

## **NIHB's Collaborative Efforts Help Put First Kids 1<sup>st</sup>**

The National Indian Health Board believes that every child is sacred. That's why we partnered with the National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, and the National Indian Education Association to create First Kids 1<sup>st</sup>.

First Kids 1<sup>st</sup>, or FKF, seeks to cultivate and nurture strategies and policies that build and strengthen equitable and local supports for vulnerable Native children in their communities. As Indian Country continues to transform its public health systems to meet the needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives, it is vital that youth be included in that process. As part of a youth engagement model, developing advocacy and policy that is youth-driven and youth-informed, NIHB inaugurated our first Youth Advisory Board in March 2017!

The board advises the National Indian Health Board's Board of Directors and staff and consists of 24 Native youth, 2 from each of 12 different Indian Health Service Areas across the U.S. Members participate throughout the one year commitment by attending the Native Youth Health Summit, participating in quarterly webinars, presenting virtual Indian health and advocacy trainings, and quarterly teleconferences. Because this is the first TYHAB, the inaugural cohort will have the unique opportunity to be involved in developing the TYHAB's agenda, bylaws, and other founding documents. TYHAB participants will also be paired up with Native undergraduate and graduate student mentors throughout their time on the advisory board.

As part of FKF's efforts to create more information on the health needs of Tribal youth, NIHB will assess, train, and provide resources for Native youth and their families to develop life skills needed to be emotionally and physically healthy. NIHB also works to improve behavioral health by working directly with Tribes and to cultivate a Tribal medical workforce by working to reduce barriers to education.

First Kids 1<sup>st</sup> aims to be a vital resource for Tribal leaders and public health professionals by cultivating a body of knowledge on AI/AN children and families. Currently, there is a lack of specific data driven reports on the health of children and youth in Indian Country. By advocating for systemic policy change, providing policy analysis, collecting data, and helping create an educational pathway to medical professions, First Kids 1<sup>st</sup> is helping youth create #HealthyCommunities in Indian Country.

Please read more about FKF's policy agenda [HERE](#).