



American Indian/Alaska Native Healthcare Workforce
Development Summit
August 21, 2026 · Phoenix, Arizona

Following the Lead of Tribal Colleges & Universities

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



IHEART Background & Objectives



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 (AI/AN) communities in the health professions. IHEART is an AI/AN-led collaborative consisting of a national coordinating committee and

regional networks to amplify, herald, and sustain systems-level solutions by uniting allies, organizations, and communities dedicated to improving AI/AN educational and health outcomes. This was the seventh annual summit since IHEART's founding.

IHEART Objectives

- Development of regional networks that promote local systems-level change focused on AI/AN 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 AI/AN expertise and cultural ways.

Summit Objectives

Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCUs) Indigenize higher education. To improve American Indian/Alaska Native health outcomes, support future healers, and increase healthcare workforce diversity, we can learn from the TCU model of decolonizing our education pathways and ways of thinking. This day of discussion, learning, and connecting with TCU representatives provided space to learn how we can come together to Indigenize healthcare workforce development.

IHEART amplifies and grows pathways into health professions for Native communities through Indigenous-led collaborations and systems-level solutions.



[Visit our Youtube channel](#) to see recordings of this summit and other IHEART events!

Representatives from Partner 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

Senior Director of Workforce
Pathways and Partnerships
*Association of American
Medical Colleges (AAMC)*



Tyler Parisien, EdD

IHEART Co-Lead

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



Joaquin Baca

IHEART Co-Lead

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



This summit was presented in conjunction with the 2026 National Tribal Health Conference hosted by the National Indian Health Board.



Sarah Kjorlien

IHEART Program Manager
AAIP

Eric Johnson

IHEART Communications
Coordinator
AIHEC



Building the Tribal Health Workforce of Tomorrow: Policy, Practice, and Opportunity

Address from the National Indian Health Board



Lacey Wind



Jessica Dean

The National Indian Health Board serves as the unified voice of 574+ Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, championing the cause of health equity. Before colonization, our people were among the healthiest on Earth, sustained by our traditional foods, clean water, and natural medicines.

Overview of Remarks

- Workforce Shortages
 - IHS has undertaken largest hiring effort in its history
 - Improving the workforce system requires combined efforts from multiple parts of the system
- NIHB's Fit with IHEART
 - National convener of stakeholders in the field
 - Runs many programs nationwide to build capacity
 - Advocates for programs
- Recruiting & Pathways
 - Recruiting alone will not fill these vacancies or solve the larger issues
 - Exposure to health careers, education, resource access, and designing for retention are all key
 - This type of work requires working together
- NIHB Workforce Programs
 - Public Health in Indian Country Capacity Scans (PHICCS) informs programs and advocacy- latest showed need for 1,230 public health professionals
 - Reporting on efficiency and assisting with public health accreditation
 - Tribal Health Scholars for Health & Sustainability Program
 - Three scholars in last cohort; many opportunities for partnerships with pathway programs



The Original Workforce Development Model: What Tribal Colleges Teach Us About Building the Future of Indigenous Health



Duane Bedell, Keynote Speaker

President Bedell provided the keynote address for the 2026 Summit. His remarks grounded us in what sets TCUs apart, and why they should be centered as the future of American Indian and Alaska Native healthcare workforce development. His engaging and thought-provoking remarks truly laid a foundation for the discussions and proceedings of the day.

Overview of Remarks

- Defining Workforce Development
 - Developing people is the core concept of *workforce development*
 - Traditional ways and Tribal communities have always prioritized the development of people
 - TCUs are not simply a part or partners in workforce development, they are experts and the original leaders
- Finding Meaning
 - Part of developing a workforce is teaching people their place in community
 - This grounding leads to a well-rounded workforce and stronger community

**“Before we taught people how to do jobs,
we taught them why the work mattered.**

That is not a small distinction. A job description can tell someone what to do. A training manual can tell someone how to do it. A credential can signal that someone has met a standard.

**But purpose teaches someone why they keep
showing up.”**



The Original Workforce Development Model: What Tribal Colleges Teach Us About Building the Future of Indigenous Health



“Education happens when a student realizes they do not have to choose between opportunity and identity. Education happens when a community sees itself reflected in the curriculum. Education happens when faculty, staff, Elders, families, and partners all become part of a student's support system.

That is the kind of education Tribal Colleges were built to honor.”

- **Four movements to frame this work**

- **Remember.** The most important lessons usually occur outside the classroom. Remembering community, culture, and tradition grounds us and our students.
- **Reclaim.** Too often, discussions of workforce development are framed by deficit thinking; we need to center the strengths of TCUs.
- **Reimagine.** Relationships between TCUs and granting bodies or other institutions can be transactional. True relationships extend beyond the life of a grant.
 - Consider the four Rs of a real partnership: respect, relationship, responsibility, and reciprocity
- **Rebuild.** Building the future of Native health is not simply about expanding programs and capacity; it should be grounded in culture, community, responsibility, and belonging. TCUs are central to this future.

“The question is not whether Tribal Colleges belong in the future of Indigenous health. The question is whether the future of Indigenous health can be built without them. I do not believe it can.

Tribal Colleges are not simply preparing people for the future. Tribal Colleges are helping define what that future should become.”

Tribal Colleges & Universities Panel: Putting Theory into Practice



Dawn Frank,
Facilitator
President, Oglala
Lakota College



Michael Munson,
Panelist
President, Salish
Kootenai College



Linda Cotton,
Panelist
Student Success
Coordinator, California
Indian Nations College



Roseanne Rosenthal,
Panelist
Dean of Academics and Student
Services, California Indian
Nations College



Elmer Guy,
Panelist
President, Navajo
Technical University

This panel gathered TCU leaders to discuss and share Indigenization and healthcare workforce development innovations at their institutions.

Overview of Remarks

- Why Work at a TCU?
 - Connection to community, building a strong supportive culture for students
 - TCU faculty and staff act as role models, overcoming past harms
 - There is potential in TCU programs and offerings, with room to build
- Understanding TCUs and TCU Students
 - Begin with the needs of the community
 - Inflexibility on standards can contribute to workforce shortages
 - Make space for students and professionals to practice their culture
- Centering Community Needs and Strengths
 - Providing education and other services to rural, remote communities
 - Working with Tribal Councils and community groups; often serving multiple Tribal Nations
 - Collaborating with other TCUs in the region
 - Developing multiple programs in many different healthcare fields; partnering with other universities or professional schools to build pathways

Tribal Colleges & Universities Panel: Putting Theory into Practice

“I don’t ask students anymore, ‘What are you going to study?’ instead I ask them, ‘What are you going to help solve?’” -Dr. Guy

- True Partnership

- Grant partnerships can be helpful, but shouldn’t be the only connection
- Grant partnerships can result in huge administrative burdens for TCUs while only providing small amounts of funding
- TCUs often act as liaisons between other institutions and Tribal communities
- It is important to keep talented people at TCUs - poaching staff makes this harder
- Offer summer research programs to TCU students
- Start the conversation with TCUs before approaching for a grant application or other project

- Relationships Between TCUs and High Schools

- Dual enrollment is critical for student success
- Navajo Technical University waives tuition for students by getting reimbursement through state program

- Federal Funding for TCUs

- Tribal Nations and TCUs are not relegated to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs; there is a treaty responsibility for the federal government
- Consider utilizing work groups, committees, and similar structures to create deep conversations
- Reach out before initiating programs or starting grants



Research Presentations



A Student's Journey

Dani Kouyoumdjian & Ben Richmond

Developing a Community-Informed Indigenous Health Unit at a Pediatric Academic Medical Center Chermiqua Tsosie



Bridging Indigenous and Global Health: A Comparative Framework for Strengthening Healthcare in the Navajo Nation Chloe Eskey



Healing Before Harm with Data as Medicine: A Community-Governed Study of Indigenous Stress, Cultural Protection, and Well-Being Laura Sawney



From Nokomis Findings to an Indigenized Health Career Journey Chris Derby (IHEART East + Southern Plains)



Regional Breakout Discussions

Alaska + Northwest



Regional Hub Champions
Shanda Lohse & Jason Deen



Summary of Discussion

Regional Overview

- 4 states, 2 TCUs

Seed Funding Projects

- Nokomis needs assessment - results showed that exposure to healthcare careers needs to begin early
- Forthcoming children's book

Regional Considerations

- Students from rural villages participate in pathway programs, allowing them to augment college applications
- Inherent challenges for students in Alaska who come from rural areas when they go to larger places

TCU-Focused Discussion

- IHEART could invite students to speak at summits; explore ways to support dual enrollment programs at TCUs; identify TCUs with model programs
- Connect with: SEARCH; Northwest Indian College; UAA "Middle College" program with Anchorage School District; WSU Running Start program
- Ensure that curriculum is culturally responsive for students



Read the report:
IHEART Alaska
Needs Assessment

Regional Breakout Discussions

California + Hawai'i



Regional Hub Champions
Antoinette Martinez & Julie Gattenio



Summary of Discussion

Regional Overview

- 2 states, unique and diverse Native and Indigenous populations; no one from Hawai'i present

Existing Pathway Programs

- Huwigurruk is the only post-bacc program in California
- CRIHB, HCAI, CalWright, RHT, We are Healers, UCR all listed as potential partners

Regional Needs

- Programs exist, often too far from target communities
- Students need support transitioning from TCUs to medical school, other professional programs
- Cultural responsiveness and proper student support are sometimes lacking in programs, hosts, mentors

Solutions and Models

- Rural areas can benefit from hybrid programs
- Blind admissions can help reduce discrimination; more often, direct advocacy is often needed
- Mentorship is critical for building skills, confidence

Future Focus

- Curriculum development
- Social media and other broad outreach methods
- Partnerships will be key for advancing the work

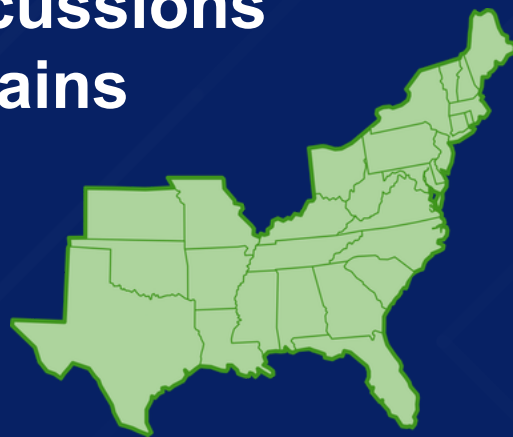


Regional Breakout Discussions

East + Southern Plains



**Regional Hub Champions Chris Derby,
Kristen Rowan, Breanna De Leon**



Summary of Discussion

Regional Overview

- 28 states - very diverse and geographically large

Project Summary

- Conducted a needs assessment to determine what already exists and how successful these programs are
- Sponsored an IHEART Scholar program

TCU Reflections

- TCUs still have to follow accreditation standards, meaning using the colonial education model, but there are attempts to Indigenize
- Indigenizing includes being creative with instruction; hands-on learning and story-telling
- A pay disparity exists for TCU faculty
- There is a desire to challenge the current systems and ideologies: capitalism, metrics for admissions
- Many TCUs start at the associate degree level, but some have Master's and PhD options
- TCUs are considered private in that they are chartered by a tribe, and also public by accepting all students
- Start-up costs for health programs are high
- Some TCUs have articulation agreements with local universities, but none feed directly into medical programs



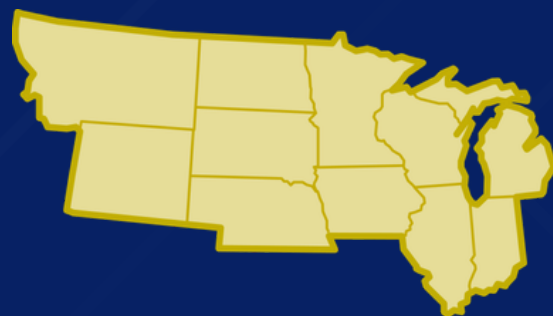
Read the report:
Advancing Health
Education Pathways

Regional Breakout Discussions

Northern Plains



Regional Hub Champion
Drew Babcock



Summary of Discussion

Partnership and Sustainability with TCUs

- Dismantle oppressive policies and rebuild internal processes to better serve tribal communities
- Move students beyond basic needs to higher-level thinking and leadership

Capacity, Consultants, and Outreach Initiatives

- Need for external consultants to assist with HR, strategic planning, and website development due to limited internal capacity
- Branding and storytelling are critical for promoting TCUs
- Time and resource constraints are major barriers

Funding, Scholarships, and Pipeline Programs

- Publicize fellowships, tribal funding, and scholarships
- Students usually want to remain in their communities and need flexible, local programs
- Successful healthcare pipeline programs include summer enrichment partnerships and Title VI-funded initiatives

Key Themes

- IHEART should be a capacity link for TCUs
- TCU's could use a developed holistic common message for students and caregivers. Social media campaign or materials?
- Increase awareness of IHEART



Learn more
about this social
media project!

Regional Breakout Discussions

Southwest



Regional Hub Champion
Roberta Zayas



Summary of Discussion

Regional Overview

- Four states
- Robust participation in monthly meetings
- Hosted three student outreach events in 2026

TCU-Focused Discussion

- Uniquely positioned to help people figure out what they want to do
- Need resources from larger educational and health institutions; non-tenure faculty have heavy workloads
- Student motivation is high
- How can TCUs get access to workforce development funds?
 - Partnerships with non-TCU institutions
 - Advocacy for TCUs when funds being distributed-IHEART has the opportunity to be a neutral party when advocating for TCUs to the state and larger institutions
- Most are community colleges, and most TCU health programs are in allied health

Looking Ahead

- Need emphasis in allied health, not just medicine.
- Connect community with clerkship opportunities
- Identify regional specific barriers for students doing rotations, particularly in rural tribal areas
- Explore how to make student engagement in clinics welcoming and engaged with communities.
- Look into solutions to recruit high school science teachers; explore virtual learning/bridge courses
- Build partnerships between Tribal governments, schools, and health systems



Read the toolkit:
Rising Healers Native
American Youth
Healthcare Expo

Policy Paper Development: Impact of U.S. Policies on Student Education



Mary Owen

IHEART Founder + Co-Lead
Director of Center of American Indian
and Minority Health, U of MN

Dr. Owen presented an update on the white papers currently being written by IHEART.

- Policy Education Focus
 - IHEART's work is affected by policy decisions
 - IHEART aims to find systemic solutions to increase AI/AN representation in healthcare fields
 - Systemic work requires policy education as well as partnerships and resources
- Goal and Scope
 - Highlight policies that hinder American Indian and Alaska Native student educational success
 - Spur action and the creation of new policies that address decades-long shortages of AI/AN student matriculation into health professions programs and schools
 - Intention is to publish these policy papers on the IHEART website as well as in academic journals
- Timeline
 - Discussions began at virtual IHEART Summit, March 2026
 - Team of volunteers gathered
 - Two topics determined:
 - Addressing K-16 Barriers to American Indian and Alaska Native Student Academic Success
 - Low matriculation and graduation rates, success of AI/AN students in health professions programs, and IHS vacancy rates
 - Literature review underway
 - Outlines being created
 - Next virtual meeting: August 28, 12 pm Central Time

Join the discussion! Email skjorlien@aaip.org to be added to the policy paper communications.

Speaker Biographies



Dr. Duane A. Bedell is a proud member of Gnoozhekaaning, the Bay Mills Indian Community, and serves as President and CEO of Bay Mills Community College. With more than 20 years of service in tribal education, he has worked as a faculty member, department chair, tribal leader, national education advocate, and college president, always guided by a commitment to Indigenous student success and community empowerment. Dr. Bedell's journey reflects the power of education to open doors, strengthen communities, and create lasting change. His leadership is rooted in humility, relationship building, and a deep belief that every student deserves the opportunity to thrive. Though his work has reached classrooms, campuses, tribal communities, and national policy spaces, he describes himself simply: he's just a guy trying to make a difference in education.



Drew Babcock is proud to be a two-time graduate of the University of Montana earning both a B.S. in Athletic Training and M.S. in Health and Human Performance. A native Montanan, he was born in Kalispell and raised in East Glacier and the Browning area on the Blackfeet Reservation. He is an Amskapi Piikuni (Blackfeet). He spent his high school years in Las Vegas, NV, then returned to Montana on a collegiate track scholarship and has stayed in the Missoula area since 2002. Mr. Babcock always been interested in healthcare, which is a big reason for him becoming an athletic trainer, spending over 16 years as an athletic trainer with Grizzly Athletics. Throughout his collegiate and post collegiate education he has become passionate about healthcare inequity, especially in regard to American Indian/Alaska Native populations and frontier settings. In his current position with the Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana, he is the liaison with their IHS, Tribal, and Urban Indian organizations. He also focuses on faculty and resident doctor education, American Indian med student recruitment, and workforce and pathway development.



Linda Cotton spent her early childhood in Oklahoma before relocating to Redlands, California during her teenage years. She has 25 years of experience in Native education and student support. Linda began her career working with Kumeyaay students in the San Diego region and later returned to the San Bernardino/Riverside area, where she served for 19 years as an Instructional Liaison and Alternative Education Manager for the Morongo Band of Mission Indians. She currently serves as the Student Success Coordinator and Professor of Psychology at California Indian Nations College in Palm Desert California. Linda holds a Bachelor of Science in Human Services and a Master of Science in Psychology from the University of Phoenix. She also holds a Pupil Personnel Services Credential in School Counseling from the University of Redlands. Through the AIHEC NARCH BIRCH Grant, she has recently earned a Graduate Certificate in Public Health with an emphasis in Indigenous Health from the University of North Dakota. In the spring, she will be taking prerequisite courses at UND in preparation to apply for the PhD program in Indigenous Health, further strengthening her commitment to improving the well-being of Indigenous communities. For the past seven years, Linda has also been actively involved with the Intertribal Education Collaborative, contributing to initiatives that support Native students and educational equity. With extensive experience across multiple levels of education, along with counseling and research expertise, Linda is a dedicated advocate for student success. Her passion lies in helping students overcome barriers and empowering them to achieve their academic and personal goals. She is deeply committed to serving Tribal communities and expanding opportunities for Native students to access, persist in, and succeed in higher education to build a better future for our next seven generations.

Speaker Biographies



Jessica Dean manages initiatives that strengthen Tribal public health capacity through performance improvement, systems development, and workforce advancement strategies. She works closely with Tribal public health departments to coordinate learning opportunities, provide technical assistance, and administer funding that supports public health program efficiency and progress toward national public health accreditation. Jessica also leads the National Indian Health Board's national Tribal public health assessment and environmental scan, Public Health in Indian Country Capacity Scan (PHICCS), which examines the state of public health programming, services, workforce, and organizational capacity across Indian Country. In addition, she manages NIHB's Tribal Scholars for Health & Sustainability (TSHS) Program, which prepares the next generation of Tribal public health professionals through workforce development, training, mentorship, and applied learning opportunities.



Christopher Derby, MD, descends from Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. He received his undergraduate degree from Princeton University. He attended medical school at the University of Michigan where he graduated Alpha Omega Alpha national medical honor society. Dr Derby completed general surgery residency at the University of Virginia followed by cardiothoracic surgery residency at the University of Southern California. He then completed his congenital heart surgery fellowship at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. He is board certified in General Surgery and Thoracic Surgery. Dr Derby's current practice includes pediatric and adult heart and lung transplantation in addition to congenital heart surgery charitable missions. His passion is prioritizing lifelong care and a heart-healthy lifestyle for children and adults with congenital heart disease.



Dr. Dawn Tobacco-Two Crow-Frank, whose Lakota name is Ta Oyate Wiyankapi Win – Her People See her, has served as President of Oglala Lakota College since 2022, the first woman to hold the position. She is an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and an OLC alumna, having received her B.S. and Master's degrees from Oglala Lakota College, and later earned a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from South Dakota State University (2010). Her career includes work with the Oglala Sioux Tribe's Health Administration office and Indian Health Services; Project Director of the Teca Aicibleza Pi Kte ("Youth Understanding Themselves") Program (2001–2004); and Interim Executive Director of the Oglala Sioux Tribe under Cecelia Fire Thunder's administration. She has been with Oglala Lakota College for over a decade, serving as Director and Chair of the Graduate Studies Program (2005–2013) and Vice President for Instruction (2013–2016). In this role, Dawn was instrumental in developing culturally relevant frameworks for OLC as a tribal college — leading the design and implementation of strategic planning, the Institutional Effectiveness plan, assessment systems, General Education Assessment Framework, an Enrollment Management plan for student success, and a co-curricular framework. Dawn served on numerous community organizations, including the Wacante Kiyapi Board of Directors and Tasunke Wakan Okolakiciye, and served as Calico Community President and a Wakpamni District Task Force member. She was a member of the American Evaluation Association since 2006, SD EPSCoR, and the Circle of Life Steering Committee (University of Colorado), and served on the Oglala Sioux Tribe Research and Review Board (2009–2014). She was appointed to the Black Hills Treaty Council on September 19, 2012. She currently serves on the Board of Directors and Executive Board of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and the American Indian College Fund (AICF).

Speaker Biographies



Since 2006, **Dr. Elmer J. Guy** has served as the President of the Navajo Technical University (NTU). Prior to becoming president, Dr. Guy also served NTU as its Vice President of Academic and Student Services and its Dean of Instruction. Before joining NTU, Dr. Guy was appointed by Navajo Nation president to serve as both executive director and deputy director of the Navajo Nations Department of Education. Dr. Guy also directed the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services for the Navajo Nation. Dr. Guy earned his undergraduate and doctorate degrees from the University of Arizona, and in between, a graduate degree from the University of San Francisco. Dr. Guy serves as Chair of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, serving as Co-Chair of the Education Subcommittee, for the National Congress of American Indians and a Trustee of the Higher Learning Commission. He also co-chaired the World Indigenous Higher Education Consortium for three years, was appointed by the President of the United States to serve on the National Board of Education Sciences for four years, and is a former Trustee of the College Board.



Shanda Lohse, MD (Standing Rock Lakota) joined Eastern Aleutian Tribes in June 2018 and has served as their medical director since May 2019. She has worked in the Alaska Tribal Health System since 2005. She earned her bachelor's degree from Columbia University and her medical degree from the University of Minnesota Medical School. Dr. Lohse did her family medicine residency at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is a member of the American Medical Association, the Association of American Indian Physicians and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Dr. Lohse has presented nationally and internationally on integrated primary care teams and systems.



Antoinette Martinez, MD, is Chumash and resides in Northern California serving as a Family Medicine and Obstetrics provider for United Indian Health Services, Inc. This is a PL-638 tribal health clinic which provides primary care services to numerous indigenous tribes within Humboldt and Del Norte counties including the Yurok, Wiyot, Tolowa, Karuk, Hupa, and numerous others. Dr. Martinez graduated from the University of North Dakota INMED (Indians into Medicine) School of Medicine and Health Sciences. She has done research on Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) and American Indian Women on a North Dakota reservation, and published Cost of Smoking and Environmental Tobacco Smoke Exposure in California American Indian Communities in 2000. She completed her Family Medicine residency at the University of California Davis Medical Center in 2009, in addition to completing three years in OB/GYN residency in 2006. Dr. Martinez is Co-Director of the University of California Davis School of Medicine Tribal Health PRIME (Programs in Medical Education). She precepts numerous medical students and Family Medicine residents and serves as a member of the California Medical Association JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) committee. Dr. Martinez continues to be active in cultural practices, traditional ceremonies and horseback riding.

Speaker Biographies



Dr. Michael M. Munson, st'ítlam łx'wix'weyuł smʔem (Séliš, Qlispé, and other ancestries), attributes much of her passion for Indigenous education to her parents, yayá, and elders. Michael has bridged Education and Native American Studies through various roles at Salish Kootenai College, including faculty, department chair, dean, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and through state, regional, and national work. Michael has led the collaborative development and implementation of community-requested undergraduate and graduate programs aimed at reawakening our languages, cultures, and educational practices. As President of Salish Kootenai College, Michael continues collaborative efforts to improve education and workforce opportunities for our people, is inspired by her daughter and husband, and is driven by elder teachings, cultural values, goals, and beliefs.



Mary Owen, MD is a member of the Auk Kwaan Tribe of the Tlingit people. On graduation from the University of Minnesota Medical School and Family Practice Residency Program, she returned home to work for her tribal community in Juneau, Alaska. In 2014, after eleven years of full-scope family medicine, she returned to the University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth as the Director of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health (CAIMH). Her work includes recruiting and supporting future Native American physicians and teaching medical students and health care providers important components of providing healthcare to AIAN communities. Dr. Owen continues to provide clinical care at the Center of American Indian Resources in Duluth.



Dr. Roseanne Rosenthal, of Tewa and Apache lineage, serves as the Dean of Academics and Student Services and is a certified Forensic Nurse and Crime Scene Investigator with a background in nursing and healthcare administration. She earned her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of California, Riverside, with an emphasis in Critical Medical Anthropology, Public Policy, and Health and Humanities. Her research focuses on intergenerational trauma and the impacts of NAGPRA and ICWA on Native American students and Tribal communities. Dr. Rosenthal is committed to supporting Native American students through culturally responsive education, mentorship, advocacy, and student-centered programs.



Lacey Wind, MSW, LCSW, is the Vice President of Tribal Health Programs at the National Indian Health Board. An enrolled member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, she has dedicated her career to advancing Tribal health equity through Tribal-led solutions. Her work focuses on strengthening the Tribal healthcare workforce, building Tribal public health capacity, advancing workforce pipelines, integrating behavioral health across healthcare systems, and supporting Tribal communities through policy, public health, and culturally grounded approaches that improve access to care and community well-being.

Speaker Biographies



Roberta Zayas is a member of the Diné (Navajo) Nation. She is born for (maternal clan) Tsénabahilnii (Sleeping Rock People clan) and born into (Paternal clan) Táchií'nii (Red Running into the Water People clan). Her maternal grandfather is Tsénjikiní (Cliff Dwellers People clan) and her paternal grandfather is Tódích'ii'nii (Bitter Water clan). She currently resides in Albuquerque, NM but hails from a place known by her grandparents and their children as Red Willow Springs, Arizona, a rural area in the mountains of Northeastern Arizona located on the Navajo Reservation near Sawmill, Arizona. Ms. Zayas currently serves as a Program Manager with the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) specializing in community partnerships, community capacity building, and positive youth development with a focus on supporting diverse populations. In her current role, she oversees the expansion of programs, establishes sustainability of programs into communities, provides project planning, and oversees operations of the projects. Ms. Zayas has collaborated in community work with rural communities throughout New Mexico and Arizona, with indigenous communities and youth. Her efforts are focused on advocating for the underserved populations and believes that being a culturally responsive individual entails using the indigenous value-based approach to community development and utilizing the 7-generation model to carry out community development. Her educational background includes a B.S. in Sociology, M.C.R.P in Community Regional Planning, and M.P.A. in Public Administration.

Additional Partner and Supporter Information

IHEART is built of partnerships, collaboration, and volunteerism. Although they were not featured as speakers at this particular summit, we would like to acknowledge the following contributors. Please visit our website to read their biographies.



Joaquin Baca,
AAIP



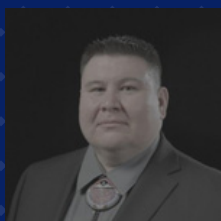
Jason Deen,
Alaska +
Northwest



Breanna De
Leon, East +
Southern Plains



Julie Gattenio,
California +
Hawai'i



Tyler Parisien,
AIHEC



Norma Poll-
Hunter, AAMC



Kristen Rowan,
East + Southern
Plains

Resources from IHEART

Healthcare Pathway Programs Map

Includes over 100 pathway programs throughout the country. Users can search by location, profession, academic level, financial support, and virtual/in-person options. [Explore the map](#) and learn how to add your own program!

Newsletter & Regional Meetings

[Sign up for our monthly newsletter](#) to get updates on IHEART work and hear about opportunities from our partners. Email skjorlien@aaip.org to be added to the monthly meetings for your region.

Informational Resources

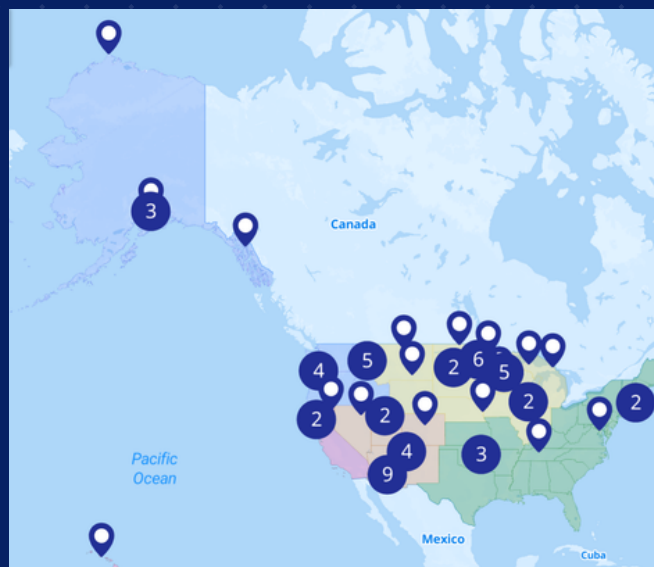
The IHEART website and newsletter host informational resources including regional project reports and printable guides.

Coming Soon- Financial Aid Database!

This fall on the IHEART website, we are excited to be launching a database of financial aid resources specifically cultivated for AI/AN students interested in healthcare professions.

Looking to learn even more? Check out the [Past Events page](#) on our website! Read reports, watch videos, and peruse posters from this and other IHEART summits.

Find additional resources and links on the [IHEART Linktree](#), and follow us on social media!



Informational Fliers



Coming soon!

Find Financial Support for Your Education

Find education funding and tuition-support opportunities for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Indigenous students. Use the filters below to explore scholarships, grants, tuition waivers, residency benefits, and other financial resources. Eligibility and deadlines may change, so always confirm details with the sponsoring organization.

Level of Study	Tribal Requirements	State	Award Type	Search
All	Any	All	All	Search by Keyword

Upcoming Events

Connect with IHEART at these upcoming partner events:

- NANAINA Conference, Sept. 2026, Washington D.C.
- AAIP Conference, Sept. 2026, Oklahoma City OK
- NIEA Convention, Oct. 2026, Buffalo NY
- AISES Convention, Oct. 2026, Portland OR
- NIH Conference, June 2027, Denver CO

