

Urban Indian Leader, Walter Murillo, Speaks at White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

Category: Policy Blog

written by Adrienne Elliott | November 23, 2022

On September 28, 2022, Walter Murillo, CEO of NATIVE Health and President-Elect of the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH), headlined a panel titled “Breaking Barriers: Bridging the Gap Between Nutrition and Health” at the [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#). Mr. Murillo highlighted high rates of food insecurity in Indian Country, which intersects with other social determinants of health such as limited housing, employment, and lack of trust in health care systems in Native communities. In the Phoenix area, NATIVE Health has engaged with partners to create community gardens, teach traditional seeding and recipes, and deliver food boxes to elders during the height of COVID to support access to healthy and nutritious meals for urban American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs).

Video of the panel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1_iLHCOAeY

Background

UIOs provide essential access to nutrition, food, and health resources for the more than 70 percent of AI/ANs living off-reservation. AI/AN people experience the highest rates of diabetes across all racial and ethnic groups ([14.5 percent](#)), compared to 7.4 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. 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.” Moreover, diabetes and heart disease are among [the top five](#) leading causes of death for AI/AN people who live in urban areas. Additionally, urban AI/AN people are more than [three times](#) more likely to die from diabetes than their White peers and have higher death rates attributable to heart disease than urban White people.

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 the Conference, the Administration announced 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](#)