**Slide 1:**

**Covid-19 Pandemic in Indian Country**

**National Indian Health Board**

**Slide 2:**

Jill Jim, PhD, MPH, MHA

Navajo Nation

National Indian Health Board

Public Health Infrastructure and Accreditation Programs Director

**Slide 3:**

NIHB MISSION STATEMENT

Established by the Tribes to advocate as the united voice of federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, 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.

PHPP VISION STATEMENT

Working together to empower sovereign Tribal nations to improve equity, policy, and public health systems that build thriving Native communities now and for the next seven generations.

**Slide 4:**

Images of various media headlines about rates of COVID vaccination and infection among Native Americans

**Slide 5:**

* American Indian / Alaska Native population
* 3.7 million American Indian and Alaska Native alone
  + 9.7 million alone & other race
* 1.1% of the total population
  + 2.9% alone & other race
* 574 federally recognized Indian Tribes
* Over 70% of AIAN live outside Tribal lands
* In 2020, IHS served 2.56 million in 37 states

**Slide 6:**

American Indian and Alaska Native Life Expectancy Similar to US 1944

**Slide 7:**

COVID-19 Mortality Among American Indian and Alaska Native Persons – 14 States, January-June 2020

**Slide 8:**

COVID Testing

5,439,994 individuals tested

**Slide 9:**

COVID Positive Cases

610,073 individuals tested positive for COVID

**Slide 10:**

COVID Vaccination

Distribution of COVID Vaccine

* Indian Health Service
* State Jurisdiction

4,419,525 Doses Distributed

2,406,179 Does Administered

**Slide 11:**

Tribal Sovereignty: The Right to Power and to Self-Govern

* Tribes are sovereign nations, with the power and duty to safeguard their citizens’ health
* Tribal nations predate the formation of the United States – they retain their sovereignty
* Tribal sovereignty has been repeatedly recognized and affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Constitution, and hundreds of Indian treaties and federal statutes
* Tribal nations hold a unique relationship with the United States
* “American Indian/Alaska Native” is first and foremost a political status

**Slide 12:**

* Health Care for Tribal Nations
  + Federal Indian health laws and policies
  + Treaties with the federal government
  + Federal trust responsibility
  + Tribal sovereignty
  + Government-to-government relationships

**Slide 13:**

Public Health Authority

A Public Health Authority is defined by federal law (45 CFR 164.501) as: “an agency or authority of the United States, a State, a territory, a political subdivision of a State or territory, or an Indian tribe, or a person or entity acting under a grant of authority from or contract with such public agency, including the employees or agents of such public agency or its contractors or persons or entities to whom it has granted authority, that is responsible for public health matters as part of its official mandate.”

**Slide 14:**

Why is Public Health Capacity So Strained in Indian Country?

* As US public health infrastructure was developed over the past century, Tribes were excluded from these systems & structures
* The main sources of funding that support State and Local health departments are not available to Tribes
* The Indian Health Care Improvement Act includes authorization for the Indian Health Service to conduct public health activities, but Congress has left this section of the Act unfunded
* Current IHS funding covers less than 20% of the actual cost to provide health care and public health services to all of Indian Country

**Slide 15:**

Ways to Engage Tribal Communities

* Understand the government structure
  + Elected leaders
  + Public health administrators
* Learn about the public health system
  + Health delivery system
  + Tribal epidemiology centers
  + Public health authorities

Next Steps:

* Director–to – Director meeting
* Governor–to–President/Chairman meeting
* Regular monthly/quarterly meetings
* Orientations

**Slide 16:**

Ways to Engage Tribal Communities

* Establish and maintain the relationship
  + Collaborate
* Coordinate
* Strategize
* Support
* Technical assistance
* Build capacity

Next Steps:

* Understand needs and gaps from the Tribal perspective
* Listen and learn
* Come to the table with ideas of what you can offer to support Tribes, but allow Tribes to take the lead
* Be sensitive to a possible history of strained relationships between governments
* Come to an agreement on possible solutions

**Slide 17:**

Ways to Engage Tribal Communities

* Empower and strengthen Tribal sovereignty
* Be an advocate for Tribal self-determination
* “Nothing about us, without us”
* Build and enhancing capacity and capacities to combat diseases

Next Steps

* Conduct meaningful Tribal consultation
* Create a Tribal Consultation Policy through consultation with Tribes
* The Policy sets a framework for communication and diplomacy between governments
* Ensure consistent adherence to the Policy

Ownership

* + Inspire and empower ideas to fruition
  + Data systems

**Slide 18:**

Understanding Culture, Understanding Disparities

* Distance to receive health services
* Holistic care
* Food access
* Basic needs (water, shelter)
* Perceptions about disease, wellness, etc.
* Ways of life
* Cultural taboos

**Slide 19:**

Final Thoughts

* Working with Tribes must have a foundation of respect for Tribal sovereignty
* Improve quality data
* Cultural integration at the forefront
* Strengthening partnerships
* Health system awareness
* Lessons learned into action

**Slide 20:**

Thank you!

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**Slide 21:**

Keep up with NIHB!

Follow us on social media:

* Facebook: NIHB1972
* Twitter: @NIHB1
* Instagram: @nihb1
* LinkedIn: National Indian Health Board

Visit our website: https://nihb.org/

**Slide 22:**

Resources:

* [https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/ihsprofile/#:~:text=Population%20Serve%3A%20(as%20of%20January,American%20Indians%20and%20Alaska%20Natives](https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/ihsprofile/)
* <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2022/aian-month.html>