



**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

A young girl with dark hair and a large blue bow is captured in a dynamic pose, swinging a baseball bat. She is wearing a grey t-shirt with a graphic of a bird in flight. The background is a blurred green field, suggesting an outdoor sports setting. The text "THE EVOLUTION OF NATIVE HEALTHCARE" is overlaid in large, bold, green letters with a black outline. The letter 'I' in "NATIVE" is replaced by a small green graphic of a Native American headdress.

# THE EVOLUTION OF NATIVE HEALTHCARE

**FIVE YEAR ANNIVERSARY EDITION**





# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

For the last 13 years, there has been a strong movement in health policy to move from a fee-for-service system through various intermediate stages to one that is more accountable to the health of a population. WCHS is in a unique position to make this idea a reality. How, might you ask?

***Because we are an indigenous healthcare organization with strong ties to our community.***

***Because a significant portion of our funding is already population health-focused.***

***Because our scope of services encompasses prevention, primary care, and acute care.***

***Because we are motivated to evolve to a better system of care.***

The great football coach Vince Lombardi was known to welcome his freshman athletes by reviewing what a football is, its shape, material, and flight characteristics. In other words, he started with the basics and built from there. WCHS is also building its foundations from the physical plan to electronic systems to employee onboarding and training. The vision or goal, however, is clear: "To lead the nation in health for indigenous people."

Being at WCHS at this stage in our evolution is a distinct privilege. I thank the board, Tribal Council, and all my colleagues at WCHS. I am grateful for the many partners we collaborate with from healthcare, academia, donors, and government; without their participation, we could not do what we do. For all who read this report, I hope it is informative and even inspirational. I hope you feel inspired to continue to work with us, and if this is an introduction, I hope you are inspired to start working with us.

Pinagigi,

David Edwards





# THE EVOLUTION OF NATIVE HEALTHCARE

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# EMBRACING OUR SHARED FUTURE

## DEFINING AN OVERARCHING MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

WCHS continued to write new chapters. In 2023, in an effort to increase collaboration throughout the organization and provide a more holistic approach to health care, WCHS established a single unified Mission, Vision, and Values statement to complement the individual Twelve Clans Unity Hospital and Winnebago Public Health Department purpose statements that came before.

## OUR MISSION

**CREATE AND SUSTAIN A HEALTHY COMMUNITY.**

## OUR VISION

**TO LEAD THE NATION IN HEALTH FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.**

## OUR VALUES

- ***CULTURALLY CENTERED***
- ***SELF-DETERMINATION***
- ***INTEGRITY***
- ***HEALING***
- ***INNOVATION***
- ***COMPASSION***

## FORGING AHEAD

As we articulate this vision for the future, we stand resolute in our dedication to creating a healthier community. The forthcoming pages of this annual report will delve into the tangible ways we are bringing this vision to life, exploring our achievements, challenges, and the ongoing pursuit of excellence in indigenous healthcare.



# CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF PROGRESS & COMMITMENT

## A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

In the heart of Winnebago, Nebraska, the Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System (WCHS) marked a monumental milestone in July of 2023 - its 5th anniversary. The celebration unfolded with a dynamic program and warm reception, bringing together the community, notable guests, and leaders to commemorate a transformative journey.

This celebratory event culminated with a traditional meal, symbolizing community and unity. Attendees enjoyed buffalo meat and picnic fare, fostering a sense of shared achievement. CEO David Edwards extended his congratulations and gratitude to the communities served, acknowledging the trust placed in WCHS for their health and well-being.





# SELF-GOVERNANCE & CMS CERTIFICATION

## A JOURNEY OF SELF-GOVERNANCE

The journey began with the Winnebago Tribe's decisive action in July 2018, taking over the reins of what was once the Omaha-Winnebago Indian Health Services (IHS) Hospital. Faced with the revocation of CMS certification due to inadequate care, the Winnebago Tribe, custodians of the Public Health Department for over 30 years, exercised their right to self-governance. In 2018, the Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System emerged, supporting both the Winnebago Public Health Department and Twelve Clans Unity Hospital.

## THE ROAD TO CERTIFICATION

This certification is more than a regulatory benchmark—it is a symbol of excellence, accountability, and the fulfillment of a vision that began with the Tribe's decision to reclaim its healthcare system in 2015. After years of systemic planning, organizational alignment, and a relentless focus on quality improvement, WCHS has met the rigorous federal standards required to participate in Medicare and Medicaid programs.



Left: CMS Surveyors  
address WCHS



Pictured: The  
Winnebago Tribe  
Assumes  
Management of the  
Hospital at midnight  
on July 1st, 2018.





***“When the time finally came for the surveyors to visit, we were ready. I’m so proud of our team. Over the past five years, they had worked and prepared for this. The community’s health system, achieving CMS certification, is truly something to celebrate!”***

***-David Edwards, CEO***

## **WHAT CMS CERTIFICATION MEANS FOR THE COMMUNITY**

A CMS Certification Number (CCN) is issued only after a comprehensive federal survey process evaluates the quality of care, compliance with safety protocols, and overall organizational integrity. WCHS's successful certification means:

- +** Access to critical federal funding through Medicare and Medicaid.
- +** Federal recognition of our hospital’s adherence to national care and safety standards.
- +** Reinforced trust in the care our patients receive—right here at home.
- +** Greater sustainability for continued growth and innovation in Native healthcare delivery.





**LET US WALK WITH YOU ON YOUR  
HEALTH JOURNEY.**

## **EXPANDED ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE**

Being able to provide a robust Primary Care Clinic is crucial for improving population health in rural and tribal communities by ensuring accessible, quality care. WCHS continues to make strides towards improving our Primary Care Clinic to align with industry best practices for the healthiest outcomes.

### **EXPANDING PRIMARY CARE HOURS**

In the Fall, we extended our Primary Care Clinic hours to better meet the needs of our patients. The Primary Care Clinic, formerly known as the outpatient clinic, is now open on Monday through Thursday from 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM and Friday from 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM. These hours will allow for before-work or school appointments, enabling patients to better fit their annual exams or health screenings into their schedules

### **Allowing for Flex Appointments**

This year, we launched flex appointments.



***“I am a working father whose kids are in school during the weekdays; these extended hours and flexible appointments have made it easier for me and my family to utilize the Primary Care Clinic for both annual visits and sick visits, instead of depending exclusively on the ER.”***

***-WCHS Patient & Community Member***



Flex appointments take advantage of no-show appointment capacities to offer some flexible time slots each day. Patients may not be able to see their primary care physician, and they might have to wait a little longer, but if you come to WCHS seeking care from a provider, you can be seen that day!

### **Offering Nurse Visits for STI testing**

In October, WCHS Primary Care Clinic started offering rapid sexual wellness screenings without the need for an appointment. Syphilis and other STIs can be contracted from unprotected sex and/or IV drug use. Since many of these infections lack symptoms, they can be hard to recognize and treat. Untreated, they can negatively affect your fertility and health for a lifetime. This service will allow patients to get tested regularly and ask questions without the need to wait for a provider. It is hard to get patients of any age to talk about something as personal as their sexual health. This drop-in service requires no appointment, making it as simple as possible to seek care.

The WCHS's Primary Care Clinic remains committed to removing patient barriers to care.

# LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITY & SHAPING OUR TOMORROW

## WCHS REQUESTS FEEDBACK TO GUIDE STRATEGY

In our relentless pursuit of excellence, WCHS understands that meaningful progress stems from a partnership with our community. We actively seek feedback through various channels, each contributing to the refinement of our strategies and the enhancement of our services.



## PRESS GANEY: ELEVATING PATIENT EXPERIENCE

At WCHS, your experience matters. We collaborate with Press Ganey, a renowned leader in healthcare performance improvement, to gauge patient satisfaction. Your valuable insights guide us in elevating the quality of care, ensuring that every interaction with our healthcare system is positive, compassionate, and reflective of your needs.

## A COMMITMENT TO PERSONALIZED CARE

Intentional Rounding is more than a process; it's a commitment to providing personalized, attentive care. Our administrative and healthcare professionals make deliberate, regular rounds to ensure optimal operations, address any concerns, and proactively anticipate the needs of staff and patients.

## HAPPYORNOT: YOUR VOICE, YOUR IMPACT

In our pursuit of continuous improvement, we've embraced the simplicity and power of HappyorNot. With conveniently located feedback stations, we invite you to share your sentiments in real time. Your feedback directly influences our daily operations, helping us make immediate adjustments to enhance your experience.





## ENGAGING THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

Our commitment to community engagement extends to the Community Pow Wow Survey, an initiative designed to capture the diverse perspectives of our community members. Through this survey, we delve into the nuances of your needs, preferences, and expectations, ensuring that our services are tailored to the unique fabric of Winnebago.



## SHAPING PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Your well-being is our priority, and Public Health Surveys play a pivotal role in shaping our prevention programs.

By understanding the health landscape, we can develop initiatives that resonate with you—programs that educate, encourage, and support the mental, environmental, social, and physical wellness needs of the Winnebago community.

## YOUR VOICE SHAPES OUR TOMORROW

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, your voice remains central to our decision-making. WCHS is not just a healthcare provider; we are a community-driven organization, and your feedback guides our strategic decisions, fosters continuous improvement, and ensures that our services align with the aspirations of the Winnebago community.





***“These are my services; they are the services used by me, my family,  
and my community to be healthy, so I want them to be the best. ”***

***-Pilar Aldrich, Director of Wellness***





# CONNECTING AS HEALTHY Relatives

The Wellness Program at WCHS is about more than exercise. It's about creating opportunities for our community to come together, build healthy habits, and celebrate our strength. This year is no different; by growing our team of trainers, we were able to offer expanded services and continue hosting a variety of community-wide events. At Whirling Thunder Wellness, our indoor facility, and Land of Wellness, our outdoor recreational space, every offering is designed to inspire movement and connection.

## **Personal Training**

Our certified personal trainers provide individualized support to help clients reach their fitness goals. Whether someone is new to exercise or an experienced athlete, trainers design programs that focus on strength, endurance, balance, and overall health. The result is not just better fitness, but more confidence and a stronger foundation for lifelong wellness.

## **Wellness Classes**

Group classes create a sense of community and accountability. From strength and cardio sessions to yoga and cultural wellness activities, these classes make exercise fun and accessible for all ages. Many community members are referred to these classes as a part of their healthcare plan, ensuring that wellness is integrated into everyday care.

## **Fun in the Sun**

The **Fun in the Sun** summer program is designed to help kids stay active, healthy, and engaged while school is out. From the splash pad to museum field trips, healthy meals to nutrition and wellness education, the program provides a safe and enriching environment for children to learn and play. A collaboration between the Whirling Thunder Wellness Center team and the Diabetes Program, Fun in the Sun ensures that kids get outdoors, socialize, and grow in healthy ways all summer long.

## **Recreational Events**

The Wellness Program also hosts community events that showcase both health and culture throughout the year. The Winnebago Softball Tournament & League and the Pow Wow Wilderness Run are annual activities that encourage friendly competition, teamwork, and community pride. These events not only encourage fitness but also strengthen the bonds of community — proving that wellness is something we achieve together.



# INVESTING IN WELLNESS & PROTECTING OUR FUTURE

## TECHNOLOGY THAT ELEVATES PATIENT CARE

In May 2023, WCHS proudly completed a major investment in patient care by installing the GE Healthcare Definium 646 HD Digital X-ray system. This advanced technology allows our Radiology team to capture high-resolution images with more flexibility, greater speed, and better patient accessibility. The new X-ray equipment features a large 17x17 cassette, improved weight-bearing capacity, and dynamic positioning capabilities, making imaging safer and more effective for all patients.



## CULTURAL HEALING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

The Winnebago Public Health Department received a \$25,000 grant from First Nations Development Institute to enhance its Native Connections Program. Since its launch in 2016, Native Connections has reached more than 550 Native youth annually, providing culturally relevant mental health support, suicide prevention, and substance abuse awareness.

Through classes in traditional regalia making, instrument crafting, and language revitalization, youth ages 14–24 are empowered to reconnect with their identity and culture. The program also includes involvement from WPHD Mental Health Therapists to build trust in counseling and create safe spaces for healing.

**"WE'RE EXCITED TO CONTINUE ENHANCING OUR SUICIDE PREVENTION WORK BY CREATING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE, YOUTH-CENTERED ACTIVITIES. THIS GRANT IS A BIG STEP IN REINFORCING OUR MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND CULTURAL WELLNESS OF OUR FUTURE LEADERS."**

**-MONA ZUFFANTE, CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER**



# ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION

In 2023, the Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System (WCHS) established the **Winnebago Health Foundation** — a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for the people of Winnebago and other Native communities we serve. This foundation is meant to be the fundraising arm of the Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System focused on building enduring relationships that maximize advocacy and philanthropy to support the health of the Winnebago community and the people we serve.



In their first year, they established a governing board, governing bylaws, received their 501c3 number, established their goals, established a brand, and a means of collecting donations.



This year was about setting up the essentials needed to begin this important work of supporting WCHS's goals for growing and improving the quality of existing health programs and expanding the number of services available.

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Hoikikara ra  
OF ONE ANOTHER

**Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System**  
**(A Component Unit of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska)**

<b>Assets</b>	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 44,398,434	\$ 17,175,392
Patient accounts receivable, net	2,797,141	1,099,624
Due from Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska	645,837	521,921
Inventory	646,455	1,048,905
Grant Receivables	115,012	504,432
Investments	9,817,200	19,542,055
Other	126,496	47,576
Total current assets	58,546,575	39,939,875
<b>Noncurrent assets</b>		
Capital assets not being depreciated	538,135	533,315
Capital assets and right-to-use assets, net	5,166,574	5,070,272
Total noncurrent assets	5,704,709	5,603,587
Total assets	\$ 64,251,284	\$ 45,543,462
<b>Liabilities and Net Position</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>	\$ 930,329	\$ 1,110,113
Accounts payable	1,592,763	1,669,820
Due to Winnebago Tribe Of Nebraska	118,627	190,397
Purchased/referred care payable	274,065	206,120
Current portion of lease & subscription liabilities	3,309,980	2,266,384
Total current liabilities	6,259,349	5,442,834
<b>Noncurrent liabilities</b>		
Long-term portion of lease & subscription liabilities	33,585	122,430
Total liabilities	6,259,349	5,565,264
<b>Net position</b>		
Net investment in capital assets	5,397,059	5,275,037
Restricted	5,259,876	34,703,161
Total net position	57,991,935	39,978,198
Total liabilities and net position	\$ 64,251,284	\$ 45,543,462



**Winnebago Comprehensive Healthcare System**  
**(A Component Unit of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska)**  
Statements of Net Position Sept. 30, 2023 and 2022

	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>
<b>Operating Revenues</b>		
Indian Health Service Compact	\$ 49,545,216	\$ 27,214,897
Net patient service revenue	16,704,924	8,474,288
Other	304,653	308,936
Total operating revenues	66,554,793	35,998,121
<b>Operating Expenses</b>		
Salaries and wages	29,087,812	26,144,899
Contract labor	7,612,711	6,357,479
Medical and drug supplies	3,872,148	3,074,023
Indirect costs	2,733,365	4,498,799
Supplies and postage	1,852,036	1,587,370
Deprecation and amortization	1,822,443	1,025,768
Other program costs	1,398,328	657,415
Purchased/referred care	983,755	1,268,787
Professional fees	697,975	54,569
Utilities	659,775	545,075
Rent	604,033	577,343
Information technology	324,473	186,047
Travel and training	313,661	257,910
Repairs and maintenance	202,874	206,801
Total operating expenses	52,165,389	46,442,285
Operating income (loss)	14,389,404	(10,444,164)
<b>Nonoperating Revenues (Expenses)</b>		
Noncapital grants and contributions	1,988,884	2,336,787
Contributions from Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska	-	454,108
Investment gain (loss)	260,092	(317,337)
Interest income	1,375,357	260,052
Total nonoperating revenue (expenses)	3,624,333	2,733,610
Change in net position	18,013,737	(7,710,554)
Net position, beginning of year	39,978,198	47,688,752
Net position, end of year	\$ 57,991,935	\$ 39,978,198

# WCHS LEADERSHIP

## 2023 EXECUTIVE TEAM



**DAVID EDWARDS**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**SHARON FRENCHMAN**  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER



**MONA ZUFFANTE**  
CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER



**DR. GANESH KINI**  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER



**AUSTIN SCHANZENBACH**  
CHIEF TRANSFORMATION OFFICER



**SARA MCINTOSH**  
CHIEF NURSING OFFICER



**BETH WEWEL**  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER



# WCHS LEADERSHIP

## 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**JIM RIXNER**



**DARLA LAPOINTE**



**DR. ROWEN K. ZETTERMAN**



**VICTORIA KITCHEYAN**



**COLY BROWN**



## **CONTACT US**

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