

Indigenous Language & Identity Challenges: *Perspectives from California Urban Indian Organizations*

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the conditions in which people live that can affect a wide range of health outcomes¹, and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) play a key role in addressing SDOH in the populations they serve. Many researchers have identified specific Indigenous SDOH due to the unique conditions that impact the health and well-being of Indigenous communities, including language and identity². The National Council of Urban Indian Health disseminated a survey in winter 2025-2026 and gained insights from six California UIOs on Indigenous language and identity challenges.

Indigenous language and identity refers to the use and revitalization of Indigenous languages, as well as the reclamation of traditional knowledge and practices to support collective identity and cultural connection.²

Many studies have demonstrated the benefits of Indigenous language and identity in **improving resiliency and acting as a protective factor** against substance abuse, depression, and diabetes^{3,4}.

How do respondents address Indigenous Language and Identity?

50%

integrate Indigenous language and identity into their programs and services

33%

have staff who provide services or programs through Indigenous languages



100% screen for language preference of patients or clients during intake. Specifically:

- ▶ 83.3% offer virtual translator services
- ▶ 66.7% offer translated patient education materials
- ▶ 50% offer in-person translator services

83%

do not generally hear concerns from patients regarding the impacts of their Indigenous language and identity on their navigation of health care or their requests for traditional services, **demonstrating the success of UIOs in providing culturally tailored care to meet patient needs**

[Read the full report: ncuih.org/sdoh2026](https://ncuih.org/sdoh2026)

References

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