

# Seattle Indian Services Commission

## King County American Indian and Alaska Native Housing Needs Assessment



Prepared by: Zhen Han, Katelin Jones, Sam Guerrero, Kevin Klingbeil, Chelsea Sweeney, Harry Maher, Heather Bell



Seattle Indian Services Commission  
140 Lakeside Ave. Ste. A - #339  
Seattle, WA 98122-6538  
206.714.4234  
[www.seattleindianservices.org](http://www.seattleindianservices.org)

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# Executive Summary

Formed in 1972, the Seattle Indian Services Commission (SISC) is a public development corporation chartered by the City of Seattle to provide effective, comprehensive, and coordinated services, activities, and programs to expand housing, job and income opportunities; enhance recreational and cultural opportunities; and to improve the overall living conditions of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Seattle and King County.

Over the last several years, SISC has focused on enhancing its visibility and viability in order to better serve the Seattle and King County Native community. In response to this new direction and focus, SISC initiated the King County American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) Housing Needs Assessment in 2016 to fill gaps in data concerning the characteristics and needs of the Native population in King County and to support local programs serving King County's AIAN residents. The Muckleshoot Tribe provided the critical financial support necessary to implement this ambitious and timely project.

The assessment was also intended to support SISC's efforts to re-develop the Pearl Warren Building, located in the Beacon Hill Neighborhood of Seattle, into a large affordable housing complex for King County's AIAN population with onsite supportive services. SISC has envisioned that this new development would adopt a holistic model that addresses the housing, health, wellness, and educational needs of the AIAN population, including newborns, children, students, young adults, working adults, families, and elders.<sup>1</sup>

Through the assessment, it was SISC's intent to gather and report not only quantitative information, but also include a qualitative narrative that clearly paints a picture of the Native community in King County and its struggle for affordable housing. To that end, a three-pronged approach was used to carry out the study. First, an intercept survey was administered to collect information on the demographics, employment, income, and housing situation of Native people who lived or received services in King County, or who had left King County within the past five years. The survey also addressed the use of and need for supportive services. Second, interviews were conducted with three service providers and a Native woman who had recently found housing after being homeless for 15 years. Third, a focus group provided insight into the specific experiences of Native college students.

The following report presents the results of the King County AIAN Housing Needs Assessment. It illustrates the current housing needs of the Native community in King County, identifies housing and service-related barriers and gaps that must be addressed, and provides a selection of recommendations to consider.

## Key Results of the Survey

Number of respondents who met the screening criteria: 447

<sup>1</sup> Seattle Indian Service Commission Community Development Plan. Revitalizing a Native Village in the City of Seattle. April 2016.

## Overview of Respondents

- 65% of respondents identified as female; 5.6% chose non-traditional gender categories.
- Median age of respondents was 44; 92% were under 65 years of age.
- 65% of respondents were single.
- 33% said either they or their partners were the primary caretakers for children under 18
- 28% of respondents did not have a permanent residence.
- 60% of respondents who had a permanent residence were renters.
- 24% of respondents had a Bachelor's degree or higher.
- 21% of respondents reported that their families received no income at all.
- 12% of respondents indicated that either they or their partner had served in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard.

## Children and Families

- 22% of children included as part of the survey were under 5 years of age.
- 18% of caretakers reported caring for 4 or more children.
- Almost 30% of respondents who were primary caretakers had a relationship to the child other than parent, including grandparent, foster parent, aunt/uncle, family friend, and sibling/cousins.

## Health Services

- 25% of respondents cited access to better social or health services as one of the main reasons for moving to King County.
- Medical (55%) and dental (43%) were the most frequently cited services used at the time of the survey.
- The top four services that respondents said they needed but were not receiving were all health/wellness-related: cultural healing (28%); dental care (21%); counseling (19%); and medical care (14%).

## Housing Availability and Affordability

- 33% of respondents cited housing in particular and 37% cited affordability in general as the main reasons for moving away from King County.
- Of those who supplied both income and housing payment information, 50% (98 of 195) were housing cost-burdened (spent more than 30% of their income on rent or mortgage); 55% of renters (90 out of 164) were cost-burdened vs. 26% of homeowners (8 of 31).
- Finances were a top barrier to buying or renting homes. Respondents indicated that they didn't make enough money for rent/mortgage (63%), had no or poor credit (50%), or couldn't find affordable housing where they wanted to live (45%).
- 65% of respondents would be interested in living in low-income housing in King County.
- Given reported median household income, an affordable monthly housing payment would be approximately \$550 (30% of median household income).

## Education

- 26% of respondents had started, but had not completed, higher education.
- 64% of respondents were interested in pursuing additional education.

## Income and Employment

- Median household income was \$22,000.
- Those who had completed higher education earned a median salary that was \$36,800 higher than those who had not completed higher education (\$50,000 vs. \$13,200).
- Only 30% of respondents reported having permanent full-time jobs; 46% of partners were reported to have full-time employment.
- 19% of respondents reported being unemployed; individuals experiencing homelessness had unemployment rates of about 36%, while those with homes had unemployment rates of about 12%.

## Connecting Services and Potential Gaps/Needs

- 20% of respondents indicated that they were not receiving any services in King County.
- 32% of respondents indicated they did not need any additional services.

However, there may be potential gaps and needs that were not overtly expressed:

- About 12% of respondents indicated that either they or their partners are veterans, but only about 4% of respondents claimed that someone in their family received a veterans pension or benefits.
- 19% of respondents reported being unemployed, but only 2.5% reported receiving unemployment or worker's compensation.
- One-third (136) of respondents said they were taking care of children under 18, but comparatively few were making use of services for children and families.
- 37% of current students were not receiving financial aid.
- Of the 28% of respondents without permanent housing, 35% were living on the streets or in their cars and 26% were staying in shelters; concern for safety of self (50%) and belongings (37%) were the most commonly cited deterrents to staying in shelters.

## Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews

To gather information concerning Native students' experiences in finding and securing safe, comfortable and affordable housing in Seattle and the King County area, needs assessment coordinators conducted a focus group discussion with Native college students at wəłəbʔaltx™ (the Intellectual House) on the campus of the University of Washington.

Project coordinators also conducted key informant interviews with representatives from three local Native service providers in order to gain additional context concerning the challenges faced by the Native community in the King County area and related service gaps. Colleen Echohawk, Executive Director of the Chief Seattle Club, Toy Rodriguez, Homelessness

Prevention Program Manager at the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation (UIATF), and Norine Hill, Founder and CEO of Mother Nation, were interviewed. In addition, an interview was conducted with a Native woman who recently ended 15 years of homelessness with help from local service providers and the guidance of Native elders. A summary of the key themes can be found in the main report.

## Recommendations

Below is a list of actions for SISC and its partners to consider based on data collected as part of the SISC King County AIAN Housing Needs Assessment.

- **Affordable housing.** Investing in affordable permanent housing options and providing services that enable access to affordable housing has the potential to increase opportunities for employment.
- **Essential features for all new Native housing facilities.** Proximity to public transportation, convenient parking options, secured entry, and handicap accessible features are important components to incorporate in any new housing development serving AIAN populations in King County.
- **Redevelopment of the Pearl Warren Building site.** Service providers and surveyed community members shared the same vision as SISC that, in addition to providing affordable housing for Native people, the redeveloped Pearl Warren building could become a hub for resources and services in the city center. It was suggested that the building should provide space for on-site services and case management, youth activities, and community gatherings.
- **Education.** SISC and other service providers could consider making further efforts to connect current and potential students of all ages to relevant services such as financial aid and housing support. The Pearl Warren Building could potentially become a living and learning community for Native students studying in nearby universities, colleges, or vocational institutions.
- **Health and wellness services.** Health and wellness-related services were the services most used and the most needed by survey respondents. This is an area where SISC could help connect existing services with the population in need and support the development of culturally relevant approaches.
- **Services for families.** Connecting those who take care of children to necessary services has the potential to reach two or more additional people, potentially contributing to the future success of children and youth, and making a larger positive impact among the local AIAN population.
- **Addressing homelessness.** Programs and services that effectively connect single adults to low-barrier housing are one of the key aspects of addressing homelessness. In addition to housing assistance, onsite services and cultural healing programs should be provided to achieve lasting stability. Targeting specific subpopulations, such as single adults, elders, families with children, and students, will require layered and coordinated solutions given that not all of these groups can be housed and served in the same facilities.
- **Mobile and accessible services.** Services need to be mobile in order to reach the

homeless community, as well as people who have moved to the edges of King County or are not staying on or near public transportation routes. Service providers also need to expand their outreach to underserved homeless communities.

- **A service coalition.** Coalitions with participation from Native organizations, city-, county-, state-level government agencies, service providers, tribal leaders, and philanthropic partners should be formed, or developed out of existing collaborative efforts such as the Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness, to better serve the urban Native community. A better understanding of Natives’ historical trauma and its impacts on the behaviors and choices of Native peoples can help non-Native service providers better understand the cases that they are working on and formulate tailored services. Native organizations would welcome more non-Native providers’ participation in their training sessions concerning Native cultural issues and the impacts of generational trauma.



# Background

## Natives in King County

Archaeological evidence indicates that humans have inhabited the coastal regions of the Pacific Northwest for more than 10,000 years. The Puget Sound region has historically been home to several Indian tribes, including the Duwamish, Suquamish, Nisqually, Snoqualmie, and Muckleshoot. These tribes shared cultural bonds including their use of the Lushootseed language, one of many Coast Salish languages.

In the mid-1850s, the United States negotiated a series of treaties with the tribes of Western Washington.<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Point Elliott established four reservations: Port Madison for the Duwamish and Suquamish, and the Tulalip, Lummi, and Swinomish Reservations. The Treaty of Medicine Creek was negotiated with the Puyallup, Nisqually, and Squaxin Indians. Following conflicts between Natives and white settlers on both sides of the Cascade Mountains, the United States agreed to the changes in the Puyallup and Nisqually Reservations and the Muckleshoot Reservation was established.

In 1865, soon after the European-American settlement of Seattle and the King County area, Native Americans were banned from owning property in the City of Seattle and were forced to live on the Port Madison, Tulalip, Swinomish, and Lummi reservations.<sup>3</sup> The Exclusion Act was effectively overturned after the government of Seattle was dissolved in 1869, but Natives still faced local persecution, as evidenced by the burning of the Duwamish Longhouse in 1893.<sup>4</sup> Later, in concert with the federal government's efforts to disband Indian tribes and dissolve Indian reservations and lands in what is often referred to as the Termination Era, the federal Indian Relocation Act of 1956 gave incentives to Native populations from rural communities to relocate to major urban areas, including Seattle. Seattle's Native population grew from an estimated 700 people in 1950 to over 4,000 in 1970.<sup>5</sup>

To better meet the needs of the growing Native population, Native communities in Seattle began to form their own social service organizations. Some of the earliest Native organizations include the American Indian Women's Service League (AIWSL)<sup>6</sup>, led by Pearl Warren, the

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.muckleshoot.nsn.us/about-us/our-history.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> King County Council Remembers 1865 Exclusion of Native Americans, Indian Country Today. <https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/king-county-council-remembers-1865-exclusion-of-native-americans-15hcpWZ3v0C7FztjkbCHiQ/>

<sup>4</sup> Seattle Board of Trustees Passes Ordinance Calling for Removal of Indians from the Town, Historylink, <https://www.historylink.org/File/10979>

<sup>5</sup> Bernie Whitebear and the Urban Indian Fight for Land and Justice, <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/whitebear.htm#note41>

<sup>6</sup> American Indian Women's Service League, Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project. <https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/AIWSL.htm>

Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB), the Seattle Indian Center, and the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation (UIATF). These nonprofits depended on donated time and space to fulfill their missions and provide essential services to the Native community. So, in 1969, when SIHB and UIATF leader Bernie Whitebear heard that most of Fort Lawton, an old U.S. Army post in Seattle's Magnolia neighborhood, was designated as federal surplus land, he and other leaders lobbied support for obtaining the land in order to build a cultural center to provide community services for the local Native population.<sup>5</sup> The City of Seattle, however, with the support of a bill introduced by Washington's senators, wanted to acquire the land and establish a park.

### **Pearl Warren, President of the American Indian Women's Service League**



On March 8, 1970, one hundred Native activists occupied Fort Lawton and Whitebear declared, "We, the Native Americans, reclaim the land known as Fort Lawton in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery."<sup>7</sup> After multiple attempts to occupy the Fort and two years of confrontation and negotiation, Bernie Whitebear and the other Native activists were ultimately successful; UIATF was granted 20 acres of land<sup>4</sup> and the site was established as the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center. Today, the Center is home to UIATF and a space for Powwows and other cultural activities. The Center hosts a number of permanent and rotating art exhibits in the Sacred Circle Gallery.<sup>8</sup>

This early activism ultimately spurred the creation of the Seattle Indian Services Commission (SISC), a city-chartered Public Development Authority. It was formed to expand job and income opportunities, enhance recreational and cultural opportunities, and improve the overall living conditions of American Indians and Alaska Natives in King County.

Seattle and the King County area is now home to approximately 45,600 Native people from Washington, Alaska and throughout North America, and AIAN individuals account for 2.2%

<sup>7</sup> By Right of Discovery. United Indians of All Tribes Retakes Fort Lawton, 1970. Lossom Allen. [http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/FtLawton\\_takeover.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/FtLawton_takeover.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Daybreak Star Center, <https://www.unitedindians.org/daybreak-star-center/>

of the population.<sup>9</sup>The Native population still faces a number of social disparities in King County<sup>10</sup>, and nationwide. Compared to other racial groups, the AIAN population earns lower median incomes,<sup>11</sup> suffers from higher rates of illicit substance use,<sup>12</sup> has higher high school and college dropout rates,<sup>13</sup> and suffers comparatively worse health outcomes, including significantly reduced life expectancies.<sup>14</sup>

## A Shared Vision

To overcome these challenges and work towards improving the lives and livelihoods of King County's urban Natives, in 2014, the United Way of King County led a participatory process to engage the Indian community and define a shared vision of the future.<sup>15</sup> The vision statement is as follows: "We envision an urban Indian community that is united in spirit and practice, trusting and compassionate in our relationships, and fully embracing the ancient wisdom and healing that will sustain us for generations. We envision healthy, safe, self-reliant Native families actively engaged in the community, celebrating our vibrant, diverse and unique cultures. We envision a gathering place in Seattle that both symbolizes and galvanizes the beauty, resilience, power, and sacredness of our being, and provides a forum to unite our many voices."

The five strategic pillars developed to support this vision statement are:

- Creating a Strong Foundation for the Community
- Nurturing Community Empowerment and Involvement
- Increase Visibility and Presence in Seattle-King County
- Investing in Our Youth
- A Roadmap for Funders and Supporters

Over the years, Native organizations and institutions in King County have made great efforts to implement strategic actions identified by the community and work towards this common vision. In 2016, SISC, in cooperation with Big Water Consulting and with support from a

<sup>9</sup>American Community Survey, 2012-2017 five-year estimate.

<sup>10</sup>Understand King County racial disparities. United Way of King County. Oct 2015. [https://www.uwkc.org/wp-content/uploads/ftp/RacialDisparityDataReport\\_Nov2015.pdf](https://www.uwkc.org/wp-content/uploads/ftp/RacialDisparityDataReport_Nov2015.pdf)

<sup>11</sup><https://www.epi.org/blog/2016-ac-s-shows-stubbornly-high-native-american-poverty-and-different-degrees-of-economic-well-being-for-asian-ethnic-groups/>

<sup>12</sup>Skewes, M. C., & Blume, A. W. (2019). Understanding the link between racial trauma and substance use among American Indians. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 88-100.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000331>

<sup>13</sup>Psychosocial factors influencing academic persistence of American Indian college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38, 3-12 <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ548621>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/disparities/>

<sup>15</sup> A Vision for the Urban Indian Community. Assessment of assets and opportunities of the King County urban Indian population. June 2014. United Way of King County. <https://philanthropyuw.org/sites/default/files/resources/2014%20UWKC%20Final%20Report%2006.19.14%20%285%29.pdf>

number of local Native partner organizations, initiated the King County American Indian and Alaska Native Housing Needs Study to assess the community's housing and service needs. The study fulfills the community's goal to "conduct an annual assessment of community needs and assets" and contributes to the community's vision to further "invest in physical buildings and facilities including affordable housing, maintenance and improvements."

## Housing in King County and the Impact on the Native Population

Many recent studies, including the State of Washington Housing Needs Assessment (2015)<sup>16</sup> and Affordable Housing Update (2018)<sup>17</sup>, have highlighted that a lack of affordable housing has affected every community in Washington State and that such deficits are concentrated in the urban areas around Puget Sound. The cost of renting and purchasing homes in King County and the surrounding areas has greatly increased in the past decade. According to estimates of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the median monthly rents in King County effectively doubled from 2008 to 2018.<sup>18</sup> Increases in the cost of purchasing a home in King County reflect a similar trend.<sup>19</sup> The King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force has estimated that King County needs to build or preserve 44,000 affordable housing units by 2024 to meet housing needs and alleviate the high cost burdens of County residents.<sup>20</sup>

Skyrocketing housing costs have left many low-income households struggling to find and keep a home they can afford and are a contributing factor to the homelessness crisis in King County. A recent study showed that in urban areas across the US, when median rent increases by \$100, homelessness increases by 15%.<sup>21</sup> The rent increase in King County has likewise shown a strong correlation with the increase of the homeless population.<sup>22</sup>

A shortage of affordable housing in King County has disproportionately impacted the Native population. The homelessness rate of AIAN residents is higher than for any other racial or ethnic group.<sup>23</sup> Many AIAN individuals have moved to neighboring counties within the past few years because they could not afford housing in Seattle and King County.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/housing-needs-assessment/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/COMMERCE-affordable-housing-update.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/50per.html#2008>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.zillow.com/king-county-wa/home-values/>

<sup>20</sup> King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force. [https://www.kingcounty.gov/~/-/media/initiatives/affordablehousing/documents/report/RAH\\_Report\\_Final.ashx?la=en](https://www.kingcounty.gov/~/-/media/initiatives/affordablehousing/documents/report/RAH_Report_Final.ashx?la=en)

<sup>21</sup> Byrne, Thomas, et al. "New perspectives on community-level determinants of homelessness." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 35.5 (2013): 607-625.

<sup>22</sup> The economics of homelessness in Seattle and King County. McKinsey&Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-cities/the-economics-of-homelessness-in-seattle-and-king-county>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/native-americans-are-this-regions-original-residents-and-they-are-its-most-likely-to-be-homeless/>

# Re-Development of the Pearl Warren Building

More affordable housing options for AIAN individuals could help reduce homeless rates and new housing facilities could also serve as a hub for a variety of culturally relevant supportive services including health, wellness, education, and family services. The Seattle Indian Services Commission's (SISC) vision for the future of the Native Community in King County includes the re-development of the Pearl Warren Building site into a comprehensive housing and community facility that provides safe, secure and culturally sensitive affordable housing and supports the economic self-sufficiency of the King County AIAN population. SISC has been working to make this vision a reality since 2015.<sup>24</sup>

## Objectives

The King County AIAN Housing Needs Assessment sought to identify the needs and wants of Natives in the King County area, explore how to better serve the Native population through new affordable housing opportunities and supportive services, and inform the re-development of the Pearl Warren Building.

The primary questions addressed by the study are:

1. What are the basic demographics of King County's AIAN residents who are in need of services (including employment, education, and health)?
2. Which types of supportive housing and other services are most needed among King County's AIAN population?
3. What subpopulations are in particular need of supportive and transitional housing?



<sup>24</sup>Seattle Indian Services Commission Community Development Plan. Revitalizing a Native Village in the City of Seattle. April 2016.

## Lead Agency

The Seattle Indian Services Commission (SISC) is a city-chartered public development entity that was developed to carry out programs to expand housing, job and income opportunities, enhance recreational and cultural opportunities and improve the overall living conditions of AIAN communities in King County, Washington. SISC owns the Pearl Warren Building and rents out space to social service providers. SISC is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners made up of community representatives who are approved by the Seattle City Council.

## Contributing Organizations

**Catholic Community Services (CCS).** CCS is the official human service outreach arm of the Catholic Church in Western Washington. It offers shelter for homeless Native people in and around King County as well as mental health and addiction recovery services. CCS provides the Native American House, a safe, clean and sober transitional housing with case management services for Native American homeless men, and the Spirit Journey House, transitional housing for Native homeless adult women in recovery from substance abuse. The Spirit Journey House is the first Recovery House in an urban setting in the state of Washington.

**Chief Seattle Club.** The Chief Seattle Club was founded by a Jesuit, Father Talbot, in 1970. The club has operated with growing leadership from the urban Native community and supporters. Located in the Pioneer Square area, the Club offers day shelter, activities, showers, meals, clothing, legal advocacy, and social service support to Native individuals experiencing homelessness in King County. The Club has developed a number of affordable housing projects. A new 24-unit housing will open in June 2019. *ʔalʔal*, an 80-unit housing project serving homeless and low-income populations, will open in 2021, with financial support from the City of Seattle.

Through a team of Case Managers and Outreach Workers paired with financial assistance, the Club helps homeless Natives obtain permanent housing through move-in assistance (first/last month's rent, security deposits, application fees), maintain housing to prevent homelessness through eviction prevention funds (back rent, utility assistance), street outreach, diversion, and emergency housing (short-term motels for homeless households that have permanent housing lined up in the near future).

**Cowlitz Tribal Health, Seattle.** The Cowlitz Indian Tribe provides social services and resources to Native children and families in the Seattle area through its Tribal Health Facility in Tukwila. Mental health therapists provide individual and group counseling that combine best practice methodologies with traditional ways to provide effective therapy to AIAN individuals in need. Cowlitz Tribal Health also provides highly effective and culturally-sound treatment for chemical dependency.

**Mother Nation.** Mother Nation is a non-profit grassroots Native American organization which offers culturally informed healing services, advocacy, mentorship and homeless prevention in the State of Washington. Its mission is to support the success of Native Sisters by way of cultural prayers and Sisterhood during times of crisis. Mother Nation helps Native women heal from the scars of sexual and domestic violence, intergenerational trauma, homelessness,

and substance addition. Mother Nation organizes the Circles of Life workshops, which include Gathering of Women sweat or Talking Circles, and provides Native Chemical Dependency classes, a variety of cultural classes on drugs and alcohol use. Mother Nation also organizes Men's Talking Circle and a variety of Native Youth activities.

**Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB).** SIHB is a local non-profit community health clinic that was incorporated in 1970 as an Indian community health center. Today, SIHB provides health care, dental services, medical services, and inpatient alcohol and substance abuse treatment to more than 6,000 patients annually in King County.

**United Indians of All Tribes Foundation (UIATF).** UIATF is a non-profit organization founded in Seattle, Washington in 1970. Its mission is to provide educational, cultural, and social services that reconnect Indigenous people in the Puget Sound region to their heritage by strengthening their sense of belonging and significance as Native people. The Foundation operates the Daybreak Gallery of Native American Art and provides a variety of social, education and economic development opportunities and cultural activities for the Native American community. The Foundation began as a small group of Northwest Native Americans and their supporters, led by the late Bernie Whitebear, who engaged in an occupation at Fort Lawton to reclaim a land base for the urban Indians living in and around Seattle. The Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center was completed in 1977 and has become a hub of activities for Native peoples and their supporters locally, nationally, and internationally.

UIATF operates the **Labateyah Youth Home**, a transitional home that provides housing and services to youth between the ages of 18 and 23. Labateyah Youth Home provides a safe and nurturing environment for homeless youth, combining Native American wisdom and ceremony with modern health and social services.



# Methodology

## Intercept Survey Implementation

The Housing Needs Assessment survey was implemented as an intercept survey (a research method used to gather on-site feedback from an audience at an event or facility) targeting AIAN adults who either live or receive services in King County, Washington, or who have lived in King County within the past five years. SISC Commissioners and SISC's partner organizations worked with Big Water Consulting to identify survey content and design the survey form for distribution to members of the community. Matt Echohawk-Hayashi of Headwater People Consulting coordinated the outreach for the survey and the administering of surveys at local facilities and events. Other partners include Chief Seattle Club, Cowlitz Tribal Health Seattle, Seattle Indian Services Commission, Seattle Indian Health Board, Tlingit & Haida Washington Chapter, First Nations Student Group at the University of Washington, United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, Louie Gong/8th Generation, Huchoosedah Indian Education, Mother Nation, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Snoqualmie Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Crow Nation, Na'ah Illahee Fund, Native Action Network, Native News, Equity in Education Coalition, King County Drug Court, and Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness. Additional contact was made with potential respondents via public meetings and through a public outreach campaign.

Developing a random sample of the Native community in King County was not feasible within the constraints of the project. Data collected through the intercept survey illustrates the needs of the Native Community, but should not be considered statistically representative of the entire AIAN population in King County. Because surveys were disseminated and collected at locations serving AIAN individuals, the survey results likely over-sampled the subset of AIAN individuals in King County who visited service providers and had a higher need for assistance than the broader Native community. However, this serves the objective of this study by providing insights into the experiences and desired services of the most vulnerable AIAN individuals in the area who would use and benefit from the services provided at the redeveloped Pearl Warren Building and by other Native service providers.

The survey was provided as an online questionnaire accessed through the SISC website as well as in a paper format that was distributed through service providers and community organizations. The online questionnaire was created using LimeSurvey, a secure, open source survey creation tool, and the paper survey was created using SNAP survey software.

## Data Preparation and Analysis

Once the active data collection period ended, paper forms were scanned using SNAP and converted to a digital format. Online data were downloaded from LimeSurvey. A codebook was prepared to ensure data consistency, facilitate the integration of separate data files into a single dataset, and serve as a reference for later analysis. Data received from paper surveys

and online were joined, cleaned, and analyzed using R, an open-source software environment for statistical computing and graphics.

In total, 541 survey responses were received. However, 94 of the 541 respondents completed the survey form online but did not satisfy the eligibility criteria for the survey (currently living or receiving services in King County, or lived in King County within the last 5 years), so their information was removed from the final data set. Those who filled out the online version of the survey and did not meet the screening criteria were not given the option to continue answering the survey questions. Nine individuals fully completed the paper version of the survey but did not meet the survey criteria. These nine responses were also not included in the reported results.

## Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group

One key group within the Native community in King County that SISC wanted to learn more about was the Native college student and recent college graduate population. A focus group discussion with Native college students and recent graduates was conducted at the University of Washington on Feb 26, 2019. The discussion focused on Native students' experiences in finding and securing safe, comfortable and affordable housing in Seattle and the King County area. Three key informant interviews were conducted with Toy Rodriguez of the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, Colleen Echohawk, Executive Director of the Chief Seattle Club and Norine Hill of Mother Nation to gain additional context and help frame the survey results.

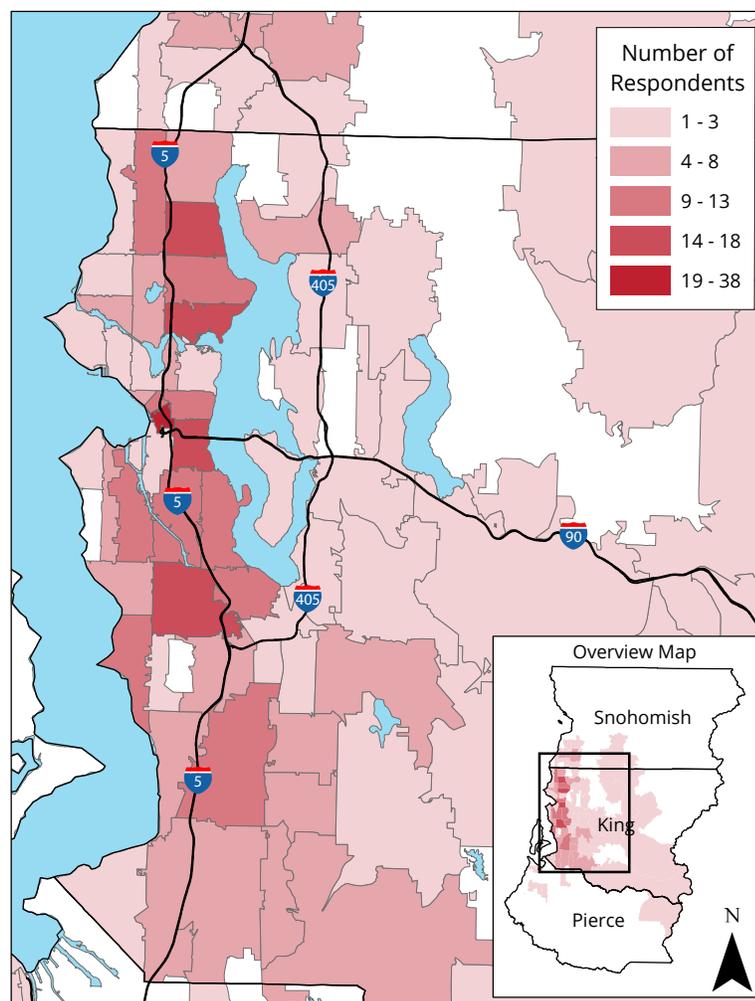


# Results of Intercept Survey

## Overview of Respondents

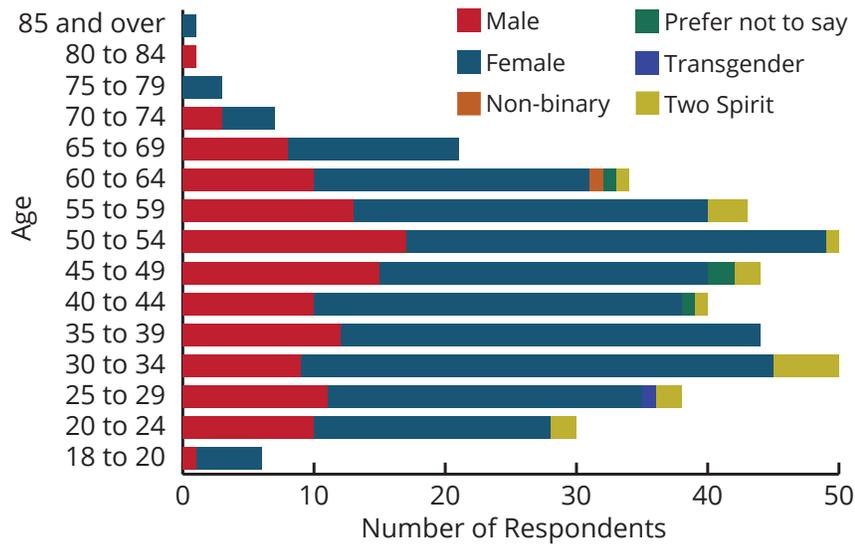
Overall, 541 individuals responded to the survey and 447 respondents met the eligibility criteria, which required the respondents to: 1) currently live in King, Pierce, or Snohomish Counties; 2) receive services in King County at the time of the survey; or 3) have lived in King County within the past five years. A majority of survey respondents lived in King County (87%) and a small portion lived in Snohomish and Pierce Counties. Based on the ZIP codes respondents provided, a large proportion of respondents lived or stayed in areas immediately surrounding downtown Seattle (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 | ZIP Codes in Which Respondents Lived or Stayed Most Frequently at the Time of Survey**

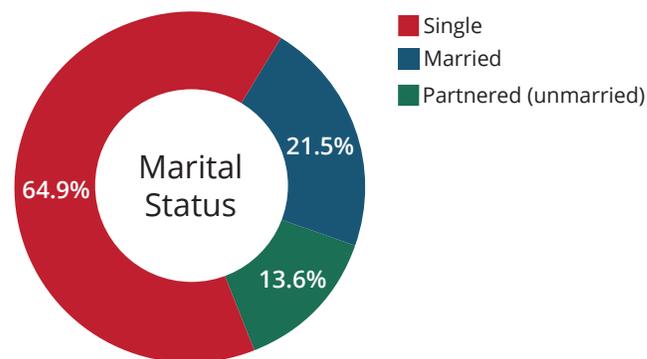


A majority of respondents (65.0%) self-identified as female, 29.3% self-identified as male, and another 5.6% self-identified under non-traditional gender categories. The median age of respondents was 44 (see Figure 2). Nearly 65% of respondents reported being single (not married, divorced, or widowed) and about one-third were married or had a partner (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2 | Survey Respondents by Age and Gender**



**Figure 3 | Survey Respondents by Marital Status**



More than three-quarters of respondents (77.8%) reported that they were members of a federally-recognized tribe. Survey respondents were members of 74 different U.S. federally-recognized tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, as well as 8 different First Nations in Canada. 22% were not enrolled in a federally-recognized tribe and about 6% of respondents did not identify themselves as descendants of any tribal group.

# Education

Education can be important for promoting both economic development and cultural identity. Among those who were not pursuing education at the time of the survey, the most commonly reported education level was “some college” (without completion of a degree) (24.8%). This corresponds with the well-documented high college dropout rate among AIAN students nationwide.

Sixty-four respondents (15.9%) were in school at the time of survey and 44 of them were pursuing technical certification, an associate’s degree, or a bachelor’s degree. One critical piece of support that native students need to continue higher education is financial aid. Of the eight respondents that indicated they had recently dropped out of school, six identified financial expenses (for transportation, books, and other living expenses) as a contributing factor. 37% of surveyed students were not receiving any financial aid. During the Native student focus group at the University of Washington, one theme that emerged within the discussion was that students were having issues with financial aid covering the cost of their on-campus housing, and there were no known on-campus resources to help them pay for housing.

Education can greatly increase one’s earning potential: the median annual salary of respondents who completed a bachelor’s degree or higher was \$36,800 higher than those who had not completed any higher education. A majority (63.7%) of participants indicated that they were interested in pursuing further education and, in an open-ended narrative response format, several respondents indicated a desire for more educational programming and support.

**Table 1 Highest Degree Attained by Survey Respondents Who Were Not in School**

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Below 9th grade	14	4.5
9th - 12th grade (no high school diploma)	25	8.0
GED/HSED	36	11.6
High school diploma	29	9.3
Some college (no degree)	77	24.8
Associate's degree	26	8.4
Technical college or certification program	33	10.6
Bachelor's degree	44	14.1
Graduate or professional degree	23	7.4
Doctorate	4	1.3
Total	311	100.0

**Table 2 Highest Degree Attained by Survey Respondents Attending School**

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
9th - 12th grade (no high school diploma)	5	7.9
GED/HSED	2	3.2
High school diploma	3	4.8
Some college (no degree)	21	33.3
Associate's degree	8	12.7
Technical college or certification program	3	4.8
Bachelor's degree	11	17.5
Graduate or professional degree	10	15.9
Total	63	100.0

## Employment

Among all respondents, 30.4% held permanent full-time jobs and 45.8% reporting that their partner held full-time employment. These percentages are lower than the average in King County (65.1%, ACS2017). Overall, 18.9% of all survey respondents were unemployed (see Table 3). Of the respondents in the labor force (adults who were not retired or disabled), 25.6% were unemployed.

40.9% of respondents who had moved to King County in the past five years did so for “more job opportunities.” Yet, among these respondents who were also in the labor force, 24.5% were unemployed, illustrating that while employment was a strong motivator to move to King County, many people were still struggling to find employment.

Educational attainment strongly correlates with employment status. 38.4% of employed respondents had a bachelor’s degree or higher while only 7.4% of unemployed respondents had one. Also, while 47% of those surveyed with a high school diploma or GED, or who had not completed high school, were unemployed, 19.0% of those with some college, an associate’s degree, a technical degree or higher were unemployed. These findings underscore the importance of higher education in addressing unemployment among AIAN populations in the King County area.

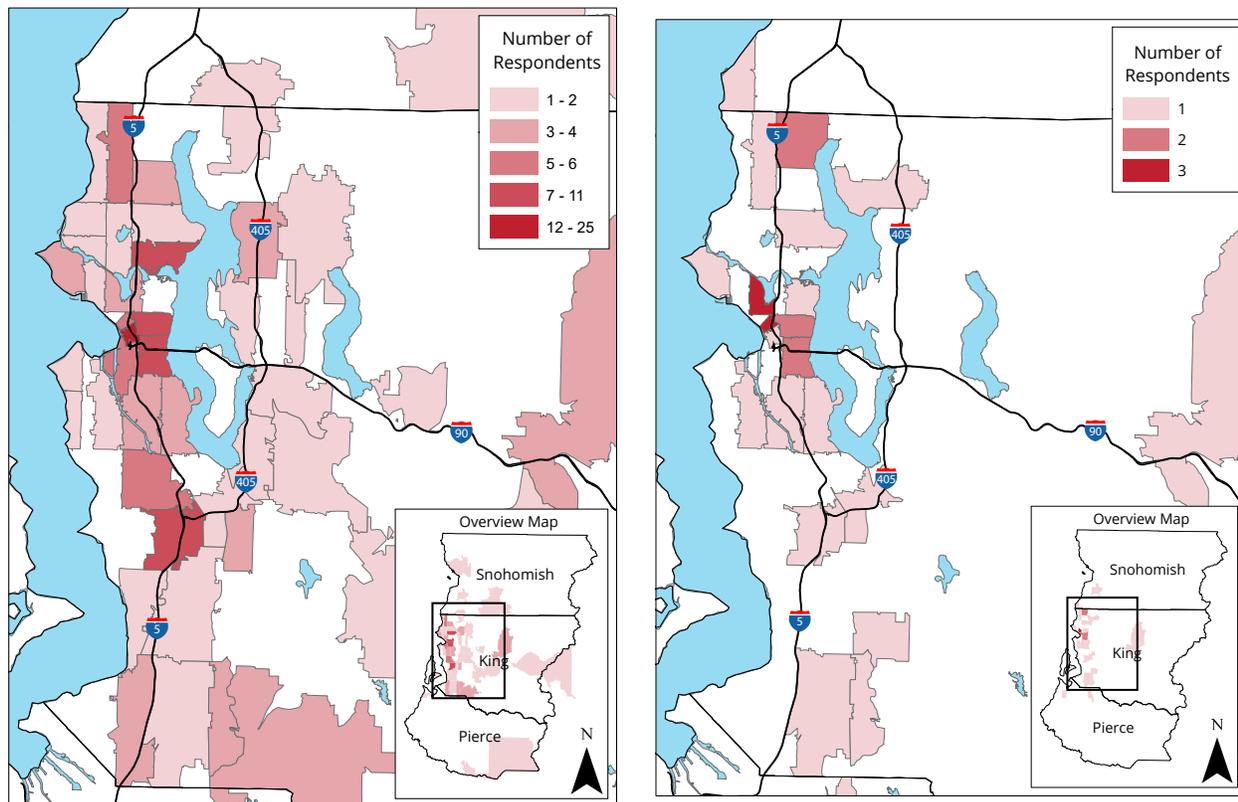
Lack of transportation may hurt some respondents’ abilities to find employment. Only 65.4% of respondents had a driver’s license. About 6% of participants had a suspended driver’s license. Among those with a driver’s license, 42.6% were employed in permanent full-time jobs while only 10.9% of those who did not have a license or had a suspended license were employed on a permanent, full-time basis.

**Table 3 | Employment Status of All Respondents**

Response	Number	Percentage
Permanent full-time	114	30.4
Permanent part-time	33	8.8
Temporary full-time	8	2.1
Temporary part-time	18	4.8
Seasonal full-time	3	0.8
Seasonal part-time	4	1.1
Self-employed	16	4.3
Unemployed	71	18.9
Disabled	58	15.5
Retired	25	6.7
Student	21	5.6
Stay-at-home parent*	4	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Responses that were not included in the list of original answer choices, but were specified by participant(s) in an open-ended format.

**Figure 4 | ZIP Code of Respondents' (Left) and Partners' (Right) Primary Workplace**



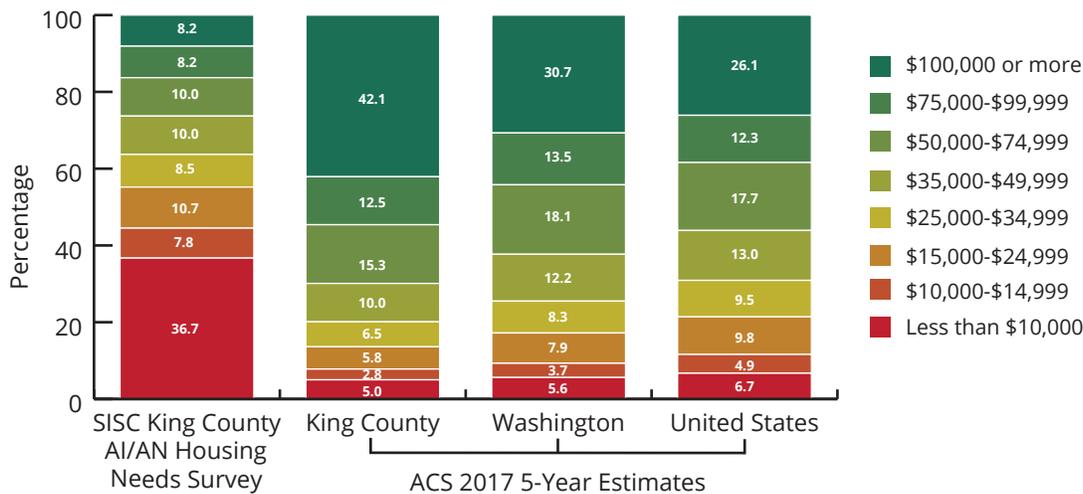
The majority of respondents reported living in areas largely concentrated around Downtown Seattle (see Figure 1). Respondents and their significant others also reported working in the more densely populated regions in and around Seattle that are served by public transit (see Figure 4). Respondents with jobs reported commuting to work via public transit at a higher rate (17.7%) than King County residents overall (13.5%).

## Income

The median income of surveyed households was substantially lower than King County’s Area Median Income (AMI). According to the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), the average household income for King County was \$113,252.<sup>25</sup> Respondents reported a median household income of \$22,000 and an average household income of \$36,769.

Comparing survey results with ACS data for the U.S., Washington State, and King County (2017 5-year estimates) further reveals that survey respondents had much lower income levels. While only 13.6% of households in King County make less than \$25,000 annually, 55.2% of survey respondents reported annual household earnings of less than \$25,000 per year (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5 | Household Income Across Different Data Sources**



The median income of single-race AI/AN households (occupants identified only as AI/AN in the race section of the survey form) in King County, according to 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, is \$45,923, which is a little more than half the median income for all households in King County (\$83,571).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. [https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17\\_5YR/S1901/0500000US53033](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/S1901/0500000US53033)

<sup>26</sup> [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5YR\\_S1903&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_S1903&prodType=table)

This indicates that AIAN households in King County earn substantially less than non-AIAN households. However, the markedly lower median household income found in the assessment survey when compared to ACS data may be a result of administering surveys at service provider locations and thus disproportionately targeting respondents with fewer resources and greater needs. In addition, the ACS does not survey non-sheltered individuals living in outdoor locations such as those living in tents, cars, or RVs (captured in Point-In-Time counts), while at least a portion of this population was captured in the King County AIAN Housing Needs survey. <sup>27</sup>

## Housing

**Housing Situation.** Nearly 30% of survey respondents did not have a permanent residence. 34.7% of these respondents reported living on the streets or in their cars and 25.7% reported staying in shelters (see Table 4). More than 80% of these respondents had been homeless for more than a year (Table 5).

**Table 4 | Housing Situation of Respondents with No Permanent Residence**

	Number	Percentage
I am TEMPORARILY staying with family or friends	37	36.6
I stay in a transitional, homeless, youth, or (DV) domestic violence shelter	26	25.7
I currently live on the streets, in a tent, or outdoors	22	21.8
I stay in a car or van	13	12.9
I stay in a motel*	3	3.0
Total	101	100

**Table 5 | Last Time that Respondents with No Permanent Residence Had a Home**

	Number	Percentage
Within the last 6 months	10	8.8
6 months - 1 year ago	10	8.8
More than 1 year ago	64	56.1
Never	28	24.6
Not applicable	2	1.8
Total	114	100

<sup>27</sup> ACS Design and Methodology. [https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/design\\_and\\_methodology/acs\\_design\\_methodology\\_ch04\\_2014.pdf?#](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/design_and_methodology/acs_design_methodology_ch04_2014.pdf?#)

72% of respondents had a permanent residence at the time of the survey. More than 80% of these respondents were renters, either renting alone or with family or friends (Table 6). Respondents who had a permanent residence had been relatively mobile in the past five years, however: while 67.5% had stayed in 1-2 places, 21.7% had stayed in 3-4 places, 5.4 % had stayed in 5-6 places, and another 5.4% had stayed in more than 7 places.

**Table 6 | Housing Situation of Respondents with a Permanent Residence**

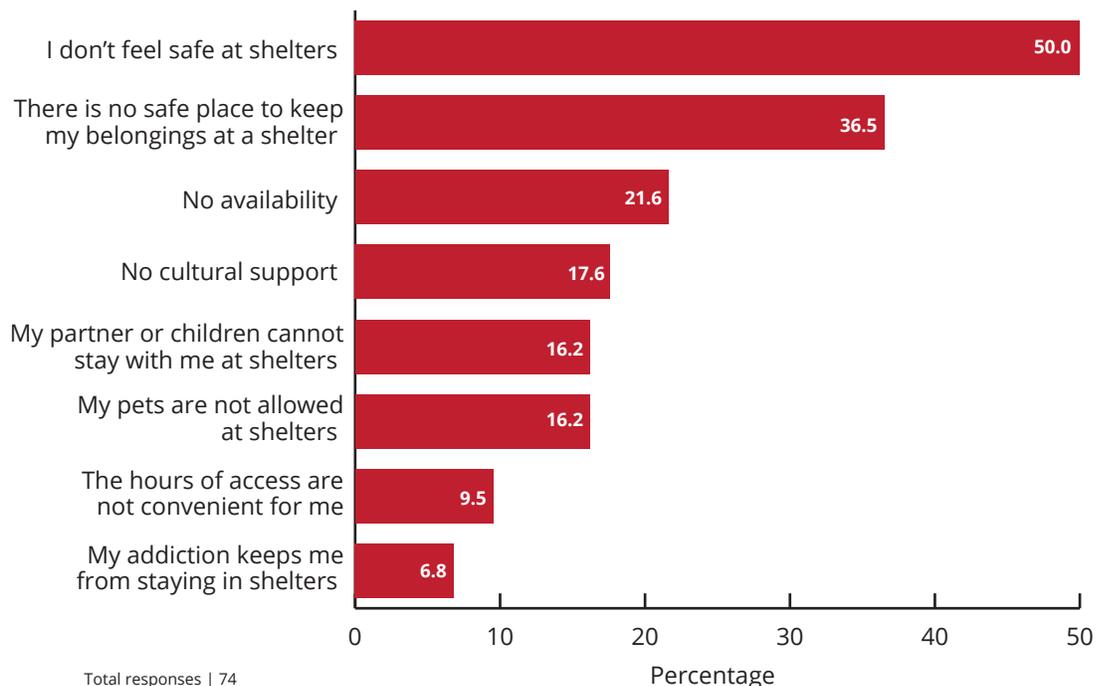
	Number	Percentage
I rent my own home/housing unit	174	60.2
I own my own home/housing unit	51	17.6
I live or rent a room in a home/housing unit owned by family/friends	39	13.5
I share a rental unit with family/friends	22	7.6
I stay in a college or university dorm*	2	0.7
I stay in an RV or camper*	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Responses that were not included in the list of original answer choices, but were specified by participant(s) in an open-ended format.

**Shelters.** Safety concerns for themselves (50.0%) and their belongings (36.5%) were the top reasons that respondents selected for why they chose not to stay in emergency shelters. A lack of availability (21.6%) and cultural support (17.6%), as well as not being able to stay with their children, partners, and pets were also commonly cited barriers to staying in shelters (see Figure 6). A few respondents indicated in their narrative responses that poor hygiene standards and health concerns/disabilities prevented them from staying in the shelters. Local service providers also noted that shelters often do not offer services to multigenerational families with elders or teenagers. Some programs split up families, which can cause feelings of isolation and separation.

**Housing Affordability.** A lack of affordable housing in King County was a recurring theme among survey responses. About a third of the respondents who had moved away from King County in the past 5 years indicated that they left the area due to a lack of affordable housing. Affordability was also the top barrier for renting or purchasing homes. Respondents indicated that they didn't make enough money for rent/mortgage (62.5%), had no or poor credit (50.1%), and couldn't find affordable housing where they wanted to live (45.0%) (see Table 7).

**Figure 6 | Top Barriers to Living in an Emergency Shelter (Participants Could Select up to Three)**



**Table 7 | Top Barriers when Looking for a Home to Rent or Buy (Select up to Five)**

Response	Number	Percentage (of 347 Responses)
I don't make enough money for rent or mortgage	217	62.5
I don't have credit or have poor credit	174	50.1
I can't find or afford housing where I want to live	156	45
I have too much debt (credit card, car loan, student loan, child support, etc.)	64	18.4
I can't find available housing near my place of employment	57	16.4
I don't have a bank account	37	10.7
I have a criminal record that keeps me from getting housing	36	10.4
Not applicable (I do not want to buy or rent)	29	8.4
I have a health disability*	7	2
I have previously been evicted*	3	0.9
I don't know how/lack information*	3	0.9
I face discrimination*	1	0.3

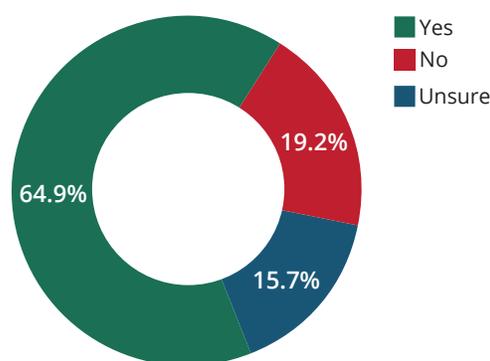
\*Responses that were not included in the original list of answer choices, but were specified by participant(s) in an open-ended format.

Respondents who had income and a permanent residence spent a high proportion of their income on housing expenditures. These respondents' median monthly housing payment was \$1,008. Half of these respondents (98 of 195) were cost-burdened (i.e., they spent over 30% of their income on housing costs). More specifically, 54.8% (90 of 164) were rent-burdened, while 25.8% of homeowners (8 of 31) were mortgage-burdened.

Given a median annual household income of \$22,000 across all survey respondents, an affordable monthly rent would be approximately \$550 (30% of the median household income). This is much lower than the median monthly rent prices in King County for studios (\$1,456) and one-bedroom (\$1,633), two-bedroom (\$2,006), and three-bedroom apartments (\$2,904). Housing would need to cost even less to be affordable for lower-income subgroups, especially those experiencing homelessness and those with disabilities.

**New Affordable Housing Development.** A majority of respondents (64.9%) indicated that they were interested in living in an affordable housing development in King County (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7 | Interest in a King County Affordable Housing Development**



Total responses | 396

Respondents interested in living in an affordable housing development were subsequently asked how many children, adults, and adults over 65 years old they would be living with if they were provided a housing unit. One-, two-, and three-member households accounted for 72.5% of all responses. About one-third of respondents (32.3%) indicated that they would live alone; among these individuals, 86.2% were between 18 and 64 years old and 13.8% of them were 65 years old or older. Almost three-quarters (74.2%) of respondents who anticipated a household size of three indicated there would be at least one child living in the household (see Table 8). 4.1% of the respondents indicated that they would have a multi-general household (i.e., adults, seniors, and children living together).

**Accessibility.** 21.8% of respondents reported that they would need a home with handicap accessible features (including a ramp, grab bars, and wide hallways). Respondents weren't asked what specific handicap accessible features they required, so additional follow-up will be necessary to identify the specific accessibility features that should be incorporated in any new affordable housing development.

**Table 8 | Anticipated Household Size**

Response	Total Number of Households
1	87 (32.3%)
2	67 (24.9%)
3	41 (15.2%)
4	31 (11.5%)
5	16 (5.9%)
6	15 (5.6%)
7	4 (1.5%)
8	4 (1.5%)
9	3 (1.1%)
11	1(0.4%)
Total	269

**Section 8.** Almost one-fifth of respondents who had a permanence residence were assigned a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher and 90.2% of those who had a voucher (46 out of 51) had been able to use it (see Tables 9).<sup>\*</sup> Five respondents who had Section 8 Vouchers but were not using them indicated that they were either unable to find affordable housing that their vouchers would cover or were on Section 8 housing waiting lists.

**Table 9| Respondents Assigned a Section 8 Voucher**

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	53	18.8
No	216	76.6
Unsure	13	4.6
Total	282	100

## Health and Social Services

Health and social services were important to survey participants. One-quarter of the respondents who had moved to King County in the past 5 years indicated that one of the main reasons for their move was to have better access to health or social services.

<sup>\*</sup> Note: The question asking about Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers was asked in the section of the survey for those who had permanent housing, and does not include individuals with Section 8 Vouchers who were unable to find housing. The Seattle Housing Authority found that only 44% of voucher holders succeeded in finding housing at the end of 2017.

Medical and dental services were the services most commonly used by survey participants, with 55.0% receiving medical care and 43.3% receiving dental care in King County (see Table 10).

**Table 10| Current Services Utilized by Respondents, their Partners, or Children in King County**

Response	Number	Percentage (of 300 Respondents)
Medical care	165	55.0
Dental care clinic	130	43.3
None/Not applicable	61	20.3
AL-Anon/AA/NA meetings	48	16.0
SNAP (food stamps)	42	14.0
Elder programs and activities	23	7.7
Child care assistance/daycare	21	7.0
Legal clinic/legal services	20	6.7
Job training classes	18	6.0
Out-of-school youth programs and tutoring for youth	17	5.7
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	11	3.7
Parenting classes	11	3.7
TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	6	2.0
Family reunification	6	2.0
GED classes	5	1.7
In-home care	3	1.0
Early childhood education	3	1.0
Behavioral health services*	12	4.0
Housing services*	7	2.3
Social Security or Social Security Disability (SSI or SSDI)*	6	2.0
Child welfare/C.P.S.*	2	0.7

\*Responses that were not included in the original list of answer choices, but were specified by participants in an open-ended format.

The top four services that respondents indicated they needed but were not currently receiving were also all health and wellness-related. These include cultural healing (27.8%), dental care (21.1%), counseling (19.0%), and medical care (14.1%) (see Table 11). Respondents also indicated a range of unmet needs in the areas of education (job training, GED, youth

programming), child care and early childhood education, elder care, family services, SNAP, and TANF. Almost one-third of respondents (32.1%) reported that their needs were met and they did not need additional services.

**Table 11 | Services that Respondents Needed but Had Not Received**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage (Of 327 Respondents)</b>
None/Not applicable	105	32.1
Cultural healing services	91	27.8
Dental care	69	21.1
Counseling services	62	19.0
Medical care	46	14.1
Job training classes	44	13.5
Legal clinic/legal services	42	12.8
Elder programs and activities	31	9.5
Out-of-school youth programs and tutoring for youth	25	7.6
Family reunification	22	6.7
SNAP (food stamps)	19	5.8
Al-Anon/AA/NA meetings	17	5.2
Parenting classes	16	4.9
Child care assistance/daycare	15	4.6
GED classes	13	4.0
TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	8	2.4
In-home care	3	0.9
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)	6	1.8
Early childhood education	4	1.2
Affordable housing*	16	4.9
Higher education*	4	1.2
Cash assistance*	7	2.1
Security*	2	0.6

\*Responses that were not included in the original list of answer choices, but were specified by participants in an open ended format.

## Children and Families

33.0% of respondents indicated that they or their partners were the primary caretakers for children under 18 years old and 18.1% of caretakers reported caring for 4 or more children. About half (48.8%) of all those who reported being child caretakers reported being single and 82.2% of child caretakers were female. Among the children being cared for, 22% were under 5 years old. Additionally, almost 30% of respondents who were primary caretakers had a relationship with the child other than that of the child's parent, including grandparents, foster parents, aunts or uncles, family friends, and siblings or cousins.

25% of those who reported being caretakers for children did not have permanent housing. Of the 23 respondents who gave information concerning their current housing situation, 12 were temporarily staying with family or friends and another 11 were living either in shelters, outdoors on the streets, in cars or vans, or in motels.

## Connecting Need with Services

Survey responses also revealed potential gaps or needs that may not have been overtly expressed. For example, while 12% of respondents indicated that either they or their partners are veterans, only about 4% of respondents claimed to be receiving VA benefits for veterans and families of veterans. Reasons for this gap should be further explored, but SISC and others may be able to help connect veterans to VA services for which they qualify. Additionally, King County has a veterans program that provides emergency financial assistance, housing assistance, employment guidance and assistance, life stability, mental health referrals, and other supportive services <sup>29</sup> in both Seattle and Renton.

Furthermore, about one-third of respondents said they were taking care of children under 18, but comparatively few were making use of services intended for families. Of the 136 respondents or partners who are primary caretakers of children, a small proportion access services for families (21 childcare, 17 tutoring, 11 WIC, 11 parenting classes, 6 TANF, 6 family reunification, 3 early childhood education, and 2 child welfare/CPS). Reasons for not accessing these services require further investigation.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/veterans/programs-services.aspx>

# Summary of Qualitative Data

To provide additional depth and context to the survey results, qualitative data were collected through interviews with staff of three different Native service providers and a Native woman who had recently ended 15 years of homelessness in Seattle. Survey coordinators also conducted a focus group made up of eleven Native students and recent graduates at the University of Washington. Key themes of the interviews and focus group are summarized below.

## Summary of Key Informant Interviews

### Service Providers

In an effort to identify the specific challenges faced by the urban Native community in the King County area, as well as any gaps in service, survey coordinators interviewed representatives of three Native service providers: the Chief Seattle Club, United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, and Mother Nation. Below is a summary of the themes addressed in these interviews.

### Housing Challenges Faced by Urban Natives

According to the interviewees, Native people often encounter culture shock when moving to urban areas from their tribal communities, which are often located in more rural or remote areas, and they have difficulty dealing with non-Native landlords, service providers, and others who do not understand or accommodate their cultural issues and needs. For example, many Natives are not prepared for the strict occupancy rules enforced by the managers of urban housing. Additionally, they do not have experience formulating and adhering to a realistic urban household budget because they are used to multi-generational living and shared or communal resources in tribal areas, which often results in missed rent or utilities payments. This disconnection from shared living, resources, and culture often leads to feelings of isolation and adds to the suffering and trauma that many Natives have already experienced.

The interviewees noted that many of the urban Natives assisted by the Native service providers in King County are in fact not recent transplants from rural areas but either came to the area as a direct result of the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 or are the descendants of those who suffered emotional and physical trauma from that misguided effort to “urbanize” the American Indian population and remove them from their land. While the negative impacts of the Relocation period were initially felt decades ago, the trauma caused to those relocated has been passed down to subsequent generations via the mental health, housing instability, cultural isolation, substance abuse, and other issues experienced by their parents and grandparents and ultimately them as their children, grandchildren and family members.

To highlight that housing instability was not simply an inherent and longstanding characteristic of Native culture, rather than an issue caused by the imposition of external cultures and policies on Native peoples, one interviewee noted that “prior to 1492, Natives had a 100%

success rate in housing their people” and that “reclaiming traditional housing practices was vital to healing the Native community.” One service provider explained that providing housing to homeless Native people, or preventing homelessness for those at risk of losing their housing, in King County was “like playing chess in a hurricane” due to the mountain of paperwork required to secure funding or vouchers to pay for or subsidize their rent and arrange the various services necessary to fully address their generational trauma, mental health, substance abuse, criminal history, cultural isolation, and need for spiritual healing.

Interviewees noted that Native applicants for housing units suffer much higher rates of discrimination by landlords than non-Native tenants, though these rates may more closely mirror those for other people of color, and they find it much harder to secure safe, stable, and affordable housing. If they are in fact able to obtain housing, based on their cultural values and tradition of sharing, Native tenants often take in other family members and friends who are either not eligible to receive housing of their own or cannot afford to obtain their own unit. In doing so, these doubled-up households risk violating the occupancy standards of their lease agreement or not being able to pay rent due to the increase in household costs for food, etc. Landlords in urban areas are very strict about over-occupancy or unauthorized occupants, which turns the traditional Native practice of sharing with others, a practice that has allowed Native communities to survive significant hardship for millennia, into something that puts Native families at odds with the laws and contracts of urban, non-Native society.

According to one interviewee, landlords use template leasing documents that apply attorney fees to any issue or dispute between the landlord and tenant despite the fact that no formal process has actually been initiated, no documents have been prepared, and, at times, no attorney has even been engaged in the matter. In some cases, when proof that an attorney has been engaged is requested from the landlord, the attorney fees are simply removed. In fact, according to this interviewee, landlords often say they have an attorney, but attorneys are rarely involved or make an appearance in landlord-tenant matters. Fees which are not listed in the lease agreement are also often added to the tenant’s list of outstanding charges and, in many cases, the landlord cannot provide the basis for the charges when asked. In order to gain future leverage over a Native tenant, when the tenant is late submitting even a single rent payment, the landlord may require that the tenant sign a stipulation that provides for an immediate, non-judicial remedy of eviction if any future payment is not made on time. Due to their lack of experience with landlord-tenant laws and very limited access to legal assistance, Native tenants also often believe that the 3-day and 10-day eviction notices served on them or posted on their door by landlords are legitimate without checking to see whether these notices satisfy legal requirements, and, unfortunately, many Native tenants also ignore notices that have been properly posted or served on them and are subsequently left without any legal recourse or defense against these actions.

United Indians and other Native service providers assisting Native tenants do not have attorneys on staff or on contract to assist them, and they cannot act as attorneys or give legal advice to those they are assisting. However, these service providers have significant experience in housing issues and can either help their clients navigate the process on their own or refer them to the Northwest Justice Project or the King County Bar Association’s Housing Justice Project to receive legal advice and representation. One interviewee noted that, while Natives are not necessarily treated differently than other people of color, the landlord-tenant process is inflexible and landlords often lack knowledge of the cultural issues that can

help explain the unfamiliar behaviors of some Native tenants.

Interviewees indicated that, if and when eviction of Native tenants occurs, it often leads to the breaking up of Native families due to the restrictions in place at shelter and transitional housing facilities. For example, homeless services often do not provide for multi-generational families and some homeless families have to split up in order to receive shelter. The fear of separation often prevents families from staying in shelters. Separation from family due to eviction or housing instability only deepens the sense of isolation already experienced and, in many cases, forces family members to fend for themselves. One interviewee noted that this creates a particular concern for the children, especially teenagers who often fend for themselves. While a facility like the Labateyah Youth Home operated by United Indians can assist a certain number of these Native youth, many end up on others' couches or floors or on the streets.

Other Native adults simply choose not to live in shelters or other housing where they would be subject to unfamiliar or restrictive rules. One interviewee referenced a Native woman who chose to live in a van rather than live in a recovery center because she was not interested in living subject to the rules of the facility. Similarly, some Native homeless choose to live outside with groups of other Native homeless over living in a shelter with others, and under the supervision of others, who do not understand or appreciate their culture. While many of these issues concerning the administration of rules applied by shelters are not unique to Native homeless, they are compounded by the distinct and justified distrust of institutions felt by Native community members who remember the physical and cultural trauma inflicted by Indian boarding schools, forced sterilization programs, the removal of Indian children from Native homes and communities through the foster care system, and a number of other damaging programs implemented by non-Native institutions that continue to traumatize Native peoples and inform their behaviors and choices.

One interviewee noted that, despite the efforts of the Native service providers to connect with and reach out to the Native community, some community members remain confused about how to access the services available to them and do not always know where they need to go to seek the help that they need. Additionally, as a result of the trauma experienced by the Native community and the impacts of that trauma on individuals' mental health and financial instability, many Natives who are homeless have criminal records or were recently released from jail, which makes them harder for Native service providers to assist. The interviewees noted that Native community members needed more case managers that look like them and relate to their issues, because they do not want to feel embarrassed about their situation or have to struggle to explain their issues or problems.

### **Impacts of the High Cost of Housing in King County**

The interviewees noted that living in Seattle and the urban core of King County has become increasingly unaffordable over the past 5 to 10 years, especially for those who are only working part-time or are college students. As a result, many Native individuals and families have had to move to south King County, Pierce or Snohomish Counties, or back to their home reservation or other nearby reservations. Native service providers based in Seattle are now providing more housing support to Native community members through vouchers or rent subsidies in communities such as Renton or Federal Way, which are in south King County

and Pierce County. According to one interviewee, this migration often results from a loss of income (for example, one of two partners loses their job), an increase in rent (especially where landlords will only offer 6-month leases to allow for more regular rent hikes or where rents are income-dependent), or both. One interviewee noted that some tenants will actually stay in a less desirable unit following a promotion at work just to avoid the impacts of the rent increase that would follow moving to a new complex charging income-based rent.

As a result of new funding dedicated to reducing homelessness in King County, Chief Seattle Club, Mother Nation, United Indians, and Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB) are able to provide a limited number of housing vouchers to or cover the move-in costs for some low-income Native individuals and families. For example, Mother Nation, in partnership with Catholic Community Services Pregnancy and Prenatal program, provides FUP (Family Unification Program) Housing Choice (Section 8) Vouchers through Washington State's Child Protection Services agency to Native families with children in order to allow them to overcome the high housing costs in the area. Other grants targeted toward preventing family homelessness, such as the Rapid Re-housing grant provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Building Changes, enable the Native service providers to assist Native families by helping them pay the high move-in costs (e.g., first and last month's rent and security deposit) within King County. These funds, however, are quickly exhausted in such an expensive housing market with so many families in need of assistance; Mother Nation, for example, spent over half of its available funds within the first quarter of 2019. To keep the program moving forward, Mother Nation made extra efforts to network and collaborate with non-Native agencies in Pierce and Snohomish who receive funds to assist Native individuals and families. Through a partnership to co-manage cases, Mother Nation participants were able to remain housed.

### **Ongoing Service Gaps**

Interviewees were asked to describe the current service gaps for the Native community in Seattle and the King County area. As part of this discussion, one interviewee recommended that those evaluating existing services and programs start with the following question: "Do these programs work for the Native community? If not, why not?" Below is a list of service gaps that were identified during the interviews.

#### Housing

The interviewees acknowledged a substantial need for more affordable housing units to house the Native community in Seattle, especially for housing that provides additional supportive services and space for community members to come together. One interviewee noted that families that have experienced significant trauma need permanent supportive housing with onsite case management where one-on-one counseling could be made available.

Most of the existing housing assistance programs and funding target families with children; there is currently a lack of housing services for other groups, including senior couples, single adults, students, etc. In addition, one interviewee noted that the traditional tools and methods currently used to assess housing instability risk do not embrace atypical scenarios and can erroneously exclude people who are in need of assistance because they appear too "normal." For example, a student couple might be deemed at low risk of housing instability because many questions focus on issues more commonly faced by those at risk of homelessness and

do not acknowledge the specific income- and landlord-related challenges that students face. It was also noted that Native students often face “income source discrimination” because landlords will not accept third-party payment and students often receive financial assistance or support from third parties.

To begin addressing this need to provide housing for all of the various subpopulations within the Native community, in cooperation with other partner entities, the Chief Seattle Club is currently planning to develop a total of 100 new housing units in downtown Seattle, as well as in the Northgate and SoDo (south of downtown) areas of Seattle. One of these facilities will house a full clinic with a pharmacy, which will help remove transportation-related barriers to healthcare for residents and ensure that the most vulnerable or immobile residents receive the medications and continuing care that they need to stay mentally and physically healthy. A portion of the housing developed by the Chief Seattle Club will be “low-barrier” housing for single adults, which will allow this underserved subpopulation of the Native community to receive stable housing without first having to resolve their substance abuse and other issues. SIHB is also developing housing for seniors, which will address their need for additional care and provide safe urban housing for these respected members of the Native community.

### Transportation

The interviewees acknowledged that the services available to the Native community in Seattle are primarily centralized near downtown Seattle and that issues concerning the cost of and access to transportation still presented significant challenges for the Native community in King County as a whole. One interviewee noted that, no matter how many passes or vouchers they have to provide to homeless or low-income community members, they always run out. Many members of the Native community live in service and transit “deserts” away from transportation lines and corridors and they have to spend hours on public transit to visit Native facilities in order to receive specific services or to culturally connect with other members of the Native community. One proposal to partially alleviate the cost barrier to transportation involves the creation of a reduced fare zone for low-income riders on buses, light rail, and street cars within a specified service area in the central core of Seattle.

### Mobile Services

Following their migration away from the urban core, those who live on the fringes of King County are often far from transportation lines and centralized service providers and frequently face difficulties securing jobs, finding childcare, accessing service providers in the city center, and engaging in cultural activities. As a result, these individuals and families become even further isolated within the suburban and ex-urban areas of King County and adjacent counties.

More mobile healthcare and other services, rather than facility-based service provision, should be provided in order to reach people who have moved to the edges of King County, who are homeless and unlikely to visit service providers, or who are not staying on or near public transportation routes. According to one interviewee, evidence for this need can be found in the data concerning high utilization of emergency rooms for primary care. A few service providers are already developing these services or are working with other providers to extend the mobile component of their service provision.

## Childcare

According to the interviewees, Native parents who are in the work force or attending school need more support in the form of childcare to allow them to be successful in their efforts, limit the negative impacts of instability on children, and remove this significant barrier to personal growth.

## Education and Youth Programs

Native students of all ages are in need of greater support. For example, Native youth in King County need more culturally relevant and accessible youth programs as well as safe spaces where they can finish their school work and receive assistance in completing the prerequisites for college admission. These students also need more opportunities to connect with each other across institutions. Public school districts should assign liaisons for Native students and Native organizations to properly address and understand Native student needs and effectively resolve any issues or conflicts that arise involving Native students in a culturally sensitive manner.

## Additional Gaps and Recommendations Provided by Interviewees

- An expansion of the spiritual healing services currently available will allow more urban Natives to connect with elders and people who have similar experiences, and engage in spiritual healing to address and overcome their specific trauma.
- Service providers should offer training on “basic urban life skills” for Native individuals who have just arrived in the city from their reservation or who are homeless. People who were just released from jail usually have nowhere to go and need transitional housing to avoid repeating past mistakes. However, many service providers find it hard to reach and assist people with criminal backgrounds, and new tools and rules will need to be developed to ensure that these members of the Native community are not ignored, abandoned, or denied essential services.

## **Suggested Features for SISC’s Planned Affordable Housing Facility**

The interviewees echoed SISC’s vision that, in addition to providing affordable housing, the redeveloped Pearl Warren Building could become a resource center for the Native population in the urban core of King County. A variety of vital services could be provided onsite, including, for example, services related to employment, health and wellness, daycare, substance abuse and addiction treatment, spiritual healing, and cultural support. They suggested that there should be space for on-site case management and one-on-one meetings with Native service providers.

It was also suggested that the building could become a space for community gathering and house a youth center where Native youth connect with each other and with elders. According to two of the interviewees, the redeveloped building should have controlled entry to prevent both unwanted visits and new occupancy-related hardships caused by extended family members moving in, especially for women and families who have experienced trauma.

One interviewee noted that planners must first ask the question “How did we get here?” and

use the answers to begin to empower and educate the community and work with it to define its future direction. This interviewee highlighted that the new facility must effectively and seamlessly incorporate all of the various critical services, which will likely require the assistance of Native and non-Native specialists to guide the site planning and development process and conduct workshops with service providers to determine how to better serve the Native community in cooperation with one another within the same facility.

In an effort to further target the development of the site to address the specific unmet needs of the Native community based on the housing facilities currently being planned or developed by other service providers (for example, the facility for seniors being planned by the Seattle Indian Health Board and the low-barrier housing for single adults being developed by Chief Seattle Club discussed above), one interviewee recommended that the housing developed by SISC be designated for Native families. Apartments within the development should range from 2- to 4-bedrooms in order to accommodate different family sizes and services supportive of families, such as childcare, preschool, afterschool activities, and workforce development, could be provided onsite. This approach reflects a coordinated effort by service providers to reduce service overlap where appropriate and maximize limited resources to meet the needs of the larger Native community.

### **Counting the Native Homeless Population in King County**

All of the interviewees indicated that the Point-In-Time Count of Homeless Persons for the City of Seattle and King County has consistently undercounted homeless Natives in recent years and that the Native community does not have faith in the accuracy of these numbers. It was recommended that the City and County consult Native providers and people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness to identify places where Natives and other people of color live or stay in order to obtain accurate counts at these locations. Those performing the counts could also gain the trust of homeless persons by bringing current or former members of the Native homeless community along with them during the count. Other proposals include instead using data in the King County Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS), which stores data on all homelessness services provided in King County, to determine the Native homeless population, or to authorize the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) to conduct the count in a properly targeted, culturally-appropriate and inclusive manner.

### **Coordination of Native Service Provider Activities**

The Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness, initiated by the Chief Seattle Club in 2015, allows Native service providers to coordinate their discussion of policy and provide feedback to City, County, and other government agencies. Coalition members include United Indians of All Tribes, Mother Nation, and the Seattle Indian Health Board. According to the interviewees, regular Coalition meetings enable member organizations to discuss their progress in achieving defined goals, identify specific funding needs, and coordinate their efforts. The Coalition also seeks to actively engage non-profits, Native organizations, government agencies, tribal leaders, and philanthropic partners.

As a result of the Coalition's efforts to promote cooperation among service providers, the interviewees explained that case managers and other front line staff of the Native service providers in King County began to meet on a monthly basis to discuss current issues and share their knowledge and experiences with each other. Mother Nation hosted the first

Native Providers Monthly Circles in July, 2018 for front line Native staff working with the homeless community. The Native Provider's Circle has been hosted by multiple organizations and extended to much broader service areas. Some of the staff deal with housing and homelessness prevention issues at both the community and individual levels and others work more directly with mental and behavioral health issues such as trauma and addiction. According to one interviewee, many of these staff members have experienced trauma themselves, and, in an effort to promote healing and deeper bonds within the group, many of them participate in sweats (a ceremony of prayer and healing within a sweat lodge) together.

A critical piece of the discussion among participants in the monthly meeting of service providers, according to one interviewee, concerns how to ensure that cultural issues and generational trauma are effectively and appropriately incorporated into the management of housing, domestic violence, substance abuse recovery, and other programs, including those operated by city, county, and state agencies. While each of the participating organizations also provides certain unique services to the Native community in King County and the surrounding area (for example, United Indians focuses on early childhood development and foster care support, while Cowlitz Tribal Health addresses childcare, counseling, and addiction), the services that these organizations provide in the area of homelessness prevention do exhibit some degree of overlap. The fact that multiple service providers are involved in preventing homelessness demonstrates the magnitude of the problem, the importance of the varied backgrounds and experiences of the different case managers to connecting to people in need, and the need for these services to be physically dispersed throughout the large geographic area encompassed by King County.

### **Working with Non-Native Providers and Decision-Makers**

The interviewees noted that the coordination of efforts described above has been successful in building connections among Native service providers and establishing relationships with funding sources and non-Native service providers, but they also expressed a desire to better connect and build bridges between the Native service providers and representatives of local government and non-Native service providers. While Native service providers are not necessarily excluded from certain discussions or meetings, they are also not always specifically invited and their critical roles as service providers in the local community are not overtly acknowledged. Additionally, it was suggested that Native service providers must be involved in policy formulation and program planning so that they can help lead and guide these processes, rather than simply being briefed on the outcomes of these processes and decisions made after the fact. Invitations to participate at late stages in these processes and the assignment of a less-than-equal role in critical decision-making are perceived to signal that meeting coordinators are seeking to procedurally "check the box" that reflects that Native input was at least symbolically sought but that they are not genuinely interested in learning about Native cultural issues or concerns, much less incorporating them into the final outcomes. On a positive note, one interviewee noted that five years ago her organization had to ask to participate in most processes involving local government or non-Native service providers, but now most of the individuals organizing these discussions and committees understand that her organization's participation in their meetings is critical to demonstrating both the legitimacy and inclusivity of their processes.

One suggestion to help address this gap was to organize workshops addressing how Native and non-Native service providers could collaborate to provide better service to the Native community. One interviewee also suggested that a coalition comprised of Native organizations, city-, county-, state-level government agencies, and the spectrum of service providers should be formed to address the most pressing issues among urban Natives, such as the homelessness crisis. As noted above, the Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness is an example of this type of organization, but additional sustained efforts to actively engage non-Native service providers and decision-makers and provide training to them regarding the specific needs and cultural characteristics of the Native community are necessary.

The interviewees highlighted that non-Native providers need to increase their knowledge and awareness of Natives' generational trauma and the long-term impacts of trauma on people's lives, behaviors, and choices in order to fairly and appropriately serve them. A better understanding of cultural issues can help non-Native service providers better understand the individuals they are serving and develop properly tailored services. Native organizations such as Chief Seattle Club, Mother Nation, the Seattle Indian Health Board, and United Indians provide such training and encourage local government officials and non-Native service providers to participate in training sessions.

One interviewee noted that the City of Seattle's Human Services Department had recently engaged Native service providers to conduct training concerning historical trauma. Future training sessions concerning domestic violence and trauma will also be provided to police and prosecutors to facilitate greater understanding of the impacts of these issues within the context of both day-to-day interactions between officers and the public and the treatment of individuals within the larger criminal justice system. In addition, the reprogramming of the City's Homeless Investment funding helped spur City engagement with Native service providers. However, the interviewee also noted that the outreach and engagement of City staff had not yet been matched by their counterparts working for King County. While conducting training sessions is vital to educating non-Native public officials and program staff regarding the unique cultural issues and impacts of trauma within the Native community, and hopefully improves the relationship between these employees and members of the Native community, one interviewee noted that ongoing relationship-building between Native service providers and representatives of city and county government remained the key to ensuring that Native issues are fully considered and incorporated into future policy development and program planning efforts.

## **A Community Member's Journey out of Homelessness**

In order to add the perspective of a Native individual who had directly experienced homelessness in King County, survey coordinators conducted an interview with Arlene Zahne, a Native woman in her fifties who recently ended 15 years of homelessness in Seattle. She has been staying in a clean and sober transitional house for the past 1.5 years with the help of Mother Nation and their partnership with Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, the owner of Spirit Journey House (formerly Native Women In Recovery House).<sup>30</sup> Arlene and other residents of the Spirit Journey House receive cultural healing services and wrap-around housing assistance from Mother Nation. She currently works as a mentee finance clerk for Mother Nation. She shared her personal journey from homelessness to

stable housing as well as her recommendations for service providers and those planning the redevelopment of the Pearl Warren Building. Her personal experience reiterated many of the themes identified in the interviews with the service providers.

Overall, the interviewee would like to see services become more accessible to the homeless community. When she was homeless, she rarely used any services (other than hospital emergency rooms) since she did not really know about them and could not access many of them. She indicated that most of the medical service providers did not provide targeted services for the homeless community, other than the REACH<sup>31</sup> program. She recommended that service providers offer more mobile services and expand their reach to the homeless communities, especially those that other agencies do not serve. She also suggested that healthcare workers could provide more information on the other services that might be available to the homeless community. For example, they might help homeless veterans become aware of and better utilize their Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits. She suggested that service providers receive more training on how to approach some of the key issues within the homeless community, such as poor health and drug/alcohol abuse.

The interviewee confirmed that the fear of separation prevented families from staying in homeless shelters. During her times living on the street, the interviewee did not stay in shelters because she could not stay with her partner. She also did not feel welcomed or safe in the shelters and noted that racial tension led to some of the conflicts between those staying in shelters.

The interviewee emphasized that cultural healing programs were critical for her personal journey out of homelessness. Transitional housing provided a stable foundation, and, more importantly, smudging, crafts, sobriety campouts, chemical dependency classes and other activities that she participated in, along with help and guidance from elders during these activities, provided a strong sense of culture and community. She recommended that, in addition to transitional housing, services that contribute to lasting stability, such as counseling services, wrap-around services, and cultural healing, be provided to the homeless community.

The interviewee suggested that the redeveloped Pearl Warren Building site could provide an array of onsite services, such as a clinic, substance abuse treatment, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings, wellness classes, and education programs. She recommended including a community/culture center where the Native community could practice cultural activities, such as smudging or even sweats (use of a sweat lodge for prayer and healing). She also suggested that staff should become familiar with each resident's unique situation to improve their ability to engage with and serve them, recommended that security and controlled access should be put in place to keep residents safe, and noted that the facility should be designed with enhanced accessibility features for the elderly and the disabled.

<sup>30</sup> The Native Women Recovery House is the first Recovery House for Native Women in Washington state in an urban setting. Residents named it "Spirit Journey House". The program has a success rate of 4 out of 5 women receiving permanent housing.

<sup>31</sup> The REACH program (<https://www.evergreentx.org/>), administered by Evergreen Treatment Services, provides street-based, case management and outreach services to adults living outside in the greater Seattle area.

# Summary of Native Student Focus Group Discussion

On Feb 26, 2019, survey coordinators conducted a focus group discussion with eleven Native college student participants at wəłəbʔaltx™ (the Intellectual House) on the campus of the University of Washington (UW). Two freshmen, three juniors, three sophomores, two seniors, and one recent graduate joined the conversation. Participants ranged in age from 19-25 years old.

The discussion focused on Native students' experiences in finding and securing safe, comfortable and affordable housing in Seattle and the King County area. The following questions were used to guide the discussion.

1. What do you think is unique about being a Native student? What are some of the advantages and challenges?
2. How important is housing to your college life in general? Do you know anyone who is struggling with finding a place that they like?
3. What would your ideal housing situation be? Is it important for you to live with other Native people?
4. What kinds of services/resources do you use on or off campus? Are they helpful?
5. What type of services can make freshmen students' transition easier?

The overarching themes that emerged during the focus group are summarized below.

## Uniqueness of Native Students

The focus group participants noted that Natives were the smallest racial/ethnic group on campus and considered the small size of their community a "double-edged sword". On one hand, Native students had a strong sense of community. They knew each other personally and often helped each other in times of difficulty. On the other hand, participants felt that their voices were not always heard and that their community needed more representation. Additionally, limited representation among the student body and staff was viewed as contributing to a unique challenge for Native students as they transition and adapt to college life: being surrounded by people who do not understand their culture, Native students often have to carry the emotional burden of explaining their cultural identity.

Most of the participants grew up in rural and remote areas and had never lived in a metropolitan area like Seattle. Many found it challenging to move away from their support systems and resources back home, adapt to a new lifestyle, and handle the competitive academic environment at the same time. Student groups such as First Nations were considered a strong source of support among Native students at UW. However, it was also noted that not all Native students at UW received support from, were invited to participate in, or were aware of Native student groups. The school's enrollment database may not acknowledge students who did not self-identify as Native on admission forms or who are not members of a federally-recognized tribe as being Native, which can make direct outreach more challenging.

## **Unstable Housing Situation**

Participants considered stable housing a critical aspect of college life. The group discussed a number of unstable housing situations experienced by their fellow Native students, including being homeless, living in a van, and being kicked out of the dorm. A lack of stable housing had caused high levels of stress and anxiety and brought some of the students in these difficult situations to the edge of dropping out. Participants noted that homelessness among Native students was more prevalent than school administrators and even other members of the Native community likely understood. One participant mentioned that she had been homeless for one and a half years and the full details of her situation were only known by two close friends.

## **Ideal Housing Situation**

When asked to describe their ideal housing situation, respondents unanimously agreed that they would prefer to live with fellow Native students and live closer to or more connected with their indigeneity. Many Native students at UW already live in the dorms near the Intellectual House, a longhouse-style facility that is a hub for Native activities on the UW campus. Furthermore, participants preferred a place that had no restrictions preventing them from practicing traditional culture and a place with which they felt a cultural connection. One participant indicated that she knew of students who got into trouble for smudging (a ceremonial burning of herbs for spiritual cleansing or blessing) in their dorms. Another participant stated that she had never tried smudging in her dorm because she was afraid of ending up in the same situation.

Proximity to campus and services was also considered a critical feature of ideal housing. Participants explained that convenient housing locations meant that they could avoid commuting during the busy academic year and would not have to worry about transportation when visiting service providers. Participants also highlighted the importance of affordable housing and a need for transitional housing.

## **Insufficient Support**

A lack of support for Native students from the university emerged as a strong theme during the discussion. Participants noted that Native students relied on word of mouth to gather information about resources and services. Participants expressed a strong desire for one or multiple “Native Counselors” to act as elders to whom they could always turn for support. Participants mentioned that there were only a few Native faculty members on campus. Staff members Lisaaksiichaa “Ross” Braine, Tribal Liaison at UW, and Scott Pinkham, Counseling Services Coordinator in the College of Engineering, had been their go-to persons for assistance. However, participants also raised concerns that these two staff members might be overwhelmed by the high volume of student requests.

Participants discussed their specific experiences with on-campus services including housing, financial aid, and health and wellness. Overall, participants were confused about their options and would like to better understand what services are available, how to access these services, and the associated costs. None of the participants were aware of any on-campus resources or services for housing support. Participants noted that some wellness services were often backlogged, and one participant stated that she did not seek medical help in time because she was worried that she could not afford the services.

In addition, participants raised concerns about a lack of financial literacy among Native students. Some students have taken out loans without realizing their implications and discovered that even small loans can become unmanageable over time. Several participants stated that they had become very stressed out when they received alerts from Student Fiscal Services regarding delayed payments. One participant considered the alerts to be a type of threat to discontinue their education.

### **Recommendations to Help Freshmen Transition to College Life**

Participants from different academic years described various programs that they were offered as freshmen, but none of the programs were considered particularly successful and they did not “stick” across the years. Participants offered a range of recommendations to help Native freshmen more successfully transition into college life. Some suggested forming First-year Interest Groups (FIGs) specifically for Native students or for students coming from the same parts of the country, and some suggested more outreach and advertisement of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP camps) to increase student awareness and participation. Many suggested that Native students should consider taking classes offered by the Department of American Indian Studies to get to know fellow Native students.



# Limitations of the Current Study

Following is a list of limitations presented by the methodology and data of this study.

- As mentioned in the Methodology section, the Housing Needs Assessment survey was designed as an intercept survey, which allowed for cost-effective implementation and an assessment of the needs and wants of the American Indians and Alaska Natives in the King County area who visited the events, facilities, and the SISC website where the survey was made available. However, the survey cannot be used or presented as a representative data set characterizing the needs and demographics of the entire AIAN population in the King County area.
- There is evidence of non-response bias among males: only 29.5% of respondents were male, yet they make up 48.4% of the AIAN population in King County.<sup>32</sup>
- A number of respondents reported what appeared to be inaccurate income levels. Thirty-six respondents reported an annual income ranging from \$1-200 and monthly expenses exceeding \$1,500, or reported working full-time and earning less than the minimum wage of the area (\$17,250 annually). It appeared likely that some respondents only provided the first two digits of their annual salary (e.g., \$55 instead of \$55,000) or entered a monthly income instead of an annual income. To protect the anonymity of survey respondents, respondents were not asked for their name or contact information on the survey form itself, so Big Water Consulting was unable to follow up with respondents to confirm their income information. These responses were flagged as needing reconciliation and were not included in the results provided in the report.

<sup>32</sup>ACS 2011-2015. This is most recent year range available for this statistic for AI/AN alone or in combination with one or more other races.

# Recommendations

**Affordable housing.** Survey respondents, student focus group participants, and interviewees all expressed a significant need for more affordable housing. Housing assistance programs should expand their services and housing options for subpopulations other than just families with children, and update the tools used for housing instability risk assessment to incorporate less-common scenarios and more fully embrace the entire spectrum of housing needs.

## **Pearl Warren Building Redevelopment Project.**

### Unit Size

Based on the survey results, nearly a third of the demand for affordable units came from people who lived by themselves, a quarter from two-person households, and another quarter from 3-4 person households. While these results are illustrative only of the population that completed this survey, survey respondents exhibited the types and levels of need that SISC seeks to address with its proposed project. The spectrum of needs and desires reflected in these results could be used as an initial baseline for the design of the Pearl Warren Building redevelopment.

### Transportation

Affordable transportation is essential for accessing education, services, and employment. Any new affordable housing development should be close to public transportation and convenient parking options. The Pearl Warren Building already has easy access to two Interstate highways (I-5 and I-90) and is near multiple King County Metro lines. SISC will need to perform additional research into the parking demands of potential residents to determine how to incorporate or address that element in project design.

### Accessibility

The redeveloped Pearl Warren Building site and other newly developed housing developments should incorporate handicap accessible features, such as ramps, grab bars, and wide hallways, into their design.

### Controlled Entry

SISC should incorporate controlled access and secured entry into the redeveloped Pearl Warren facility in order to prevent visits from uninvited (and potentially dangerous) guests and extended family members who may attempt to move in and create new occupancy-related hardships for residents, especially for women and families who have experienced trauma.

## A Service Hub

Service providers and surveyed community members shared SISC’s vision that the redeveloped Pearl Warren building could and should become a hub for resources and services in the city center. To actualize that vision, it was suggested that the building should provide space for on-site services and case management, youth activities, and community gatherings.

**Education.** Greater support is needed for Native students to continue their education and thrive in academic settings. SISC and other service providers can make additional efforts to connect current and potential students of all ages to each other and to relevant services such as financial aid and housing support.

Living and learning communities that provide groups of students with specialized academic and social services have been found to be effective in reducing dropout rates and increasing students’ academic performance.<sup>33</sup> Living and learning communities help students connect their social and academic lives and maintain connections to their cultural identity. *wəłəbʔaltx*<sup>w</sup> (the Intellectual House) at the University of Washington (UW) provides a cultural hub for Native students on campus but, as a non-residential facility, does not provide Native housing on or near campus. The redeveloped Pearl Warren facility could potentially become a living and learning community for Native students in the city, especially for adjacent universities such as Seattle University. This community space would also allow Native students to connect with each other across institutions.

**Health and wellness services.** Health and wellness-related services were the most used and the most needed services by survey respondents. Cultural healing was the most frequently desired service among all wellness services and was referenced by multiple interviewees. This is an area where SISC could help connect the population in need with existing services and support further development of culturally relevant approaches.

**Services for families.** Connecting those who take care of children to relevant services effectively allows these programs to reach two or more additional people per recipient, potentially contributing to the future success of children and youth and making a larger positive impact among the local Native population.

SISC could consider connecting residents of the redeveloped Pearl Warren facility to family-related services, including services provided onsite. Given that the Seattle Indian Health Board is across the street from the existing building and planned facility, there is great potential for joint programs in areas such as youth services, nutrition, family services and WIC, etc.

**Addressing homelessness.** Programs that provide “low-barrier” housing are one of the key aspects of addressing homelessness. The Housing First model<sup>34</sup>, which proposes connecting those experiencing homelessness with permanent housing without preconditions and barriers

<sup>33</sup> Wolf, P. S., David, A., Butler-Barnes, S. T., & Zile-Tamsen, V. (2017). American Indian/Alaskan Native college dropout: Recommendations for increasing retention and graduation. *Journal on Race, Inequality, and Social Mobility in America*, 1(1), 1.

<sup>34</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>

to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements, has been found to be successful in other cities and could be considered by SISC and its partner organizations when planning for future housing assistance programs. In addition, onsite services and cultural healing programs should be provided to achieve lasting stability.

**Mobile and accessible services.** Services need to be mobile in order to better reach the homeless community, as well as people who have moved to the edges of King County and/ or are not staying on or near public transportation routes. Providers of services that are not mobile should also expand their outreach to underserved homeless individuals and groups in order to make them aware of the services that are available to them.

**A coalition of service providers and stakeholders.** Coalitions with participation from Native organizations, city-, county-, state-level government agencies, service providers, tribal leaders, and philanthropic partners should be formed, or grown out of the existing Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness, in order to better serve the urban Native community. A better understanding of Natives' historical trauma and its impacts can help non-Native service providers better understand the individuals they are serving and formulate more appropriately tailored services. Native organizations would welcome more non-Native providers' participation in training sessions addressing Native cultural issues and the impacts of generational trauma.



# Areas of Further Research

This study provides an overview of the needs of the AIAN population in King County. During the course of the study, many topics meriting further investigation emerged:

- **Barriers to accessing services.** Only a small portion of child caretakers were accessing family-related services. Similarly, a majority of surveyed veterans were not taking advantage of their VA benefits. What are their barriers to accessing these services? How can SISC and other service providers better reach these populations to increase their usage of support services?
- **Support for education.** A majority of the respondents were interested in further education. What types of support are needed for people to advance their education? What type of training opportunities would help people rise out of unemployment?
- **Quality of care.** Services related to health and wellness were the most commonly used and needed by survey respondents and their families. Is the AIAN population receiving quality care? How can SISC and other service providers address the unmet needs?
- **Movement of respondents.** Respondents moved frequently within the past five years. Why did they move so frequently? Does this housing instability impact their employment or is it caused by it?



PREPARED BY

**BIG WATER**  
**CONSULTING**

Seattle Indian Services Commission  
140 Lakeside Ave. Ste. A - #339  
Seattle, WA 98122-6538  
206.714.4234  
[www.seattleindianservices.org](http://www.seattleindianservices.org)