



SEATTLE
URBAN NATIVE
NONPROFITS

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Seattle-King County Urban Natives

**2% OF POPULATION
ARE NATIVE PEOPLE**
OUT OF 1.9 MILLION PEOPLE IN KING COUNTY

Native People were the first residents of the area now known as King County, and Seattle is a city that visibly celebrates its Indigenous heritage. Yet Native presence has been over the years actively resisted, obscured, ignored and even prohibited within its borders.

Today's urban American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) in King County grapple with a number of serious issues including:

- Persistent invisibility in funding circle.
- Disproportionately poor health outcomes.
- Elevated rates of homelessness.

Despite these and other challenges, the Native community in and around Seattle is multicultural and vibrant, and increasingly served by Native-led nonprofit organizations providing culturally attuned services and support.

¹ 2014 Report -Together we can lift up the sky. United Way

² 2019 Report -Seattle Indian Health Board-Policy Profile

³ First Nations Development Institute

⁴ (NOTE: In the 2019 American Community Survey, the total population for King County had increased to 2,252,782, and 1%—or 22,527—identified as AI/AN alone. Not sure how to get the “in combination” number? Number looks low.)

⁵ United Indian Health Institute Report

⁶ (Seattle King County Point in Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness, 2018 (online). (Note: in the 2020 report, that percentage had grown to 15%)

FUNDING CHALLENGES

Native-led organizations, which play a vital role in Indigenous communities, are chronically underfunded.³

Chronic Underfunding: Although overall foundation giving at large steeply increased between 2006 and 2012, funds to AI/AN organizations and causes decreased by nearly a quarter in the same time period.³

Only .23% of philanthropic funds are awarded to Native-led nonprofit organizations (NPOs), despite Native People representing 2% of the national population and are among communities of greatest need.³

Pieced Together Funding: Unlike federally recognized tribes, urban Native populations do not have the government-to-government relationship with the U.S. government that allows them to make their case for assistance. Instead, they are forced to compete for discretionary funding when it's available, piecing together local, state, federal and private resources to try to meet enormous need.¹

False Perceptions and Assumptions: The perception persists among funders that Native-led organizations lack the capacity to handle large investments. An interview with funders revealed these factors for this chronic underfunding:

- A lack of knowledge about the history of Native People, which leads to a disconnection from Native communities.
- A held the perception, common in philanthropy, that Native communities have access to federal funds and casino money, and therefore do not need philanthropic dollars
- An assumption that all Native People live on reservations and thus fail to incorporate Native communities within their urban strategies.
- A persistent perception that Native-led organizations lack the capacity to handle large investments.³

**JUST .23% PHILANTHROPIC DOLLARS
GO TO NATIVE CAUSES**
NATIVE PEOPLE ARE 2% OF THE POPULATION





DEMOGRAPHICS

Hundreds of tribes are represented by the Seattle-King County urban Native population.

Tribal Affiliations: The Seattle urban Native population includes two federally recognized tribes, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and the Snoqualmie Tribe, but hundreds of tribes are also represented by the urban Native population. Historically, in the area now known as King County the indigenous peoples included the Duwamish, Suquamish, Nisqually, Snoqualmie, and Muckleshoot.¹

Statistics:

- 7 out of 10 AI/AN live in urban areas¹
- Of the 1.9 million people living in King County, 39,117 or 2% identify as AI/AN alone or in combination with another race.⁴
- 24% of the AI/AN population lives in poverty, compared to 10.2% of the general population.¹
- The median age of the AI/AN population is 30.7 years compared to 37.1 years for the general population.¹

24% LIVE IN POVERTY COMPARED TO 10.2% IN THE GENERAL POPULATION

Housing

Gentrification: Due to rising income disparity and gentrification the AI/AN population in King County is not clustered in the urban center but has moved to south, north and western sections of the county.¹

Lack of Home Ownership: There is a much lower rate of home ownership among the AI/AN population in King County with only 36.8% owning their homes versus 59.9% of the general population.¹

Homelessness: Despite representing just 2% of the population in King County AI/AN make up 15% of the population experiencing homelessness.^{1,6}

Household Size: Rather than larger families, 1-2 person households comprise 77% of total AI/AN units served by the Seattle Housing Authority.¹

10% OF HOMELESS ARE NATIVE IN SEATTLE KING COUNTY
NATIVE PEOPLE ARE 2% OF THE POPULATION

OUR COMMUNITY

Health

AI/AN health indicators in Washington and throughout the country are consistently lower than that of the general population.

Food Insecurity: 31% of AI/AN 6th graders in Seattle public schools lack access to breakfast, contributing to childhood hunger and community food insecurity.²

Health Disparities: Statistically significant disparities exist between AI/ANs and the general population in education, poverty status, unemployment, asthma, obesity, alcohol use (binge drinking), smoking, teen birth rate, infant mortality, mortality, suicide, social support, mental distress and access to healthcare.⁵

Co-Morbidity and Mortality: Urban Natives experience a disproportionate burden of disease, including chronic disease, infectious disease, and unintended injury with extraordinarily high levels of co-morbidity and mortality.²

31% FOOD INSECURE 6TH GRADERS LACK ACCESS TO BREAKFAST
IN THE SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Education

Low Preschool Attendance: Native children have lower rates of preschool attendance between the ages of three and four than their Non-Native peers.²

Higher Rates of Discipline: Native students in Washington are more than twice as likely to be disciplined than Non-Hispanic White students.²

Fewer High School Diplomas: 21.6% of Native people in King County do not have a high school diploma, compared to 5.8% of Non-Hispanic White people.²

Despite attempts to assimilate and erase Indigenous ways of life, tribal and urban Native communities are transforming early learning and youth and adult education systems by revitalizing Indigenous culture, traditions, and knowledge to strengthen protective factors for Indian communities and close the achievement gap.²

21.6% NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA COMPARED TO 5.8% OF NON-HISPANIC WHITE PEOPLE



SEATTLE URBAN NATIVE NONPROFITS

Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits (SUNN) collaborative convenes and strengthens Native-led organizations throughout King County to build collective power through dialog, education, action, and advocacy. To increase the well-being of our urban Native family, we call upon Indigenous strength, resilience, and wisdom to address systemic inequities and galvanize community-centered solutions.

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