



April 2026

BAKERSFIELD AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

Culture as Medicine: Expanding Our Traditional Healing Services at BAIHP

We are thrilled to announce a major milestone in our mission to provide holistic, culturally rooted care to the Kern County community. Through the leadership of CEO Angel Galvez, BAIHP has become the first Urban Indian Health Program in California to secure Medi-Cal reimbursement for traditional healing services like sweat ceremonies and prayer songs.

This breakthrough ensures that our foundational practices—spiritual, mental, and physical—now have the stable, long-term support they deserve within a clinical framework.

By integrating the wisdom of the medicine wheel into our primary care, we continue to bridge health disparities and honor the diverse traditions of the families we serve.

Turn to page two for an exclusive interview on how we are paving the way for traditional medicine across the state.

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Top News

On April 14, BAIHP stood alongside community partners and government agencies at the Kern County Board of Supervisors meeting to support the proclamation of April 2026 as Second Chance Month in Kern County.

BAIHP Updates

On April 18, BAIHP hosted its 2026 Spring Gathering at Bakersfield College's Renegade Event Center, bringing the community together for a day of culture, connection, and resources. See page 3 for highlights.



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Indian Health Project

Our Feathers Soaring Higher

www.BakersfieldAIHP.org

Culture as Medicine: CEO Angel Galvez Interview

Q 1: How are traditional services adapted to respect diverse tribal beliefs and practices?

BAIHP supports traditional health services, like sweat ceremonies and prayer songs, that are socially accepted by the majority of indigenous peoples. We also consult with local tribal leaders to ensure specific regional practices are performed with proper permission and respect for local traditions.

Q 2: What was the biggest challenge in securing reimbursement for services?

The biggest challenge was translating Traditional Healer and Natural Helper services into a structure that aligns with Medi-Cal's reimbursable service requirements. While the Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN) outlines that Traditional Healer services may include interventions such as ceremonies and herbal practices, and that Natural Helper services may provide navigation support, psychosocial skill building, self-management, and trauma support, there was limited practical guidance on how to operationalize and document these services within a clinical billing framework.



Q 3: Will the reimbursement process be similar for other California-based Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs)?

Reimbursement requirements for Indian Health programs in California vary significantly between counties, largely depending on whether a county has opted into Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) services. While many counties follow a similar administrative structure involving formal contracting, some may reimburse services without a contract, whereas others require negotiated rates. We were the first Urban Indian Health Program in California to establish this reimbursement process and shared our contracting template with other counties to serve as a model.

Q 4: Is there anything you would like to cover regarding traditional healing?

For years, our clinic in Kern County has integrated traditional Native American healing practices—including sweat lodges, talking circles, and spiritual prayer—as a foundational part of our community care. These services are vital for reducing health disparities and sustaining our cultural traditions, and we remain committed to uplifting these practices for our children and families. As we look to the future, the introduction of reimbursement for Traditional Healer and Natural Helper services under Medi-Cal offers an exciting opportunity to provide stable, long-term support for the traditional healing services that have always been at the heart of our mission.

Q 5: How can an integrated healthcare system better adopt a holistic approach?

Drawing on the intertribal wisdom of the medicine wheel, an integrated healthcare system should treat the whole person—addressing spiritual, mental, and physical needs simultaneously to foster complete healing.

Regalia Class

Q 1: Who can participate in the Regalia class?

The class is open to anyone ages 14 and up.

Q 2: What specific projects does the class offer?

The Regalia class offers a diverse range of hands-on projects designed to teach traditional sewing and crafting techniques. Participants have the opportunity to create traditional items such as ribbon skirts and ribbon shirts, as well as shawls and medicine bags crafted from various fabrics. Additionally, the curriculum includes footwear construction, specifically the making of moccasins (cloth), providing a comprehensive experience in creating a full set of regalia.

Q 3: Do class participants need to bring any tools or materials?

No, we have a variety of fabrics and materials, sewing machines, scissors and anything else you need to make and finish your project.

If someone has a project that they started at home or elsewhere, they are welcome to bring it.

Q 4: Is the current class suitable for beginners?

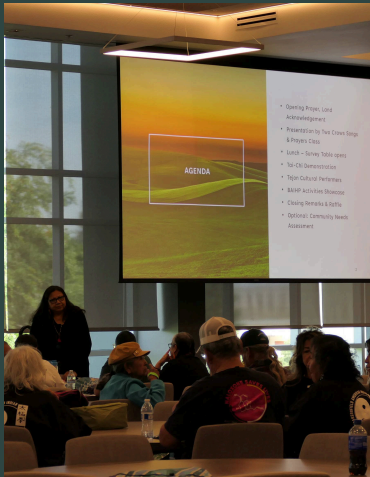
Absolutely! This class is specifically designed to be inclusive of all skill levels, especially absolute beginners. We understand that starting a new craft can feel overwhelming, so we provide step-by-step guidance through every phase of your project. From selecting fabrics to the final stitch, our instruction offers individual assistance and demonstrations, ensuring you feel confident and supported as you create your regalia.

Q 5: How can someone join a class?

Joining a class is straightforward: just show up and check in with the front desk receptionist. They will then walk you to the class. Classes are held on Tuesdays from 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM.



Spring Gathering 2026: Celebrating Culture, Community, and Renewal



BAIHP hosted its 2026 Spring Gathering on April 18 at Bakersfield College's Renegade Event Center, welcoming community members, partners, and vendors for a day of culture and connection. Throughout the day, participants enjoyed cultural expressions including a Tai Chi demonstration and performances by the Tejon Cultural Performers. The gathering celebrated Indigenous traditions through dancing, singing, and honoring Native ancestors, reflecting the season's themes of renewal and resilience.

Guests also explored the BAIHP Activities Showcase and connected with health care exhibitors and community partners. A lunch period provided time for connection, while a survey table and optional Community Needs Assessment encouraged attendees to share input on future programs and services. The event, which had 287 attendees, emphasized the importance of preserving cultural values while supporting the health and well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The day concluded with closing remarks and a raffle, leaving attendees with a strong sense of community and shared purpose.



Attendees explore booths showcasing services and community resources.



BAIHP staff take a brief moment from their work to share a smile.



A group of attendees pauses to pose and enjoy the moment together.



A cultural performer presents a traditional Native dance.



Performers share insights into Native regalia and dance traditions.



A dancer delivers a powerful performance on stage.



Attendees take a break and gather for a cheerful photo.



Tai Chi participants showcase their skills in a live demonstration.



Guests listen as the day's agenda is presented.

Tübatulabal's Annual Honoring of Our Ancestors

On Saturday, April 18, 2026, BAIHP staff attended the Tübatulabal's Annual Honoring Our Ancestors event at Kwolokam, along with over 100 attendees, in Weldon, California.

The event honors Tübatulabal ancestors, with special remembrance for those who lost their lives in the Keyesville Massacre (April 19, 1863), also known within the community as the Tillie Creek Massacre.

The Keyesville Massacre occurred near Tillie Creek along the Kern River and represents a tragic and painful chapter in California's history, during which members of the Tübatulabal Tribe were killed in an act of violence.

The attack involved soldiers from the 2nd Volunteer Battalion out of Fort Babbitt in Visalia, along with local settler militias and armed civilians operating in the area during the Civil War period.

This violence occurred within a broader context of increasing settler expansion during the Gold Rush era, when Native



lands were rapidly encroached upon for mining, ranching, and settlement.

Competition over land and resources, combined with federal and local policies that supported the displacement of Native peoples, contributed to ongoing conflict in the region.

In this climate, Native presence was often treated as a threat, and violent campaigns against Indigenous communities were frequently carried out under the justification of retaliation or maintaining "order."

Honoring Our Ancestors provides an opportunity to pause and reflect,

remembering those who lost their lives, the families who endured profound loss, and the generations who continue to carry their memory forward.

The gathering recognizes the strength and resilience of the Tübatulabal people, whose cultural traditions, deep connection to the land, and community endure despite this history. It also reaffirms a commitment to truth, healing, and respect for Native communities.

This remembrance serves not only as a reflection of the past, but as a call to support cultural preservation, community wellness, and a more just future.

Through the sharing of culture and stories, the voices of the ancestors are honored and kept alive.

The event included storytelling, traditional Native crafts, traditional plants and medicines, dance, children's activities, and food, bringing the community together in a meaningful expression of remembrance, healing, and cultural continuity.

Sexual Assault Awareness

Q 1: Why is it important to recognize Sexual Assault Awareness Month?

It raises awareness, encourages open conversations, and helps reduce stigma. It's also a time to highlight prevention efforts and remind people that support and resources are available.

Q 2: What are some common myths or misunderstandings about sexual assault?

Some people believe it only happens between strangers or that victims are to blame for what they were wearing or doing. In reality, sexual assault can happen to anyone and is not the victim's fault.

Q 3: What does consent look like in everyday situations?

Consent is clear, voluntary, and an ongoing agreement between people. It should be freely given, informed, and can be withdrawn at any time—silence or lack of resistance is not consent. True consent is based on mutual respect rather than pressure or obligation.

Q 4: How can people support survivors in a respectful and helpful way?

Listen without judgment, believe them, and respect their choices. Avoid pressuring them to share details or take specific actions, and encourage them to seek support if they're open to it.

Q 5: What resources are available for someone seeking help or more information?

Resources include confidential hotlines, local support organizations, counseling services, and educational websites. Many communities also have crisis centers that provide free and immediate assistance.

Q 6: What are some ways to take action and promote prevention in your community?

You can help by sharing accurate resources and participating in awareness events like Wear Teal Day.



For confidential, 24/7 support, contact the StrongHearts Native Helpline at **1-844-762-8483**.

Art Class: Traditional Native Art Projects



Our art class offers a variety of fun projects. We are currently painting birdhouses using Native art stencils or freehand designs. We also work on canvases, summertime fans, and coffee mugs, with a primary focus on traditional Native American canvas art.

All materials are provided to participants. However, if you have specific supplies or a personal project you would like to work on, you are welcome to bring them.

Most participants hear about us through word-of-mouth or from BAIHP staff, who provide updates and announcements during our other programs and classes.

We love seeing new faces. We frequently have new people join, and our regular attendees often bring family members along. The class is always open to beginners who are eager to explore their creativity for the first time.

National Second Chance Month

On Tuesday, April 14, BAIHP joined community partners and government agencies at the Kern County Board of Supervisors meeting in support of proclaiming April 2026 as Second Chance Month in Kern County.

BAIHP stood alongside representatives from C.H.A.N.G.E.S., the Law Offices of Torres Torres-Stallings, Kern County Probation's APEX Facility, the Bakersfield Police Department, Kingdom Men of Action, and the City of Bakersfield's Office of Violence Intervention to uplift a shared message: people are more than the worst mistake they have made.

This recognition is more than symbolic—it reflects a collective commitment to dignity, healing, and opportunity. Every individual deserves the chance to rebuild their life with support and hope.

In our community, we see the real barriers individuals face when returning home from incarceration—challenges with housing, employment, healthcare, and a true sense of belonging. For many, especially Native Americans and other underserved populations, these barriers are compounded by historical trauma, systemic inequities, and a lack of culturally responsive services.



Second Chance Month reminds us that successful reentry is not just an individual responsibility—it is a shared community responsibility. When we invest in people—through stable housing, behavioral health support, and pathways to employment—we strengthen families and create safer, healthier communities for all.

At BAIHP, we remain committed to walking alongside individuals on their reentry journey, offering culturally grounded, trauma-informed care.

Tai-Chi Class

While Tai-Chi is suitable for everyone, this class is particularly beneficial for those looking to enhance their balance and mobility, maintain mental and physical activity, sharpen their focus, and alleviate stress.

Generally, it is a practice that tends to be especially popular among older adults.

While the primary focus of this class is on improving balance and preventing falls, we achieve these goals through traditional martial arts movements. These techniques are practiced individually, using slow and gentle motions performed in the air.

Participants should wear comfortable exercise or gym clothing. Standard athletic or walking shoes are perfectly fine, though some prefer to practice barefoot (which is optional). Bringing a bottle of water is also highly recommended!

Even though some current students have a fair amount of experience, the class is slow-paced and perfect for beginners. Individualized attention is provided to every student to ensure they are learning at a pace that works for them.

If you're interested in starting Tai Chi, simply reach out to the BAIHP staff to get started. Classes are held on Tuesdays from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Q 1: What are the core "Protective Factors" that help keep families strong and children safe?

Strong protective factors include nurturing and secure parent-child relationships, clear communication, knowledge of child development, healthy coping skills, and access to social support.

Communities that offer stable housing, education, and family resources also help reduce stress and strengthen family resilience.

Q 2: What are common behavioral or physical "red flags" that community members should be aware of?

Red flags can include sudden changes in behavior, withdrawal, anxiety, aggression, age-inappropriate sexual knowledge, or fear of certain people or places.

Physical signs might include unexplained injuries, difficulty walking or sitting, or frequent complaints of pain. While these signs don't always indicate abuse, they warrant attention and care.



Q 3: How can parents start age-appropriate conversations with their children about body safety?

Parents can use simple, clear language to teach children the names of body parts, the concept of private areas, and the difference between safe and unsafe touch.

Encouraging children to trust their feelings, say "no," and talk to a trusted adult helps build confidence and awareness.

It's also helpful to integrate these lessons into everyday routines. By creating an open, shame-free environment, you ensure they feel safe coming to you with any questions or concerns.

Q 4: What are the most important "do's and don'ts" for an adult if a child discloses they have been harmed?

Do stay calm, listen carefully, believe the child, and reassure them they did the right thing by telling.

Do report the concern to appropriate authorities. Don't express shock or anger in a way that might scare the child, don't ask leading questions, and don't promise to keep secrets.

Q 5: What resources are available for families who feel overwhelmed and need support before a crisis occurs?

Families can access parenting classes, counseling services, community support groups, school-based resources, and local family service organizations.

Helplines, faith-based groups, and nonprofit agencies also provide guidance, education, and early support to help prevent crises. Many organizations offer respite care and home-visiting programs to provide parents with temporary relief and personalized coaching.

Understanding Autism: Needs & Support

Common misconceptions about autism:

One of the biggest misconceptions is that autism looks the same in everyone, when in reality it exists on a wide spectrum with very different communication styles, sensory needs, and levels of support. Another common myth is that autistic individuals lack empathy, when often the difference lies in how they express or process emotions rather than whether they feel them.

Making spaces more sensory-friendly:

Creating a sensory-friendly space often starts with reducing overwhelming input and offering flexibility. This can include using softer, adjustable lighting and minimizing visual clutter and sounds to create a calmer environment.

Consistency in layout and routine can make a big difference, and simple visual supports such as labels or schedules can add predictability. Incorporating different types of seating and allowing movement breaks can also help individuals.

Helpful resources after diagnosis:

After a diagnosis, families often benefit most from a combination of professional support and accessible information.

Building a care team that may include a developmental pediatrician, speech and language therapist, and occupational therapist can provide a strong foundation.

Local resources such as the Kern Regional Center can help families access early intervention services, eligibility assessments, and long-term support planning.

Families can begin by requesting an intake appointment; once eligibility is established, a service coordinator will guide them through available services and next steps. To get started, call 661-327-8531.





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2026 Event Calendar

Spring Gathering – Bakersfield College, 1801 Panorama Dr., Renegade Event Center
April 18, 2026 | Saturday 10 AM - 3:30 PM [Health Care exhibitors, partners, and cultural vendors welcome]

This event is a celebration in which Indigenous peoples gather for the purpose of expressing their religious freedoms such as traditional drumming, dancing, singing, and honoring the history of our Native ancestors. Spring represents a time of rebirth and resiliency. This gathering allows for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN), Indigenous peoples, and their families to gather and celebrate sacred practices of culture, traditions, values, and rituals while enjoying a health fair of BAIHP's programs and partners. This event also conducts an annual community assessment to discuss current and future program planning and tailor its services to community needs.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month – Location TBD
May 29, 2026 | Time TBD

May marks National Mental Health Awareness Month. BAIHP hosts a community event to bring awareness of resources available to AI/AN communities in Kern County. The lack of access to transportation, distance from facilities, poverty, and stigma all impact the well-being of our community's ability to get mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services. At this one-day event, participants will hear about the stories of hope, resilience, and sacredness by those who have achieved wellness and recovery and sober living. Indigenous Wellness Center group programs and services highlights and updates.

Bright Future Big Careers – 501 40th St, Bakersfield, CA (Location subject to change)
August 1, 2026 | Saturday 11 AM – 2 PM [AI/AN organizations and stakeholders welcome]

August is National Back-to-School Month. The event provides our AI/AN school-enrolled children, youth, and young adults with educational materials. This event will also provide supportive educational and behavioral health services offered by BAIHP and its collaborative partners. BAIHP will offer backpack giveaways filled with prevention materials and educational resources on bullying, tobacco, drugs, substance use prevention, and sexual transmitted diseases prevention. Lastly, we will provide sport physicals and vaccines to help students succeed and achieve in school and at home. This cultural-based outreach invites AI/AN organizations to join and serve the community to offer resources.

Kern River Valley, Lake Isabella TBD

Gathering of Native Americans (G.O.N.A) – 501 40th St, Bakersfield, CA (Location subject to change)
October 17, 2026 | Saturday 11 AM – 6:30 PM [Exhibitors and partners welcome. NO VENDORS]

This event will focus on four themes which incorporate the values of human growth and responsibility: belonging, mastery, interdependence, and generosity. Our goals for the GONA are to provide AI/AN communities with a framework to examine historical trauma and its effect on mental and substance use disorders, suicide, the promotion of mental health, reinforce cultural continuity with families living on tribal reservations, in urban or rural areas, and in Alaska Native villages, provide an integrative experience that offers hope, encouragement, a positive foundation for action and healing, and increase protective factors linked to the health and safe development of AI/AN children and their families.

Veteran's Parade – Downtown Bakersfield
November 11, 2026 | Wednesday 7:30 AM – 2 PM (Date subject to change)

The annual Veterans Day Parade takes place on Tuesday during the Veteran's holiday. We celebrate, honor, and thank those who fought and served for our freedom. The streets in Downtown Bakersfield close off starting at 6:30 AM to allow the parade to take place till approximately 2:00 PM. The parade is set to begin at 10:00 AM.

Native American Heritage Month – California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB)
November 21, 2026 | Saturday 10 AM – 3 PM [AI/AN exhibitors, Funding Partners welcomed]

This month is a time to celebrate the rich and diverse culture, tradition, and histories of AI/AN peoples. During this event we acknowledge the important contributions of Native and Indigenous peoples in Kern County through our Warrior Award recipient. Native American Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the public about tribes, pueblos, and rancherias, to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges faced both historically and in the present time, and the ways in which tribal nations have worked to conquer these challenges and to live well and vibrant lives.

For more information, please email us at BAIHPcommunity@BakersfieldAIHP.org or call us at 661-327-4030

Avocado Strawberry Salad



Ingredients

1. Ripe avocado (preferably Hass variety, peeled, pitted, and cut into chunks) - **1**
2. Juice of a lemon or lime - **1**
3. Strawberries (hulled and cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices) - **1 cup**
4. Olive oil - **1 tbsp**
5. Raspberry vinegar - **2 tbsp**
6. Honey - **2 tsp**
7. Salt, to taste - **1**
8. Freshly ground black pepper, to taste - **1**
9. Arugula (bite sized) - **2 cup**
10. Toasted pine nuts - **2 tbsp**

Author: American Diabetes Association
 Prep Time: 15 min.
 Cook Time: 0 min.
 Servings: 4 (1/4 recipe)

Directions

1. Combine avocado with lemon juice in a nonreactive large bowl.
2. Add berries, oil, vinegar, honey, salt, and pepper and combine well.
3. Serve over a bed of arugula or watercress on each of the four plates.
4. Garnish with pine nuts.



Employee Spotlight

This month, we recognize Lawrence Salcido, Community Outreach Specialist, as our semi-annual Star Award recipient—a symbol of excellence and achievement. Lawrence exemplifies



BAIHP's values through both visible initiatives and critical work behind the scenes. His professionalism, humility, and dedication strengthen our organization and expand our impact in the community. We congratulate Lawrence on his well-deserved achievement.



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Parenting Class

The Parenting Class is a referral-based course, often accessed through courts or service providers, and is open to parents, caregivers, and guardians looking to strengthen their parenting skills. This is a court-approved, 26-week curriculum that focuses on positive parenting, understanding neglect, child development, appropriate discipline, and building healthy parent-child relationships. The class also supports participants in developing safe and stable home environments. Participants are encouraged to come with an open mindset and be ready to engage. Thinking about current parenting challenges ahead of time can help them get the most out of the class.

Participants gain practical parenting tools, increased confidence, and a better understanding of their child's needs. The class helps strengthen family relationships and supports long-term stability. It also incorporates cultural values by reinforcing the importance of family, respect, and community, helping participants reconnect with cultural teachings and traditions that guide parenting in a meaningful way. This adds another layer of support, allowing families to build not just skills, but a stronger sense of identity and connection in how they raise their children.

At this time, enrollment is typically referral-based. Individuals can connect with a Family Advocate to learn more or begin the referral process. In the future, classes may also be available for community members who simply want to enhance their parenting skills. If you are interested in the Parenting Class, you can reach Evelyn Ballengee, Family Advocate at BAIHP, by calling or texting 661-501-3911, or by emailing eballengue@bakersfieldaihp.org.

Family Advocate Services

Family Advocate Services are available to Native individuals and families, including parents, caregivers, and youth who are seeking support with health, behavioral health, or social service needs.

Services include care coordination, referrals to medical and behavioral health providers, assistance with housing and basic needs, advocacy in systems like CPS or court, and support through Enhanced Care Management (ECM). A big part of our role also involves ICWA-related advocacy when working with Native families. This includes making sure the Indian Child Welfare Act is being followed, supporting placement preferences to keep children with relatives or within their tribe, coordinating with tribal representatives, and making sure families stay connected to their culture.

Services are grounded in cultural respect and intentionally center Native traditions, teachings, and community values in the work. This includes connecting families to cultural classes, ceremonies, and community resources that support identity and healing. As Family Advocates, we also make sure services are culturally appropriate by collaborating with tribal representatives, honoring family and kinship systems, and supporting ICWA practices that keep children connected to their tribe and extended family.

We make sure families feel seen, respected, and supported in a way that aligns with who they are and where they come from, while strengthening cultural identity as part of the healing process.



Happy Birthday to BAIHP Staff for April!

Nicole Minton (April 3), Ruby Guzman (April 6), Celina Priestley (April 7), Carlos Cortez (April 22), Venessa Griffin (April 23), Martha Cervantes (April 29), ShaMekka Ludd (April 29)

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