American Indians and Cancer

Daanis Chosa, AS
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa/Keweenaw
Bay Indian Community
Prevention and Policy Specialist

Objectives

1. Provide an overview of the cancer burden for American Indians in the Northern Plains
2. Review culturally relevant strategies that support positive health outcomes for American Indians
3. Access and share available culturally tailored resources that can support other organizations work
The AICAF story

American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) is a national non-profit established to address tremendous cancer inequities faced by American Indian and Alaska Natives.

Mission:
To eliminate cancer burdens on American Indian families through education and improved access to prevention, early detection, treatment and survivor support.

Our vision

Our vision is a world where cancer is no longer a leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Natives.

Through hard work, culturally appropriate community-based programs, and policy change that affords Native people access to the best prevention and treatment strategies, we see a day where American Indian communities are free from the burdens of cancer.
Our approach

We believe…
Native communities have the wisdom to find the solutions to health inequities, but are often seeking the organizational capacity, expert input and resources to do so.

American Indian cancer data

American Indians face alarming inequities in cancer incidence and mortality.

Other populations have celebrated decreasing cancer mortality rates in the past 20 years, but American Indian cancer mortality rates are still on the rise.
Cancer is the...

#1 Cause of Death for Women

#2 Heart Disease

#3 Unintentional Injury

#2 Cause of Death for Men

#1 Heart Disease

#3 Unintentional Injury

The most commonly diagnosed cancers are...

#1 Breast

#2 Lung

#3 Colorectal

#1 Prostate

#2 Lung

#3 Colorectal

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for men and women.

Other leading causes of cancer death are...

Prostate

Colorectal

Breast

Distinct patterns in AI/AN cancer rates are observed across six geographic regions defined by the Indian Health Service.
Northern Plains

AI/AN in the Northern Plains experience some of the highest cancer diagnoses and death rates in the United States.

Most Common Cancers: Northern Plains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cancer Diagnosis</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Cancer Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Breast</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Lung</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 Colorectal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cancer Diagnosis</th>
<th>Men</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Prostate</td>
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<td>#2 Lung</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>#3 Colorectal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cancer Disparities for AI/AN vs. Whites: Northern Plains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liver Cancer Death</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larynx Cancer Death</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What impacts our health?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genes and Biology</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Care</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Behaviors</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Economic Factors</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social determinants of health

The 40%

Our reality is determined by history..

“Health inequities are directly linked to determined and deliberate efforts of American federal, state, and local governments to uproot American Indians from their lands, eradicate their languages and destroy their ways of life.”
Government policies, systems & environments that impacted AI/AN’s

- Indian Removal Act
- Allotment Act (Dawes Act)
- Indian Reorganization Act (Indian New Deal)
- Indian Relocation Act
- Indian Religious Freedom Act
- Commod food system
- Boarding schools
- Kill the Indian Save the Man

Persistent inequities

- American Indians face tremendous inequities in cancer and other chronic disease largely related to health behaviors (smoking, eating, exercise) and social determinants of health (education, jobs, safety).
- American Indians are too often on the worst end of every health indicator reported (e.g. access to health care, environmental quality, substance abuse).
- We are all here because we are working together to create positive change and promote healthy norms in our communities.
What are the root causes of health disparities?

- **Federal policy that attempted to eliminate**
  American Indians and eradicate Native culture
  resulted in:
  - Addictive behaviors associated with historical trauma
  - Tobacco abuse (smoking and chewing)
    - Cigarette smoke exposure
  - Alcohol abuse
  - Diets high in animal fats and lower in fiber, lack of fresh fruit and vegetables
  - Lack of regular physical activity
  - Obesity & Diabetes
  - Family genes that may increase risk of chronic illness

We must keep unhealthy behaviors in the context of

- **Trauma:** Both historical and current
- **Stresses:** racism, poverty, other systemic inequities, cultural separation
- **Historical genocide and ethnic cleansing:** the extermination and repression of AI/AN culture
- **Living with the oppressor:** unlike other marginalized communities AI/AN’s still remain on this land base and are regulated / influenced in many ways by the federal government (for the past 500 years)
Present community & system level barriers

- Underfunded urban and tribal health care systems
- Lack of accurate population specific data
- High rates of poverty
- Poor access to health care
- Lack of culturally competent health care providers
- Limited availability of prevention programs, cancer screening and specialist care, especially in rural areas

“Health equity is crucial for the well-being and vibrancy of communities”

- We know that health is a product of social determinants and health disparities

- Health **inequities** stem from structural racism, discrimination and poverty

- Solutions need to be tribally-led, community based and rooted in culture
Elevating health equity requires:

- Access to economic, educational and political opportunity
- The capacity to make decisions and effect change.
- Safety in the places we live, learn, work, practice tradition and play
- Culturally-competent and appropriate health care when the need arises

Another way to explain **Equity**

*Health inequity* is a health disparity based on inequitable, socially determined circumstances.
Culturally relevant strategies

What can we do?

Authentically partner with AI/AN communities to:

- **Trust** the community has the wisdom and solutions to address health disparities which afflict their community
- Actualizing positive change strategies that are conceived through community member engagement and conversation
- Advance health equity through PSE change
- Apply Health in all Policies approach
- Change organizational practices
- Foster community-driven coalitions to influence policy
Going up-stream to achieve health equity

PSE change defined

Making changes at the policy, systems and/or environmental level to affect a broader impact in advancing health and achieving health equity
American Indian way of life

❖ Non-linear worldview, balance, connectedness to all things living, respect for life and for each other

❖ Collective vs. individualistic

Tribal sovereignty and PSE change

**Tribal Sovereignty** - federally recognized tribes are recognized as possessing certain inherent rights of self-government and are entitled to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protections because of their special relationship with the United States.

-US Department of Interior Indian Affairs

*It's time to utilize tribal sovereignty to advance health equity in tribal communities.*
Public Health through an Indigenous lens

**Policy change**

- Public health definition: changes in rules that encourage or discourage a certain behavior

- Indigenous lens: guiding principles for ways of living
  - Respect for elders
  - Never take more than you need
  - Showing appreciation and respect for all living things

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**System change**

- Public health definition: changes of how things are done at an organization or setting

- Indigenous Lens: building blocks of a community that allow it to function as a whole
  - family, clan, band
  - food & medicine systems
  - tribal government systems
Continued...

Environmental change

❖ Public health definition: changes in the places you live, work, play, shop and go to school

❖ Indigenous lens: the natural and built world around us and how we interact with it
  ➢ planting gardens, fertilizing the land, harvesting food
  ➢ seasonal practices
  ➢ infrastructure- sidewalks, playgrounds

Applications and impact of PSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSE Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>A human resource departmental policy that requires healthy foods to be served at all meetings, gatherings and events</td>
<td>Decreases in excess morbidity and mortality related to obesity and diet related illness among American Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>System</strong></td>
<td>Traditional tobacco and Indigenous foods community garden spaces with relevant culturally specific education for community members</td>
<td>Increases in prevention of commercial tobacco abuse and decreases in excess morbidity and mortality related to obesity and diet related illness among American Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
<td>Limit sale of junk food products and increase availability of healthy options in tribal stores, building vending machines and cafeterias</td>
<td>Decreases in excess morbidity and mortality related to obesity and diet related illness among American Indians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Policy, Systems and Environmental Change Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Common Approach</th>
<th>PSE Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Teach a unit on healthy beverage consumption</td>
<td>Provide healthy beverages at lunch and in vending machines. Limit the amount of SSB on school campus. Increase access to water stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Educate on impacts of SSB to our health</td>
<td>Develop a policy to reduce SSB consumption to create a healthier work environment. Provide healthy beverage options at meetings and conferences. No reimbursement for purchase of SSB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Provide education on benefits of breastfeeding and reducing SSB</td>
<td>Create safe accessible spaces for women to breastfeed at events and community gatherings. Remove advertisements for unhealthy beverages in local stores and/or on vending machines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Culturally-grounded strategies

**AICAF Prevention and Policy technical assistance:**

- Training - intro to PSE change
- Facilitate community conversations, active listening to identify change strategies & solutions
- Strategic planning
  - Community visioning
  - Strategies emerge
  - Voting
  - Action planning
  - Calendar creation
- Coalition building
- Community engagement
A PSE approach that builds on the cultural and social assets of the community has a greater chance of success, and because of this, community engagement is critical. Engagement encourages members to take part in the change process and advocate for their own health.

What are tribal community cultural and social assets?

- Each tribe’s value system and cultural heritage
- Land
- It’s members! human capital
- Natural resources (community garden, Indigenous foods, water)
- Political (tribal laws and ordinances that promote health)
- Institutional (schools, clinics)
- Social (programs that support community health)
- Many others
Community conversations

- Improves communication between community members and leadership
- Increases trust in governance
- Increases participation to help make positive change happen
- Draws on local knowledge to help create effective and practical changes
- Builds capacity for local community members to be active in promoting the health and wellness of their community

AI/AN community coalition’s

- Allows for interdepartmental collaboration
- Allows for community member wisdom and advisement in tribal departmental initiatives
- Allows for community member voice in policies and health priorities
- Allows for community champions to own move efforts forward
- Allows for tribal council/decisions makers to see an organized cohort of members addressing important health issues
- Cultivates community buy-in, mobilization and actualization
Community events

❖ Opportunity to gain community interest & buy-in from community members
❖ Raises community member interest, awareness and understanding of public health initiatives underway

❖ Opportunity to bring people together to recruit or nominate members to the coalition
❖ Opportunity to gather larger community member feedback and input through survey and/or conversation

Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee
Honoring Little Crow with Healthy and Indigenous Foods Initiative

Background

The Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee (LSHASC) is comprised of eight community members and two youth representatives. Meetings are organized and supported by the Health and Human Services Branch of the Lower Sioux Indian Community (LSIC).

The purpose of the LSHASC is to increase community engagement to establish a healthy lifestyle and promote community health and wellness among the Lower Sioux Indian Tribe. The committee focuses on addressing health disparities and improving the overall health of the tribe.

On January 1st, 2017, the Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee was established to develop a strategic plan for the health and wellness of the tribe. The committee worked with the community to identify health priorities and develop strategies to address them. The strategic plan is designed to guide the committee's work and ensure that it aligns with the needs and values of the tribe.

The strategic plan includes the following goals:

1. Increase awareness of the importance of healthy behaviors
2. Develop and implement health education programs
3. Increase access to health care services
4. Increase physical activity and recreational opportunities
5. Increase healthy food access
6. Increase awareness of and participation in community events

The committee has also developed a set of recommendations to support the tribal health and wellness goals. These recommendations include increasing access to healthy foods, improving nutrition education, and increasing physical activity among the tribe.

On January 15th, 2018, the Lower Sioux Health and Human Services Advisory Committee presented its strategic plan to the tribal council. The plan was adopted and will guide the committee's work for the next five years. The committee will continue to work with the community to ensure that the strategic plan is implemented effectively and that the health and wellness goals are achieved.

Strategic Plan
2017
Visioning: what does health look like for us?

AI/AN culturally tailored cancer resources
Mother's Milk

Breastfeeding can reduce the risk of cancer and cancer risk factors:

- Breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Hypertension
- Type 2 diabetes

Partner and family support:

- Let her know you support her choice to breastfeed!
- Be proactive and ask about her needs
- Take care of her baby needs (change diapers, prepare feeding surfaces, hold baby when not feeding, etc.)
- Make sure she is getting plenty of fluids, food, and rest.
- Cheer her on, it's never easy.
- Take the lead in daily chores
- Shop and cook for the family
- Care for older children

Where to turn for help:

- Your healthcare provider
- Local lactation consultant (call the national number 1-888-998-4385)
- American Indian Breastfeeding Resource Network
- American Lactation Consultant Association
- La Leche League and other local support groups

Mother's milk contains cells, hormones, antibodies, and cancer-fighting cells that protect babies from illness by improving their immune response.

American Indian Cancer Foundation.

Healthy NATIVE FOODS for American Indian Communities

The HEALTHY NATIVE FOODS TOOLKIT for American Indian communities has been developed to serve as a reference and to act as a healthy meal planning tool. The toolkit includes tips, guidelines, and meal planning strategies for staff meetings and community gatherings for both adults and children. A large part of our culture involves the time of gathering with our families and friends around a meal. The inclusion of healthy Native foods such as berries, vegetables, fruits, lean meats, fish, and dairy products will help support the health and wellness of our communities. Our goal is to support healthy Native foods initiatives for American Indian communities while also educating them about the importance of healthy eating habits, food choices, and cultural values.
Review

What percentage of health is determined by genes and biology?

10%
What are some risk factors that have led to higher rates of cancer for AI’s/AN’s?

❖ Commercial tobacco use and exposure
❖ Low cancer screening rates
❖ Excessive alcohol use
❖ Lack of regular physical activity
❖ Poor diet

What is the leading cause of cancer death for AI/AN men and women in the United States?

Lung Cancer
Contact Information
3001 Broadway Street NE, Suite 185
Minneapolis, MN 55413

dchosa@aicaf.org
www.aicaf.org