

# NATIVE DENTAL THERAPY INITIATIVE

*A project of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board*



October 2018

## News and Updates

### PORTLAND AREA STUDENTS RECEIVE DIPLOMAS AND WHITECOATS FROM ALASKA DENTAL THERAPY EDUCATION PROGRAM



June 4, 2018 was a big day for students attending the Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program. We are especially proud of our Portland Area students Jason Mecum and Alexandria Jones, Coquille Indian Tribe; and Marissa Gardner, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (5th, 4th and 2nd from left) who graduated from the program surrounded by family, instructors, and Tribal leaders and staff. They have spent the past two years away from their communities in the intense education program, and are looking forward to launching their careers as dental therapists.

Seven Portland Area students also celebrated the transition to their clinical care year and received whitecoats to mark that big step:

Kari Douglass, Chickasaw, sponsored by NARA; Arielle Cawston, Colville; Anna DeGraffenreid, Coeur d'Alene; Asiah Gonzalez and Sarah Chagnon, Swinomish; Avena Finkbonner and Angela Johnson, Lummi.

### SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE PARTNERING WITH SWINOMISH INDIAN TRIBAL COMMUNITY TO OPEN WASHINGTON STATE'S FIRST DENTAL THERAPY EDUCATION PROGRAM



*Skagit Valley College*

Now that Washington Tribes have firmly established dental therapists as oral health providers in their communities, work is proceeding to build an education program in the state. The Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program (ADTEP) at Ilisagvik College is the gold standard for dental therapy education, and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is eager to replicate much of what makes that program successful, tailor it to needs in the Portland Area, and increase the accessibility to students by building it closer to home. With generous support and partnership from the [Arcora Foundation](#), planning for the new program has transitioned into implementation.

[Skagit Valley College](#) (SVC) with campuses in Mount Vernon and Oak Harbor, serves over 8000 students and offers over 60 Degrees and Certificates for students seeking to transfer to a 4-year institution or enter the workforce. SVC was invited by Swinomish to become the home of the education program, and believes it fits perfectly with their mission to provide opportunities for students in pursuit of their educational and employment goals, while contributing to the economic and cultural enrichment of their communities. The new associates degree program will be accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and the Commission on Dental Accreditation, and will strive to mirror the 2-calendar-year curriculum developed by ADTEP. Pre-clinical year will be at Skagit Valley College, and the clinical year will be based at the currently expanding Swinomish dental clinic with rotations at partner clinics such as the Seattle Indian Health Board.

An advisory board has been established to steer the creation of the new curriculum, help design pre-clinical and clinical sties, hire a program director, and ensure the launch date of fall 2020 stays on track. Members include Tribal leaders and administrators, educators, dental directors, representatives from IHS, ADTEP and Skagit Valley College.



*Clinic expansion at Swinomish*

**The Dental Therapy Education Program Director position now open! The job posting is listed and applicants can apply at <http://www.skagit.edu/careers>**

## INTERVIEW WITH NEW NPaiHB COMMUNITY HEALTH AIDE PROGRAM (CHAP) PROJECT DIRECTOR SUE STEWARD

### **Q: WELCOME SUE ! CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF?**

**A:** I have spent the past 18 years working for a Tribal Health Organization in Alaska that operates a CHAP both as the Director and a Tribal Health Practitioner. I first learned of CHA/P's in the mid 1970's from a cousin who lived alone in remote Alaska for a few years. He encouraged me to check it out, explaining that local CHP's had come to check on him and saved his life from a serious illness. I wished for the same level of care for my grandparents. The drive to Chemawa for direct service care was very hard on them. CHAP is my life's work and I am excited to bring the medicine home.



### **Q: IN A NUTSHELL, WHAT IS CHAP?**

**A:** First introduced in the 1960s, CHAP is a model of medical, dental and behavioral health care and training developed by and for Alaska Natives. Since then it has evolved into a mature system of village and community based primary care. Providers—Dental Health Aide/Therapists (DHAT), Behavioral Health Aide/Practitioners (BHA/P) and Community Health Aide/Practitioners—are usually community residents who are trained and educated to provide direct patient care in the clinics primarily in remote villages. In Alaska all CHAP provider types exist outside of state licensure and are federally certified to practice, which allows tribes to exercise sovereignty and maintain a culturally relevant scope of practice for all CHAP provider types.

### **Q: HOW IS THE PORTLAND AREA GOING TO CREATE A CHAP PROGRAM?**

**A:** The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) of 2010 opened a door for access to this hidden gem of mid-level providers previously only allowed in Alaska. But to create CHAP in the Portland Area, a number of critical pieces need to fall into place. One of the primary needs is for IHS to authorize Area CHAP Certification Boards. IHS has created a Tribal Advisory Group that has met on several occasions in 2018 to inform the IHS about CHAP and the development of Area CHAP Certification Boards. A Portland Area CHAP Board Advisory Committee has been convened to provide strategic direction, subject matter expertise, and support for the creation of an Portland Area CHAP Certification Board and program. Members of the advisory committee represent a wide range of tribes and different types of delivery systems from the Portland Area.

### **Q: WILL PROVIDERS IN THE PORTLAND AREA NEED TO BE TRAINED IN ALASKA?**

**A:** It is our intention to create training programs closer to home, and are exploring partnerships with education institutions so that the training programs can be degree-granting and create educational pathways for our students into the health fields. With the help of our advisory committees, we will decide what we should replicate from the Alaska system of training and what will be tailored to the unique needs of tribes in the Portland Area.

### **Q: HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED WITH THIS EXCITING NEW PROGRAM?**

**A:** A Community Readiness Survey tool is complete and being used to collect information about existing infrastructure, community knowledge of the program and desire for the program. This tool will help manage community transformation and find resources to support community efforts to create CHAP's for their people. And coming soon, watch for CHAP talking points— a one-page quick reference for Tribal leadership to refer to when speaking to our internal and external partners about CHAP. Of course if you have any questions, want to participate in the advisory committee, or want more information, don't hesitate to contact me! **Sue Steward, CHAP Project Director, (503) 416-3303 (office), (907) 519-8855 (cell) or by email [sseward@npaihb.org](mailto:sseward@npaihb.org).**

## IN THE NEWS

Healthjournalism.org: [STUDY TRACKS BENEFIT OF DENTAL THERAPISTS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES](#)

The Hill: [ARIZONA SHOWS HOW AMERICA CAN EXPAND ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE](#)

KNKX: [MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT DENIED TRIBES DENTAL THERAPISTS](#)

The Medium: [THE NUMBER ONE CHRONIC ILLNESS AMONG OUR CHILDREN WILL SURPRISE YOU](#)

The Washington Post: [RURAL AMERICA HAS TOO FEW DENTISTS BUT ALSO TOO FEW JOBS TO CREATE PAYING PATIENTS](#)

## MEET INGA WEDDLE, TULALIP ADTEP CLASS OF 2020



After spending a dozen or so years in the Casino business I was looking for a change. Tulalip Tribes offered to train me in a position at the Dental Clinic. While at the clinic I saw that our people need more providers. I was inspired to pursue a career in the dental field. While completing my prerequisites for hygiene I met a hygienist who had worked with DHATs in Alaska. She suggested that I

might like being a DHAT more than hygiene. Once I connected with NPAIHB and learned about how the DHATs have been helping Alaska Natives I wanted to do that for my people too.

### Native Dental Therapy Initiative

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

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## FROM OUR PARTNERS!

The [National Indian Health Board](#) recently released results from an assessment distributed in May 2018 to measure Tribal oral healthcare systems' compatibility with dental therapy as judged by elected Tribal leaders, health program directors, and dental program directors. Highlights from the assessment include:

- ◆ A total of 67 Tribal leaders, health directors, and dental directors completed the assessment. These respondents came from 16 states, ensuring a wide range of geographic diversity.
- ◆ 2 in 3 respondents were familiar with dental therapists, and 3 in 4 were supportive of their Tribe hiring a dental therapist.
- ◆ When asked to rate their community's oral health on a scale of 1-10, the average was 4.7.
- ◆ 79% said there was a shortage of oral health providers in their community, with 33% saying the shortage was severe. Just 3% said there was an excess of providers.
- ◆ 73% of respondents wanted their state to begin licensing dental therapists if it does not already do so, and 48% said they would even support their Tribe licensing dental therapists itself, as Swinomish Tribe in Washington State did in 2016.

For more information or further findings, contact Brett Weber, Congressional Relations Coordinator, NIHB, [BWeber@nihb.org](mailto:BWeber@nihb.org)

Check out the new [online Dental Therapy Resource Guide from the WK Kellogg Foundation](#). It offers an extensive library of articles, documents, infographics, interactive tools, interviews, podcasts, social media assets and videos. As promised, it delivers "Everything you need to know about Dental Therapy!"

