A Capital Campaign to Build Housing and Social Services
for Seattle’s Native Homeless Population
How do we bridge the gap for people who are struggling in their Native land?

The face of homelessness is as varied as each individual story. Native people enduring homelessness are far more likely to successfully stabilize their lives if they are in culturally appropriate and community-oriented housing.

Seattle and King County has declared a state of emergency in response to the growing homelessness crisis. Today, Native Americans face the highest poverty rate of any racial group in King County. Of the 12,000 homeless people in the County over 10% are American Indian or Alaskan Native.

In Seattle, the only major American city to bear the name of a legendary chief, Natives are SEVEN times more likely to be homeless than whites.
We Are Still Here

The impacts of history inform conditions today

For Europeans, the Northwest was a “discovery,” which for the Native people who had lived there for thousands of years had profound and often harmful impact that is visible today. Today, more Native people live in urban areas than reservations, and access to comfortable, affordable, safe, and culturally-appropriate housing is limited.

To solve Seattle’s housing crisis and Native homelessness, we must invest in Native-led solutions.

A Welcoming Place for Fifty Years

Since 1970, Chief Seattle Club has provided a sacred space to nurture, affirm and renew the spirit of urban Native people. The day center offers free-of-charge wellness programs including health care, nutritious meals, and individualized case management. Daily cultural activities include talking circles, drumming and singing, smudging, and traditional food days. Member-led programs bring back what has been lost for many: Native traditions.

Providing affordable housing for our Native relatives is about more than just one building. It is about re-establishing trust – building community, nurturing stability, mobilizing Native people for jobs, and healing intergenerational trauma. It is about honoring Native history, customs and traditions. It means creating sacred space where all Native people have access to the best health care, and a home.

“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”

- Chief Seattle (c. 1786 – 1866)
Who is a Chief Seattle Club “Member”?

Our members come from 203 tribes, with most from Alaska and the Pacific Northwest.

IN 2018...

- 63% HOMELESS
- 22% ELDER
- 10% VETERANS
- 47% FEMALE
- 75% SUFFER FROM MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES

“A Day in the Life at Chief Seattle Club

Imagine you have spent the night on the streets or in a shelter. You may be cold or lonely but you know when you arrive at Chief Seattle Club you will be in a safe place where you can get the help you need.

Located in Seattle’s historic Pioneer Square district, Chief Seattle Club provides a safe and sacred place to rest, revive, and nurture the spirit of urban Native people in need. We believe in the power of our ancestral ways, and preserving them means fostering a sense of community.

The Missing Piece

For decades, Chief Seattle Club has worked with partner organizations to get homeless members into housing. We now have an opportunity to build housing adjacent to our current site and create the largest affordable housing designed for Native Americans in the city. As our membership has grown and we have built capacity in our organization, offering Native-designed and Native-run housing is the critical next step.
ʔałʔał translates to “home” in Lushootseed, the Native language of Seattle-area Coast Salish people. The eight-story building will be constructed next door to our current location at 2nd and Yesler Avenue.

Coast Salish peoples have been on these lands since time immemorial and their presence will be indelibly-marked on the building’s design. Outside, a Welcome Pole will greet Club members, thousands of daily pedestrians, and neighbors. While inside, furnishings and gathering spaces will be inspired by local customs and traditions.

“This project honors indigenous people, the cultural heritage of the Coast Salish people, as well as the diversity of Chief Seattle Club’s Native clients.”

- Johnpaul Jones, Choctaw Elder & Architect

Housing

80 studio apartments are earmarked for members living at or below 30% of Seattle’s area median income. 60 of the units are designated for homeless members, and 10 are for veterans. Based on our member feedback there’s also a small communal gathering area on each floor, a place to share with others or to reflect.

Health Clinic

Seattle Indian Health Board is leasing a new 2,600 square foot clinic inside the building. SIHB will offer six exam rooms, a traditional healing space, two talking rooms, a pharmacy, and staffing offices.

Expanded Space

The Club gets an additional 5,000 square feet for expanded services to reach more people in need, including ten case managers, four meeting rooms, staff offices, an art room, and a large community gathering room.

Café + Art Gallery

Native Works, our social enterprise program, will operate a 1,228 square foot café for Pioneer Square’s neighbors. The new café offers on-the-job training for Club members.
Let’s Build ṭalʔal Together

Join us in building housing and community for the people whose land was stripped from their ancestors.

Together we can make a difference.

“This expansion, this optimistic, forward-looking campaign to grow the facility right at the core of this remarkable city – to not just help solve the problem of Native homelessness, but to celebrate Native life that we all spring from. We all need to get on board with that.”

- Martha Kongsgaard, ṭalʔal Supporter