

American Indian Cancer Foundation

Healing with Culture. Reclaiming Indigenous Health.



Triennial Report 2020-2022



George Perry Floyd Jr.
(October 14, 1973 - May 25, 2020)

The American Indian Cancer Foundation stands in solidarity with the Black community. Our hearts are heavy over the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police. The threat of police violence is real for Black people. As an organization committed to supporting healthy Indigenous communities, we recognize that cancer and health disparities stem from the roots of genocide and the ongoing violence that this country was built upon. Systemic racism is still thriving throughout all governmental systems. Racism is a public health crisis, and police brutality must come to an end. This moment must be a tipping point. We do not tolerate anti-blackness. We see the inherent value of Black people everywhere, including those in our families and in Native communities across Indian Country. AICAF will listen to our relatives in the Black community with an open heart and stand with them as their pain is too familiar. We actively seek justice and demand action from our elected leaders, and we will continue to encourage protests that stand for justice for the Black, Brown, Immigrant, and Indigenous communities that continue to be under attack.

We honor the life of George Floyd and stand in solidarity with all people who are faced with injustice, hate, and discrimination.

We are all related. We hear you. We see you. We support you.

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Hau Mitákuyepi friends and relatives,

I greet you with a warm heart and handshake. I am beyond honored to serve as the second Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the American Indian Cancer Foundation and to continue a legacy of dedication and accomplishments set forth by the founding Board of Directors and the founding CEO Kris Rhodes (Anishanabe). Their vision remains at the forefront, and the relationships and continued commitment from so many are due to their efforts.

As we reflect back on 2020 and 2022, I can't help but be emotional at how so many of our lives changed and were disrupted both at home and in our workspace. The COVID-19 pandemic presented several social and economic challenges for families across Indian Country that will continue to burden our loved ones for some time. I would be remiss to say the pandemic is over, as we know it continues to impact the health and wellness of our relatives, especially those facing cancer.

Despite many shifting focus on their efforts, the American Indian Cancer Foundation remained strong in their vision and mission of addressing the cancer inequities faced by so many of our relatives. Cancer screenings halted in March of 2020, and despite many preventative cancer screening rates returning to normal for many across the United States, American Indians never knew normal. Our mission is to raise awareness of the importance of preventative cancer screenings as we bring attention to the cancer burdens and solutions so our relatives can live long, healthy, and happy lives.

This report highlights the important work that continued at the start of the pandemic and how cancer screening could be completed safely, and the continued urgency to get our relatives screened through our donors and funders. This work could not be accomplished without the dedication of so many who believe in this organization.

Ketabi/Wopila,

Melissa Buffalo

Melissa Buffalo, Meswaki and Dakota



American Indian Cancer Foundation®

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

We value the wisdom found in every Tribal teaching. Our work must be community-centered, respectful of tradition, advance knowledge, and be Native-directed. We know the answers to reclaiming our health reside within our Native communities. Together, we are creating innovative, community-based interventions that engage Native populations in discovering their own cancer best practices.

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted the health of our communities, worsening cancer outcomes and taking too many sacred lives. Our team worked relentlessly to slow the spread of COVID-19 while keeping Native people informed about cancer. Throughout the pandemic, AICAF supported Indigenous families by providing face masks, and relief funds, and developed culturally-tailored resources to tribes across the nation.

We continue to do more and more every year, some of our highlights from 2020-2022:

<p>Raised \$170,614 from 2020-2022 for Powwow for Hope, allowing us to increase SURVIVORSHIP support, campaign, and outreach across Indian Country and benefiting the expansion of our monthly awareness campaigns: INDIGENOUS PINK (breast health), TURQUOISE TUESDAY (cervical health), BLUE BEADS (colon health), and SACRED BREATH (lung health) and launching a new survivorship campaign: CELEBRATE INDIGENOUS LIFE</p>		
<p>Received over \$100,000 to help support Native cancer survivors, caregivers, and families during the COVID-19 pandemic and developed a national media campaign to provide education and culturally-tailored resources to Native families.</p>	<p>Reached approximately 1,887,292 people on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, helping raise awareness of cancer burdens with education, support, and resources.</p>	<p>Completed <100 webinars.</p>
		<p>Created 22 media campaigns including new resources for our 2SLGBTQ+ relatives.</p>

Raising Awareness of Indigenous Cancer Burdens & Solutions

The COVID-19 pandemic did not stop cancer from spreading in our communities. Through collaborative partnerships, AICAF continued to leverage community interest, resources, and investments to engage Tribes and mainstream health organizations with fundraisers and awareness campaigns across Indian Country.

- ▶ **National Outreach:** We presented virtually and/or in person, at over 151 conferences, workshops, community events, and webinars addressing Native health, reaching an estimated 13,136 people.
- ▶ **Social Media:** We reached approximately 1,887,292 people on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, helping raise awareness of cancer burdens with education, support, and resources.

In 2020, AICAF launched virtual cancer survivor support circles for Indigenous cancer survivors, caregivers, and other relatives impacted by cancer.

The National Urban American Indian & Alaska Native Cancer Coalition continued to develop. The mission of the Coalition is to advance health systems change processes, identify culturally-tailored, evidence-based intervention practices, and set goals to reduce cancer incidence among Native people.

Cancer Awareness Campaigns

Each year, AICAF hosts several awareness campaigns surrounding cancers impacting Native people at the highest rates. Our awareness campaigns during 2020-2022 include:

- January- Turquoise Thursday Campaign for cervical cancer awareness (2020-2022).
- February- Cancer Prevention and Heart Health Campaign (2021-2022).
- March- Blue Beads Campaign for colorectal cancer awareness (2020-2022).
- June- Celebrate Indigenous Life Campaign for Indigenous cancer survivors and caregivers (2021-2022)
- August- Indigenous Milk is Medicine Campaign for breastfeeding/ breast cancer risk reduction (2020-2021).
- October- Indigenous Pink Campaign for breast cancer awareness (2020-2022).
- November- Sacred Breath Campaign for lung cancer awareness (2020-2022).
- December- Cancer Caregiving Campaign (2020-2021).

Through the Fall of 2021, AICAF launched a new healthy living campaign, First Foods Are Prevention. The campaign promoted traditional lifeways as a cancer prevention tool and the key to reclaiming wellness in Indian Country. During the campaign, AICAF engaged communities by sharing culturally-tailored resources and media tools that empowered Tribes to create their own Indigenous food campaigns.



“Through our traditions, culture and shared experiences, we know how to best respond to, and prepare for diseases like the coronavirus,”
 -AICAF Board Member (2020), Dr. Bret Benally Thompson, MD (White Earth Ojibwe)



MHA Nation Ice Warrior Plunge

Since 2016, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara (MHA) Nation has hosted the Ice Warrior Plunge on Lake Sakakawea to raise funds for AICAF and other local cancer organizations. Led by Chairman Mark Fox, Former AICAF Board Member, the Ice Warrior Plunge raises awareness of Indigenous cancer burdens and fundraises for important cancer solutions.

In 2020 and 2022, over 100 “plungers” leaped into Lake Sakakawea to help raise \$92,248 to benefit AICAF’s mission. These funds helped further our efforts to strengthen AICAF programs, build larger campaigns, and provide more resources to families across Indian County.

In 2021, the Ice Warrior Plunge was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Powwow for Hope (PFH)

Since 2012, Powwow For Hope: Dancing for Life, Love & Hope has brought together thousands of people nationwide to honor loved ones who have faced or are currently facing cancer by creating a space for healing.

All funds raised by the event help AICAF develop culturally-tailored cancer prevention resources, connect cancer survivors and caregivers to healing and supportive services, and partner with Tribal Nations to change the outcome of cancer in our communities.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PFH was postponed in 2020 and people were encouraged to fundraise instead. In 2021, AICAF leadership chose to transition to our first-ever virtual PFH due to rising rates of the COVID-19 Delta variant. The powwow was live-streamed on Zoom and Facebook on August 28, 2021, with over 3,000 viewers tuning in.

Randy Gresczyk (Bois Forte Ojibwe) kicked off the virtual powwow as the spiritual leader by doing a blessing, and Deanna StandingCloud (Anishanabe) was our emcee. Christina White (Anishanabe) also shared her experience as a breast cancer survivor during the virtual event.

Hard work and dedication from participants continued to help elevate this annual event, furthering our mission and greatly expanding our reach. From 2020 to 2022, Powwow for Hope raised a total of \$170,614!



Host Drum- Spirit Boy



2021 Emcee- Deanna StandingCloud

American Indian Cancer Foundation.

Breast cancer screenings among Native women dropped by 98% from January to June 2020

Advocate for your health

COVID-19 has not stopped cancer

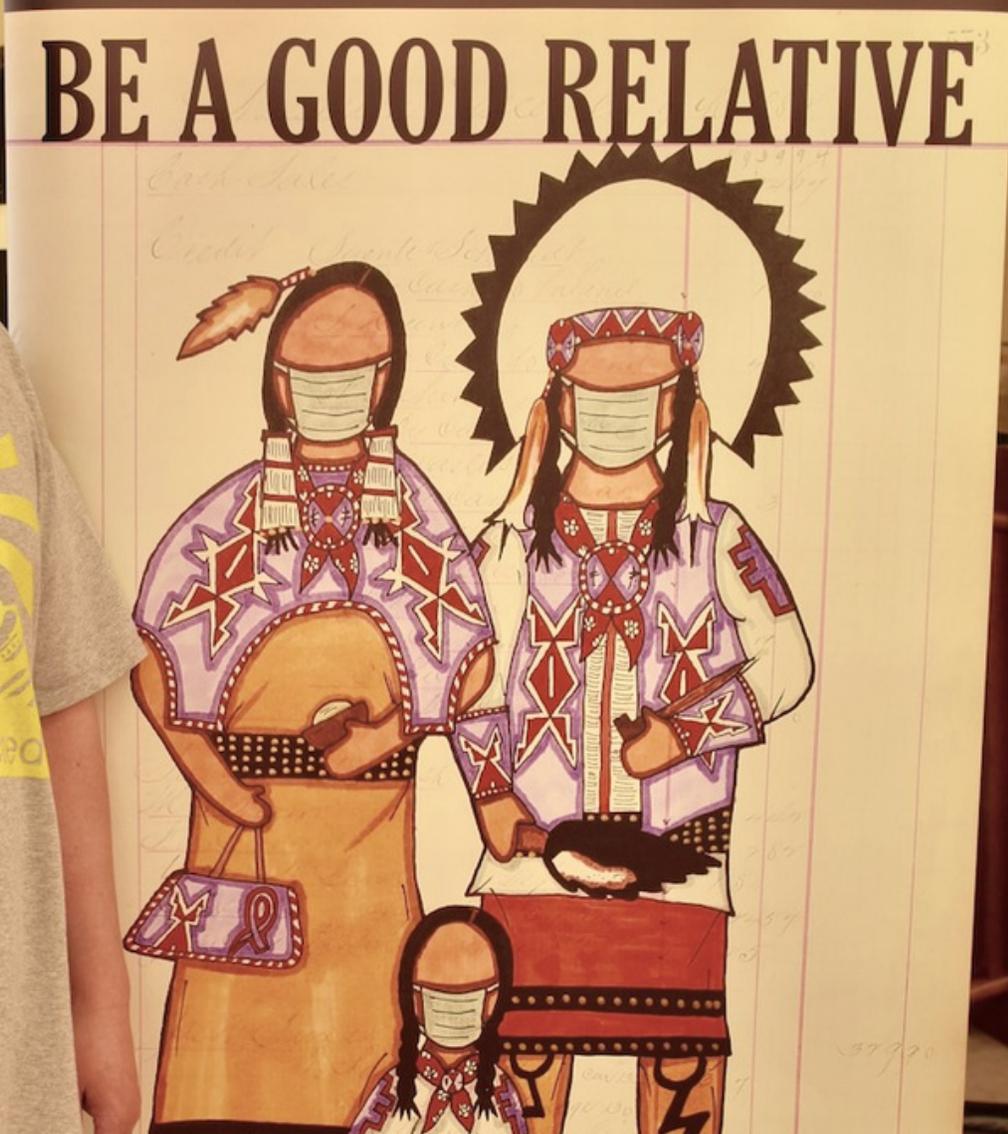
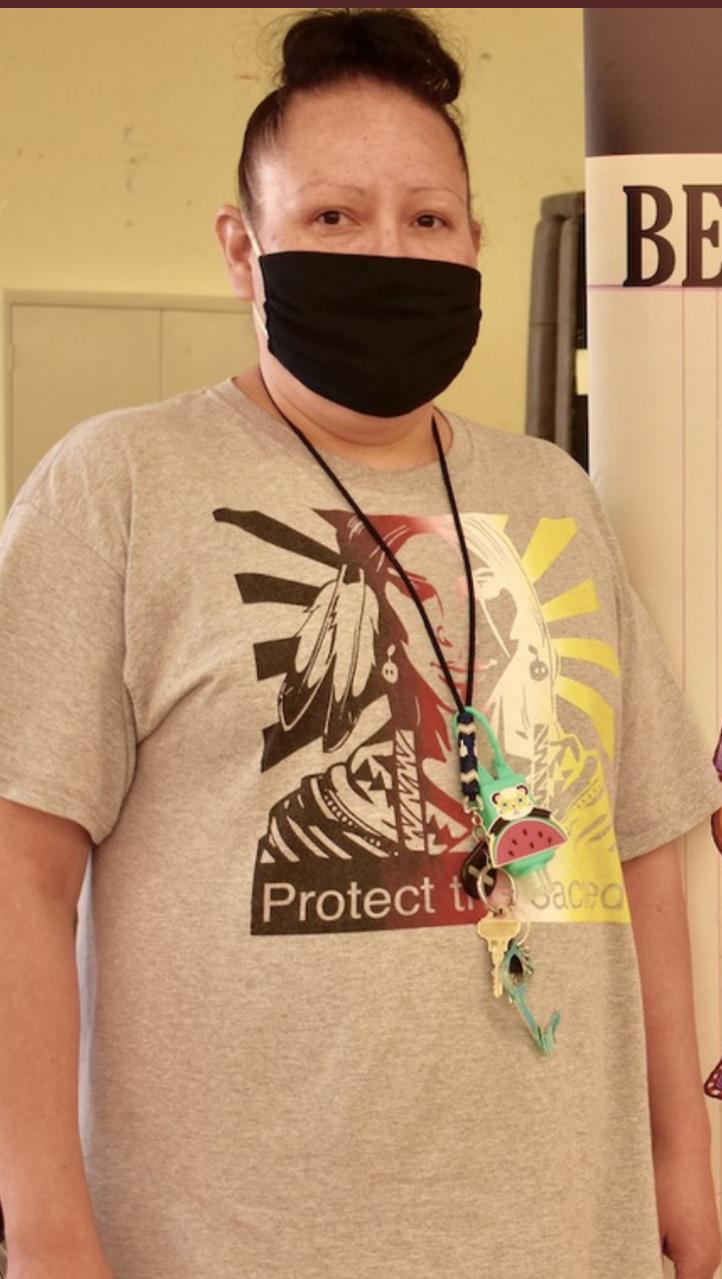
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, June 30). Sharp Declines in Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0630-cancer-screenings.html>

#CancerScreeningSavesLives



“As Indigenous nations, we’ve gone through many pandemics throughout the years, relying upon our traditions and cultural values to help us navigate health and achieve well-being. Now is the time to remember and practice those important traditions. We are a people who have always respected our elders and, during this time especially, will continue to protect and care for our relatives who are most vulnerable.”

-AICAF Board Chair (2020-2022) Dr. Gary Ferguson, ND
(Aleut/Unangan)



Advancing Capacity Through Training & Technical Assistance

There are many cancer-focused resources available, but very few reflect Indigenous peoples. AICAF is filling those gaps by listening to our communities and developing culturally-tailored model frameworks, training, and resources with Native communities and health systems.

- ▶ **Culturally-Tailored Resources:** AICAF makes a difference by sharing relevant and specific information with Indigenous communities. Some of our most popular infographics, toolkits, and resources include:
 - [Policy, Systems, & Environmental \(PSE\) Change for Vibrant Native Communities resource](#)
 - [Indigenous Lifeways are Prevention resource](#)
 - [Food & Healing: A Nutrition Guide for American Indian & Alaska Native Cancer Survivors.](#)
 - [Colorectal Cancer Signs & Symptoms resource](#)
 - [Using Traditional Healing with Western Medicine](#)
 - [Indigenous food for your gut health](#)
- ▶ **Technical Assistance (TA) for Clinics and Communities:** We offer TA through inter-tribal learning networks, training, presentations, webinars, toolkits, and targeted resources. Some of our most well-attended TA initiatives include:
 - Honoring Traditional Indigenous Knowledge as Potential Cancer Prevention Webinar

- Colorectal Cancer 101 Webinar
- Policy & Prevention: Survivor Nutrition Webinar
- Colorectal Cancer & the Alaska Native Diet: Fiber for CRC Prevention Webinar
- Advancing Health Systems Provider Toolkit Training Pt. 1 Webinar
- Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiatives Across Indian Country Webinar
- CRC Survivor Podcast with Johnny Nelson (Navajo Nation)
- CRC Survivor Podcast with Robert Desjarlait (Red Lake Ojibwe)
- American Indian/Alaska Native Cancer Survivorship 101
- Circle of Life Treatment Module
- Circle of Life Palliative Care Module
- Circle of Life End of Life Module
- Circle of Life American Indian and Alaska Native Healing Module
- Food Demo with Chef Yazzie
- Honoring the Journeys of Cancer Caregivers: An Indigenous Perspective

If you are interested in resources or technical assistance, please contact prevention@aicaf.org.

We always welcome requests, feedback, and suggestions for new material.

Cancer & COVID-19

Native people are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases and cancers, especially those that compromise the immune system. This puts them at a much higher risk of contracting COVID-19 or having more severe outcomes. AICAF worked to support our relatives in prioritizing life-saving cancer screenings during the pandemic and asking everyone to do their part to slow the spread of the virus for our vulnerable cancer survivors.

AICAF was awarded funding to support families during COVID-19 by receiving a total of \$75,000 from three funding sources to help support Native cancer survivors, caregivers, and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AICAF offered up to \$50 for individuals or a maximum of \$75 for a household with multiple survivors and/or caregivers living under the same roof to help offset lost income and essential expenses during the pandemic.

#BeAGoodRelative

AICAF was awarded an additional \$50,000 from the Minnesota Department of Health to develop a media campaign that provides education and culturally-tailored resources to Native families. The campaign aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, and case interviews. Virtual events, webinars, and talking circles were also implemented.

AICAF developed 10 national PSA videos urging our communities to follow public health guidelines and recommendations to help keep our relatives safe and healthy. Resources were also made to encourage our relatives to continue prioritizing their health through routine cancer screenings during the pandemic.

Some notable COVID-19 resources include:

- [Cancer & COVID-19: Indigenous Medicines to Support Healthy Immune & Respiratory Systems Webinar](#)
- Delivered over 600 Cloth Masks
- [AICAF's COVID-19 PSA with all staff](#)
- [Cancer & COVID-19 Cancer Screening resource](#)
- [How to visit your clinic safely for cancer screening resource](#)

AICAF continued to provide technical assistance to our Tribal Partners by helping White Earth Nation develop safety guidelines and rules for farmer's markets.

Local farmer's markets were vital during the pandemic, where access to healthy and affordable food was needed more than ever.

For more information on AICAF's response to COVID-19, visit americanindiancancer.org/covid-19



"I often tell guys, "As a provider for my family, there is no worse feeling than laying on your back in a hospital bed looking up at your spouse and knowing there's not a darn thing you can do about it!" It can be hard for me at times to do all my surveillance annually, but that's the life of a survivor. Health is the greatest gift you can give your family."

-AICAF Board member (2020-2022), Johnny Nelson (Navajo)

[Read John's cancer survivor story here](#)

Increasing Availability of Indigenous Cancer Data & Solutions

The lack of Indigenous health data is an ongoing problem. Too often, Native populations are referenced as an asterisk in data reports. AICAF is committed to identifying when new data is available, reviewing it for accuracy, and disseminating it as appropriate. We are also committed to gathering Native-specific data by engaging our people in our own research. During 2020-2022, we continued to lead research studies and develop new policies for cancer prevention.

Tribal Tobacco Use Project: This is a repeat statewide prevalence study of adult commercial and traditional tobacco use that engages Tribal and Urban populations to participate as full partners. The first study reported a 59% smoking rate among American Indian adults. Since then, Tribes and funders have invested millions of dollars to reduce this rate. Our study team published a process manuscript, "Tribal Tobacco Use Project II: Planning, Implementation, and Dissemination Using Culturally Relevant Data Collection among American Indian Communities," that details the project. Data collection was completed in 2022, and we have been working with each community on appropriate and relevant dissemination efforts.

Screen Our Circle Bill

AICAF's "Screen Our Circle" bill extends cancer care coverage for Native women! The [Screen Our Circle bill](#) updates the state statute to conform with federal law to allow any woman diagnosed with cancer through CDC's [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program](#) (NBCCEDP) funded program to be automatically eligible for Medicaid coverage. This supports AICAF's efforts to increase cancer screening among Native women in urban clinics. AICAF is thankful for the support and leadership of Emily Myatt at the [American Cancer Society - Cancer Action Network](#), and the bill's authors: State Representative Mary Kunesh-Podein, and State Senator Paul Utke and the 25+ health organizations that signed on to this bipartisan bill.

Understanding Lung Cancer Screening Barriers

The "Understanding Lung Cancer Screening Barriers" study is underway as a partnership between the American Indian Cancer Foundation, the [University of Minnesota Masonic Cancer Center](#), and the [Native American Community Clinic](#). To adapt to these unprecedented circumstances, the study adopted video-based data collection. AICAF's research team hosted virtual focus groups and interviews with urban Native smokers and health care providers serving these individuals. This study aims to uncover barriers and ensure that the right people are screened at the right time.

Clinic Systems Improvements: The research team has engaged Tribal and Urban clinics in multiple studies to determine the feasibility and impact of clinic systems improvements for HPV vaccination, smoking cessation, and lung cancer screening. Each study is planned with academic and clinic partners to identify research questions and analyze study findings for near-immediate implementation into clinic systems improvements.

Smoke-Free Tribal Casinos: Talking Points & Policy Considerations

Tribal Nations have sovereign authority to enact policies to protect their community members from the harms of secondhand exposure to commercial tobacco smoke. While many states have passed these policies, not all Tribal Nations have done so as of yet. Because many Tribal casinos were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tribal Nations across the country called on their Tribal leadership to prioritize the health of employees, patrons, and community members by reopening Tribal casinos as smoke-free facilities. This document refers to commercial tobacco usage and not the traditional or sacred use of tobacco.

Publications: Research publications stalled during the COVID-19 pandemic, but our projects continued to study new findings that were first shared with Tribal and community partners. Additionally, we publish our results in peer-reviewed publications. Here is a publication from 2021:

- Effects of culturally tailored smoking prevention and cessation messages on urban American Indian youth

Recognition: In 2022, AICAF was presented with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Circle of Excellence Award from Commissioner Jodi Harpstead for our work in supporting our Tribal partners in Minnesota to achieve their highest health potential. AICAF is honored to do this work in partnership with our relatives.

[The best part of the American Indian Cancer Foundation], “contributes thought, leadership, and research in a space where often times our stories are invisible...community is at the center of everything we do as Indigenous people.”

-AICAF Board Member (2020),
Kalina Newmark
(Dene First Nations)



AICAF Cancer Plan

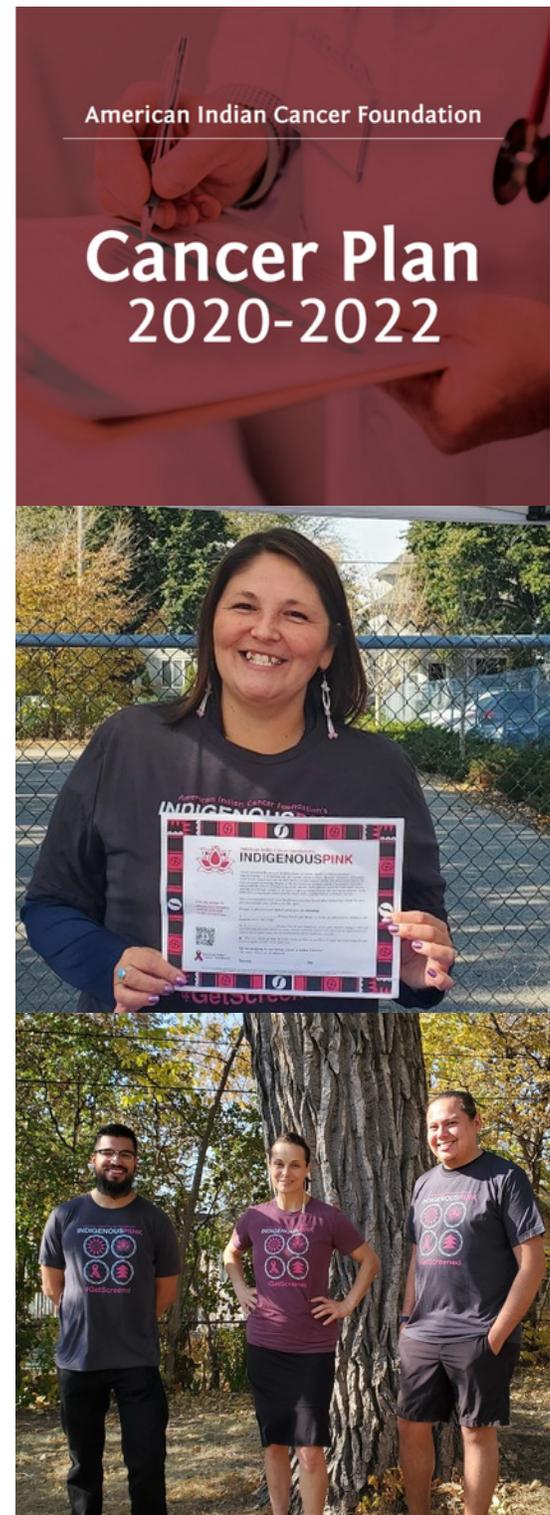
AICAF published its [Cancer Plan for 2020-2022](#), putting in place a comprehensive roadmap that works towards health equity and cancer reduction in Native communities nationwide. The plan provides specific goals and objectives to improve care across the cancer continuum: primary prevention, screening, early detection, treatment, survivorship, and palliative and end-of-life care.

The purpose of the plan is to raise awareness of Indigenous cancer burdens and provide solutions and improvement strategies to alleviate them. Long term, the cancer plan strives to:

- Reduce the incidence and mortality rate of all cancers in urban Native communities
- Increase appropriate cancer screening through recommended screenable cancer guidelines in urban Native communities
- Reduce the rate of late-stage diagnosis in urban Native communities
- Increase understanding and practice of cultural humility in Urban Indian Health Program staff
- Increase data surveillance efforts to be complete and accurate for urban Native communities
- Improve the quality of life for urban Native cancer survivors and caregivers

AICAF has aligned its cancer equity work with the cancer plan, building partnerships with clinics, communities, and organizations to reach the plan's goals and improve health outcomes in Indian Country by 2022 and beyond.

The Cancer Plan was funded by the CDC and was also published on its [website](#). For more information about AICAF's Cancer Plan, please contact health@aicaf.org.



Funders & Sponsors

We thank the funding partners who have trusted us and invested in Native-driven cancer solutions, programs, and research. Your investment has made a positive, lasting impact throughout Indian Country!

2020 Funders & Sponsors

Miigwech to the following funders who supported 2020 programming:

American Heart Association
 Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN
 Cargill Foundation
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 Clearway Minnesota
 Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 Hennepin Healthcare Comprehensive
 Cancer Center
 ICF Incorporated, LLC
 Masonic Cancer Center
 Mayo Foundation
 Minnesota Department of Health
 Minnesota Department of Human Services
 National Congress of American Indians
 Newman's Own Foundation
 Pepsi Bottling Company
 Prevent Cancer Foundation
 Roswell Park
 Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
 Three Affiliated Tribes of Mandan, Hidatsa &
 Arikara Nations
 Truth Initiative
 University of Minnesota

2021 Funders & Sponsors

Ketabi to the following funders who supported 2021 programming:

American Heart Association
 Angel Foundation
 Bald Eagle Erectors
 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 Clearway Minnesota
 Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 Fred Hutch
 Health Partners
 Hennepin Healthcare Comprehensive
 Cancer Center
 ICF Incorporated, LLC
 International Union of Operating Engineers,
 Local No. 49
 Mayo Foundation
 Minnesota Department of Health
 Minnesota Department of Human Services
 National Association of County and City
 Health Officials
 Newman's Own Foundation
 Pfizer
 Prevent Cancer Foundation
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 Roswell Park
 Red Earth Running Company
 San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
 Sealaska
 Seattle Cancer Care
 Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
 Three Affiliated Tribes of Mandan, Hidatsa &
 Arikara Nations
 University of Minnesota
 Westat, Inc.

2022 Funders & Sponsors

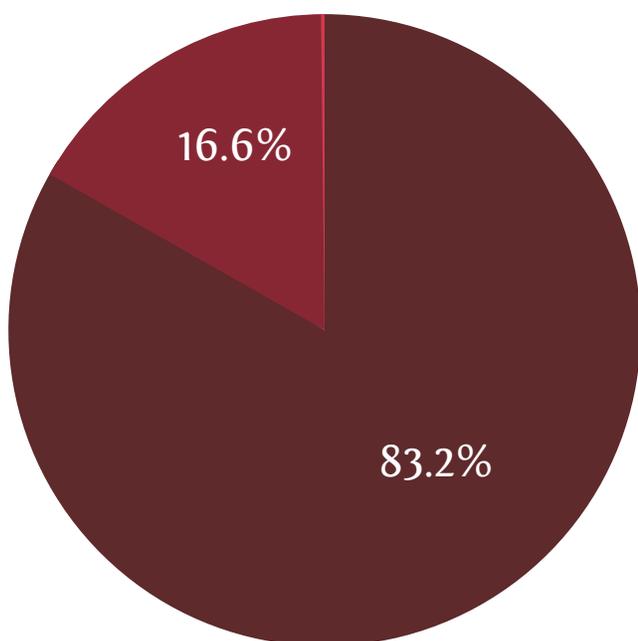
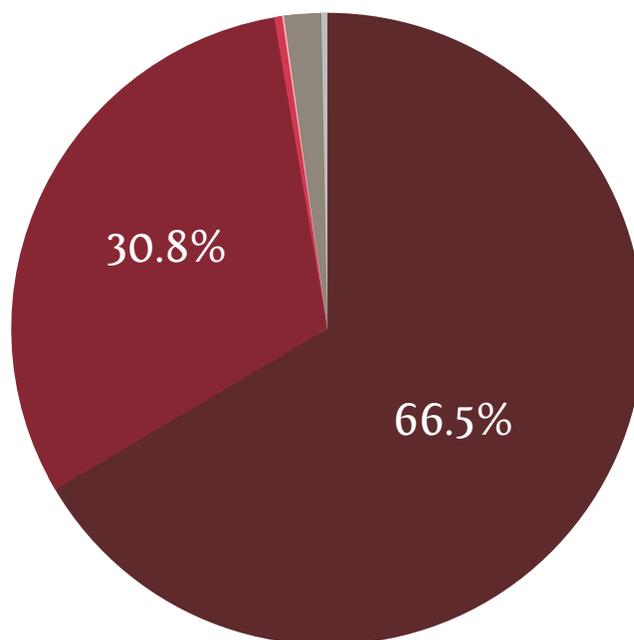
Pidamaya to the following funders
who supported 2022 programming:

American Heart Association
Akira
AmeriHealth
American Cancer Society
Angel Foundation
Association of Community Cancer Centers
Be the Match
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Clearway Minnesota
Colon Cancer Coalition
DSGW Architects
EISAI
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Genentech
Headwaters Foundation for Justice
Hennepin Healthcare Comprehensive Cancer Center
ICF Incorporated, LLC
Mayo Foundation
MN Department of Health
MN Department of Human Services
MN Society of Clinical Oncology
Newman's Own Foundation
Pfizer
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Roswell Park
RMP Foundation
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
Sears Imported Autos
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
The Aleut Corporation
Three Affiliated Tribes of Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nations
UCare
United Health Care Systems
University of Minnesota
Urban Indian Health Institute

2020 Financials

Support and Revenue

■ Grants	\$2,833,345
■ Contracts	\$1,312,641
■ Individual Donations	\$17,408
■ Corporate & Organization Donations	\$4,013
■ Events & Merchandise	\$80,520
■ Other Income	\$13,160
Total Support and Revenue	\$4,261,089



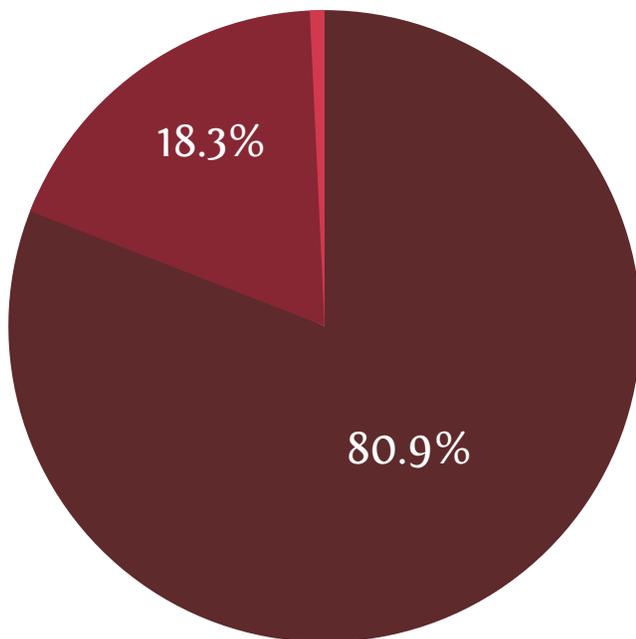
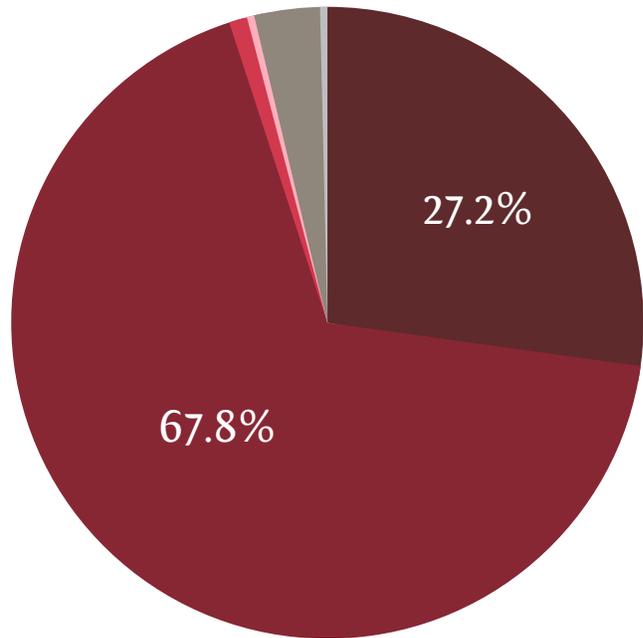
Expenses

■ Program Services	\$2,833,221
■ Management & General	\$565,273
■ Fundraising	\$6,199
Total Expenses	\$3,454,693

2021 Financials

Support and Revenue

■ Grants	\$731,178
■ Contracts	\$1,822,717
■ Individual Donations	\$24,938
■ Corporate & Organization Donations	\$10,005
■ Events & Merchandise	\$90,170
■ Other Income	\$10,051
Total Support and Revenue	\$2,689,059



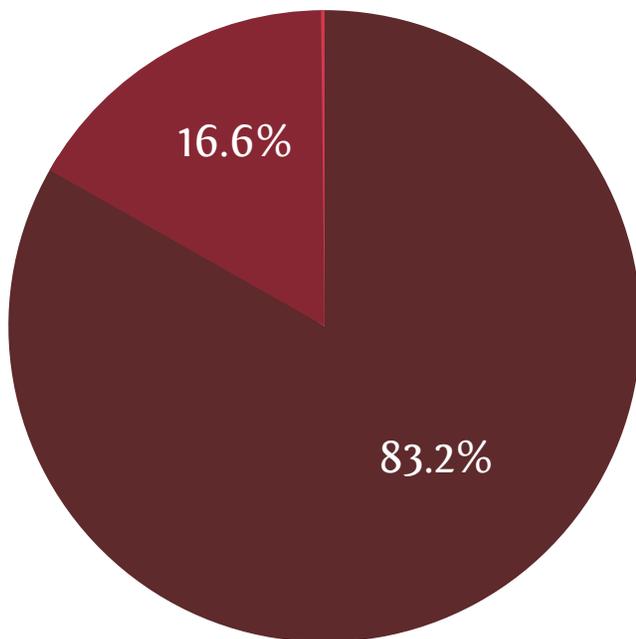
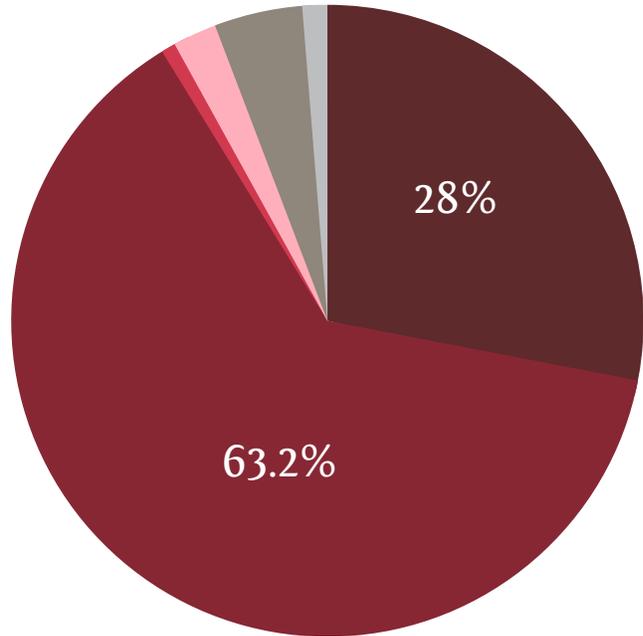
Expenses

■ Program Services	\$2,288,265
■ Management & General	\$518,151
■ Fundraising	\$21,177
Total Expenses	\$2,827,593

2022 Financials

Support and Revenue

■ Grants	\$625,000
■ Contracts	\$1,409,8101
■ Individual Donations	\$16,327
■ Corporate & Organization Donations	\$50,028
■ Events & Merchandise	\$100,548
■ Other Income	\$28,483
Total Support and Revenue	\$2,230,195



Expenses

■ Program Services	\$1,850,402
■ Management & General	\$459,946
■ Fundraising	\$26,183
Total Expenses	\$2,336,531

Board of Directors

The AICAF Board of Directors comprises Native leaders from across the nation. These individuals bring an impressive set of skills, energy, passion, and connections that help AICAF further its missions and strengthen our communities.

Chairperson (2020-2022)

Gary Ferguson, ND
Aleut, Unangan

Board Director (2020)

Mary Fairbanks, DNP
White Earth Ojibwe

Vice Chairperson (2020-2021)

Margo Gray
Osage Nation

Board Director (2020)

Mark Fox, JD
Mandan Hidatsa Arikara
Nations

Vice Chairperson (2022)

Board Director (2020-2022)
Nicole Hallingstad, MA
Tlingit

Board Director (2020-2022)

Johnny Nelson
Navajo

Secretary (2020-2022)

Deana Jackson
Navajo

Board Director (2022)

Tamera Begay, Esq.
Navajo

Treasurer (2020)

Samuel A. Moose, MTAG
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Board Director (2020)

Kalina Newmark, MBA
Dene First Nations

Treasurer (2021-2022)

Board Director (2020-2021)
Frances Tiger
Muscogee Creek Nation

Board Director (2020-2022)

Donna Palakiko, PhD, RN,
APRN
Native Hawaiian

Board Director (2020)

Bret R. Benally Thompson, MD
White Earth Ojibwe

Board Director (2020-2022)

Lillian Sparks Robinson, JD
Rosebud Sioux



Staff

The AICAF team is a group of talented and passionate individuals who strive every day to find solutions to cancer burdens in our Indigenous communities. Each of our staff members has personal reasons behind their dedication to the AICAF mission, and each contributes to our success.

Chief Executive Officer (2021-2022)

Deputy Director (2020)

Melissa Buffalo, MS
Meskwaki & Dakota

Chief Executive Officer (2020)

Kris Rhodes, MPH
Anishinaabe, Fond du Lac and Bad
River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Deputy Director

Lannesse Baker, MPH
Anishinaabe, Turtle
Mountain Band
of Chippewa

Operations Director

Alyssa Terleski, MBA
White Earth, Turtle
Mountain Chippewa

Office Administrator

Samantha Blackhall, AS

Cancer Programs Manager

Lindsey Petras, MSN

Cancer Screening Manager

Kendra Roland, MPH
Mandan, Hidatsa, and
Arikara Nation

Evaluation Manager

Bob Spencer, MS

Finance Manager

Kim Galvan, BS
White Earth Ojibwe

Finance Manager

Marie Smith, BA

Health Equity Manager

CoCo Villaluz, BA
Hidatsa/Assiniboine/Chamorro

Nurse Project Manager

Faith Kimberly Brandon, MS

Operations Manager

Shannon Zila, MS
Siksika Blackfeet

Prevention and Policy Manager

Chris Johnson, MPH
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate

Prevention and Policy Manager

Gwendena Lee-Gatewood, BS
White Mountain Apache

Research Manager

Michael Mudgett, MPH
Spirit Lake Nation

Research Manager

Wyatt Pickner, MPH
Hunkpati Dakota

Cancer Program Specialist

Colin Welker, BS

Communications Specialist

Tina MacDonald, BA
Leech Lake Ojibwe

Evaluation Specialist

Brad Krueger, MPH

Indigenous Evaluation Specialist

Veronica Seifert, MS
Fond du Lac Band of Lake
Superior Chippewa

Multimedia Specialist

George Wesley

Research Specialist

Amika Kamath, BA

Research Specialist

Anna Webber, MS

Senior Program Specialist

Ashley Pohlenz, MPH

Graphic Designer

Mike Yang, BA

Graphic Designer

Rhonda Schrader, BS

Staff

Cancer Equity Coordinator

Justin Jones, MS
Tlingit & Haida

Cancer Equity Coordinator

Misha LaPlante, BA
Bay Mills Ojibwe

**Cancer Programs
Coordinator**

Jacob Thompson, JD

**Cancer Programs
Coordinator**

Ketaki Birje, MPH

**Cancer Programs
Coordinator**

Khadijah Roberts, MPH

Coalition Coordinator

Faith Sharp, MA
Choctaw

**Communications
Coordinator**

Cheryl Bird, BS
Oglala Sioux

**Communications
Coordinator**

Lauren Conroy, BA

**Communications
Coordinator**

Mara Martinson, MA

**Communications
Coordinator**

Perry Moore, BA
Ojibwe

Program Coordinator

Chelsea Cooley, MPH

**Prevention & Policy
Coordinator**

Alyssa Diaz, BA

**Prevention & Policy
Coordinator**

Catherine Zingg, BA
Ho-Chunk Nation

**Prevention & Policy
Coordinator**

Daanis Chosa, BS
Bois Forte Chippewa

**Prevention & Policy
Coordinator**

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Thank You

We are focused on continually developing support for those with a cancer diagnosis and engaging Indigenous people across Indian Country to raise awareness, build capacity, and identify solutions. Our commitment remains steadfast in addressing the most impactful cancer burdens within the Native population, focusing on prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivor support.

Our efforts will persist in imparting knowledge about the significance of early detection while encouraging our relatives to prioritize their preventative cancer screenings, specifically for lung, colorectal, breast, prostate, and cervical. We are also focused on working with communities to continue to engage Tribal communities and Tribal leadership in utilizing sovereignty and promoting upstream prevention strategies.

Finally, we will always stay focused on how our Tribal teachings provide solutions, as we know communities have the answers and Tribal best practices to lead to better outcomes for Native people.





**American Indian
Cancer Foundation®**

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