retreat fosters connection between new employees, our Executive Leadership Team, and Board of Directors. It is a cornerstone of our commitment to culturally grounded care and community-centered leadership.

Beyond onboarding, we held staff appreciation events—including our summer picnic and year-end celebration—creating space for joy, gratitude, and connection. These moments strengthen our organizational resilience and affirm our belief that care for our community begins with care for our people.

Looking ahead, we are laying the foundation for an Indigenous Leadership Institute—a space for clinicians and staff to grow their leadership skills through the lens of cultural wisdom, preparing them to guide future generations with integrity and purpose.

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Investing in Our People

In 2024, we expanded our commitment to staff development and well-being through a wide range of learning opportunities and holistic support systems. We now have 30 learning and development programs, most of them self-funded, to grow learners who go on to care for relatives in a Native way.

Our commitment to learning runs wide and deep, from our Family Medicine residency to our Masters of Social Work (MSW) practicum to our Medical Assistant-Registered (MA-R) program. Established during the COVID-19 pandemic, when clinical centers throughout the Seattle area were scrambling to hire MAs, our program was so popular it had a waiting list of people eager to join and learn on the job. Some of them pursue further education in medical school or nursing school, and they also contribute to our workforce development by referring other potential learners to the MA-R program.

We are also reaching out to strengthen our relationships with universities across the country, including Drexel University and Georgetown University. These connections will only grow, now that we have joined the American Indian Medical Education Strategies (AIMES) alliance. As a group, we advocate for graduate medical programs, specifically those that are focused on training Native physicians to serve in Native communities through the Indian Health Service/ Tribal/ Urban Indian Organization (I/T/U) system of care.

A unique strength is the presence of our **Salmon People**—staff who leave and later return, bringing renewed purpose and deeper commitment. Their journeys reflect the enduring bonds within our organization and the strength of our shared mission. One such story is that of **Emily Vega**, who first joined SIHB during the summer of 2020 as a public health intern with UIHI. The internship lasted three months, but it left a deep impression on her. Four years later, Emily has returned as a full-time Program Manager, continuing to be in service to Native people at an organization that shares her values. She believes SIHB is a place that has allowed her to grow, both in her Indigenous identity and as a more confident leader.

We also empower our team with the tools and knowledge they need to grow professionally and serve our community with excellence. Our ability to support staff in meaningful ways is made possible through unrestricted funding, which allows us to go beyond the basics and invest in the well-being of our team. These funds help us:

- Provide 93% **health insurance coverage** for individual staff and 76% coverage for employees and their families (significantly higher than the national averages of 85% and 67%)
- Offer **unlimited mental health services**, a benefit initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Support staff through **adoption and IVF assistance**
- Match **6% of employee 401(k) contributions**, with national recognition for participation
- Deliver **in-person financial planning support** to promote long-term stability

Together, these efforts reflect our belief that investing in our people is essential to sustaining a workforce rooted in cultural values, resilience, and community care.



Esther Lucero Received King County Recovery Champion

The King County Council on Tuesday presented the 2024 King County Recovery Champion Award to Esther Lucero. Lucero was recognized by the King County Council for addressing health disparities and inequities faced by American Indians and Alaska Natives. Under her leadership, SIHB led efforts to provide treatment and recovery services for both the Native community and the larger King County community.

SIHB President and CEO Esther Lucero (Diné) with King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn



A TIM apprentice prepares medicine packets

Development

In 2024, our Development team played a vital role in advancing our mission to care for community. From securing funding for events and programs to building strategic partnerships, their work ensures that Seattle Indian Health Board can continue to grow, connect, and serve with purpose.

This year, we sharpened our focus and welcomed Wayne Harvey as our new Program Director of Development. Under his leadership, we've strengthened our fundraising strategies and deepened relationships with donors and partners, expanding opportunities to support our relatives in meaningful ways.

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Wayne Harvey: Building Community Through Service

Development Program Director Wayne Harvey (Yakama Nation) began his journey at Seattle Indian Health Board as Executive Assistant to President & CEO Esther Lucero. Today, he leads fundraising efforts that support SIHB's mission and expand its impact across Indigenous communities.

“ Leadership is about listening—and lifting others up.

Wayne's work is guided by values of integrity, innovation, and inclusion, to ensure our development efforts reflect our cultural priorities:

- Fundraising strategies are community-informed and mission-driven.
- Partnerships are built with transparency and respect for tribal sovereignty.
- All initiatives are reviewed through a lens of cultural accountability.

“ We honor our ancestors by investing in our future.

Through Wayne's leadership, SIHB's development work remains grounded in service, shaped by Indigenous values, and focused on empowering generations to come.

DEVELOPMENT



Dancers at Indigenous People Festival



Auction winners collect their prizes at the Adeline Garcia Community Service Awards

Funds raised through Development give SIHB the flexibility to invest in Indigenous economies and respond to community needs without the limitations often tied to grant funding. By cultivating relationships with donors of all sizes, the team helps sponsor events and initiatives that reflect our values and uplift our people.

Our community events reached new heights in 2024:

- **Indigenous People Festival** was our largest yet, featuring nearly 60 Indigenous vendors and performers.
- **SpiritWalk & Warrior Run**, our annual 5K run/2K walk, brought together over 100 participants for a day of healing, movement, and connection.
- The **Adeline Garcia Community Service Awards** evolved from a luncheon into a gala, drawing increased attendance and elevating the celebration of Indigenous leadership.

These events are spaces of joy, empowerment, and cultural celebration. They provide visibility for Indigenous artists and entrepreneurs, strengthen community ties, and create opportunities for Indigenous enterprise to thrive.

Through the work of our Development team, we are not only raising funds—we are building a future where Indigenous communities are seen, supported, and celebrated.



SIHB Awarded OCHIN Impact Award

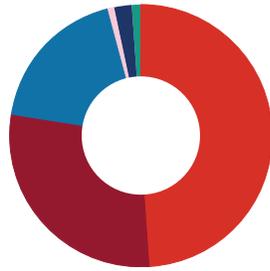
SIHB was awarded a 2024 OCHIN award for transforming patient health and well-being and paving the way for more integrated care through partnership and innovation. SIHB was recognized for ongoing efforts to integrate traditional medicine into an EHR-based primary care model, expanding care access for Indigenous patients, supporting whole-person health and well-being, and having a measurable and significant impact.

Meriah Gille (Cherokee/Choctaw/Sioux) accepts OCHIN Impact Award on behalf of SIHB

Financial Report

REVENUE BY CATEGORY

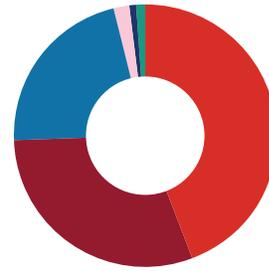
FY2023



Total Revenue **\$50,513,559**

Contracts	24,881,578
Grants	14,249,138
Third-party Revenue	10,135,046
Non-operating Revenue	273,379
Contributions	529,930
Other Revenue	444,488

FY2024

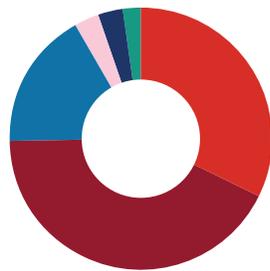


Total Revenue **\$47,425,049**

Contracts	21,912,883
Grants	13,620,847
Third-party Revenue	10,427,252
Non-operating Revenue	646,306
Contributions	445,892
Other Revenue	371,869

EXPENDITURE BY DIVISION

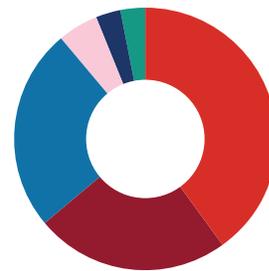
FY2023



Total Expenditure **\$36,402,876**

Medical	11,706,314
Administration	15,245,585
Urban Indian Health Institute	6,334,220
Behavioral Health	1,192,966
Community Services	1,170,674
Traditional Health	753,117

FY2024



Total Expenditure **\$38,206,375**

Medical	15,414,815
Administration	9,260,105
Urban Indian Health Institute	9,628,707
Behavioral Health	1,742,393
Community Services	1,070,993
Traditional Health	1,089,362

YEAR-TO-YEAR GROWTH

FY2019

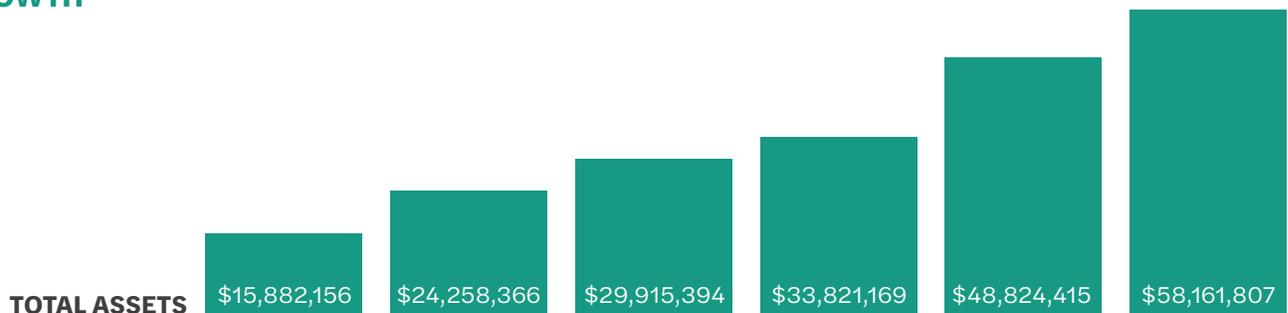
FY2020

FY2021

FY2022

FY2023

FY2024



For the Love of Native People

International District Clinic

611 12th Ave S
Seattle, WA 98144

Lake City Clinic

12736 33rd Ave NE Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98125

Pioneer Square Clinic

124 2nd Ave S
Seattle, WA 98104

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