



February 2026

BAKERSFIELD AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

Honoring Leadership: CEO Angel Galvez named a "Tu Voz, Tu Héroe" Recipient

We are thrilled to share that our CEO, Angel Galvez, has been selected as an honoree for the 4th Annual Tu Voz, Tu Héroe awards presented by Lotus Bakersfield.

This prestigious award, whose title translates to “Your Voice, Your Hero,” recognizes outstanding leaders in Kern County who go above and beyond their professional roles to empower the community.

Under Angel’s leadership, the BAIHP team has expanded healthcare access and advocated for under-served populations, making a profound impact on the local landscape.

Being named a "Tu Voz, Tu Héroe" recipient celebrates both his vision and the organization’s commitment to serving our community with dignity and respect. This recognition further inspires our team to continue providing essential resources and compassionate care to those who need it most.

See interview with Angel on page 2...



Top News

American Heart Month:
Addressing the Critical Impact of Cardiovascular Disease on Native American and Alaska Native communities.

BAIHP Updates

Gardening and nutrition classes are back in session, empowering patients to cultivate their own food while understanding the nutritional value of what they eat.



Bakersfield American
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Our Feathers Soaring Higher

www.BakersfieldAIHP.org

American Heart Month: Building Indigenous Health Sovereignty

February marks American Heart Month, a critical time when health initiatives focus on mitigating high rates of cardiovascular risk factors—including diabetes, hypertension, and smoking—that disproportionately affect Indigenous communities. These health disparities are deeply rooted in structural inequities, such as limited healthcare access, systemic poverty, and food insecurity, which are now being addressed through targeted federal and community-driven efforts.

Culturally grounded approaches, such as reviving traditional food systems, reclaiming physical activity through community-driven programs, and using traditional practices to foster wellness, are essential to prevention.

Many tribes are focusing on "Culture is the Cure," using traditional lifestyles to reverse high rates of cardiovascular disease. This holistic approach acknowledges that connecting people to their heritage, land, and culture builds resilience and improves physical health, addressing both the symptoms and the root causes of the disease.

Ultimately, American Heart Month aims to foster true health equity by ensuring Native communities have the resources, sovereignty, and support to build a healthier future.



Angel Galvez: Tu Voz, Tu Héroe Recipient (Cont.)

Q 1: What does being named a "Tu Voz, Tu Héroe" by Lotus of Bakersfield mean to you personally?

Being named Tu Voz, Tu Héroe by Lotus Bakersfield is a deeply significant honor. It validates both the leadership and the thirty years of social service I have dedicated to our community. This recognition pays off the personal sacrifices and high standards required in this work, especially regarding my commitment to indigenous communities. After starting in social services at age 18, it is incredibly moving to receive this 'pat on the back' from fellow leaders who value the impact we've made together.

Q 2: What is the most critical health challenge that the BAIHP is tackling in 2026?

While we face many issues, our primary focus for 2026 is addressing the struggle of poverty and the rising cost of living, which act as critical social determinants of health by creating life-threatening stress.



The most urgent manifestation of this is the housing crisis, as we receive more referrals for housing support and homelessness prevention than any other service. To combat this challenge, we are moving beyond just identifying the problem and are utilizing a new grant to build housing.

Q 3: What progress has been made in expanding mental health access for our community?

Since 2020, we have successfully prioritized reducing suicide rates among our Native American population.

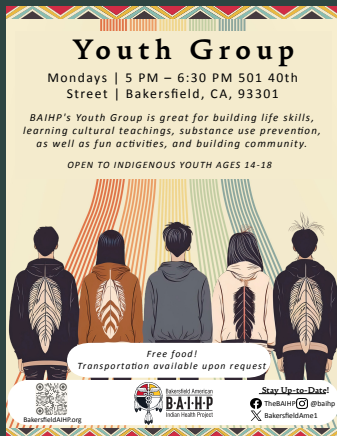
We have expanded our behavioral health services and secured a plethora of new grants. By hiring licensed clinical staff, we have transitioned to a higher quality of care model that provides our community with the professional support they deserve. We have ultimately realized my vision of becoming a 'one-stop shop' where our people can find relief and resources for any need the moment they walk through our doors.

Q 4: What is your primary goal for BAIHP as we look toward 2027 and beyond?

My primary goal is to ensure this organization remains one of the best, safest, and most respectful places to work by fostering an environment where we lead with kindness and always lend a hand. By treating every team member as a valued equal, we create a healthy culture that allows us to focus on our shared mission. Ultimately, when we take care of each other and use our collective talents together, we can provide the highest quality care and consistency to the community we serve while building a legacy of excellence that inspires us all.

Cultural Class for Youth

Mondays | 5 PM - 6:30 PM | 501 40th Street, Bakersfield



The BAIHP Youth Group provides a safe, supportive environment where prevention is rooted in culture, connection, and community.

Through substance use prevention and suicide awareness education, we empower youth with essential life skills while strengthening their ties to cultural identity and Native roots.

Each week features games, arts and crafts, and hands-on activities that make learning both fun and meaningful. Dinner is provided at every session.

Join us every Monday from 5:00-6:30 PM at 501 40th Street. This program serves as a dedicated space for Native youth to connect and grow together.

We are building a foundation of resilience and a path toward healthy, vibrant futures.

Gardening and Nutrition

Q 1: Which native/drought-tolerant plants support our cultural and nutritional goals?

Kellie: Echinacea, or Coneflower, is a hardy perennial perfect for dry, sunny summers. Once established, it is exceptionally drought-tolerant and thrives in full sun, making it ideal for regions like the Sierra Nevadas. Beyond its beauty, its dried flowers can be brewed into an herbal tea known for supporting the immune system.

Q 2: How will you teach nutrition during gardening classes?

Kellie: In my gardening classes, I will teach nutrition through hands-on planting, harvesting, and tasting. These activities connect plants to healthy eating by demonstrating how seasonal produce provides essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber. By developing practical skills, students will learn exactly where their food comes from and how to make balanced, nutritious choices.

Q 3: What is a nutritional native crop that is also easy to grow in our warm spring climate?

Kellie: Plant zucchini in late spring—typically March or April—once the soil warms to at least 65°F. Choose a location with full sun and well-drained soil rich in organic matter. Because the plants grow wide, space them at least 18 to 24 inches apart to ensure proper airflow and a healthy harvest.



Housing Services

Q 1: What specific housing support services does BAIHP offer to clients?

ShaMekka: We provide comprehensive support through outreach, community referrals, case management, and disability benefits advocacy. Our housing assistance includes rental subsidies, coverage for rental or utility arrearages, late fee payments, and first month's rent or security deposits. We also offer landlord mediation, repairs, and habitability or accessibility improvements. Additionally, our interim housing, sober living facilities, landlord outreach, and housing navigation assistance are all operated in accordance with Housing First principles.

Q 2: Who is eligible to receive assistance from the housing program?

ShaMekka: Eligible participants include individuals who are likely qualified for disability benefits, those who are experiencing chronic homelessness, or are at risk of losing their housing.

The program also helps those with serious mental illness or substance use disorders, as well as formerly incarcerated individuals—including those recently released from state prison—by providing essential reentry services.

Q 3: How can clients apply for or access these services?

ShaMekka: The best way to contact the Housing Department for a consultation is by calling us at (661) 327-4030, ext. 2021.

Alternatively, you may email us at housing@bakersfieldaihp.org with your contact information. A representative will reply to your inquiry within 24 to 72 hours.

Spaghetti Squash Stir-Fry with Chicken & Veggies



Ingredients

- 1 Medium spaghetti squash - **3 lbs**
- Boneless, skinless chicken breasts - **1 lb**
- Olive oil (divided) - **2 tsp**
- Green cabbage (shredded) - **2 cups**
- Red bell pepper (sliced thin) - **1 whole**
- Carrots (shredded) - **1/2 cup**
- Green onions (sliced) - **1/4 cup**
- Garlic (minced) - **2 cloves**
- Low-sodium soy sauce - **1 1/2 tbsp**
- Rice vinegar - **1 tbsp**
- Toasted sesame oil - **2 tsp**
- Black pepper (to taste) - **1/2 tsp**
- Cilantro - **1/4 cups**
- Lime (cut into wedges) - **1 whole**

Author: American Diabetes Association
 Prep Time: 15 min.
 Cook Time: 40 min.
 Servings: 4

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Cut the squash in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Place cut-side down on a baking sheet and roast until tender, 30–40 min. Let it cool slightly, then shred into strands with a fork.
- While the squash roasts, heat 1 tsp olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, season lightly with black pepper, and cook until golden and cooked through. Transfer to a plate.
- Add the remaining teaspoon of olive oil to the skillet. Stir in the garlic, cabbage, bell pepper, and carrots. Cook for 3–5 minutes, until just tender but still crisp.
- Return the chicken to the skillet along with the spaghetti squash strands and green onions. Drizzle in soy sauce, rice vinegar, and sesame oil. Toss to combine and heat through.
- Divide among bowls and garnish with chopped cilantro and a lime wedge.

Wellbriety

The main goal of Wellbriety is to support healing from addiction by promoting sobriety, personal responsibility, and reconnection with Native culture and community. Unlike traditional 12-step programs, Wellbriety addresses the historical impact of colonization on Native American substance use and emphasizes culturally based healing. The program encourages balance across the Four Directions—mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual—while fostering resilience, cultural pride, and strong community connections. In short, Wellbriety aims to restore balance to mind, body, and spirit, supporting healthy lifestyles and empowering Native individuals and communities on their path to recovery.

Cultural and traditional practices are integrated into meetings through smudging, songs, and prayers. When participants are from different tribes, the program incorporates their specific traditions whenever possible. Resources for participants include copies of prayers and excerpts from the Wellbriety curriculum. Meetings are held on Mondays from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, and participants can register by contacting the front desk.

Kern County Point in Time (PIT) Count

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual, one-night survey mandated by HUD to count sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness. The PIT count helps direct resources to address homelessness, which disproportionately affects many Native Americans.

Staff participation is vital because BAIHP provides cultural awareness and trust-based outreach to a population that is often missed. As the only urban Indian healthcare facility in Kern County, staff involvement is crucial for providing immediate connection during the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count and identifying un-housed Indigenous people who might not be in traditional shelters.

Tracking this data will illustrate the needs of Indigenous communities, securing funding for both our current and future services. Furthermore, it allows us to advocate for expanded resources for the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population.

BAIHP staff provides a unique breadth of cultural insight to this community engagement effort. Our team offers diverse perspectives, deep lived experiences, and professional expertise that reflect the very demographics we serve. Together, we foster a welcoming environment where every community member feels valued, seen, and heard.

What is Wellbriety?

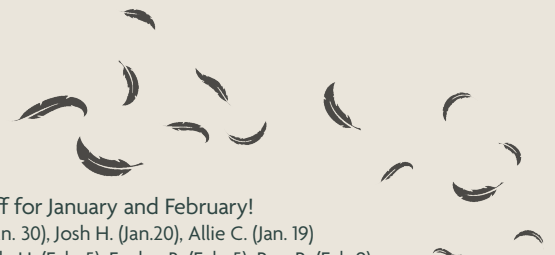
Wellbriety is a holistic, Indigenous-rooted recovery movement combining sobriety with emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness, fostering community healing.



The approach uses traditional Native American practices like the Medicine Wheel and sharing circles to address intergenerational trauma, emphasizing that recovery is a holistic pursuit of a balanced life, not just substance abstinence.



January Birthdays



Happy Birthday to BAIHP Staff for January and February!
 Pictured (Left to right): Javier H. (Jan. 30), Josh H. (Jan.20), Allie C. (Jan. 19)
 Upcoming: Amit S. (Feb. 1), Gabrielle H. (Feb. 5), Evelyn B. (Feb. 5), Ron R. (Feb 9)

