

# NATIVE DENTAL THERAPY INITIATIVE

A project of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board



March 2018

## News and Updates

### PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE FIRST TO HIRE DENTAL THERAPIST AFTER GROUNDBREAKING 2017 LEGISLATION



Rochelle Ferry  
PGST Dental Therapist

Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe (PGST) has become the first Washington state tribe to hire a Dental Therapist since passage of groundbreaking state legislation ([SB 5079](#)) to authorize dental therapists to practice on tribal lands, just one year ago. Rochelle Ferry, a Dental Therapist with eight years of experience working in Alaska, joins the team at the Port Gamble S'Klallam Dental clinic.

"Port Gamble S'Klallam Health Services is committed to providing excellent care, and the whole team is excited to bring this provider type to our clinic. The evidence is compelling. Tribal dental therapists are culturally relevant providers that improve access and clinic efficiency, offer an accessible health-profession role model to our youth, and most importantly, improve oral health," said Karol Dixon, PGST Health Services Director.

Recognizing this success, and honoring the sovereign rights and responsibility of tribes to provide the best health care possible for their communities, Washington passed legislation last year with bi-partisan support to allow Dental Therapist to practice in tribal health settings. The legislation has impacted workforce development, with five students from Washington tribes currently attending the Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program. Washington Tribes are also working with a local community college to build a Dental Therapy training program in the state.

### In the News

New York Times: [HOW DENTAL INEQUALITY HURTS AMERICANS](#)

Huffington Post: [STUDY REFUTES A BIG HEALTH CARE SPECIAL INTEREST'S TALKING POINTS](#)

Anchorage Daily News: [STUDY FINDS RURAL DENTAL AIDES ONCE CHALLENGED BY DENTISTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ORAL HEALTH](#)

Yes Magazine: [HOW ALASKA NATIVE TRIBES SOLVED THEIR DENTAL HEALTH CRISIS](#)

Indian Country Media Network: [9 REASONS DENTAL HEALTH AIDE THERAPISTS ARE GOOD FOR NATIVE KIDS](#)

### DENTAL THERAPIST BEN STEWARD JOINS NARA DENTAL TEAM

Ben Steward, an experienced Dental Therapist that graduated from the Alaska Dental Therapist Education Program in 2009, has joined the Native American Rehabilitation Association (NARA) Dental Clinic. Ben, an enrolled member of Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, worked as a DHAT for 7 years in Alaska. He and his family moved back to Oregon to help NARA expand their team to increase access to oral health care as part of Oregon's Dental Pilot Project Program.

NARA is an American Indian-owned and operated non-profit agency. Founded in Portland, Oregon in 1970, NARA offers a range of health services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) in the greater Portland area. NARA started as an outpatient substance abuse treatment center and expanded to include a residential family treatment center, a child and family services center, a wellness center, and primary health care clinic. It also offers adult mental health services at several locations and operates transitional housing for Native women and children. The dental clinic opened up in 2016.

NARA also recently received a CareOregon grant for portable operatories, that along with Ben on the team, will allow them to expand care into their other care facilities.



Ben Steward, NARA Dental Therapist

## NEW STUDY FROM UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SHOWS DENTAL THERAPISTS ASSOCIATED WITH ORAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS

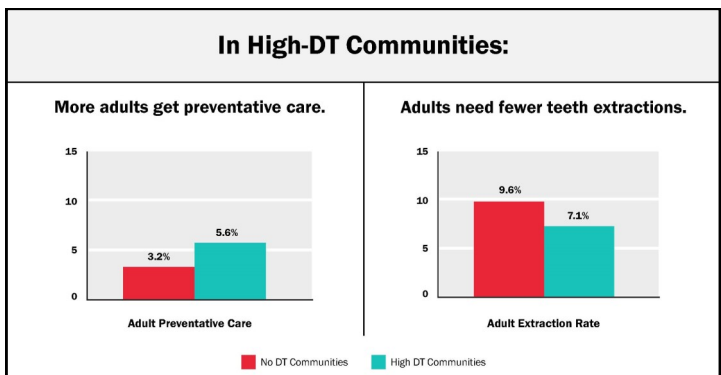
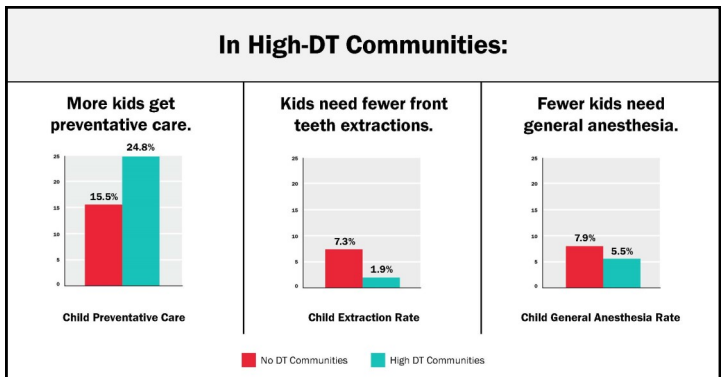
A new study, *Dental Utilization for Communities Served by Dental Therapists in Alaska's Yukon Kuskokwim Delta*, was released August 11, 2017 by Principal Investigator Donald L. Chi, DDS, PhD Associate Professor, University of Washington, School of Dentistry.

The dramatic and exciting results offer further evidence that Dental Therapists are making a difference in the communities they serve. The study examined whether dental utilization rates in Alaska Native communities were associated with the number of Dental Therapist treatment days, and looked at differences in dental utilization rates between communities with no Dental Therapist treatment days versus communities with the highest number of Dental Therapist treatment days.

### Conclusions:

- Increased Dental Therapists treatment days at the community-level in the YK Delta were positively associated with preventive care use and negatively associated with extractions.
- There appear to be clinically meaningful differences between communities with no Dental Therapists and communities with the highest number of Dental Therapist treatment days, with the latter communities exhibiting utilization patterns consistent with improved outcomes (e.g., more preventive care, fewer extractions, less general anesthesia).

Read the full study here: <http://www.npaihb.org/wpfb-file/dhatfinalreport-pdf/>



## WE ARE HEALERS COLLABORATION FEATURES DENTAL THERAPISTS



*Meet Trisha Patton, DHAT*



*AK Dental Therapy Education Program Video*

The Native Dental Therapy Initiative is excited to be partnering with [We are Healers](#) to feature dental therapists in a series of videos. We Are Healers is changing health disparities faced by American Indians/Alaska Natives by increasing the number of AI/AN health professionals who provide culturally appropriate, high quality health care to tribal communities.

The videos are being released with an eye towards prospective students gaining a better understanding of the program, and potentially seeing themselves as Dental Therapists. While available to all, we are encouraging tribal health programs and higher-education programs to use these videos to open doors to a profession that is being increasingly utilized to increase access and improve oral health outcomes in tribal communities.

Click on captions or check out the videos on our [website](http://www.npaihb.org/ndti): [www.npaihb.org/ndti](http://www.npaihb.org/ndti)

Native Dental Therapy Initiative

Visit our website: [www.npaihb.org/ndti](http://www.npaihb.org/ndti)

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