



American Indian  
Cancer Foundation®

# CELEBRATE INDIGENOUS LIFE

**Campaign Toolkit**

## ABOUT THE AMERICAN INDIAN CANCER FOUNDATION

AICAF is a national Native-led and Native-governed nonprofit organization established to address the tremendous cancer burdens faced by Native people.

AICAF strives to be a partner trusted by tribes and organizations, working toward effective and sustainable cancer solutions based on cultural teachings and wisdom.

Its mission is to eliminate the cancer burdens on American Indian and Alaska Native people through improved access to prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivor support.



## ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT

AICAF recognizes National Cancer Survivors Month throughout June during our Celebrate Indigenous Life campaign. During the campaign AICAF shares resources, survivor stories, and mental health and wellness information.

AICAF created the Celebrate Indigenous Life Campaign Toolkit to engage community members, health professionals, and leaders working towards cancer equity in raising awareness of survivorship in Native communities.

The Toolkit includes sample posts for social media that can be easily copied and pasted into the social media platform of your choice.

# ABOUT CELEBRATE INDIGENOUS LIFE

AICAF invites you to join us in recognizing National Cancer Survivors Month during our 8th annual Celebrate Indigenous Life (CIL) campaign this June! CIL aims to honor, support, and raise awareness of Native cancer survivors.

Because this national campaign happens on a digital platform, community members can participate from anywhere!

Get involved by raising awareness of Indigenous cancer burdens, uplifting our community's voices, and celebrating survivors' strength and resiliency everywhere.

At AICAF, we recognize the significance of the color lavender, symbolizing cancer survivorship. We acknowledge that relatives and caregivers are also profoundly impacted by a diagnosis, and consider them as survivors too.

## CELEBRATE INDIGENOUS LIFE WALK

This year, we invite you to **walk in honor of Indigenous cancer survivors**. Together, we will raise awareness about the cancer burdens affecting Native communities, uplift survivor voices, and celebrate their courage and resilience.

Commit to taking a walk in June and encourage your family, friends, and relatives to join you. Everyone who signs up will be entered for a chance to win a gift. You're also welcome to share photos—especially if you're walking in honor of a survivor in your life.

Fill out **this form** telling us about your plant to walk for a chance to win a prize!

# AICAF RESOURCES

AICAF offers culturally tailored resources to support Indigenous cancer survivors and caregivers in their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. From sharing Indigenous lifeways to healthy eating and physical activity, we promote holistic health through Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) change.

## CIL Word Search

The Celebrate Indigenous Life campaign honors the strength, resilience, and stories of Indigenous cancer survivors throughout National Cancer Survivors Month in June. Through this initiative, the American Indian Cancer Foundation seeks to uplift survivor voices, increase awareness of the impact of cancer in Native communities, and celebrate the ongoing journeys of healing, hope, and cultural strength.

Use this word search as a fun activity to promote mindfulness and conversations with your loved ones about survivorship.



[Download Here](#)

[#CelebrateIndigenousLife](#)

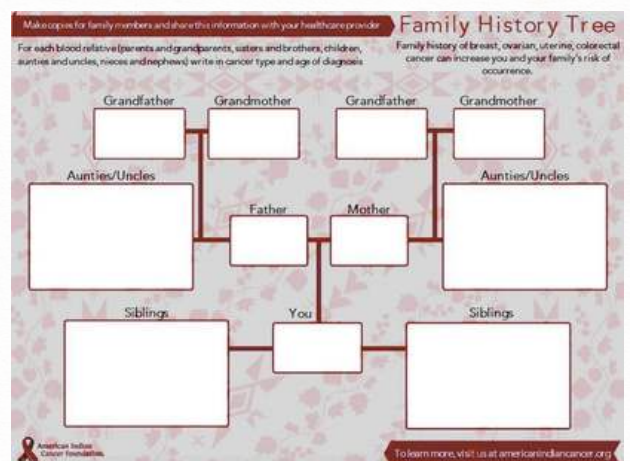
## Family History Tree

Do you know your family health history?

Learn your risks for developing chronic diseases and cancers, and allows you to take action to prevent them.

Complete this Family History Tree to stay informed about your health risks: <https://ow.ly/tlXJ50W7Wn3>

[#CelebrateIndigenousLife](#)



[Download Here](#)

# AICAF RESOURCES

## Social Media Slides

### Mental Health Tips

The cancer journey isn't just physical, it's also mental! Taking care of your mind as much as possible is crucial during any stage of the journey. Here are some tips for improving mental health, as well as a checklist for checking in with yourself!

#CelebrateIndigenousLife #MentalHealthMatters

**Indigenous Cancer Survivorship**

**Tips to Improve Your Mental Health**

- Connect with your culture
- Participate in cultural activities
- Get outside
- Focus on talking positively about yourself
- Eat healthy, regular meals
- Prioritize sleep
- Ask for help when feeling overwhelmed
- Talk to your traditional medicine practitioner
- Speak to your community elders

To learn more about AICAF visit: [AICAF.org](http://AICAF.org)

American Indian Cancer Foundation

[Download Here](#)

### Additional Resources

### Coping with Chemobrain

**TOOLS & BRAIN EXERCISES FOR COPING WITH CHEMOBRAIN**

Cancer survivors often experience cognitive changes or "chemobrain" due to their cancer, cancer treatment, or a co-existing condition. Common signs of cancer-related cognitive change include:

- Difficulty remembering names, phone numbers, and addresses
- Trouble concentrating
- Forgetfulness and lapses in short-term memory
- Difficulty multitasking
- Inability to find the right words

**What can I do?**

**Practice mindfulness.** Yoga, prayer, and meditation can lead to better memory retention.

**Ask for help.** Loved ones can help you stay on top of daily tasks. Your doctor can write a letter requesting help or work accommodations.

**Make lists.** Use your phone or a notepad to get down the things you need to do. Check items off as you finish them.

**Use a planner.** Stay on top of day-to-day tasks and special events with a personal planner.

**Sleep.** A good night's rest is critical for learning and memory.

**Change your environment.** Being in nature may help memory performance.

**Adopt a healthy lifestyle.** Eating healthy and exercising regularly can help you feel more alert and restore your body to its optimal energy levels. Look for traditional foods that your ancestors ate and engage in traditional activities like dancing and singing.

**Stay socially connected.** Socially engaging with your loved ones and relatives, including your elders, may have cognitive benefits.

**Keep your mind active.** Learn your native language, a traditional activity, or a recipe.

**Additional Resources**

- Brainlife offers free puzzles, trivia, and brain games, including multi-person games that you can play with other users.
- Brain IQ offers clinically-proven brain training exercises.
- Fit Brains Trainer is a smartphone application with personalized brain games.
- Lumosity offers free brain games and tracks your improvement.

[Download Here](#)

### Eating Well Together

**Survivorship: Eating Well Together**

Healthy eating, healing and prevention for the American Indian cancer survivor and family

**Why is it important for a cancer survivor to eat healthy?**

Nutrition affects every aspect of cancer, from prevention, to treatment and remission. Maintain a healthy diet before, during and after cancer treatment to help your body heal.

**5 HEALTHY EATING TIPS FOR SURVIVORS**

- Drink plenty of water and other low-calorie drinks to stay hydrated.
- Snack every few hours to help give the body energy to heal.
- Include protein (fish, beans, eggs, peanut butter, etc.) with every meal to help with strength and mood.
- Eat fruits and vegetables with each meal. The vitamins, minerals and fiber are medicines.
- Consume good fats (salmon, olive oil, nuts, avocados, etc.) to help your body process nutrients and supports brain health.

**HEALTHY COOKING METHODS**

- Roast, sauté, steam or poach your food to retain nutrients.
- Avoid searing food in an open flame. Cooking that charbroils food by charring, grilling increases levels of cancer-causing benzopyrene.
- Avoid high-temperature broiling, baking, toasting, and frying.
- These can interact with other medicines or your diet to create cancer-causing substances.

**FOOD SAFETY**

- Wash your hands thoroughly when preparing meals.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs unless the plate has been washed.
- Control cooking, serving, handling and consumption when preparing meals.
- Store foods at the appropriate temperature (cold and hot).

**FAMILY: HEALTHY, STRONG AND CONNECTED**

- Share time together and encourage to help, inspire and give your own Indigenous foods to experience how our ancestors had healthy.
- Support your survivor and their loved ones by making changes to your food habits with them.
- Learn more about how food can support the family and extend healing to be supportive of your family.

What is cancer?  
Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. Cancer is not one disease. There are many types of cancer that affect men and women and often behave differently.

What is a cancer survivor?  
A cancer survivor is any person who has been diagnosed with cancer. From the local site of diagnosis, through treatment and remission and their journey into the world.

[www.aicaf.org](http://www.aicaf.org)

[Download Here](#)

### Using Traditional Healing with Western Medicine

**USING TRADITIONAL HEALING WITH WESTERN MEDICINE**

**Traditional Healing**

- Focuses on all aspects of a person's health: the mind, body, and all aspects of their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

**Western Medicine**

- Focuses on body mechanisms. Heals the body of physical symptoms, ailments, and disease.

**How They Work Together**

- Comfort Care & Long-Term Support:** Traditional healing practices and medicine work alongside Western treatments to help reduce cancer symptoms and side effects. This helps, for example, the emotional impact of a cancer diagnosis for the survivor, caregiver and loved ones.
- Whole Body Wellness:** Traditional healing centers the holistic view of a person, taking into account all of their steps to ensure the whole health beyond the physical elements.
- Personal Empowerment:** Traditional healing believes the importance of traditional, community, and medical providers with traditional experiences, traditions, and shared decision-making tools.

Traditional healing sustained Native communities long before Western contact and the establishment of the scientific medical. The knowledge and wisdom of traditional healers inspired Western medicine and gave rise to many of today's pharmaceuticals, including cancer treatments. Incorporating both practices in your cancer plan may be a powerful approach to healing.

[Download Here](#)

# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR CANCER SURVIVORS AND CAREGIVERS

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, please dial 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline or text NATIVE to 741741 to chat with the Crisis Text Line.

## Published lists of resources:

- [Patient and Caregiver Peer Support/Mentoring Programs](#)
- [The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Mental Health and Crisis Services](#)
- [Mesothelioma Hope's Mental Health Guide for Cancer Patients and Families](#)

## Mental Health Resources for Cancer Survivors:

- [American Society of Clinical Oncology's Managing Emotions site](#)
- [Mayo Clinic's Managing Your Emotions After Cancer Treatment](#)
- [National Cancer Institute's Coping with Cancer site](#)
- [OncoLink's Coping with Cancer site](#)
- [Oregon Health and Science University Knight Cancer Institute's Cancer and Mental Health site](#)

## Mental Health Resources for Caregivers:

- [American Society of Clinical Oncology's Caregivers Taking Care of Themselves site](#)
- [National Cancer Institute's Support for Caregivers of Cancer Patients site](#)
- [OncoLink's Caregivers site](#)

## Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

- Dial or text 988 for free 24/7 support | [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)

## Crisis Text Line

- Text NATIVE to 741741 | [crisistextline.org](https://www.crisistextline.org) | For free crisis counseling 24/7

## National Alliance on Mental Illness(NAMI) Helpline

- Connect by phone 800-950- 6264 M-F, 10 am-6pm, ET or text "Helpline" to 62640, or chat. | [www.nami.org](https://www.nami.org)

## StrongHearts Native Helpline

- 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483) is a 24/7 safe, confidential and anonymous domestic and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans and Alaska Natives. | [strongheartshelpline.org](https://www.strongheartshelpline.org)

## The Paths (Re)Membered Project

- NO COST mental health services to Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer 2SLGBTQ+ persons aged 15 years and older. Services are currently offered in limited states. | [pathsremembered.org](https://www.pathsremembered.org)

## Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ+ young people

- 24/7 at 1-866-488-7386. Counseling is also available 24/7 via chat every day at [TheTrevorProject.org/Help](https://www.TheTrevorProject.org/Help), or by texting 678-678.

## Veterans Crisis Line

- Dial 988 then Press 1 or Text 838255 | [veteranscrisisline.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

Please note that this is not a complete list of resources that are available and information is subject to change.



# Steps of the Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) Change Process...through an Indigenous Lens

Programs that are interested in PSE changes, especially if there are multiple that they are working on, are encouraged to follow these basic steps below to start the work. This is a broad, yet simple, list of steps to follow:



## **Make Friends - Get people together.**

To make changes, we need lots of people working together. Making friends with different people allows everyone to help in their own way. More friends means more ideas and more people reached.



## **Look Around - See what's happening.**

Taking a close look helps us know what to do about health problems. We can see what's missing, patterns, and things affecting the community. This shows us why changes are needed.



## **Pick What's Important - Choose where to focus.**

After looking around, we see where health problems come from. We need evidence to set goals to fix them. Look at data to find the exact problem to focus on first. The community health plan helps.



## **Make a Plan - See if ideas will work.**

Once goals are set, think about whether ideas can really happen. Talk to people to make a plan to reach goals, and check if the timing is right. Get key people to help.

## **Spread the Word - Tell people why.**

Before making changes, explain to everyone why it's needed. This gets more support and less resistance. Use media to educate people.

## **Take Action - Do it!**

The first 5 steps lead up to taking action on health changes. Carry out activities that directly help reach the goals.

## **Check Your Work (Evaluation) - See what changed.**

Look back at the processes used and results so far. This shows what changes happened.



**American Indian  
Cancer Foundation®**

2355 Fairview Ave N #317  
Saint Paul, MN 55113

612.314.4848  
health@aicaf.org

[www.AmericanIndianCancer.org](http://www.AmericanIndianCancer.org)