

PRESS RELEASE: National Native Organizations Come Together in Support of Hope for Life Day for Indigenous Communities During Suicide Prevention Week

Category: Press Release

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According to the CDC, suicide is the second leading cause of death of AI/ANs.

Washington, D.C. (September 11, 2020) - This week, National Native Organizations (the National Council of Urban Indian Health, the National Indian Health Board and the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board) came together to honor and celebrate *Hope for Life Day* (September 10, 2020) to bring awareness to the suicide disparities faced by Indigenous people across the U.S., especially our youth. With suicide being the second leading cause of death of American Indian and Alaska Natives, it is important to promote hope and resilience resources to counter the effects of current COVID-19 isolation practices which can lead to stress, worry and depression. "The pandemic of suicide has been taking precious Native lives for far too long. With the new pandemic of COVID-19 ravaging Native communities, it is more important than ever that we find ways to bring the community together and highlight the resilience of our people. This week, we joined with the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) and Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board to promote hope, life, cultural resiliency and community transformation during this important week. As our population is being decimated by the deadly virus of COVID-19, we need our youth to know that we need them here now more than ever. One more death is too many," said Francys Crevier, NCUIH Chief Executive Officer.

"The National Indian Health Board recognizes that many American Indians and Alaska Natives are experiencing extraordinary challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is within our purview as Tribal leaders, community members, parents, elders and neighbors to watch out and protect one another, especially our Native youth. Hope for Life Day brings together community for the purpose of healing and brings a sense of hope to those who may be suffering and having thoughts of suicide. NIHB is proud to be a part of the solution for Indian Country by providing technical assistance to the Substance Abuse and Suicide Prevention (SASP) grantees. We have seen much progress and success with the program as it fosters community mobilization and a community driven approach to these concerns - providing a beacon of hope for many," said NIHB CEO Stacy A. Bohlen.

"In the world that is sadly filled too much with hate, ugliness, hurt, we can find hope and the light in those we love. The simple hellos, the simple how are you, the simple it's good to see you, is a light we can all give without hesitation. Because it's those little things that may often mean the world to someone without us even realizing it. So please if you can do anything on this day, tomorrow and every day after, please be kind, please love one another, please uplift a loved one, a friend, a relative and even a stranger... be that light today that our future needs," says NPAIHB Chairman Nickolaus Lewis.

In 2015, the Annual National American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Hope for Life Day (Suicide Prevention Awareness Day) was put forward as a resolution at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Mid-Year Conference in 2015 after a year collaborative effort by the [Action Alliance's AI/AN Task Force](#). Since then, National Native Organizations have partnered each year on September 10, which is during Suicide Prevention Week to raise awareness.

This week the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH), National Indian Health Board (NIHB) and Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board's (NPAIHB) THRIVE/ WeNative initiatives partnered to host a Hope for Life Media Campaign for Suicide Prevention, using the hashtag #HopeForLife. Resources and positive messaging were shared via social media sites, respectively, which will continue to be available to the community through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter.

On Wednesday, September 9, NCUIH co-hosted a Facebook live event with NIHB and NPAIHB THRIVE/WeNative titled "Suicide Prevention in the Age of COVID-19", where representatives from both urban and tribal communities, as well as youth shared on their suicide prevention and awareness activities. The American Indian Health and Family Services (AIHFS), an Urban Indian Organization in Detroit, presented on their Sacred Bundle and "post-vention" programs to support the continuation of mental health screenings for the youth and adults in their community during the pandemic. Adon Vasquez (Cherokee) and Karyna Sitkowski presented from AIHFS.

Also, Mr. Roger Clark (Paiute) from the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah presented on their Mus- Pu-Vu Program, funded by the former Indian Health Service MSPi Program (Methamphetamine, Suicide, Prevention Initiative). Ms. Lael Tate (Diné), Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator, shared outcomes from the NPAIHB's youth conference that transitioned to virtual due to COVID-19. During the conference youth created art, poetry and videos to promote their [#IndigiLoveBeginsWithI](#) recently released campaign. A video was shared that captured the event's experience through their own words and pictures.

The Facebook event recording is available [here](#).

Facebook Live Event - Lael Tate (Diné), Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator, NPAIHB

On Thursday, September 10, the organizations hosted a [Tweetstorm](#) event: [#HopeForLife](#). Sample messaging was provided to use during this time, to raise awareness of common warning signs for suicide, resources for self-care, and mental health resources to share with others.

This year's NCUIH Youth Council created an [Indigi-Wellness Healer Campaign](#) ahead of Hope for Life Day where they created 2 infographics and ran an online social media campaign to promote healthy relationships and prevent suicide in youth. Last year, the NCUIH Youth Council hosted a month-long [Indigi-Wellness Champion Campaign](#) that kicked off on Hope for Life Day.

NCUIH Youth Council Indigi-Wellness Healer Infographic

More resources and information are [available online](#) for the Hope for Life Campaign.

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[Learn More](#)

Facebook Event: Suicide Prevention in the Age of COVID-19



Watch the Facebook Event: Suicide Prevention in the Age of COVID-19

[Watch Recording](#)

Social Media Campaign Graphics

About the National Council of Urban Indian Health

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is the national organization devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally-competent health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) living in urban settings. NCUIH envisions a nation where comprehensive, culturally competent personal and public health services are available and accessible to AI/ANs living in urban communities throughout the United States. NCUIH is the only organization that represents all 41 Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) federally funded by the Indian Health Service.

About the National Indian Health Board

Established by the Tribes to advocate as the united voice of federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) seeks to reinforce Tribal sovereignty, strengthen Tribal health systems, secure resources, and build capacity to achieve the highest level of health and well-being for our People.

About the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB or the Board) is a non-profit tribal advisory organization serving the forty-three federally recognized tribes of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. NPAIHB houses a tribal epidemiology center, several health promotion disease prevention projects, and is active in Indian health policy. We R Native is housed at the Board and is a comprehensive health resource for Native youth, by Native youth, providing content and stories about the topics that matter most to them. We R Native strives to promote holistic health and positive growth in local communities and the nation at large. The suicide prevention project at the Board is Tribal Health: Reaching out InVolves Everyone (THRIVE).

Tweetstorm

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