

# [Tune in TODAY: Urban Indian Leader to Speak at White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#)

Category: Press Release

written by Meredith Raimondi | September 28, 2022

***Walter Murillo (Choctaw), NCUIH President-Elect and CEO of NATIVE Health, will speak on addressing barriers to access for nutrition and health services for the urban Indian community.***

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 28, 2022)** - Today, the Biden-Harris Administration is hosting the [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#). Walter Murillo (Choctaw), the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) President-Elect and CEO of NATIVE Health in Phoenix will be speaking on the National Strategy Pillar Panel Session, *Breaking Barriers: Bridging the gap between nutrition and health*, at **12:10 p.m. EST**. He will bring the voice of urban American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) into the important conversation of food insecurity and nutritional barriers, which Native communities disproportionately experience.

Click here to watch the Conference live: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1\\_iLHCOAeY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1_iLHCOAeY)

## **Background**

It's been more than 50 years since the first and only White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health was held in 1969. At today's Conference, the Administration will announce a [National Strategy](#) that identifies steps the government will take and catalyzes the public and private sectors to address the intersections between food, hunger, nutrition, and health. The Administration sought input on the development and implementation of this national strategy and initiated Tribal

Consultation on June 28, 2022. On July 15, 2022, NCUIH submitted [comments](#) to the Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and recommended that they support urban Indian organizations (UIOs) to promote food security, nutrition, and exercise; include urban AI/AN populations in future research efforts and government projects; and establish consistent Urban Confers regarding nutrition, hunger, and health.

- [Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#)
- [NCUIH Comments on the White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#)

AI/AN people face high levels of [food insecurity](#) and diseases related to lack of access to healthy foods, including [diabetes](#) and [heart disease](#). Social determinants such as forced relocation, low socioeconomic status, and historical trauma have a significant impact on nutritional health among the population. Furthermore, AI/AN people who live in urban settings are especially likely to experience food insecurity. According to a [2017 report](#) published in the Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, “[u]rban AI/ANs were more likely to experience food insecurity than rural AI/ANs.” The [high rates of food insecurity in urban AI/AN communities](#) are likely a result of “AI/ANs living on reservations... [having] access to tribally provided food and health care resource services that may not be accessible to AI/ANs living in urban areas.” This issue in AI/AN communities has only been exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as isolation and economic hardship increased the barrier to nutritional food access.

UIOs provide different food programs and other nutrition services for urban AI/AN to address this ongoing challenge. NATIVE Health, a UIO in Phoenix, Arizona, provides a variety of food programs to address food insecurity. These programs include:

- Free, daily food distribution to any needy individual.
- Weekly backpacks of food for families with children.
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program or Senior Food Box program.
- Fresh meals for COVID-impacted families.
- Kid’s Cafe meals for children under 18.
- Ready to eat meals and fresh produce bags as available at NATIVE HEALTH Central and NATIVE HEALTH Mesa.
- Weekly food bags for NATIVE HEALTH employees.
- Traditional garden for community members.
- Read it and Eat program that introduces families to healthy, affordable, easy cooking lessons. This program transitioned to an online model since the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **About NCUIH**

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is the national non-profit organization devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally competent health and public health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) living in urban areas. NCUIH is the only national representative of the 41 Title V Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) under the Indian Health Service (IHS) in the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). NCUIH strives to improve the health of the over 70% of the AI/AN population that lives in urban areas, supported by quality, accessible health care centers.

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