

# Native Dental Therapy Initiative *News and Updates*

Summer 2019



Graduates Avena Finkbonner, Lummi Nation; Angela Johnson, Lummi Nation; Sarah Chagnon, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community; Asiah Gonzales, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community; Arielle Cawston, Colville Tribes; Anna Degraffenreid, Coeur d'Alene Tribe; Kari Douglass, Chickasaw, Native American Rehabilitation Association

## **Congratulations New Portland Area Dental Therapists!**

Seven Portland Area dental therapy students graduated on June 14 from the Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program. Each will return to their Tribe or Urban Indian Program in Idaho, Washington and Oregon to provide care to community members. Inga Weddle, Tulalip, also received her white coat and will head to Bethel for her clinical year.

Each of the graduates has spent the past two years mastering the most routine and preventive dental procedures that make up the dental therapists' scope,

while each of their Tribes secured the ability to license them in a way that works for their clinics and their governments.

Coeur d'Alene spearheaded efforts in the Idaho legislature to pass a law this year that offers a state license to tribal dental therapists. Lummi Nation recently set up their own Licensing Board for their dental therapist. Swinomish led efforts in 2017 to authorize tribal dental therapists through state law, and will license the new Swinomish and Colville

graduates. The Native American Rehabilitation Association in Portland is participating in the Oregon Dental Pilot Project Program allowing dental therapists to practice under ongoing state oversight.

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board celebrates each of these amazing individuals for their accomplishments, and stands with each of the Tribes and Urban Indian Program as they provide extraordinary leadership in tackling oral health disparities with this evidence-based model of care.

*Native Dental Therapy Initiative is a project of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board.*

Check us out at <http://www.npaihb.org/ndti>, [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

## 2019 Legislative Wrap-Up

**Idaho:** After two years of research, discussion and collaboration, Governor Brad Little signed into law [S 1129](#), the dental therapy bill sponsored by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe on March 25<sup>th</sup>. With strong support from the Nez Perce and other Idaho Tribes, the Senate passed the bill 30-4 and the House passed it 59-9. The new law authorizes the Idaho Board of Dentistry to license dental therapists who have met certain criteria to practice in tribal communities, as well as promulgate rules defining their scope of practice and level of supervision.

**Washington:** The Washington State Legislature approved funding in their 2019-2021 biennium state budget of \$6.5M to reimburse tribal health programs for services provided to Medicaid eligible individuals by dental therapists (DHATs). Services provided to Medicaid eligible individuals by DHATs are eligible for reimbursement beginning July 1, 2019 at the same encounter rate given for services provided by dentists or other providers. Additional funds were allocated in the Capitol Budget to support the Dental Therapy Education Program at Skagit Valley College.

Outside the Portland Area, four new states authorized dental therapy this year! **Michigan, New Mexico, Nevada and Connecticut** joined the growing list of states improving access and outcomes through these high quality primary oral health providers.



*Chairman Cladoosby with dental clinic staff in new classroom*

## Swinomish Holds Grand Opening For New Dental Clinic and Dental Therapy Training Facility

On April 9, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community welcomed visitors to the Grand Opening Ceremony of their newly expanded and remodeled dental clinic. The dental clinic will also house the clinical portion of the future Washington Dental Therapy Education Program.

Swinomish Chairman Brian Cladoosby spoke to a jam-packed reception area about the historical trauma associated with dental care for his community. He explained the great significance this new dental clinic holds for the Swinomish people and the sense of hope it brings for the community's health in years to come.

The new dental clinic boasts spectacular views, 16 state-of-the-art operatories, lab and sterilization rooms, and all digital records. Four of the operatories are reserved for the future Dental Therapy Education Program, as is a classroom, office space, and a locker/shower room.

The Dental Therapy Education Program is a partnership between Skagit Valley College and Swinomish, and will be the first CODA accredited Dental Therapy Education Program in the lower 48. The program is working toward welcoming its first class in autumn 2020.

## Native Dental Therapy Initiative Adds New Staff



**Dr. Miranda Davis** is the Native Dental Therapy Initiative Project Director, taking over the role previously held by Christina Peters who is now Director of the Tribal Community Health Provider Project. Dr. Davis also provides clinical care with the Puyallup Tribe, where she has worked since 2006. In addition to the Puyallup clinic, she has worked in private practice and has volunteered in several countries. Dr. Davis is passionate about public health and expanding access to high quality oral health care. She has special interest in helping patients with dental fears and in providing

respectful care. Originally from northern California, Dr. Davis received a DDS from University of the Pacific in San Francisco and an MPH from University of Washington.



**Savanna Shaw (Warm Springs)** is the Tribal Community Health Provider Project Assistance. She has been interning at NPAIHB for 4 years. She graduated high school in 2017 and started at Portland Community College this past fall. “When I applied for this job I didn’t know how great of an impact that our projects would be. I’m glad to be learning more everyday about our projects on how we make a difference in our communities.”

## Indian Health Service releases draft CHAP Policy

*Deadline for comments extended to July 8, 2019*

On May 8, IHS initiated tribal consultation on a draft interim policy to expand the Community Health Aide Program (CHAP) beyond Alaska. The CHAP Tribal Advisory Group (TAG) developed the draft policy with IHS and there is still language that tribes are divided on with IHS.

There is also concern and confusion about separate but related policy actions by IHS on the CHAP and Community Health Representative (CHR) Programs. CHAP and CHR are complimentary programs and will together strengthen the health infrastructure serving Tribes throughout the country. Approval of the interim CHAP policy will not result in a funding cut or phasing out of the existing CHR program.

CHAP nationalization holds great promise for the future health care delivery system in Indian Country. It is extremely important that Tribes submit comments as this policy will allow the Portland Area to begin CHAP implementation with those Tribes that elect to utilize these providers. **For Tribes wishing to comment on the draft policy, please see below resources. For questions or a template letter contact Christina Peters, [cpeters@npaihb.org](mailto:cpeters@npaihb.org), 206-349-4364.**

[IHS Dear Tribal Leader Letter](#)

[Draft Interim CHAP Policy](#)

[NPAIHB’s CHAP comment letter](#)

### From our Partners...

[Community Catalyst](#) and the [National Indian Health Board](#) have launched the [National Partnership for Dental Therapy](#) to elevate the visibility and broad, multi-sectorial support for dental therapy. We believe all communities could benefit from dental therapists, but the focus of the Partnership is improving access to much needed dental care to communities where the needs are the greatest. [Join us!](#)

Also check out National Indian Health Board’s Tribal Oral Health Initiative’s Spring Newsletter [here!](#)