

[NCUIH on NPR: Coronavirus Exposes Public Health Inequities in Indigenous Communities \(March 2, 2020\)](#)

Category: News

written by Meredith Raimondi | April 2, 2020

Native American tribes across the U.S. for weeks have been shutting down casinos, hotels and tourist destinations, and shoring up services amid worries about the spread of the coronavirus.

The coronavirus has been exposing and deepening [systems of inequality](#) all across the country. Low-wage workers without sick leave have [limited options](#) for making ends meet, students without internet access [are struggling](#) as schools move online, and those without health care may be [unable to seek care](#) if they get sick. Adding on to that, nearly 10 million people in the U.S. [have filed for unemployment](#) in the past two weeks.

In American Indian communities, the coronavirus outbreak has exposed a number of longstanding public health inequities.

Some tribal leaders, like [Rodney Bordeaux](#), the President of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, have issued a state of emergency due to concerns over how the pandemic will affect their communities.

"I am troubled that our people do not currently have access to the CDC approved test kits either from the CDC or the Indian Health Service. I am also concerned that the state has not made these kits available to our people, especially our elders and other vulnerable populations."

Urban Indian Health programs, which were given some money in the two recent stimulus packages, have been dramatically underfunded for decades despite the fact that roughly 70 percent of American Indians live in urban and suburban areas."

We spoke with **Francys Cevier** of the National Council for Urban Indian Health about what the coronavirus pandemic has meant for Urban Indian communities. We also talked to **Julian Bear Runner**, president of Oglala Sioux Tribe in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, about how it's impacting rural tribal populations.

Check out our ongoing coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic [here](#).

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