



2023 IMPACT REPORT

# CENTERING COMMUNITY, EMBRACING GROWTH

# TO OUR VALUED COMMUNITY PARTNERS

As I reflect on the past 3+ years that I have had the privilege of working at Empire Health Foundation (EHF), I am struck by the immense turmoil facing the country and directly impacting our region. From a global pandemic, to a groundswell social justice movement in response to George Floyd's murder, to an ever widening political divide, to the increasing effects of climate change, we have been called to imagine a more equitable, just world. Recent events are demanding that we all show up differently, and this is a challenge we at EHF do not take lightly.

Our team has been digging into what it takes to achieve sustainable change toward health equity in our region. We've examined where and how our actions, or inaction, have either supported or harmed the communities we serve. Throughout this process we've been honored by hundreds

of neighbors who have shared with us their visions, strengths and needs for their families and communities.

They have clarified how EHF must evolve to offer the kinds of support required of us by the communities most affected by health inequities in our region. Alongside providing financial resources, EHF must leverage our connections, voice, knowledge and reputation in new ways. Authentic partnership requires a consistent focus that will guide us as we walk alongside community in the shared pursuit of health equity.

We are committed to restoring resources to the communities most impacted by systemic oppression: Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC), the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, people with disabilities and rural underserved



communities. Our goal is to use our financial and institutional resources to help community organizations and leaders realize their visions for change.

We are evolving to leverage our position as the Inland Northwest's largest private funder to be of greater service to communities building power and pursuing justice. The time for that shift is now and we are committed to doing our part.

Our upcoming 10-year strategic plan will focus on addressing persistent and historical injustices and investing our resources in communities whose health and well-being have been most impacted. In response to the feedback of these communities, we have shifted our grant making to prioritize them and fund their solutions. In 2023, we distributed \$8.8 million across the region through 129 grants. More than half of those grant dollars went to BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ and/or rural led and serving organizations.

Many of you have engaged with us over the last three years in critical conversations that are shaping the future of our organization. This year will bring more opportunities to work alongside us, inform our work, and explore funding partnerships together. We look forward to learning from you how we can meet critical community needs and deepen the ways we support and engage within and across communities.

It has been an incredible honor to support so many inspiring leaders and organizations in our region. On behalf of our team, thank you for placing your trust in us and for the time and energy so many of you have already committed to co-creating the next chapter for Empire Health Foundation. We are so excited to work with you in building a healthier and more just future for everyone in our region.

Let's get to work,

*Thomas E. "Zeke" Smith*

**Zeke Smith**  
President, Empire Health Foundation



The Empire Health Foundation board gathered with staff in the Methow Valley in fall 2023 to plot progress towards our strategic goals.

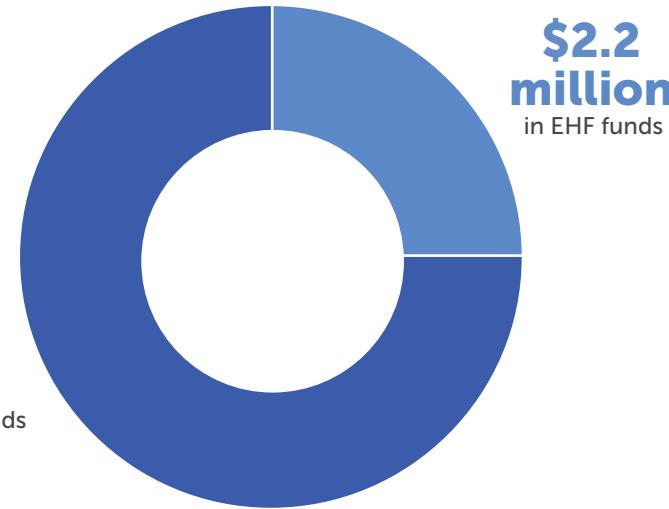
# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## BY THE NUMBERS

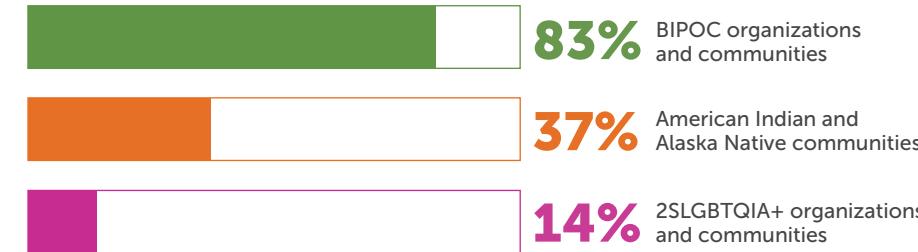
Empire Health Foundation has been shifting our grant making and partnership strategies to focus on communities most impacted by health inequities. This intentional shift has been guided by community feedback and is embodied in our Equity Healing Framework adopted in Spring of 2022. We lived further into our commitment to partner with underserved communities in our region by reaching more community members and continuing to evolve our grant making approach in 2023.

**TOTAL GRANTS**  
distributed by EHF  
**\$8,846,650**

**\$6.6 million**  
in third-party funds



### EHF ENDOWMENT FUNDED GRANTS by the Numbers



**74** community organizations supported

**200+** attendees at community outreach events EHF hosted onsite

# CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

## FOR RURAL BIPOC YOUTH

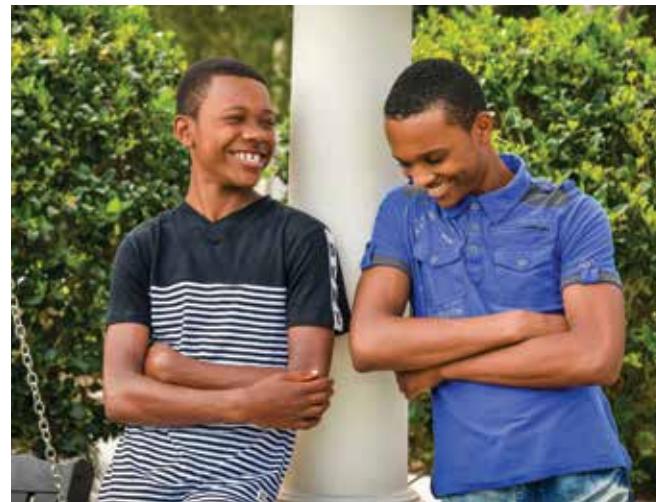
A sense of security is foundational to young people's success, and rural BIPOC youth need safe places in their communities that foster this sense of belonging. We're excited to work with new partners bringing important and often missing support in rural and tribal communities.

Foundation for Youth Resiliency and Engagement (FYRE) is a BIPOC-led and -serving community organization in Omak that advocates for equitable opportunities that allow all youth to thrive in this rural community bordering the Colville Reservation.

We supported FYRE in sustaining this space for rural BIPOC youth through a 2023 operating grant and funding for the expansion of their center through our Capital Leverage Fund. This partnership is part of our ongoing work to develop and grow our relationships with organizations rooted in community and to live into the intentions set forward in our Equity Healing Framework.



EHF Staff visit FYRE in the fall of 2023.



# HOLDING SPACE FOR HOPE

Camp Hope in Spokane's East Central neighborhood became the largest encampment for unhoused people in the state during the summer of 2022. Recognizing an unmet community need, we leveraged our institutional power and financial resources to connect frontline service providers with the resources they needed to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community and address the housing insecurity crisis.

Hundreds of people lived in this tent city on a vacant, dusty city block. The growth of Camp Hope, and other encampments on state

Department of Transportation lands across Washington, prompted a statewide program to disband encampments on state right-of-ways and offer better housing options to the unsheltered people residing on state property.

State leaders turned to us to lead the effort to humanely transition people living at Camp Hope into better housing options. We accepted this role as a funder and administrative backbone for service providers, and as a natural extension of our ongoing work convening local leaders to develop housing and homelessness solutions in the Spokane community.

We have administered more than \$7 million in state funding since 2022 to support our community partners Compassionate Addiction Treatment, Jewels Helping Hands, Revive Counseling and the Spokane Low-Income Housing Consortium. This collaborative effort connected people living on the encampment with peer navigators, and created new substance abuse, mental health treatment and housing options. These efforts led to more than 150 unsheltered people, many of whom face multiple, serious obstacles to stable housing, now living in permanent or supportive housing.

Julie Garcia, the founder and executive director of Jewels Helping Hands, said that the trust, collaborative spirit and financial support of EHF made her organization's direct service work possible.



These keys were to the first home this man could call his own. A year later he is still in housing and thriving.



Celebrating the Camp's June 2023 closure - (l/r) Julie Garcia, Hallie Burchinal, Meagan Vincello, Layne Pavay and Ami Manning.

**\$7  
MILLION**  
*administered in state funding  
since 2022*

**150  
UNSHeltered PEOPLE**  
*have housing because of  
state funds and collaborative  
efforts*

"EHF has a big voice that they used to advocate for us small service providers to have the resources we need so that we could do the work on the ground. We wouldn't have been able to do the work we did without EHF."

**Julie Garcia,**  
*Founder and executive director of Jewels Helping Hands*

# CATALYZING RESOURCES

## FOR BIPOC-LED ORGANIZATIONS

### Leveraging Funding for Community Impact

Emerging from the pandemic, we heard a clear need from community partners for access to physical space to establish their organizations and build their capacity to serve their communities. This need is most prominent in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-led and -serving organizations. Based on the feedback, we developed the Capital Leverage Fund to invest in these organizations' capital projects, including offices, gathering spaces, childcare facilities and housing.

These grant dollars have catalyzed additional project support for our partners who have leveraged our support to bring in \$28 million in additional funds to their projects.

The Capital Leverage Fund supported the construction of the Raze Early Learning Center. The childcare facility will serve up to 180 children and celebrate Black excellence.



"The networking and conversations EHF has included us in have supported the continued growth of this work."

Penny Spencer,  
Director of the Spokane Tribal Network

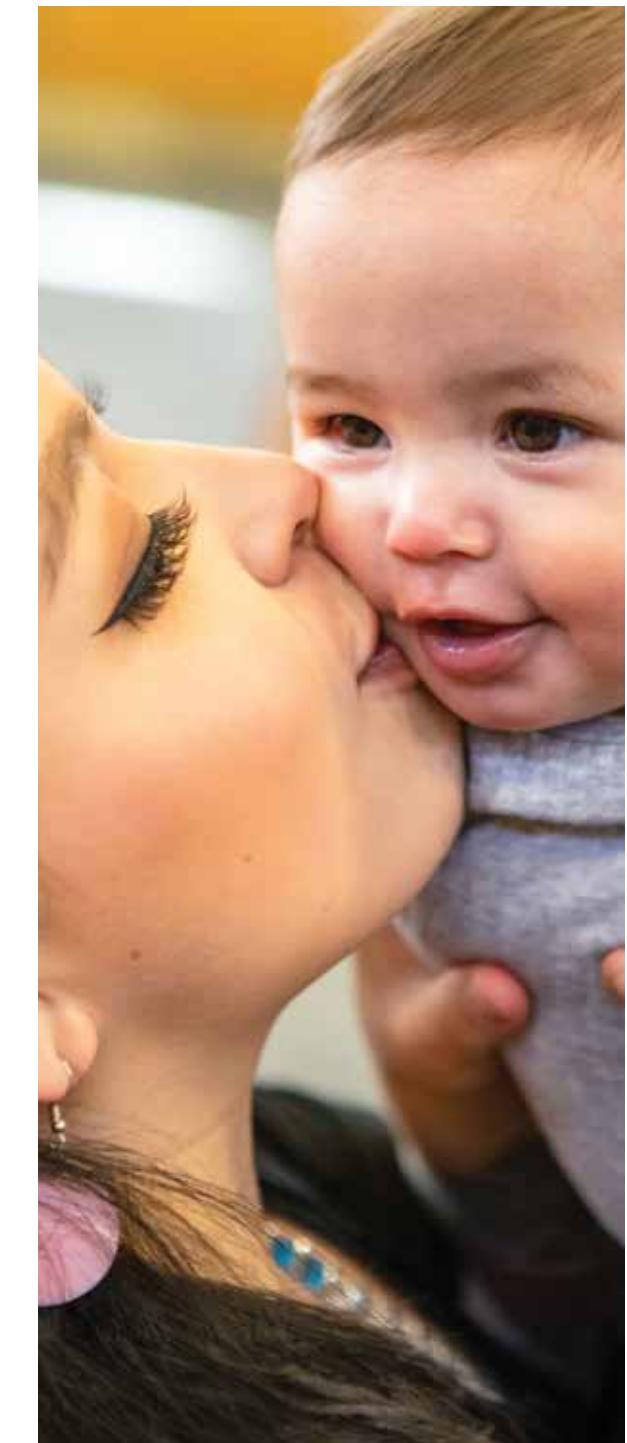
### Partnering for Indigenous Birth Justice

We have been working with Spokane Tribal Network (STN) since 2019 to promote access to culturally informed and relevant reproductive healthcare options in Eastern Washington. One of our roles has been to connect community organizations with available training and philanthropic resources. We worked with STN to connect them with our partners at the Perigee Fund.

By leveraging their own partnership with and grant funding from Perigee, STN was able to win a Department of Health grant for a birthing center. In March 2023, STN partnered with Həłmxiłp Indigenous Birth Justice to open the Indigenous Birth Justice Center in Spokane, offering a broad range of resources to young families and expecting parents.

**"I'm excited for our kids to have a place where they see themselves reflected."**

Kerra Bower,  
Founder of Raze and owner and director of Little Scholars Development Center



# MOVING FORWARD, GROWING TOGETHER



As we seek to improve and evolve as a community partner, we're engaged in ongoing growth to build staff awareness and competence to become a more inclusive, reliable and trustworthy community partner.

This ongoing process involves: staff training in areas like cultural competency and bias training; engagement and outreach to improve relationships in community; and work with third-party partners to understand our impact and areas for growth as an organization.

We partnered with Roanhorse Consulting, an Indigenous-led consulting firm, in the spring of 2023 to better understand our impact in and relationships with the communities we serve. The Roanhorse team interviewed 18 community partners to get a better sense of their experience and perception of EHF, and make recommendations on how we can grow as an organization rooted in and responsive to community. Our collaboration with Roanhorse has shown us both the work we have to do to rebuild trust with our partners and the progress we've made in recent years.

We are taking the recommendations of the Roanhorse report as a stepping stone to continued organizational and individual growth. In the winter of 2023, we began a multi-year partnership with Fresh Vue — a Spokane-based strategic design and organizational development company — to work with staff on an individual and group basis to build intercultural awareness and conflict resolution skills. Our work with Fresh Vue is part of our organizational commitment to developing a learning culture that is responsive to community needs and creates a respectful space where people can feel safe and confident to express themselves.

We are dedicated to continual improvement, evaluation and evolution as we work with communities to dismantle persistent health inequities. It is with great respect for and admiration of the communities we serve that we continue on this path of growth. Thank you for walking with us, and here's to continuing together on the road ahead.

In response to community feedback and as part of our ongoing journey to live into the Equity Healing Framework, EHF is making the following organizational commitments:



Actively working to rebuild trust and relationships with partners through genuine interactions and by diversifying our staff.



Engaging in internal growth and working on community agreements that dictate how we show up as staff and create brave spaces for our partners to interact with and participate in EHF-led initiatives.



Following our partners lead, embracing community-led initiatives, and respecting the autonomy of community partners in pursuing their work and priorities.



Building internal processes that are collaborative and less extractive, including compensating partners for their time and engaging in strategy work aligned with the Equity Healing Framework.



Improving transparency and open communication about our programs and grant opportunities by launching an updated website and creating new content on our blog and social media. EHF is also in the process of finalizing a 10-year strategic plan that will set clear intentions for how we prioritize funding and working in community.



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