

# Sealth

Name: Chief Sealth International High School	Enrollment: 1,135
Address: 2600 SW Thistle Street	Nickname: Seahawks
Configuration: 9-12	Colors: Blue and gray
Newspaper: <i>Southwester</i>	Annual: <i>Cache</i>



Sealth, 1973 SPSA 018-6

## Details:

Name: **Chief Sealth High School**

Location: 2600 SW Thistle Street

Building: 50-room concrete

Architect: Naramore, Bain,  
Brady & Johnson

Site: 17.45 acres (shared campus)

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- 1957: Named on May 3; opened in September
  - 1969: Addition (Naramore, Bain, Brady & Johnson)
  - 2000: Athletic complex upgraded, synthetic turf and lighting (field designer DA Hogan)
  - 2004: Facility modernization (Sierra-Martin; BEX II); Front entry and commons
  - 2008: School closed for construction; Students relocated to Boren as interim site
  - 2010: Renovation (Bassetti Architects; BEX III); Seismic upgrades
  - 2010: Name changed to Chief Sealth International High School
  - 2011: David T. Denny Middle School opened on Sealth site
  - 2019: Southwest Athletic Complex (SWAC) track and field replaced (BTA III & IV)
  - 2021: SWAC renamed Nino Cantu SW Athletic complex

In June 1954, the growing population in southwest Seattle led the Seattle School District to plan for its first new high school in some 30 years. Enrollment estimates indicated that the high school population in West Seattle would reach 4,000 by 1965. The school board selected a site in the Westwood neighborhood near White Center, across the street from Denny Junior High School.

The school was named for Noah Sealth, known also as Chief Seattle and si?al in his own Lushootseed language. Chief Sealth was the most prominent Native American leader in the region at the time of the city's settlement and



Sealth, 1958 SPSA 018-8

was regarded as an influential friend by the founding fathers who named their town after him. The name of the school represents an attempt for a closer English pronunciation of the Suquamish and Duwamish leader's actual name in contrast to the spelling of the city's name, Seattle.

The construction of the school was unique for the region, although it had been used extensively in other countries, and was selected because of its ability to withstand earthquakes. Known as a "thin-shell" type of building, the structure is all concrete with three-inch walls. The roof has a concrete base with a built-up roofing finish. A large "barrel" roof covers the gymnasium and auditorium, which seat 2,000 and 1,150, respectively. Built on the grounds, the roof was eased into place in four hours by a team of 26 men. At the time, it was the largest roof of its kind in the Pacific Northwest.

Chief Sealth High School opened with 900 students in grades 9-11 in 1957. Construction continued into 1958. The school's spacious gymnasium, auditorium, and activities area were made available for community activities. The first graduating class was the Class of 1959.

Enrollment grew and, by 1960-61, there were 13 portables on the grounds. Enrollment peaked at 2,206 in 1962-63. An addition in 1969 gave the school a learning resource center and a business education area.

In the early 1970s, Chief Sealth followed a unique schedule system, divided into seven periods. Only six periods met on a given day with one period omitted every day on a rotating basis. This gave students an opportunity to explore an additional subject.



Sealth, 1963 SPSA 018-1

The first Family Fun Night at Sealth took place on May 6, 1994. This tradition has evolved into four Family Engagement Nights every year, including a Futures Night where students and families learn about colleges, technical schools, scholarships, and financial aid. In 1998, school highlights included an international studies program, which focused on foreign languages and language arts-social studies, and a performing arts magnet program with award-winning drama, band, choir, and jazz and string ensembles.





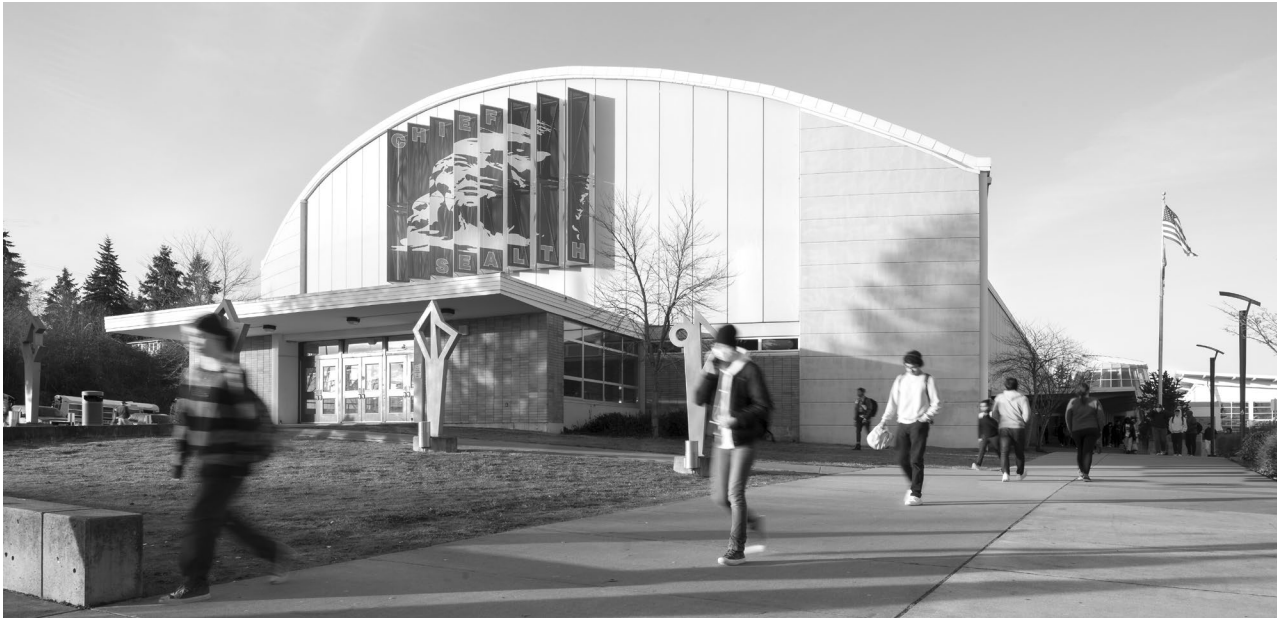
Sealth, 2023 ©Arthur Ross SPSA 018-83

This international and multicultural focus extends to programming today, which finds expression in a wide range of offerings including a mariachi band, exchange programs to China and Guatemala, and world language classes, including Arabic, Spanish, Japanese, and Mandarin Chinese.

In 2000, the shared athletic fields of the high school and Denny Middle School were upgraded. Synthetic turf replaced grass and new bleachers were installed. Regulation baseball and softball fields were constructed. The entire complex features lighted fields and scoreboards. The same year as the upgrades, the baseball field was renamed the Robert Feagan Memorial Baseball Field in honor of a longtime teacher. The complex is the only complete track and field facility in the district's portfolio. The nearby swimming pool in the Southwest Community Center is still used by both schools in agreement with the Seattle Parks Department.



Sealth, 2010 SPSA 018-82



Sealth, 2023 ©Arthur Ross SPSA 018-84

In 2004, the school was modernized to include a new student commons; the library was renovated, and other improvements were made.

In 2010, the entire school was remodeled. Upgrades to the 230,000-square-foot Sealth building involved classroom remodels and technology enhancements, as well as the addition of a career center, computer labs in the library, music labs, classrooms, and science rooms for a pre-engineering program.

When the construction project of a new Denny Middle School was completed a year later on the Chief Sealth campus, the two schools were connected with the construction of a new 20,000-square-foot galleria/commons. The land from the former Denny Middle School was added to the athletic complex and new softball field and tennis facilities were constructed as part of the Denny project. During this time, Sealth received accreditation as an International Baccalaureate High School. The building name was updated to Chief Sealth International High School because it offers a dual-language Spanish program, a continuation of the program offered by Concord and Denny.

In 2019, the Southwest Athletic Complex track and field were replaced, which included resurfacing of the stadium track, and a new synthetic turf field with cork infill was added, along with additional project features. In the fall of 2021, the complex was formally renamed Nino Cantu Southwest Athletic Complex to commemorate Nino Cantu, who died unexpectedly on October 12, 2018, at the age of 51, after serving as the grounds/events manager for the athletic complex for 18 years. Denny principal Jeff Clark was among those who advocated for the renaming at the March 24, 2021, school board meeting. Doree Fazio-Young, known as the Lunch Lady at Denny, told *Westside Seattle* in 2018 that “Nino treated the complex like it was his home taking care to welcome everyone like they were family ... He treated you like you were his best friend.”

In 2022 Chief Sealth High School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the Washington Heritage Register. The nomination of Sealth for this honor was developed as part of a National Park Service Under-Represented Communities Heritage Grant.

Famous alumni include Meg Tilly, a Broadway actress and Golden Globe winner; Art Wolfe, famed wildlife, nature and landscape photographer; and Regina Rogers Wright, who led the school to two women’s basketball championships and is a member of the “1,000-point club” at the University of Washington.