



2025 AI/AN Healthcare Workforce Development Summit

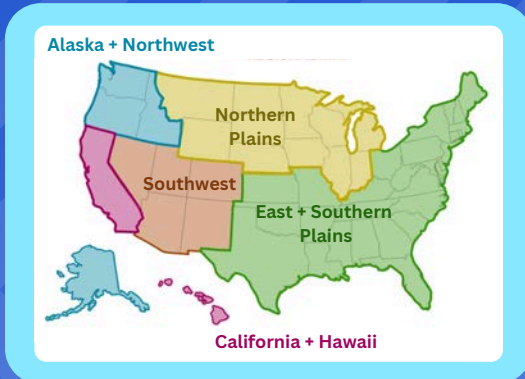
March 19-20, 2025

Presented by the
Indigenous
Health,
Education, and
Resources
Taskforce
(IHEART)



*Supporting AI/AN
individuals in the health
professions through
Indigenous-led, culturally
responsive networks that
advance systems-level
change.*

IHEART BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES



»»» WHAT IS IHEART?

The Indigenous Health, Education, and Resources Taskforce (IHEART), is a national collaborative formed in 2021 to address the scarcity of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities in the health professions. IHEART is an AIAN-led collaborative consisting of a national

coordinating committee and regional networks to amplify, herald, and sustain systems-level solutions by uniting allies, organizations, institutions, and communities dedicated to improving AIAN educational and health outcomes. This was the fifth annual summit since IHEART's founding.

»»» IHEART OBJECTIVES

- Development of regional networks that promote local systems-level change focused on AIAN health workforce development that includes fostering the development of systems-focused leaders.
- Identification and dissemination of effective systems-based solutions.
- The creation of a centralized national resource for health professions workforce development that centers AIAN expertise and cultural ways.

»»» 2025 SUMMIT OBJECTIVES

- Create an opportunity for collective strategic planning for the IHEART initiative to guide our work in the coming years.
- Translate IHEART's national objectives to the regional level in order to empower regions to come up with systems-level solutions to challenges in AI/AN workforce development.
- Share timely developments in health workforce recruitment, higher education, and state/federal legislation and policies to understand how we can move IHEART's mission forward amidst these changes.
- Launch new tools for IHEART members to use in the promotion of existing pathways programming.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM SPONSOR ORGANIZATIONS

The IHEART initiative was launched through the collaborative efforts of the Association of American Indian Physicians, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Association of Native American Medical Students, Association of American Medical Colleges, and the Indian Health Service and is sustained through funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



MARY OWEN (MD)

IHEART Founder and Co-Lead

*Associate Dean of
Native American Health
University of Minnesota
Medical School*



NORMA POLL-HUNTER (PHD)

IHEART Co-Lead (AAMC)

*Senior Director of Diversity
and Inclusion
Association of American Medical
Colleges (AAMC)*



TOM ANDERSON (MPH)

IHEART Co-Lead (AAIP)

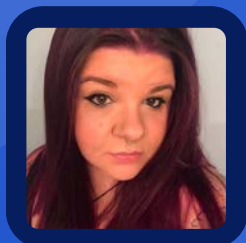
*Executive Director
Association of American Indian
Physicians (AAIP)*



RENO CHARETTE

IHEART Co-Lead (AIHEC)

*Director of Health Initiatives
American Indian Higher Education
Consortium (AIHEC)*



STEPHANIE DOBOS (MPH)

IHEART Program Manager

*Based out of the Association of
American Indian Physicians
(AAIP)*

IZZY BURKE

**IHEART Communications
Coordinator**

*Based out of the American Indian
Higher Education Consortium
(AIHEC)*



OPENING PRAYER, KEYNOTE & STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP BY VICKIE OLDMAN

KEYNOTE REMARKS

Vickie Oldman, Co-Manager at [Seven Sisters Community Development Group](#), provided keynote remarks on the theme of strategic planning and growth at this pivotal moment in IHEART's development. After leading us with an opening prayer, she shared insights from her

work helping other Native-led organizations develop strategic plans for how to grow their membership and infrastructure in a way that is authentic to the organization's core values. Vickie used the example of an aspen tree and its root system as a way to visualize the organization of IHEART and its regional hubs. While each region is envisioned to stand independently and will grow by being fed from its own "soil" (the surrounding community), each region is connected to the others and to the national IHEART team through a robust, interconnected root system which ensures that resources are distributed equally.



STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

Following her keynote remarks, Vickie led attendees in an interactive workshop to explore what the core values of IHEART are according to its current membership. To draw out these values, she led attendees in an exercise in which each person was asked to illustrate a specific story that led them to this work at various points in their career and education, including:

- A moment from 10 years ago which influenced your interest in addressing AI/AN health disparities through education;
- Another example from 5 years ago;
- An example of something you are currently doing to enact this work through IHEART; and
- Your vision for what IHEART will be doing 10 years from now to sustain this work.

Attendees were invited to share their personal stories from this exercise and synthesize their individual experiences into a single core narrative which describes how the work that IHEART is doing reflects members' core values.

PANEL DISCUSSION: TRENDS IN HEALTH WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

»»» PANELISTS



Rance McClain (DO)



Lisa M. Greenhill (MPA, EdD)



Jessica A. Rickert (DDS)



Kimberly Bellamy

Rance McClain (DO)
Senior Vice President of Medical Education, [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine \(AACOM\)](#).

Lisa M. Greenhill (MPA, EdD)
Chief Institutional Research Officer, [American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges \(AAVMC\)](#).

Jessica A. Rickert (DDS)
[Anishinaabe Dental Outreach Specialist](#)

Kimberly Bellamy (Moderator)
Lead, Strategic Programs and Partnerships, [Association of American Medical Colleges \(AAMC\)](#).

»»» KEY POINTS

Watch the full recording of this discussion on the IHEART YouTube channel.

- In the 2023-2024 academic year, AI/AN students represented 1% of the roughly 10,000 students entering osteopathic medical school.*
 - The first tribally affiliated medical school in the United States, the Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine, was established in 2020 with a campus at the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah, OK. The curriculum integrates Cherokee culture and prepares students for primary care residencies in tribal or tribal-focused health care facilities.
- The American Indian Medical Education Strategies (AIMES) Alliance, established in 2024, is another organization which addresses physician shortages in tribal communities by advocating for federal policies that expand graduate medical education partnerships in tribal medical facilities.
- As of 2023, AI/AN students make up 0.1% of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) students enrolled at Colleges of Veterinary Medicine in the U.S.
 - To improve recruitment numbers, AAVMC is expanding its rural recruitment efforts and partnering with organizations like the Native American Veterinary Association and Natives in Vet Med to highlight AI/AN representation in veterinary medicine.
- Of the 1,012 dental students in the state of Michigan, 3 are AI/AN.
 - Anishinaabe Dental Outreach has facilitated a partnership with Bay Mills Community College (a Tribal College) to give AI/AN students located in the Upper Peninsula greater access to dental schooling.

**This count does not include students who reported being of mixed heritage.*

PANEL DISCUSSION: POLICY CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND HEALTH

▶▶▶ PANELISTS

Moriah K. O'Brien

Vice President of Congressional and Federal Relations, [American Indian Higher Education Consortium \(AIHEC\)](#)

Danielle Turnipseed (JD, MHSA, MPP)

Chief Public Policy Officer, [Association of American Medical Colleges \(AAMC\)](#)

Lacey Wind

Director of Public Health Policy and Programs, [National Indian Health Board \(NIHB\)](#)

Mary Owen (MD) (Moderator)

Associate Dean of Native American Health, [University of Minnesota Medical School](#)



Moriah K.
O'Brien



Danielle Turnipseed
(JD, MHSA, MPP)



Lacey Wind



Mary Owen (MD)

▶▶▶ KEY POINTS

[Watch the full recording of this discussion on the IHEART YouTube channel.](#)

- Bipartisan support is crucial for developing support at the Congressional level to advocate for continued funding and services to Indian Country, particularly the Tribal Colleges and Universities which provide educational pathways to AI/AN students.
- At the time of this event, the Executive Order on implementing the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) Workforce Optimization Initiative has initiated hiring freezes and layoffs at a number of federal agencies.
 - In the Indian Health Service (IHS), prior to this E.O. there was an existing 30% vacancy rate (including 35% for physicians and 44% for behavioral health providers). There are exemptions to the new hiring freeze for some 600-level providers in behavioral health and psychiatry, but the overall effect is that 950 probationary IHS staff have been terminated and staff moral is low.
- At the Congressional level, the Tribal Tax and Investment Reform Act is expected to be reintroduced to the House, which includes several IHS tax exemption provisions for loan repayment and scholarship programs.
- In 2024-2025, AAMC observed a decrease of 15.4% in the number of AI/AN medical school applicants compared to the previous year.
 - To address this, AAMC is working to strengthen the academic medicine workforce, support medical students and schools in the training of future scientific researchers and physicians, strengthen academic health systems and teaching hospitals, and support health and scientific research and funding.

STUDENT PANEL: UNPACKING THE POST-BAC EXPERIENCE



Ava Scherlag



Mateo Perez



Molly Tomah



Brayden
Windes



Aiyana
Austin



Breanna
De Leon

»»» PANELISTS

Ava Scherlag

Nursing Pathway Scholar, [Wy'east Nursing Pathway](#)

Mateo Perez

Nursing Pathway Scholar, [Wy'east Nursing Pathway](#)

Molly Tomah

Scholar, [Native American Pathway Program](#)

Brayden Windes

Scholar, [Huwighurruk Tribal Health Program](#)

Aiyana Austin

Scholar, [Huwighurruk Tribal Health Program](#)

Breanna De Leon (MPH, ScM) (Moderator)
PhD Candidate in Behavioral & Community Health Sciences, [University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health](#)

[Watch the full recording of this discussion on the IHEART YouTube channel.](#)

»»» KEY POINTS

- Students noted that post-baccalaureate programs can be a helpful option to keep AI/AN students academically and culturally engaged during the transitional period before applying to or beginning classes at medical school.
- Programs which integrated cultural knowledge and practices into the curriculum were especially effective for students who wanted to be able to practice medicine through an Indigenized lens.
- Other forms of support, such as financial planning for medical school and MCAT prep, helped students prepare for the next stage in their education.
- Students reiterated that there is no single way to approach beginning a career in health care; taking breaks from school to pursue other opportunities or to take care of personal needs is not uncommon and doing so should not deter students from being able to pursue a career in medicine. Postbaccalaureate programs can offer a flexible option to students who want additional support and academic preparation before professional school.

MEET THE 2025 REGIONAL HUB CHAMPIONS



Drew Babcock (MS)

American Indian/Alaska Native Outreach
& Project Coordinator, Family Medicine
Residency of Western Montana

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Roberta Zayas (MCRP, MPA)

Program Manager, UNM Health
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Antoinette Martinez (MD)

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Chris Derby (MD)

Surgical Director of Cardiac Intensive Care
and Mechanical Circulatory Support,
Nemours Children's Hospital Delaware

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Breanna De Leon (MPH, ScM)

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Kristen Rowan

Training & Development
Coordinator, Oklahoma State
University

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RESOURCES FROM IHEART

»»» CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS HEALTH PATHWAY PROGRAMS MAP

The new Healthcare Pathway Programs map tool (pictured behind this text) is an interactive tool that allows educators and students to peruse the available healthcare professions pathway programs that have been submitted by individual IHEART members and vetted by the IHEART team. This map aims to showcase Native-designed and Native-led pathways programs for AI/AN students interested in health careers. Its featured programs include all health professions (not just medicine), and are oriented for students of all ages.

If you have questions about the Healthcare Pathway Programs map tool or submission form, contact Stephanie Dobos at sdobos@aaip.org.



[Access the Map and Submission Form Here](#)


»»» 2025 SUMMIT RESOURCES

PowerPoint slides and links to resources related to the 2025 AI/AN Healthcare Workforce Development Summit can be accessed at [this link](#).

Find additional resources and links
on the [IHEART online landing page](#).



National Tribal Health Conference 2025

 **September 7-12, 2025**

Venue: Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass,
5594 W Wild Horse Pass Blvd, Chandler, AZ
85226

SAVE THE DATE

The next in-person IHEART summit will take place on **Friday, September 12th** in Chandler, AZ, as part of the National Indian Health Board's 2025 National Tribal Health Conference.

Registration for the full NIHB summit is available on their [website](#). IHEART summit registration will be handled separately. Please stay tuned for details.