



## AIHC Delegates Meeting Minutes

12/03/2025 9:00 AM PST to 4:00 PM PST  
American Indian Health Commission  
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Red Cedar Hall

### Attendance:

Alden Andy, COM  
Amber Arndt, DOH OTPHR (Nisqually Tribe, she/her)  
Amira Caluya, DOH  
Andrea Thomas-Muckleshoot Exe. Health Dir. (MIT- Exe. Health Dir.)  
Andrew Shogren, Jamestown S'Klallam  
Aren Sparck, HCA  
Ashley Lowe-Thaens, AIHC  
Brooke Amyx, WA DOC, she/her  
Cassie Anderson, DCYF  
Charlene Abrahamson (she/her) HBE Tribal Liaison  
Christina Diego# GOIA (Christina Diego)  
Christine Winn, HCA  
Cindy Gamble, AIHC  
Colleen Cawston# Department of Corrections (colleen.cawston310)  
Cooky Fiander/Mardell, Yakama  
Cyndi Coma (Thomas) # Shoalwater Bay Tribe  
Dana Ward, Jamestown S'Klallam  
Dayna Seymour, Colville Business Council  
Denece LaClair# Skokomish Wellness (dlaclair)  
DOH - Jill Edgin, WA DOH OTPHR (she/her)  
DOH Candice Wilson Quatz'tenaut  
Dylan Dressler# NATIVE Project (Dylan Dressler)  
Faith Turk, AIHC  
Francis Dressler  
Heather Erb, AIHC  
Heather Holzer# AIHC (Heather Holzer)  
Hilary Edwards | NPAIHB  
JanMarie Ward, AIHC  
January Austin, ND Lower Elwha Klallam Health Services Director  
Jaron Heller - HCA/OTA  
Jen Olson, AIHC

Jessica McKee, AIHC  
Jill Malone, Stillaguamish  
Kathryn Akeah, AIHC  
Kay Culbertson, Cowlitz Indian Tribe HHS Director  
Kim Coombs-Chehalis Tribe  
Kristen Peterson, DOH  
Larry Robinette, OIC  
Laura Kluever, AIHC  
Lena Nachand, WA Medicaid  
Linda Lauch# AICC ED (LINDA LAUCH)  
Lisa Rey-Thomas, AIHC  
Liz Henry, Kalispel  
Lucilla Mendoza, HCA-OTA  
Lucy Hill  
Manny Santiago, WAHBE  
Marci Halvorsen, AIHC  
Maria Ness, AIHC  
Maureen Kinley - Lummi  
Nakia DeMiero, HCA Office of Tribal Affairs  
Melissa Morgan, Stillaguamish  
Nicole Earls, Health Care Authority  
Nicole Gibson, Skokomish  
Pakak Sophie Boerner, NPAIHB Health Policy Specialist  
Rachel Armas# Squaxin Island (rachelarmas)  
Raina Peone - Office of Tribal Affairs  
Rosalinda Fivekiller, DOH, Citizen of Cherokee Nation  
Ryan Moran, HCA  
Samantha Phillips# Nisqually Tribe (Samantha Phillips)  
Sarah Sullivan, Swinomish  
Shoalwater Bay -Delia Culp  
Stephen Kutz# Suquamish (Stephen Kutz)  
Summer Hammons# Tulalip Tribes (Summer Hammons)  
Susan Glenn, DOH-OTPHR  
Terra Horton, AIHC  
Tia Skerbeck, Lower Elwha  
Toni Lodge, NATIVE Project, Spokane  
Veronica-NPAIHB (Veronica Smith)  
Vicki Lowe, AIHC  
Wendy Stevens, AIHC

## **I. Welcome/Opening Blessing - 11:00 AM CST**

Presented By Steve Kutz, Loni Greninger, Vice-Chair Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

- An informal opening was conducted including a blessing and gratitude expression, emphasizing the diverse roles and contributions of attendees.

Link to [Zoom meeting chat](#)

## II. AIHC Business

### A. Establish Quorum - 11:10 AM CST

Presented By Maureen Kinley

[Roll Call pg 1](#)

[Roll Call pg 2](#)

[Roll Call pg 3](#)

- Roll call was conducted, with various tribal representatives and health directors introducing themselves and their affiliations, confirming their presence online or in-person.
- A quorum was acknowledged, ensuring enough representation for decision-making during the meeting.

### B. Approve September 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes - 11:15 AM CST

Presented By Steve Kutz

[9.3.25 AIHC Delegates meeting Minutes](#)

- Approval of the minutes from the September 3rd meeting was motioned Lummi and seconded by Tulalip, followed by all in favor indicating 'aye', adopting the minutes without opposition.

### C. Approve Today's Agenda - 11:20 AM CST

Presented By Steve Kutz

- The current agenda was presented, with elections for chair, secretary, and member at large noted as a priority. No additions to the agenda were requested.
- A public calling campaign will be announced, possibly just before or after lunch, including a drawing at noon.
- **Motion** - Approval of the today's agenda was motioned Tulalip and seconded by Swinomish, followed by all in favor indicating 'aye', adopting the minutes without opposition.

### D. Election of Officers

- The meeting began with discussions on conducting elections for board positions.
- Voting process for the position of chair was initiated. Steve Kutz was nominated by Lummi. Delegates could email or use the chat for nominations, and in-person voting was facilitated. The process moved forward with no additional nominations for chair being presented.
- Nomination process for the Secretary position was opened. Tulalip nominated Maureen Kinley. No further nominations were made for the Secretary position.

- Nomination for Member-at-Large was opened. Tulalip nominated Linda Lauch. No further nominations were made for Member-at-Large.

## E. Approve AIHC Financial Report

Presented By Terra Horton/AIHC

### [AIHC Financial Report](#)

- The financial report agenda began with a presentation of the current year's expenses and program income. A visual graph indicated that the majority of expenses go directly into programs for consultants and staff, summing up to a total of \$2.9 million so far this year. Smaller expenses include travel and operational costs.
- The financial report highlighted a significant increase in program income, reaching just over \$3.4 million compared to past years, which saw a starting amount of \$800,000 in 2017. This was illustrated using a graphical representation with feathers symbolizing million-dollar increments.
- A historical overview of employment growth at the Commission was presented, showing an increase from one person to ten, exemplifying the organization's expansion over the past decade. This was represented using paddles.
- The presenter discussed major program expenses, notably the Opioid Summit, which costs approximately \$200,000 annually. Payroll expenses are under \$1 million, and consultant services remain the largest expense.
- Questions were raised regarding identifying specific federal and state funding programs. The presenter agreed to provide detailed reports for further clarity on fund allocation and source distinctions.
- The WIC program is currently frozen due to funding restrictions, but other programs are secured through expedited invoicing to ensure financial stability.
- **Motion** - A motion by Swinomish was proposed to approve the financial report, which received a second from Lummi and was subsequently voted on. The motion was passed without opposition or abstentions.

## III. State Agency Updates

### A. Health Care Authority - 11:25 AM CST (*recording garbled and unable to capture comments*)

Presenter: Ryan Moran

- HCA deeply understands the concerns that are on the horizon related to those based on the federal changes that are coming, and the confluence of those impacts of how that will impact our healthcare delivery system and your healthcare bill advocacy.
- 3 pillars of approach HCA is focusing on - (1) Coverage mitigation, (2) advancing health outcomes and health equity, and (3) operations at the authority focusing in on people, process, system.
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### B. Department of Health - 12:25 PM CST

Presented By Candice Wilson, Amber Arndt

Link to [DOH Slide Deck](#)

- The 100-day plan established by Secretary Worsham includes initiatives for health justice and public health workforce improvements.
- Executive Order 2510 is a focus within the 100-day plan, emphasizing consolidated contracting and agreements.
- The Governor's Health Alliance coordinates public health efforts across 15 states, with a focus on broader public health threats.
- Work on OTP accreditation includes proposed legislation to establish fee authority to maintain the state accreditation program.
- The state health plan, last updated in the 1980s, is being revised with a committee led by OFM.
- The Dear Tribal Leader letters are used for communication, with ongoing updates concerning legislative processes and tribal engagements.
- Executive Order 2510 emphasizes the need for meaningful government-to-government relations, including training and responsibilities for tribal consultation.
- A report on compliance with Executive Order 2510, including government-to-government implementation, is due to GOYA by January 31.
- Efforts include ongoing fiscal monitoring and protecting tribal data sovereignty, with agency-wide goals targeting better tribal engagement and funding processes.
- A training module is being developed for annual completion by staff regarding cultural competency in tribal engagement, set for release in the first quarter of 2026.
- Two non-competitive tribal set-aside grants were announced: HEAL tribal capacity grant at \$45,454 per tribe and the Worker Climate Change Safety Grant at \$15,000 per tribe.
- Tribal data sovereignty principles are being reinforced across the agency, with updates to resources and templates available on the Partner Hub.
- The environmental health disparities map (EHD) is being updated, factoring in feedback from recent government-to-government consultations.
- A training module is being developed for annual completion by staff regarding cultural competency in tribal engagement, set for release in the first quarter of 2026.
- Two non-competitive tribal set-aside grants were announced: HEAL tribal capacity grant at \$45,454 per tribe and the Worker Climate Change Safety Grant at \$15,000 per tribe.
- Tribal data sovereignty principles are being reinforced across the agency, with updates to resources and templates available on the Partner Hub.
- Reminder of state planning related to the purchase of vaccines; funding practices for the upcoming season require clarification.
- The Native and Strong campaign is ongoing, with creative assets and text/chat services developed to support suicide prevention among native individuals in Washington.
- Funding was announced for potential public health challenges related to the FIFA World Cup 2026; DOH is collaborating with partners on the application process.

## **C. Washington Health Benefits Exchange - 1:25 PM CST**

Presenter: Charlene Abrahamson, Tribal Liaison

## **D. Office of the Insurance Commissioner - 1:45 PM CST**

Presenter: Larry Robinette/OIC

- Commitment to community connection initiative by the Office of Insurance Commissioner, aiming to engage more broadly and provide clearer understanding of their role beyond selling insurance.
- Office of Insurance Commissioner discusses efforts to address denied claims and fraudulent cases, promoting community engagement to assist individuals facing insurance issues.
- There is an ongoing national effort to address tribal maternal mortality rates, notably higher among American Indian and Alaska Native people, requesting input via surveys from tribal leaders on effective mortality review committee models.

## **IV. Lunch - 2:00 PM CST**

- Acknowledgment of the contributions to lunch preparations by the Traditional Foods program and the donation of fish for the meal.
- Acknowledgment of lunch provided by Grinnell family, with options for participants to take leftovers home.

## **V. Medicaid Reentry Services - 3:00 PM CST**

Presenter: Brooke Amyx/DOC

- A presentation was given on the Medicaid Reentry Program aimed at facilitating continuity of care and supporting individuals transitioning from incarceration to the community.
- The program aims to partner with tribal communities and tribal healthcare clinics to better support tribal members returning to these communities.
- DOC is expanding its capacity from serving only highest needs individuals to serve all individuals through the Medicaid expansion waiver, increasing social workers from 11 to 19.
- The DOC reentry team's approach includes managed care organizations ensuring a warm handoff to community medical case managers.
- Future goals include going live with Medicaid expansion services by July next year, focusing on three required services: MOUD, targeted case management, and release medications.
- Meet and greet sessions at prisons are scheduled to build bridges between community healthcare providers and prison reentry staff.
- Discussion on the measurement of program success, focusing on reducing recidivism and improving healthcare outcomes like emergency services utilization and reducing post-release deaths.

- Feedback and recommendations are sought to improve the program’s impact on tribal communities.
- Clarification that tribal members need to sign up for Medicaid coverage even if they plan to use tribal clinics, with DOC facilitating this process.
- The DOC is hiring under health services for the Medicaid expansion waiver, aiming to identify tribal assisters and resources to aid transitioning populations.
- Discussion on the billing process for tribal providers who may offer re-entry services, with potential opportunities for tribal clinics to bill for these services.

## **VI. AIHC Executive Committee Updates - 3:30 PM CST**

Presented By Steve Kutz, Summer Hammons, Maureen Kinley, Sarah Sullivan, Linda Lauch

- Recognition was given to the staff of the American Health Commission for their hard work and the success of the program displays, likened to a science fair.
- There was a discussion about possibly doing a presentation at the upcoming Washington State Public Health Association meeting to showcase public health developments within Indian Country.
- A video was created detailing personal introductions and work responsibilities; it is suggested that it be shortened from its current length of 50 minutes.
- Marilyn Scott, who has led efforts in public health for American Indian Health Commission, is retiring. Plans to honor her were discussed, including a potential visit.
- Issues with collection notices at Yakima Memorial Hospital, owned by MultiCare, were discussed, with a commitment to investigate through the Office of Insurance Commissioner.
- On January 21st, there will be a Legislative Day for participants to meet their representatives, encouraging participation for advocacy and strategizing on health-related issues.
- Linda Lauch expressed plans to attend the upcoming Legislative Day despite previous discomfort, recognizing it as an opportunity for learning.

## **VII. AIHC 2026 Priorities - 4:00 PM CST**

Presenter: Vicki Lowe, AIHC

[AIHC 2026 Priorities 12.2025.pptx](#)  
[2025-2026 Priority Matrix - UD 12.2025.docx](#)

- The review focuses on the American Health Commission's priorities for 2026, considering changes in the federal administration and the need to adjust strategies.
- A priority is securing ongoing funding for the Washington Tribal Opioid and Fentanyl Task Force which requires \$300,000 annually.
- Legislative efforts include working with the healthcare authority and legislature to ensure reliable funding and tracking the financial savings from Indian Health Services-eligible patients.
- Legislation is suggested to track savings for Medicaid patients eligible under Indian Health Services, with a focus on capital funds for health facilities.

- Discussion of potential legislative action to utilize hospital community benefit funding for recovery support services following emergencies like overdoses.
- Recommendations include addressing disparities in Medicaid funding rates and encouraging tribal clinics to track financial impacts of their services.
- Consideration of a study on the effects of tribal clinics stopping services for non-Native patients, highlighting the importance of tribal contributions to state Medicaid systems.
- The organization plans to codify Tribal Data Sovereignty Principles into the Washington Health Improvement Act, aiming for legislative inclusion.
- The new strategy involves engaging Native youth through programs at Evergreen university, aiming for legislative and advocacy skill-building for students.
- **Motion** - A motion was raised by Jamestown S'Klallam and seconded by Swinomish to approve the legislative priorities, resulting in unanimous agreement.

## **VIII. Discussion on AIHC Legislative Priorities for 2026 Session - 4:30 PM CST**

Presented By Vicki Lowe, Heather Erb, Maria Ness

[2026 Legislative Priorities.pptx](#)

- Focus on legislative planning: Tracking hospital revenues and urging transparency related to federal Medicaid savings.
- Discussion on IHS (Indian Health Service) consultation and reorganization highlights the dwindling of IHS-run facilities due to tribes opting for compacting and contracting. A consultation is scheduled for January 6th where tribes will be briefed on the thoughts regarding reorganization.
- Acknowledgment that tribes must be represented in the upcoming IHS consultation using a formal letter from the tribe endorsing their representation.
- Reflection on public health concerns due to insufficient foundational public health funding and the reliance on tribes during emergencies like COVID-19. Concerns raised about closing pharmacies and public health coverage gaps.
- Acknowledgment of the challenges faced by IHS with a low percentage of need-based funding leading to reliance on third-party revenues. Mention of a past budget of \$2.8 billion.

## **IX. Reflections and Closing Remarks**

- Reflection and gratitude for contributions of Vicki and staff, as well as tribal partners. Emphasis on the role of good hearts in the work being done for tribal health and community betterment.
- Closing reflections emphasize traditional healing practices and their importance in addressing health issues like diabetes, heart disease, and addiction within tribal communities. Encouragement for return to traditional ways.
- A closing gratitude segment, reflecting on the positive impact of the meeting on tribal communities and the dissemination of knowledge. Thanks extended to Vicki and her team.

- A blessing is given by Dana Ward for participants and their travels home, encouraging the spread of knowledge and good medicine throughout the community.
- Meeting adjourned with holiday wishes extended to all participants.