



September 2026

BAKERSFIELD AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH PROJECT NEWSLETTER

A Month of Community, Culture & Wellness

BAIHP continues to strengthen connections across our community through culturally responsive health, wellness, and family-focused programs. Our Doulas are advancing their training through our partnership with Three Moons Doula Collective, while Ms. Tara Gray represented BAIHP at the California Tribal Epidemiology Center's Tribal Public Health Conference, sharing important information on maternal health.

New and ongoing programs, including Bingo Fit, cultural workshops, talking circles, Tai Chi, art, beading, youth activities, traditional gardening, and Wellbriety, continue to provide meaningful opportunities for community connection and wellness.

BAIHP also remains committed to helping community members access medical care and health resources, while welcoming Marisa Torres-Ruiz as our new Senior Manager of Health Services. We are thankful to our staff, partners, instructors, community members, and Board of Directors for helping advance our mission and support the health and well-being of our community.



Top News

BAIHP will soon be offering Doula care to pregnant and postpartum community members, alongside our Indigenous Community Doula Program, which trains community members to become Doulas.

BAIHP Updates

Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for most people six months of age and older. BAIHP will have a limited supply of influenza vaccine, Pneumovax 23 (PPSV23), and Tdap vaccine.



Bakersfield American
B·A·I·H·P
Indian Health Project

Our Feathers Soaring Higher
www.BakersfieldAIHP.org

CEO Update: Celebrating Health, Culture & Community

It has been a great month of community, culture, wellness, and connection at BAIHP. We are proud to highlight some of the people and programs helping to make a difference.

Celebrating Maternal Health

Congratulations to our BAIHP Doulas who are continuing their training through our partnership with Three Moons Doula Collective. This partnership helps strengthen culturally responsive maternal health support for Native mothers and families.

We also want to recognize Ms. Tara Gray for representing BAIHP at the California Tribal Epidemiology Center's Tribal Public Health Conference in August. Tara presented on maternal health and helped bring attention to maternal and child health within Native communities.

Wellness & Community

August marked the launch of our Bingo Fit program, bringing together movement, wellness, and fun for our community.



We also partnered with the Kern County Department of Aging and Adult Services for a fresh food and healthy eating presentation for older adults, including information and resources to support healthier food choices.

Throughout the month, community members participated in cultural workshops, talking circles, Tai Chi, art, beading, youth activities, traditional gardening, Wellbriety, and more.

Medical Support & Referrals

BAIHP continues to help community members connect with medical care and health resources.

As a referral-based medical program, our team works with patients to identify appropriate services, connect with providers, and help navigate available resources.

Thank You, Community

Thank you to our staff, instructors, partners, community members, and Board of Directors who all continue to participate and support BAIHP programs.

We look forward to another great month of health, culture, family, and community in October.



BAIHP and TFK Advocate for Healthier Bakersfield Communities

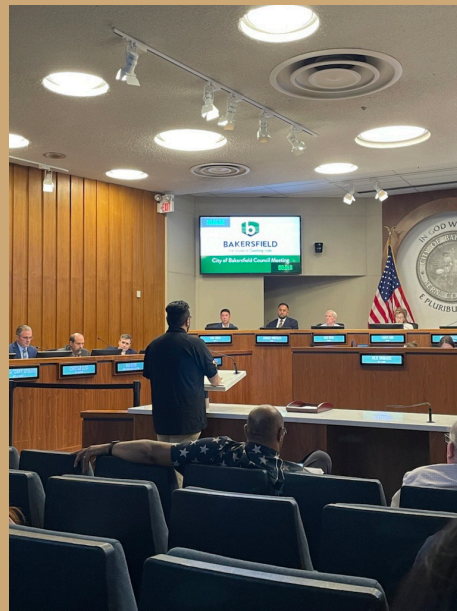
On August 26th, BAIHP attended the Bakersfield City Council meeting with our partners from Tobacco Free Coalition of Kern (TFK).

Together, we've been working to educate the public on the health impacts of commercial tobacco by supporting different policy efforts.

Specifically, BAIHP has been involved in educating other organizations about the difference between commercial and traditional tobacco.

Where commercial tobacco produces smoke that harms others personally and secondhand, traditional tobacco is considered one of our sacred medicines that is often used as medicine, as a gift, or in ceremony.

This distinction is especially important when developing policies that impact Tribal communities and cultural practices.



By sharing this information, BAIHP hopes to ensure that traditional tobacco use is respected and not unintentionally impacted by commercial tobacco regulations. Our continued partnership with TFK allows us to

advocate for healthier communities while also honoring and protecting traditional practices.

At the City Council meeting, many members of TFK were in attendance with five members who spoke to support the amendment to the Bakersfield parks policy to include sections for prohibited smoking areas.

BAIHP Community Outreach Specialist, Lawrence Salcido Jr., spoke on the proposal by educating city council and staff about the differences between commercial and traditional tobacco, and emphasizing the importance of visible signage.

Councilmember Eric Arias thanked TFK for our efforts in promoting healthier communities. The policy passed with five yes votes out of six.

We look forward to the second hearing on the policy and will be in attendance again to support our partners at TFK.

Understanding AIAN History and Healthcare Needs



On August 20th, BAIHP Cultural Coordinator Cheyenne Bond presented to the Bakersfield Behavioral Healthcare Hospital on the unique needs of the AIAN community in healthcare spaces.

To begin, she shared some of the historical context about how Native peoples were taken from their land and forced into Indian Boarding Schools or, within California, the Missions.

This context has impacted how our people view aspects of healthcare and the amount of trust that is placed in those systems. Understanding this history is an important step toward building stronger relationships and creating more culturally responsive healthcare experiences for AIAN communities.

We thank Bakersfield Behavioral Healthcare Hospital for their commitment to learning more about the unique needs and history of our people.

Doula Services Offered at BAIHP

We're excited to announce our Doula Services!

BAIHP will soon be offering Doula care to pregnant and postpartum community members, alongside our Indigenous Community Doula Program, which trains community members to become Doulas.

Read on to learn what Doula support looks like, how it's for, and how to connect with a Doula.

What is a Doula?

A Doula offers emotional, physical, and educational support before, during, and after birth, helping build a safe and confident birth experience.

Research shows continuous Doula support is linked to lower use of pain medication, fewer cesarean births, and more positive birth experiences overall.

Doulas complement medical care, and don't replace partners or medical providers.

What kind of support do Doulas provide?

- Before birth: education and birth planning, plus comfort techniques like breathing exercises and labor positions.



Tara Gray presents on BAIHP's Indigenous Doula Initiative and the transformative role of culturally rooted birth support in strengthening Indigenous families, honoring traditional knowledge, and advancing community-led approaches to maternal and family wellness across Indian Country.

- During birth: continuous presence and advocacy, helping you move through contractions.
- Helping you with communicating preferences to hospital staff, and offering hands-on comfort measures like massage or a birth ball.
- After birth: home visits to check in on you and your baby, feeding support, and newborn care guidance.

Doula support isn't only for vaginal, unmedicated births. Our Doulas also provide care and comfort for c-section births.

Who can access Doula care?

Pregnant or postpartum (up to one year) clients who are eligible for BAIHP medical services and establish as a BAIHP client can request a Doula.

About our Doulas

We're also assisting 12 community members to become fully trained, Medi-Cal certified Doulas through a fully funded scholarship, growing a Doula workforce rooted in our own community and culturally competent care. Our scholarship is currently closed.

How can I learn more or get connected?

If you're pregnant or postpartum and interested in Doula support, reach out to BAIHP directly to learn more about available services. Our team will follow up with the next steps.

Welcoming Our Senior Manager of Health Services



Marisa Torres-Ruiz is one of BAIHP's newest employees. Local to Bakersfield, she brings a background in public health, community-based programs, and a lifelong appreciation for the places and people that shape health. She attended school on the East Coast, earning her Master of Public Health from George Washington University, and later completed her PhD in Public Health through the San Diego State University/University of California San Diego Joint Doctoral Program. Along the way, she had the opportunity to work in Washington, D.C., including at the central office of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and other federally funded organizations.

D.C. holds a special place in her heart: the Jefferson Memorial is her favorite monument and it is where her husband proposed to her on its steps. Before joining BAIHP, Marisa worked with the Institute of Behavioral and Community Health at San Diego State University, where she helped implement and sustain programs focused on reducing health disparities and improving long-term health outcomes in underserved communities. Her work has centered on health behaviors, public policy, and community-based health interventions.

Bingo Fit and Nutrition Classes

Bakersfield American Indian Health Project continues to expand opportunities for community members to improve their health through programs supported by the Special Diabetes Program for Indians. Two programs currently seeing great participation are Bingo-Fit and Nutrition Cooking Class, each with its own focus and purpose.

These programs are designed to meet community members where they are and encourage everyone to take steps toward better health at their own pace. They also provide opportunities to build connections with others while learning skills that can be used at home and in everyday life.

Bingo-Fit focuses primarily on health, physical activity, and mobility in a fun and welcoming environment. Participants engage in simple, accessible movements and exercises while enjoying the familiar game of bingo.

The goal is to encourage movement, maintain mobility, and make physical activity enjoyable and social for participants of varying abilities and fitness levels. By combining movement with a familiar and enjoyable activity, Bingo-Fit helps take some of the pressure out of exercise and creates a positive experience for everyone in the class.



Nutrition Class, supported by the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI), focuses on diabetes prevention and management through nutrition education. Classes provide practical information about blood sugar, balanced meals, and making healthier food choices while incorporating culturally appropriate foods and traditional food practices whenever possible.

Participants are encouraged to ask questions, share their experiences, and discover simple ways to make healthier choices that work for their families and lifestyles.

The response from the community has been especially encouraging. Our Monday nutrition class experienced strong turnout, leading us to add an additional Tuesday class so that participants have an opportunity to attend.

The continued participation and enthusiasm we see each week demonstrate the importance of creating health programs that are accessible, meaningful, and connected to the community. It has been wonderful to see community members return each week and encourage one another.

Health is more than numbers, appointments, or making the “perfect” choices—it’s about taking the small steps that can make a big difference over time. These programs are meant to create a welcoming space where our community can learn, move, share, laugh, and support one another along the way.

Whether you come to try a new recipe, learn about managing diabetes, or get moving with Bingo-Fit, we have a place for you. We hope to continue making health something that feels positive, achievable, and connected to the strength of our community. Come join us—we’d love to see you!

*Content provided by Kellie Rodriguez,
Health Educator*

Current Job Openings at BAIHP



The following are the current job openings at BAIHP. For more information about these positions, please visit the BAIHP Careers page at bakersfieldaihp.org/careers/.

- **Executive Assistant** (Administration Department, Full-time in Bakersfield)
- **Finance Assistant 1** (Finance Department, Full-time in Bakersfield)
- **Public Health Nurse** (Medical Department, Full-time in Bakersfield)
- **Director of Behavioral Health** (Behavioral Health Department, Full-time in Bakersfield)

Those who are interested in applying and meet the minimum requirements for a position can apply through our company website.

The Story Behind BAIHP's New Mural

The new mural on the Bakersfield American Indian Health Project (BAIHP) building was inspired by BAIHP's and the Native community's desire to celebrate and share our Indigenous culture, heritage, and traditions through art. We wanted the mural to provide our community and visitors with a meaningful visual representation of who we are. The different scenes reflect both our past and our present, honoring the traditions, people, and cultural practices that continue to shape our community today.

The mural was created by artist Alex G., who works closely with the Arts Council of Kern and has extensive experience creating murals, along with an impressive artistic portfolio. The overall design was a collaborative effort involving many members of the BAIHP community. Native elders from the BAIHP art group, former BAIHP CEO Angel Galvez, and members of our Board of Directors all participated in the planning process and provided input and ideas that helped shape the final design.

The mural incorporates a variety of cultural elements that have significance within Native and Indigenous communities. These include the hawk, which is viewed as a spiritual animal; sage and other plants that reflect the importance of the natural world; drums and baskets that



represent cultural traditions and practices; and the river and water, which are important elements of life and the environment. The mural also features a Native dancer wearing feathers and traditional regalia, highlighting the importance of cultural expression, ceremony, and the continuation of Indigenous traditions.

Tribal elders and members of the Native community were involved throughout the mural creation process and shared their ideas and perspectives. Their participation helped guide the design and ensured that the cultural elements represented in the mural were meaningful, respectful, and reflective of our community and Indigenous heritage.

The mural reflects the mission and values of BAIHP by celebrating the culture,

identity, and strength of the Native communities we serve.

It recognizes the importance of honoring our elders and traditions while also looking toward the future. By bringing these cultural images into a public space, the mural helps create a welcoming environment where Native people can see their history and traditions represented and where others can learn about and appreciate Indigenous culture. It also reflects BAIHP's commitment to community, cultural connection, education, and the well-being of future generations.

One of the most meaningful scenes is the image of an elder playing the drum and singing. This particular elder passed away this year and was deeply involved in the Native community.

We hope community members and visitors see the mural as a beautiful reminder of who we are as Indigenous people, where we come from, and how far we have come. We also hope it inspires a sense of pride in our culture and reminds us of the importance of passing on our traditions, stories, and knowledge.

Honoring Our Ancestors Pow Wow Celebrating Native American Culture and Tradition



The Honoring Our Ancestors Pow Wow will be held September 26–27 at California State University Bakersfield, 9001 Stockdale Hwy, on the Don Hart East Lawn.

This free event is open to the public and invites community members to come together to honor and celebrate Native American culture, traditions, and ancestors. Grand Entry will take place at noon on both days, featuring contest dancing and opportunities to experience the vibrant traditions of the Pow Wow.

Attendees can also enjoy a variety of food and craft booths throughout the event. Saturday's festivities will run from noon to 10 p.m., while Sunday's events will take place from noon to 6 p.m., with free parking available for guests. The Honoring Our Ancestors Pow Wow is an alcohol- and drug-free event, providing a welcoming environment for individuals and families of all ages.

Every Child Matters: Remembering Our Children, Honoring Their Stories

Every Child Matters is a reminder of something our communities have always known: our children are sacred. They carry our stories, our languages, our songs, our teachings, and the hopes of generations who came before them.

For Indigenous people, the words Every Child Matters carry a history that cannot be separated from the children who were taken from their families and communities through Indian boarding and residential school systems.

Beginning in the 19th century and continuing for generations, Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in schools designed to assimilate them into dominant American society.

Many were separated from their parents and siblings, punished for speaking their languages, discouraged or forbidden from practicing their cultures, and deprived of the connection to family and community that every child deserves.

Behind the history are individual children.

Children who missed their mothers.
Children who longed for home.
Children whose names, languages, and traditions were taken from them.
Children who never returned.



For many families, the effects of these experiences did not end when the schools closed. The loss of language, cultural knowledge, family connection, and traditional ways of parenting has continued across generations.

Yet alongside this painful history is a story of resilience. Our people survived. Our cultures survived. Our languages are being reclaimed. Our communities continue to teach our children who they are and where they come from.

This is why Every Child Matters is not simply a statement. It is a responsibility.

It means creating spaces where Indigenous children can grow up knowing that their identity is something to be proud of.

It means making sure children have access to healthcare, education, behavioral health services, and community resources that recognize their culture and their lived experiences.

It means creating opportunities for children to learn from Elders, hear their language, participate in traditions, and understand the stories of their ancestors.

Most importantly, it means listening.

When we listen to our children, we tell them their voices have value. When we protect their culture, we tell them their identity has value. When we support their families, we tell them they are not alone.

Our ancestors fought to ensure that we would still be here. Today, we have the responsibility to ensure that the generations coming after us have more than survival. They deserve to thrive.



Stay Protected This Flu Season: Vaccination Information for 2026-2027

For the 2026–2027 flu season, influenza activity typically begins increasing in October and often peaks between December and February. Flu vaccination is recommended for most people 6 months and older, with September and October being preferred times to get vaccinated, ideally by the end of October.

The flu can range from mild illness to serious complications and spreads mainly through respiratory droplets when an infected person

coughs, sneezes, or talks, as well as through close contact with others. Common symptoms may include fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache, and fatigue; some people may also experience vomiting or diarrhea.

Eligibility for these vaccines varies based on age, medical history, risk factors, and previous vaccinations.

To prepare for your vaccination appointment, an email with prescreening and consent forms will be sent to you. If you are not already in the BAIHP electronic health record (EHR), you will need to be added, and all required prescreening and consent forms should be completed before your scheduled appointment.

1. Tapered green or yellow fruit
2. Small, red fruits often in pairs
4. Red fruit with small seeds outside
5. Common fruit with a core and stem

Grilled Lime Chicken Salad Lettuce Wraps



Ingredients

1. Lime zest - **1 tbs.**
2. Lime juice - **1/3 cup**
3. Olive oil - **3 tbs.**
4. Garlic (minced) - **2 clove**
5. Ground cumin - **1 tsp.**
6. Paprika - **1 tsp.**
7. Kosher Salt - **1/4 tsp.**
8. Black pepper - **1/4 tsp.**
9. Boneless, skinless chicken breasts - **1 1/2 lbs.**
10. Cherry tomatoes (halved) - **1 cup.**
11. Cucumber(s) (diced) - **1 cup.**
12. Red onion (finely chopped) - **1/2 med.**
13. Fresh cilantro (chopped) - **1/4 cup**
14. Lettuce leaves (large, such as butter or iceberg) - **12 leaves**

Author: American Diabetes Association
Prep Time: 50 min.
Cook Time: 15 min.
Servings: 6

Directions

1. In a bowl, combine the lime zest, lime juice, olive oil, minced garlic, ground cumin, paprika, salt, and pepper to make the marinade.
2. Place the chicken breasts in a seal-able bag or shallow dish and pour half of the marinade over the chicken. Toss to fully coat. Marinate in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.
3. Preheat the grill or a grill pan over medium high heat.
4. Grill the marinated chicken breasts for about 6–8 minutes per side or until fully cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F.
5. Allow the chicken to rest for a few minutes before slicing it into strips.
6. In a bowl, combine cherry tomatoes, cucumber, red onion, and fresh cilantro.
7. Pour the remaining marinade over the vegetable mixture and toss gently.
8. Place two lettuce leaves on each plate.
9. Top with the vegetable salad mixture.

Employee Spotlight

Gabby Hudson was nominated for the STAR Award because of the leadership she has demonstrated since stepping into the ECM Lead role. She has done an exceptional job leading the team while



continuing to provide strong support to our clients. Gabby also played a key role in helping ECM successfully pass its recent audit. Her reliability, willingness to support others, and commitment to excellence have made a meaningful and positive impact on both the team and the clients we serve.



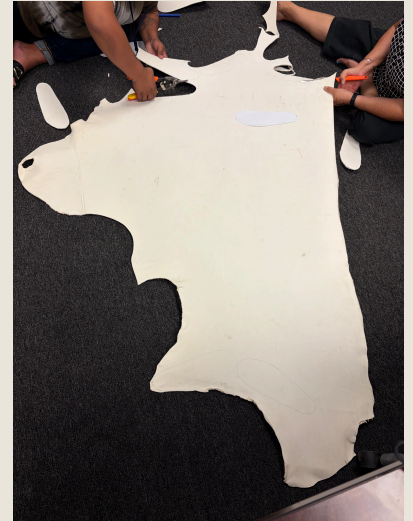
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Celebrating California Native American Day on September 25



A rattle design that was created by a participant in the Culture Workshop class.



Class participants cut out material to make moccasins during a Culture Workshop class.

California Native American Day, designated on the fourth Friday of September, honors the cultures, histories, contributions, triumphs, and struggles of California's Native peoples while encouraging accurate education and correcting misconceptions.

Assembly Constitutional Amendment 17 by Assemblymember Ramos recognized the importance of the annual California Indian Cultural Awareness Conference, which equips communities with resources about California Indian cultures, histories, and governance. Together, they promote cultural awareness, truth, healing, and collaboration with California's tribal nations.

BAIHP and other Urban Indian Organizations in California work diligently to meet the unique needs of California Native Americans and recognize that we also have a responsibility to those tribal members who live off their reservations anywhere in the United States and come to California.

As an inter-tribal health clinic, it's important for us to honor and respect the tribes whose land we work on, such as the Federally recognized Tejon Indian Tribe, and the Tubatulabal Tribe in the Kern River Valley.

This September 25th, on CA Native American Day, we invite you to take some time to learn more about the tribal people in your area!



Happy Birthday to BAIHP Staff for September!

Frankie Vivas (Sep. 10), Kellie Rodriguez (Sep. 10), Marena Perez (Sep. 11), Angela Dominguez (Sep. 20)

501 40th Street, Bakersfield, CA 93301
12308 Mountain Mesa Road, Lake Isabella, CA 93240



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