

# SURVIVOR SOVEREIGNTY

Native people face high rates of sexual assault, sexual abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence.

**According to the National Institute of Justice, more than four in five Native men and women have experienced violence in their lifetime.**

We understand that scheduling and receiving preventive health care can feel daunting while recovering from traumatic events. We also know that life-saving cancer screenings are essential in honoring your long-term health.

Cancer is the leading cause of death for Native women and the second leading cause of death for Native men.

**Early cancer detection improves survival rates, meaning that #CancerScreeningSavesLives.**

We understand that for survivors, certain cancer screenings may be triggering. To help with this, we have compiled tips for making screening and preventive health care more comfortable.

**YOUR BODY IS YOUR OWN. YOU HAVE BODY SOVEREIGNTY.**

*Here are some ways to advocate for your emotional and physical health:*

## **Know what to expect:**

- 🌍 Talk to your health care team about what cancer screenings are recommended for your age and health history, and what each one entails
- 🌍 Colonoscopies, mammograms, pap smears, and other screenings may feel invasive, but your health care team can help make them more comfortable
- 🌍 Ask your health care provider to explain why each step of the screening process is necessary. Your health care provider should explain why they are performing certain exams and what these test results tell them about your health.
- 🌍 Knowledge is empowering. Asking questions helps to mentally, emotionally, and physically prepare for screening, and is a great way to feel more confident in each step of the process

## **Advocate for your physical sovereignty:**

- 🌍 Talk to your health care provider about your survivor history if you feel comfortable doing so
- 🌍 Request that your health care provider narrates each step of the exam as it is performed
- 🌍 Invite a friend or family member to serve as an emotional support person during the screening
- 🌍 It is okay to slow or stop an exam or screening at any time
- 🌍 Inform your health care provider if any part of the screening is uncomfortable or triggering
- 🌍 Remind yourself that taking care of your health is another way to celebrate your body sovereignty

## **After your screening:**

- 🌍 Debrief with your health care provider about the exam/screening process. Let them know what did and didn't work for you. This is an opportunity for the provider to document what is most helpful for future exams
- 🌍 Come up with a screening plan. Know what other preventive screenings are recommended and when you should receive them

Cancer screening is an important way to honor yourself, your body, and your future as a resilient survivor. You deserve long-term health and well-being. It is perfectly normal to feel nervous about other people touching your body, but you have complete control over how and when that happens. We celebrate every Indigenous survivor and pray for your mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.



American Indian  
Cancer Foundation.