

# Tribal Opioid/Fentanyl Prevention, Education and Awareness Campaign Workgroup

August 27, 2025

## Meeting Notes

**Co-Chairs: Steven de los Angeles, Council Member, Snoqualmie Tribe;  
Lucilla Mendoza, Health Care Authority (HCA); Candice Wilson, Department of Health (DOH)**

**Attendees:** Nachya George, Behavioral Health Program Director, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation; Zekketha “Val” Vargas, Project Coordinator, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Morgan Snell, Tribal Health Planner, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe; Darrell Charles, Jr., Strong Program Manager, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe; William Lucero, Drug Task Force Coordinator, Lummi Nation; Logan Toby, Lummi Nation; Evelyn Jefferson, Crisis Outreach Supervisor, Lummi Nation; Edna Revey, School Nurse, Lummi Nation; Mona Miller, Director of Reentry and Community Family Services, Puyallup Tribe; Olivia Duvall, Tribal Wellness Coordinator, Samish Indian Nation; Daylen Gonzalez, Behavioral Health, Skokomish Indian Tribe; Steven de los Angeles, Council Member, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe; Erika Thale, Executive Director, Squaxin Island Tribe; Julie Owens, Director of Operations, Squaxin Island Tribe; Nakesha Edwards, Mental Health Programs Manager, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community; Courtney Jefferson, Youth Development, Tulalip Tribes; Marilyn Scott, Council Member, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe; Christa McAllister, Case Manager, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe; Naomi Jacobson, North Star Program Manager, Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB); Scott Pinkham, Equity Program Director, United Indians of All Tribes Foundation (UIATF); Vicki Lowe, Executive Director, American Indian Health Commission (AIHC); Laura Kluever, Tribal Assister Support, AIHC; Lisa Rey Thomas, AIHC, Rebecca Purser, Tribal Member, Suquamish Tribe; Colleen Cawston, Director, Department of Corrections (DOC), Office of Tribal Relations (OTR); Harj Aulakh, DOC OTR; Candice Wilson, Executive Director, Department of Health (DOH) Office of Tribal Public Health & Relations (OTPHR); Rosalinda Fivekiller-Turk, Tribal Engagement Director, DOH; Amber Arndt, Tribal Policy Director, DOH, OTPHR; Chantel Wang, Opioid Health Educator, DOH; Amira Caluya, 988 Implementation Specialist, DOH; Kathy Pierre, Prevention/Community Health, DOH; Gerry RainingBird, Suicide Prevention Program, DOH; Jennifer Almgren, Health Services Consultant, DOH; Lisa Yanagida, Chief of Staff, Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS); Leah Muasau, Tribal Contracts Coordinator, DSHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP); Sher Stecher, Tribal Relations Manager, DSHS OIP; Brenda Francis-Thomas, Regional Manager, DSHS OIP; Michelle Johnson, Tribal Affairs Administrator, DSHS Behavioral Health and Habilitation Administration; Julie Jefferson, Statewide Tribal Relations Administrator, DSHS Economic Services Administration (ESA); Lisa Pemberton, Tribal Affairs Administrator, DSHS Home and Community Living Administration (HCLA); Freda Cogger, Tribal Relations Program Administrator, DSHS ESA Community Services Division (CSD); Marcy Jordan, Local Planning Area Program Manager, DSHS ESA CSD; Denise Kelly, Tribal Liaison, DSHS ESA CSD; Tim Reynon, Executive Director, Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA); Charlene Abrahamson, Tribal Liaison, Health Benefit Exchange; Christine Winn, Deputy Administrator, Health Care Authority (HCA) Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA); Lonni Rickard, Communications Consultant, HCA OTA; Lucilla Mendoza, Tribal Behavioral Health Administrator, HCA; Nakia DeMiero, Tribal Opioid Response Coordinator, HCA; Anne Paulsen, State Opioid Response Communications Consultant, HCA; Melissa Thoemke, Behavioral Health Communications Manager, HCA; Sarah Cook-Lalari, WSTPS Coordinator, HCA, OTA; Megan Mills, Desautel Hege (DH); Paj Nandi, DH;

## Welcome, Blessing, Introductions

*Steven de los Angeles, Council Member, Snoqualmie Tribe*

## Opening Remarks and Tribal Campaign Updates

*Steven de los Angeles, Council Member, Snoqualmie Tribe*

*Lucilla Mendoza, HCA & Candice Wilson, DOH*

*Tribal Representatives*

- Council Member de los Angeles said the October meeting will be moved to October 29 and a new meeting invite will be sent out.
- Lucilla shared the workgroup has made progress in bringing together Tribal and state partners to work on Tribal opioid/fentanyl behavioral health, education and awareness messaging.
- Council Member de los Angeles reviewed presentations from the last workgroup meeting.

## Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) Workgroups

*Tim Reynon, Director, GOIA*

Tim said GOIA held monthly meetings with Tribal leaders and liaisons to reimagine the Centennial Accord. We are moving the Centennial Accord to a year round engagement to work on issues ahead of the meeting with the Governor and have individual time for Tribal and state leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue.

- He shared the draft timeline, agenda, pre-meeting topics and invited folks to share additional topics.
- Wednesday, October 22, will be dedicated to Tribal and state relationships discussion.
- GOIA will create a report out from the Centennial Accord in January.

Please email Tim at [tim.reynon@goia.wa.gov](mailto:tim.reynon@goia.wa.gov) if you have anything additional.

### **WA Tribal Opioid/Fentanyl Task Force Update**

*Vicki Lowe & Lisa Rey-Thomas, AIHC & Lucilla Mendoza, HCA*

Vicki shared the 2026 Tribal Health Legislative Priorities Report from the August 21 Governor's Indian Health Advisory Committee (GIHAC) meeting presentation which is focused on recommendations and issues that need legislation to make it happen.

- Funding is needed to keep the Opioid Task Force going, to do another Opioid Summit and to do the reporting. We must look at existing funds and utilize what's already out there such as the Opioid Abatement Settlement funds can help.
- Continuum of Care legislative requests are to expand Tribally or UIHO-operated behavioral health facilities and housing.
- Hospitals have community benefit funding and we are proposing they use the funds to hire a peer support specialist or recovery coach with the funds, to help if someone has overdosed and will be released.
- Ensure training is included for non-Tribal providers who are serving Native Americans.
- Provide funding for the Public Safety & Justice Systems legislative requests for an annual Tribal law enforcement conference, Tribal Juvenile Courts pilot project and for 16 regional drug taskforces.
- Housing and Wrap around Services needs an increase in funding and resources for rentals to keep people in housing, develop and distribute print-based resource directories for those who can't access the internet and support for folks applying for housing programs such as a navigator. Help is needed to leverage the Foundational Community Supports program.
- For Family and Community Services, leverage federal grants and state funds for up to 30 tribal liaisons across the state along with regional supervision under the Tribal liaisons.
- The continuation of funding for the 988 Native and Strong Lifeline, and Opioid Prevention, Treatment and Recovery using Opioid Abatement, about \$3.2 million for the biennium.
- Develop policy support use of culturally based evidence to fund Tribal/Indigenous prevention services, and leverage IHS and SAMHSA funds for projects.
- Develop culturally based evidence comprehensive list building upon existing a best practices list. This may come off the list as it may already have funding.

Vicki asked how to have someone in the school systems so youth get the help they need instead of getting in trouble. Would this funding come from Title 6, education system, or behavioral health funds?

Rebecca shared the Suquamish Tribe and North Kitsap School District partnered. Suquamish funds several academic positions and helps all AI/AN students with a preference for the Tribe. She suggested looking for funds currently within the education and behavioral health system, mirror the model that brought OSPI to the table and collaborate. Also lean in on Tribes already doing the work for best practices and how they are improving the lives of youth, and look in the community and see what offerings there are for the families and getting the information to folks raising youth. It could look like part advocate/part behavioral health counselor. At Suquamish, they are called academic coaches and support in and outside of the classroom, like at recess and lunch, so a child has a familiar person to go to if they are experiencing bullying or other issues. The coach can be the child's voice and work with school staff to ensure the student is supported. Whether it's a fully funded Tribal or state position, the collaboration must be strengthened.

Logan said there are many schools that have Native outreach for school districts. At Lummi Nation, there are various Tribes going to the same school.

Leah suggested a mobile liaison team that can be scheduled to go to schools.

Kathy mentioned Lummi Nation has a new school based health program that received funding.

Lucilla said there were concerns for individuals working in the school district and being the only person in that role as they might experience systemic racism themselves. It would be good if there was a Hub or support

system to ensure they were supported in the schools. Some schools are eliminating the program due to lack of funding and support.

Vicki asked if OSPI could help find out which schools have the positions and cut the positions?

Rebecca suggested reaching out to the OSPI Office of Native Education, Director Shandy Abrahamson or District Superintendent, Henry Strom. This could also be an opportunity for Tribal Leaders to engage in consultation with the school district and discuss including how much money the school district and Tribe has available for this work.

Charlene suggested leadership needs to address the perception that Tribes are getting so much for free and show the data of the disparities Tribes are facing.

Vicki shared they are working on a Medicaid report showing the savings that working in a Tribal clinic brings to the state. When talking about health disparities, the data feels wrong. It's discriminating to say the Tribes need to fix those things because the power of the institutions is what caused those harms.

Rebecca suggested showing the multi-pronged funding input from the state, Tribes, CBOs and feds. This could show the Governor it is a full wraparound support.

Vicki said DOH uses our data to apply for funding and how much money goes to the Tribes to do the work. We have asked for Tribal set asides to do that. We are working on some legislation to ensure it's not too difficult to be a provider to help folks who have co-occurring disorders. We need mental and SUD providers to be able to do both.

Please reach out to Vicki Lowe at [vicki.lowe@aihc-wa.com](mailto:vicki.lowe@aihc-wa.com), Heather Erb at [heather.erb@aihc-wa.com](mailto:heather.erb@aihc-wa.com), Maria Ness at [maria.gardipee@outlook.com](mailto:maria.gardipee@outlook.com) or Ashley Lowe-Thaens at [Ashley.lowe-thaens@aihc-wa.com](mailto:Ashley.lowe-thaens@aihc-wa.com) with questions or comments. Reach out to any of us for any of these. Shared contact info for her, Heather Erb, etc.

### **Native and Strong Campaign-Chat and Text Launch Update**

*Amira Caluya, DOH*

Amira said the 988 Native and Strong Lifeline (which is a specific subnetwork for AI/AN folks) chat and text feature went live on August 25. A DTLL will go out this week. For more information, go to [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org).

Non nationwide providers will be required to comply with text geo-routing by mid-2028.

For texts via Wi-Fi, a person using the system must have a WA area code.

Please contact Amira at [amira.caluya@doh.wa.gov](mailto:amira.caluya@doh.wa.gov) if you have questions.

### **For Our Lives Youth Campaign and Collaboration Update**

*Megan Mills, Desautel Hege*

Megan said there are new Campaign resources for Native youth, which is based on feedback from youth at listening sessions and focus groups across WA. Youth were confident in their ability to refuse substances and interested in learning more about opioids. They wanted culturally relevant materials, with real stories and information.

Megan shared the new materials that included posters created by a Native artist with images of Tribal folks and personal statements, an infographic poster and rack card. Youth couldn't always describe how they would refuse drugs so a pull out card was created offering ideas to help them. The materials will be distributed to schools.

Please reach out to [meganm@wearedh.com](mailto:meganm@wearedh.com) or [pajn@wearedh.com](mailto:pajn@wearedh.com) with questions or feedback.

### **Collaborative-Department of Health 2026 Proposed Legislative Package Review Webinar**

*Candice Wilson, DOH*

Candice shared some slides on happenings from DOH.

Amber invited folks to share what impacts they are facing so DOH can escalate them to federal partners. DOH:

- has a new Secretary who released a 100 day plan.
- is working on ways to work closely together, and sending emails whenever there are updates.

- has a lot of federal funding and is navigating the difficult climate with grants as several are due to end, such as WIC and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness fun.

State budget cuts hit hard with reductions to foundational public health services, and DOH is working through layoffs. DOH will submit proposed decision packages and request legislation to OFM soon for consideration. DOH is proposing:

- Opioid treatment program (OTP) fee authority. A DTLL went out last month, DOH held listening sessions and received great Tribal input. Tribes want to keep the OTP accreditation program in the state.
- Updating federal standards for preventative services, which asks for state authorization to do vaccine regulations and recommendations rather than utilize federal recommendations. We are working together on this with other states. If it passes, DOH will create a workgroup which will need Tribal representation and others involved as it would be new for the state.

Budget request decision packages are:

- The fee schedule is outdated for newborn screening and shellfish.
- Certification of need for a trauma system to help improve it and keep it in place.
- Funding for 988 call centers and IT. DOH is working through the applications now for it. We are asking the Legislature to approve up to four call centers and fully fund them.
- Funding for the Office of Innovation and Technical Maintenance & Operations. This is IT-related regarding enhancements and updates.

Other items share were the DOH Naloxone Finder Tool, with a reminder August 31 is Overdose Awareness Day. DOH connected with GOIA as the Puyallup Tribe of Indians are the pillars of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. There are World Cup Surveillance, FIFA Public Health and Medical Subject Matter Experts Workgroups happening. DOH also shared the WA DOH Tribal Immunization newsletter. Please reach out to [otphr@doh.wa.gov](mailto:otphr@doh.wa.gov) if you have questions.

### **For Our Lives Current and Future Budget on Campaign Funds Discussion**

*Lucilla Mendoza and Anne Paulsen, HCA*

Lucilla said at the last workgroup meeting, Anne and she talked about the \$3.2 million Opioid Abatement dollars to move forward starting July 2025-June 2027, the need to have a good plan in place for the money and to get feedback. They are currently working on:

- Revamping and rebranding previous materials to mirror For Our Lives style
- A full toolkit of youth material.
- Tribal Leader videos.
- MOUD and anti-stigma campaign information
- A media buy plan for each of the materials.

The campaign has been separated into two phases:

- Phase 1: Continue meeting with Tribes and customize materials for them and expand to include UIHOs. This includes a restock of materials until new customization happens for 2026. It includes launching the youth material and getting it into schools and updating websites with youth messaging. It also includes ongoing campaign management. This will cost about half of the settlement amount.
- Phase 2: Has not been decided. Options could include a statewide media buy on a variety of platforms, partnering with Native artists/designers to incorporate and expand visual storytelling, expansion of messaging to sub-audiences, such as veterans, research and incorporate more Eastern WA, regional, Tribal lands, cultural areas, river canoes, etc., and set aside funding for procurement from previous requests.

Lucilla said nothing is in contract yet so please share your thoughts by contacting her at [lucilla.mendoza@hca.wa.gov](mailto:lucilla.mendoza@hca.wa.gov) or with Anne Paulsen at [anne.paulsen@hca.wa.gov](mailto:anne.paulsen@hca.wa.gov).

Colleen shared a campaign poster and banner that will be posted at all DOC locations for overdose awareness.

### **Meeting Wrap-Up/Next Agenda**

*Steven de los Angeles, Council Member, Snoqualmie Tribe*

*Lucilla Mendoza, HCA & Candice Wilson, DOH*

- **Reminder:** -Boulder Care Presentation at September Meeting

Council Member de los Angeles asked if anyone has topic recommendations for next month's agenda?

Candice offered to provide another short update on FIFA.

Nakia suggested a North Star Tribal Prevention System update and planning for Native American heritage month in November.

Lucilla said it can be discussed at the agenda planning committee on September 8. If anyone else has suggestions, please reach out to her or Sher Stecher at [sher.stecher@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:sher.stecher@dshs.wa.gov)..

**Adjourn**