Because of these systemic injustices, AI/AN face lower life expectancies and higher rates of preventable disease, disability, and death.

The outcome: Severe health inequities for American Indians and Alaska Natives

Because of these systemic injustices, AI/AN face lower life expectancies and higher rates of preventable disease, disability, and death.
A PATH TO HEALTH EQUITY
for American Indians and Alaska Natives
5 Essential Components

1. **Tribal Sovereignty**
   Respect for Tribal Nations as sovereigns and expanded Tribal self-governance are foundational to AI/AN health equity.

2. **Resilience through Culture**
   Leaning into traditional values and worldviews opens new paths forward.
   - Extended family structures
   - Traditional healing
   - Traditional food systems
   - Community, connection, and belonging
   - Native perspectives on health & wellbeing

3. **Strong Tribal Institutions**
   With collaboration, emphasis on traditional values, and prioritization of health and wellbeing, Tribal institutions can be powerful forces for AI/AN health equity.
   - Tribal governments
   - Regional and National Indian organizations
   - Schools & colleges
   - Healthcare systems
   - Justice systems

4. **Tribal Representation in State & Federal Governance**
   Undoing centuries of harm to AI/AN requires dedication to rebuilding relationships and trust and purposeful inclusion of Tribes in decision-making.
   - Meaningful Tribal consultation
   - Inclusion in agency task forces & committees
   - Active Tribal Advisory Committees
   - Expanded pathways for AI/AN to become elected officials and government employees

5. **Federal Trust Responsibility**
   To fulfill the trust responsibility for protecting AI/AN health, the US government must:
   - Fully fund the Indian health system
   - Ensure Tribes have sufficient resources and capacity to meet needs and participate actively in governance
   - Reverse AI/AN erasure through cultural competence training of government employees, Tribally informed public school curricula, and improved data practices

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2022 Inter-Tribal World Café on Health Equity for contributing your insights into charting a path forward for AI/AN health equity!
### Steps Forward for CMS

Based on the outcomes of the 2022 Inter-Tribal World Café on Health Equity, the following recommendations are examples of steps the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) can take – in partnership and consultation with Tribes – to build on the [CMS Health Equity Framework](https://www.cms.gov) and advance health equity for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN).

#### 1. Tribal Sovereignty
- Create a policy acknowledging that ‘American Indian and Alaska Native’ is a matter of political status (not race/ethnicity)
- Ensure CMS health equity definition is inclusive of AI/AN
- Approach AI/AN health equity through the Government-to-Government relationship the US maintains with Tribal Nations

#### 2. Resilience through Culture
- Advance language access, health literacy, and the provision of culturally tailored services designed by Tribes for Tribes
- Support Indigenous knowledge, traditional healing, and culturally relevant services
- Proactively solicit Tribal input on communications materials going to Indian Country

#### 3. Strong Tribal Institutions
- **Build capacity** of Tribal health and wellness organizations, programs, and workforce to recognize strengths and reduce inequities
- Collaborate with Tribal governments and organizations, including Tribal Epidemiology Centers

#### 4. Tribal Representation in State & Federal Governance
- Work with Tribes to assess causes of disparities within CMS programs, and address inequities in policies and operations to close gaps
- Ensure regular, meaningful, and robust Tribal Consultations, including for CMS guiding documents like the Strategic Plan and Health Equity Framework
- Be responsive to recommendations of the CMS Technical Tribal Advisory Group

#### 5. Federal Trust Responsibility
- **Expand the collection, reporting, and analysis of standardized data** to better represent AI/AN
- Provide training to CMS employees on Tribes and application of the federal trust responsibility
- Review CMS documents and policies for implicit bias

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Blue text is from the [CMS Framework for Health Equity 2022-2032](https://www.cms.gov).