

# Collaborative Pathways to Thriving Tribal Communities

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# Building on a Legacy of Collaboration: The Strong Heart Study



**Before Strong Heart:**  
Limited information on  
**CVD incidence,  
prevalence, risk  
factors** among  
American Indians.

**Challenges:**  
small size of  
communities; **young  
age, cultural diversity,  
wide geographic  
distribution of  
population**

**Strong Heart Study (1988):**  
12 tribes in three geographic areas

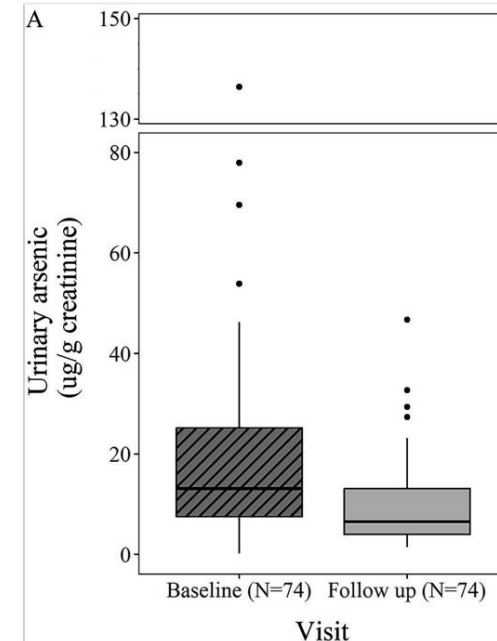
## Key Findings

- Higher burden of CHD and stroke in AI
- Unique risk factors (e.g., renal function)
- Type 2 diabetes strongest risk factor for CVD
- Arsenic exposure → higher CV risk
- Depression → incident hypertension
- High cholesterol in 50% of AI teens, >70% of young adults

## Key Impacts

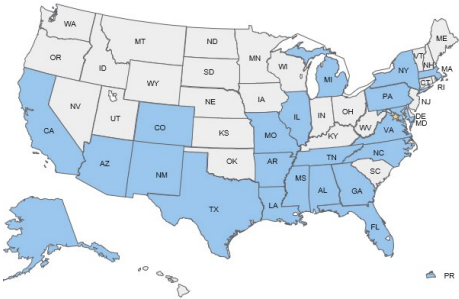
- Decreased incidence of CVD disease
- Decreased CVD mortality (men)
- Clinical calculators designed for AI

**Partnership between Strong Heart Water Study & Northern Great Plains Tribes: Community-Led Effort Cuts Arsenic Exposure by 47%**



**Opportunity: SHS renewal.**  
Expand our partnership, addressing early-life risk factors, integrating initiatives/programs, and fostering community-led projects to enhance health and strengthen research capabilities

# Partnering with Tribal Communities to Combat Chronic Disease



- **4 CEAL Regional Teams** working w/ tribal communities
  - **AZ, CO, MS, NM**
  - **Health areas:** CVD, diabetes, mental health, dietary health, maternal/child health

## • Initiatives

- Improving **Physical Activity, Social Connectedness and Traditional Food Intake**
  - **rural AN communities** in Yukon-Kuskokwin region of AK
- **Tailored Diabetes Program**
  - **Lakota Tribal communities** (Rapid City, SD)
- **Long Covid Intervention**
  - **The Navajo Nation** in AZ
- Community-level **intervention to increase environmental resilience and improve behavioral health outcomes**
  - **AN Youth and Adults** in 5 sites in AK

Leverage **trustworthy partnerships** with **communities** to pursue **community-engaged research** that **co-develops solutions** to improve health and health outcomes in **high-burden communities**.

## Exemplar

*Qungasvik Tools for Life Intervention for youth and elders in rural AN communities in Yukon-Kuskokwin Delta region*

**implementation of Qungasvik to improve physical activity, social connectedness and traditional Yup'ik food intake**

**Qungasvik:** developed by Yup'ik communities

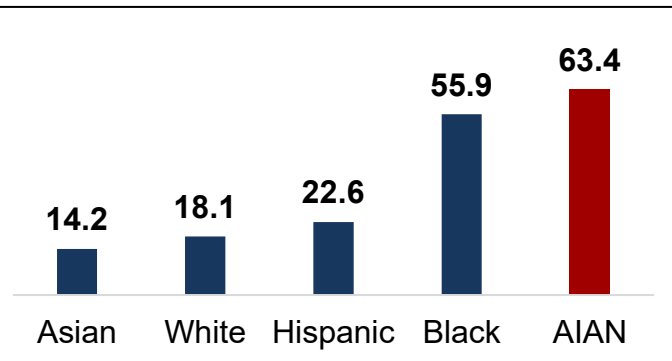
- **engages Elders, parents, and youth in cultural activities**
- Communities **customize teachings for individuals, families, and the community, adapting them to local culture, seasons, and resources.**
- **Teachings delivered annually** to provide protective experiences, fostering survival skills and strong community connections.

**Opportunity:** Partner with tribal communities to identify health priorities and collaboratively develop tailored solutions.

# Disseminating Community-Embedded Interventions to Address Maternal Health Disparities

AIAN women >3x more likely to experience pregnancy-related death

Pregnancy-Related Mortality per 100,000 Births by Race and Ethnicity



- >60% of AIAN women entering pregnancy have suboptimal cardiovascular health
- Mental health conditions and hemorrhage most common causes of pregnancy-related death in AIAN



## IMPROVE-CIP

Implementing a Maternal Health and Pregnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone – Community Implementation Program

Enhancing maternal health for all communities through:

- **Community-engaged research** before, during, and after pregnancy
- Building **trust and strong partnerships** that encourage maternal health
- Developing and testing **implementation strategies to increase adoption, uptake, and scale of evidence-based interventions**

Exemplar:

Mindful Wellness Advocacy Zones:  
Opportunities for Kinship Involvement

**Evidence-based intervention: Hi'ųnį Gijire Ra (Mother's Helpers) – Doula Care**

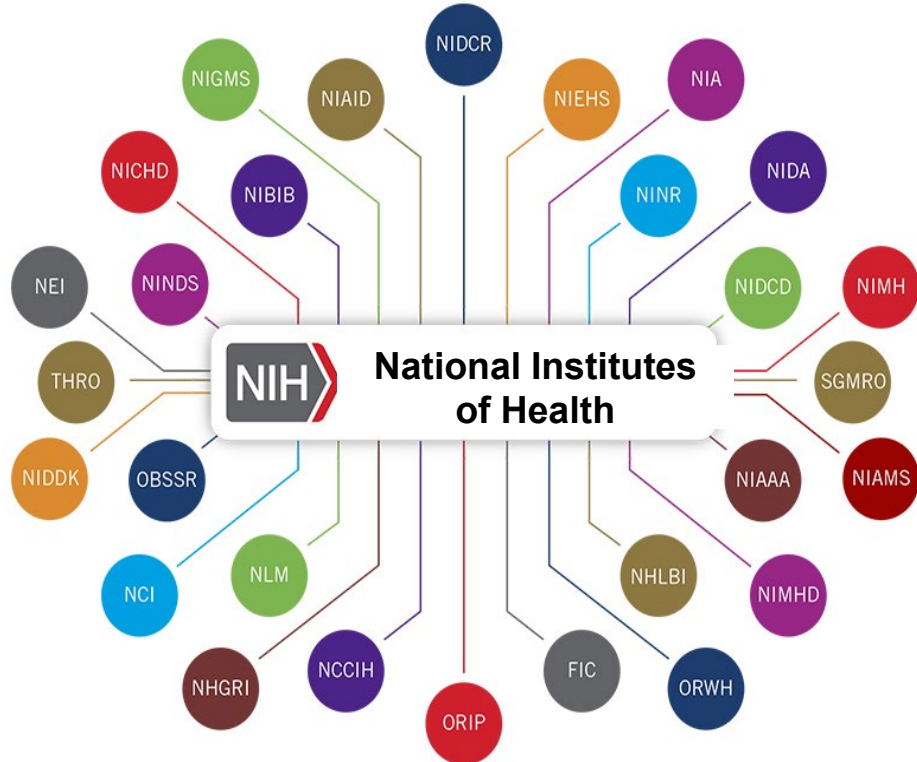
- Use of doula services with kinship support to improve maternal health outcomes for pregnant women in the Winnebago/Hōcāk community
- Guided by principles of resilient research and a “Three-Eyed Seeing” framework including Hōcāk values

Opportunity: Collaborate with communities to incorporate cultural values and practices into health frameworks to address local health challenges.

# Charting the Future



**NIH CEAL**  
Community Engagement Alliance



## Working with TAC to...

- ...Ensure coherence across initiatives, connecting local activities with broader program goals.
- ...Develop a unified strategy that reflects collaboration and shared objectives.
- ...Build on groundwork of SHS for long-term community health improvement.





# Our Circle of Partners: Ensuring Trust, Transparency, and Research Reciprocity

