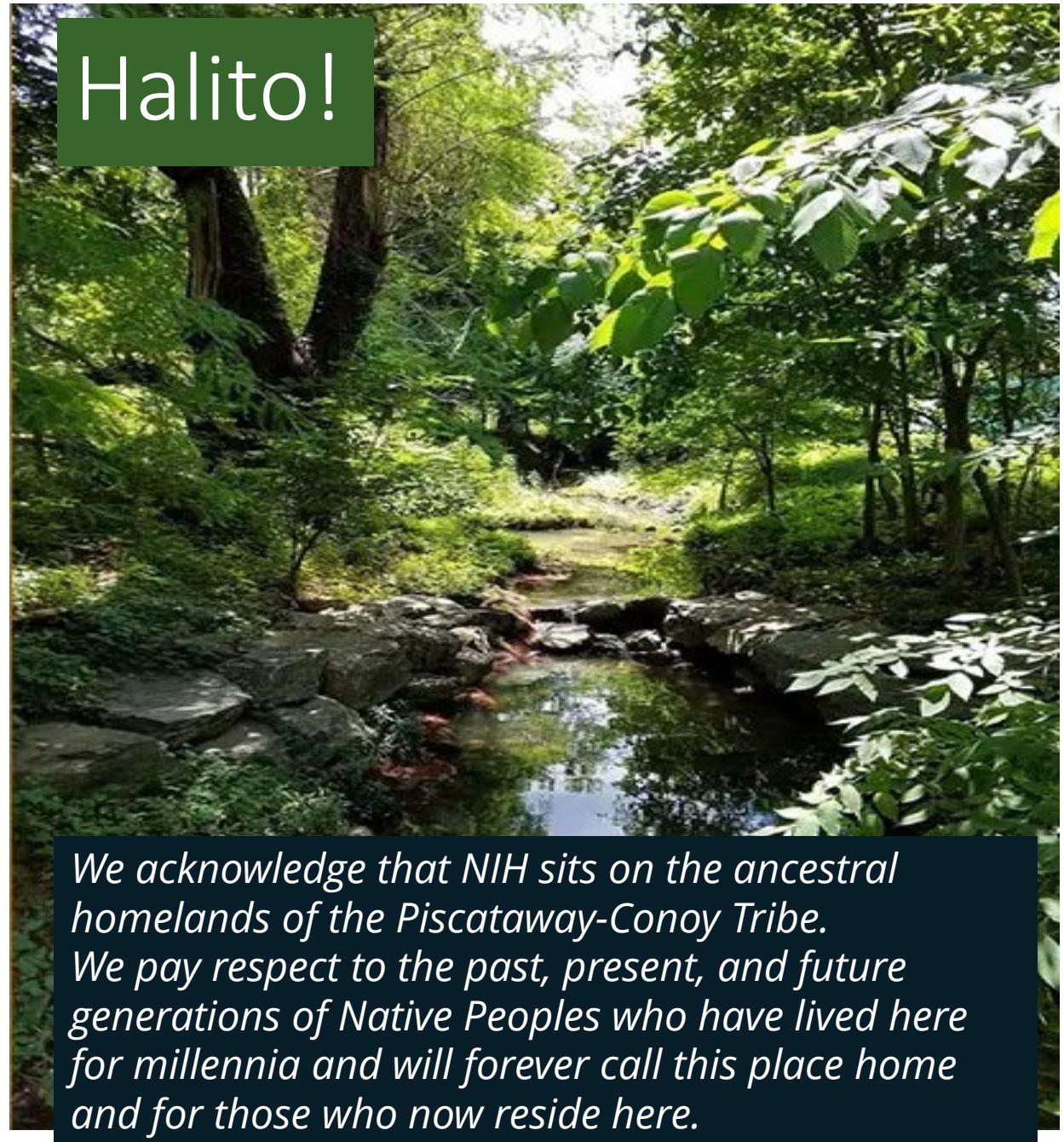


Tribal Health Research Office

Karina L. Walters, PhD
Director, Tribal Health Research Office (THRO)

**Division of Program Coordination, Planning and Strategic Initiatives,
Office of the Director, National Institutes of Health**

- Piscataway-Conoy and other Tribal Peoples camped along the stream on the east side of the main NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland, beginning about 3,000 years ago.
- In addition to this land being the ancestral homelands of the Piscataway Conoy Confederacy Montgomery County also is homelands to:
 - The Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians; the Accohannock; the Assateague; the Nause-Waiwash Band; the Pocomoke Indian Nation; and the Youghiogheny River Band of Shawnee Indians.
- During the 17th century, the Nacotchtank (“a town of traders”) village was within the modern borders of the District of Columbia along the intersection of the Potomac and the Anacostia river.



We acknowledge that NIH sits on the ancestral homelands of the Piscataway-Conoy Tribe. We pay respect to the past, present, and future generations of Native Peoples who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home and for those who now reside here.



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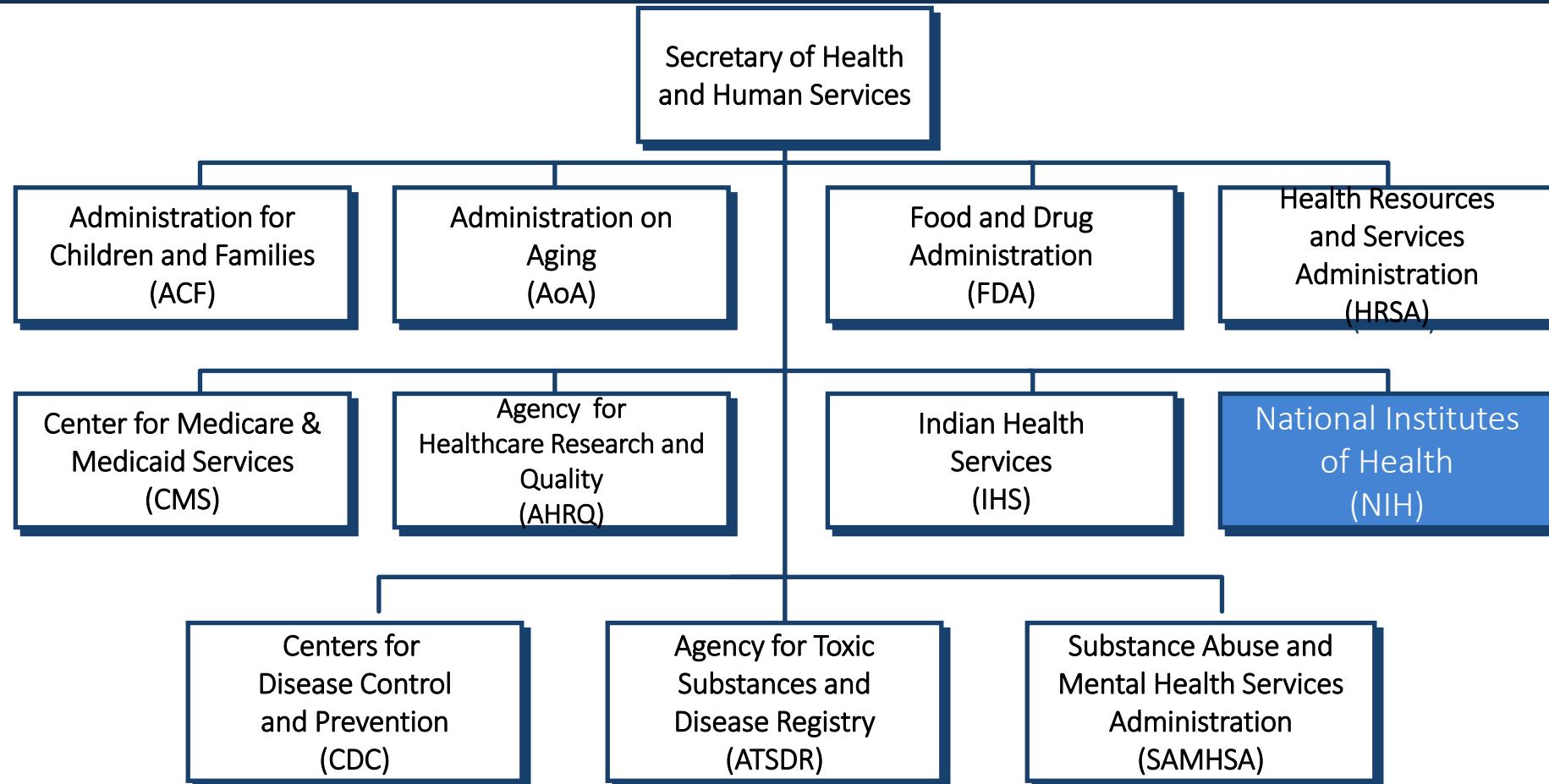
NIH: Steward of Medical and Behavioral Research for the United States

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is one of the world's foremost medical research centers.

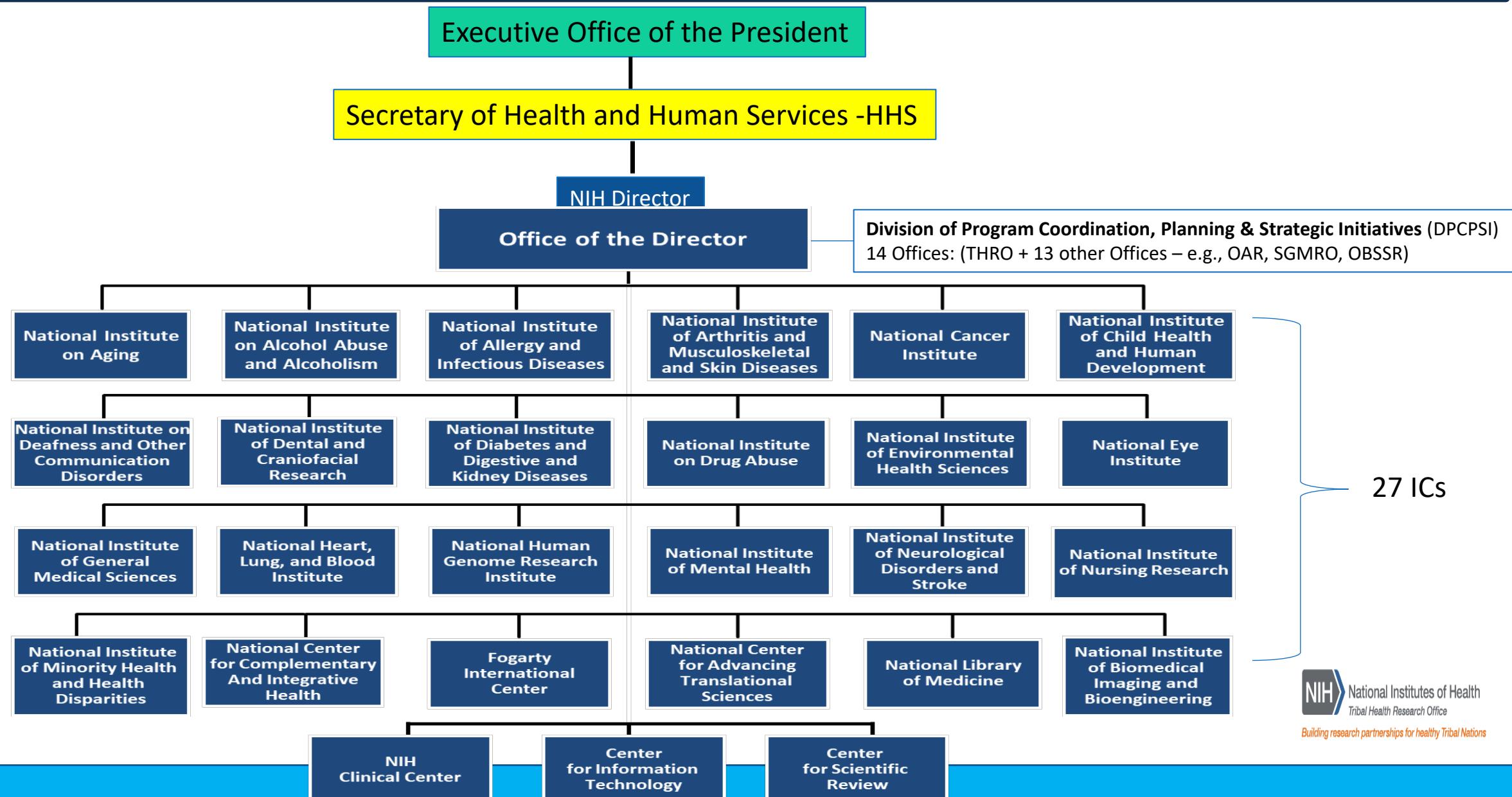
- NIH is the **largest public funder of biomedical research in the world**
- **Mission:** To seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to **enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability**
- **Conducts research** in its own laboratories
- **Supports research** of scientists in universities, medical schools, hospitals, research institutions, and tribal communities **through a competitive peer review process**
- **Helps train research investigators**
- **Fosters communication** of medical information

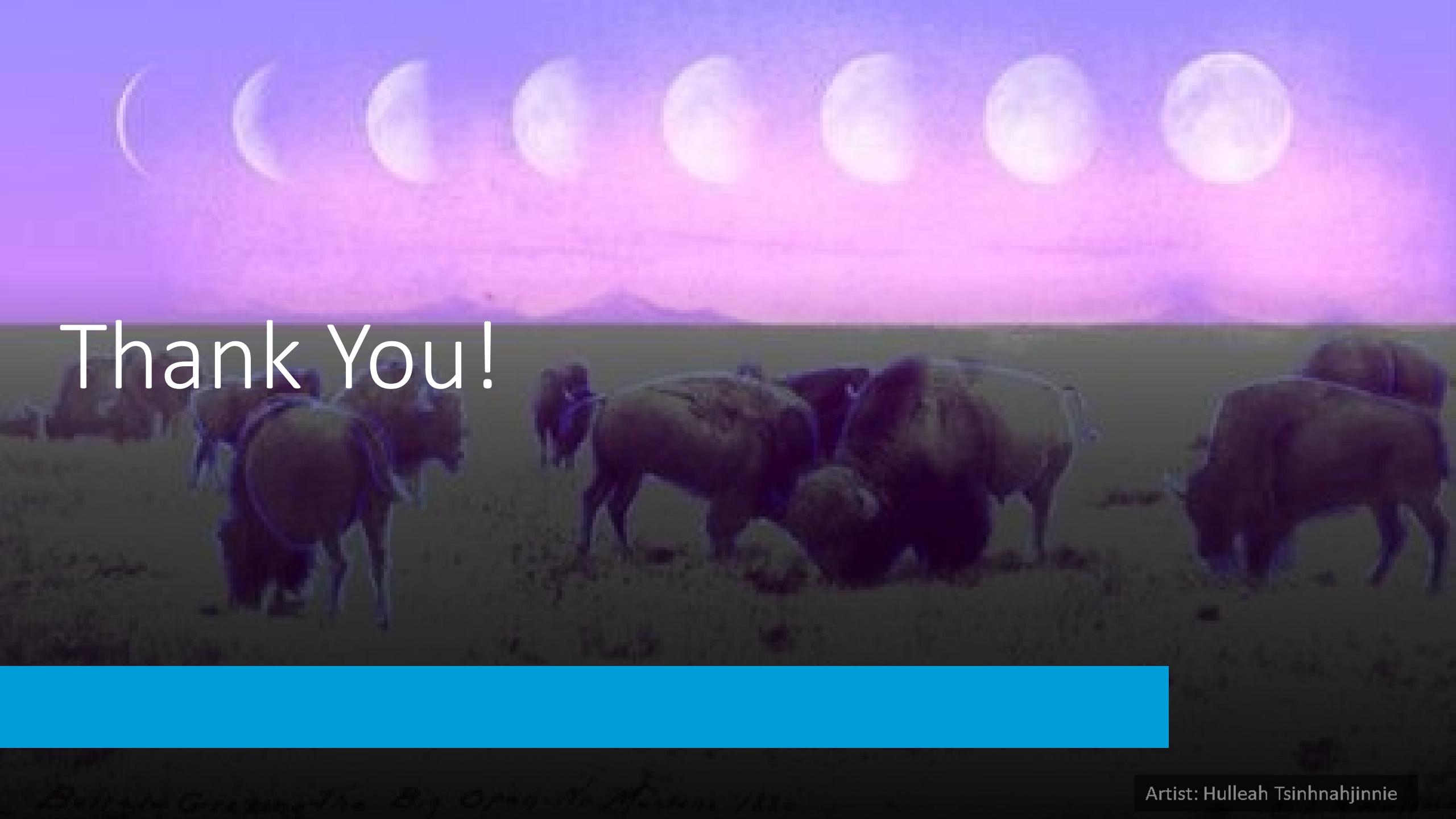


The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



27 Institutes and Centers (ICs) – Each Has Its Own Mission and Budget

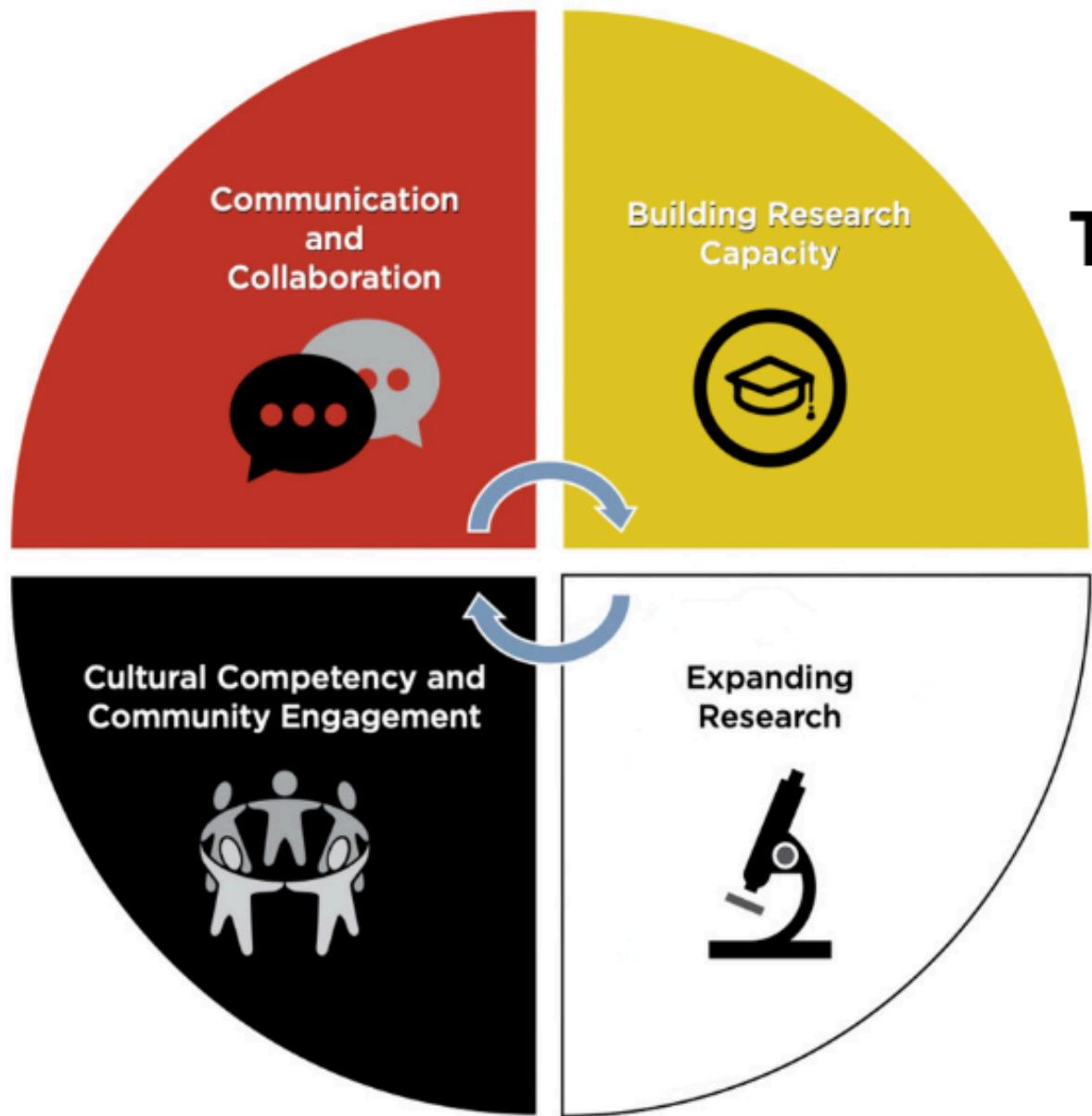




Thank You!

Bison Grazing, The Big Open-Heads Ranch, 1880

Artist: Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie



NIH STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TRIBAL HEALTH RESEARCH FY 2019-2023

Goals aim to improve NIH relationships and collaborative efforts with American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

LEARN MORE!



National Institutes of Health
Tribal Health Research Office

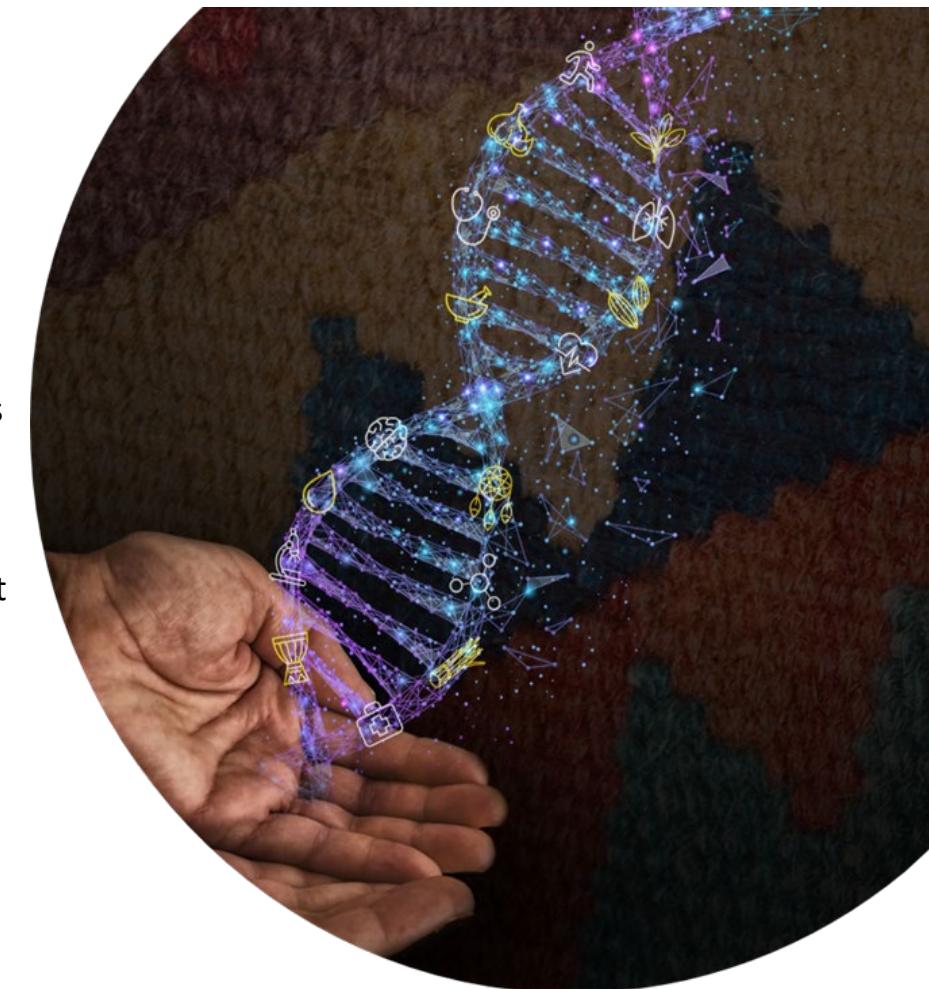
Building research partnerships for healthy Tribal Nations

Highlights of THRO Accomplishments and Activities Through April, 2023

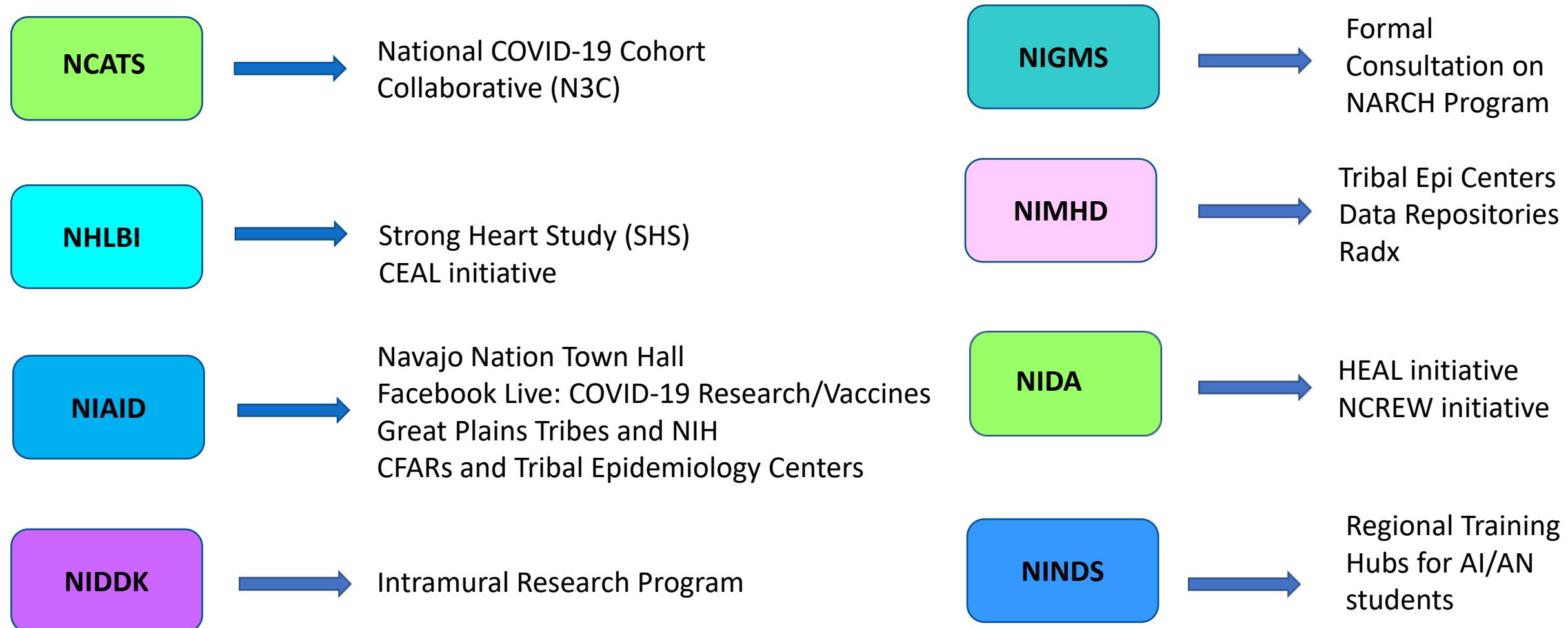
- NIH Investment in AI/AN research increased from \$170 million in FY 2018 to more than \$300 million in FY 2020.
- New NIH Tribal Consultation Policy issued March 2022 with Tribal Consultation Toolkit
- AI/AN-specific Supplemental Guidance for Data Sharing
 - Best Practices for Responsible Management and Sharing of AI/AN Participant Data
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-22-214.html>
- Traditional Medicine Summit in 2022
- Collaboration on NIGMS Tribal Undergraduate to Graduate Research Training (TURTLE)
- Extensive behind-the-scenes technical assistance to solve issues across NIH with Tribal Nations

Most THRO activities to date has focused on:

- Building capacity and expanding research for AI/AN Tribes.
- Forming collaborative partnerships with Tribal leadership and increasing awareness of relevant NIH research support opportunities.
- Identifying research gaps, health inequities and developing evidence-based strategies to address.
- Area for development:
 - Increasing collaborations with other HHS agencies, Tribal organizations, and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) was identified as an area for improvement. NIH ICOS most often collaborates with other ICOS or with Institutions of Higher Education in supporting AI/AN research.



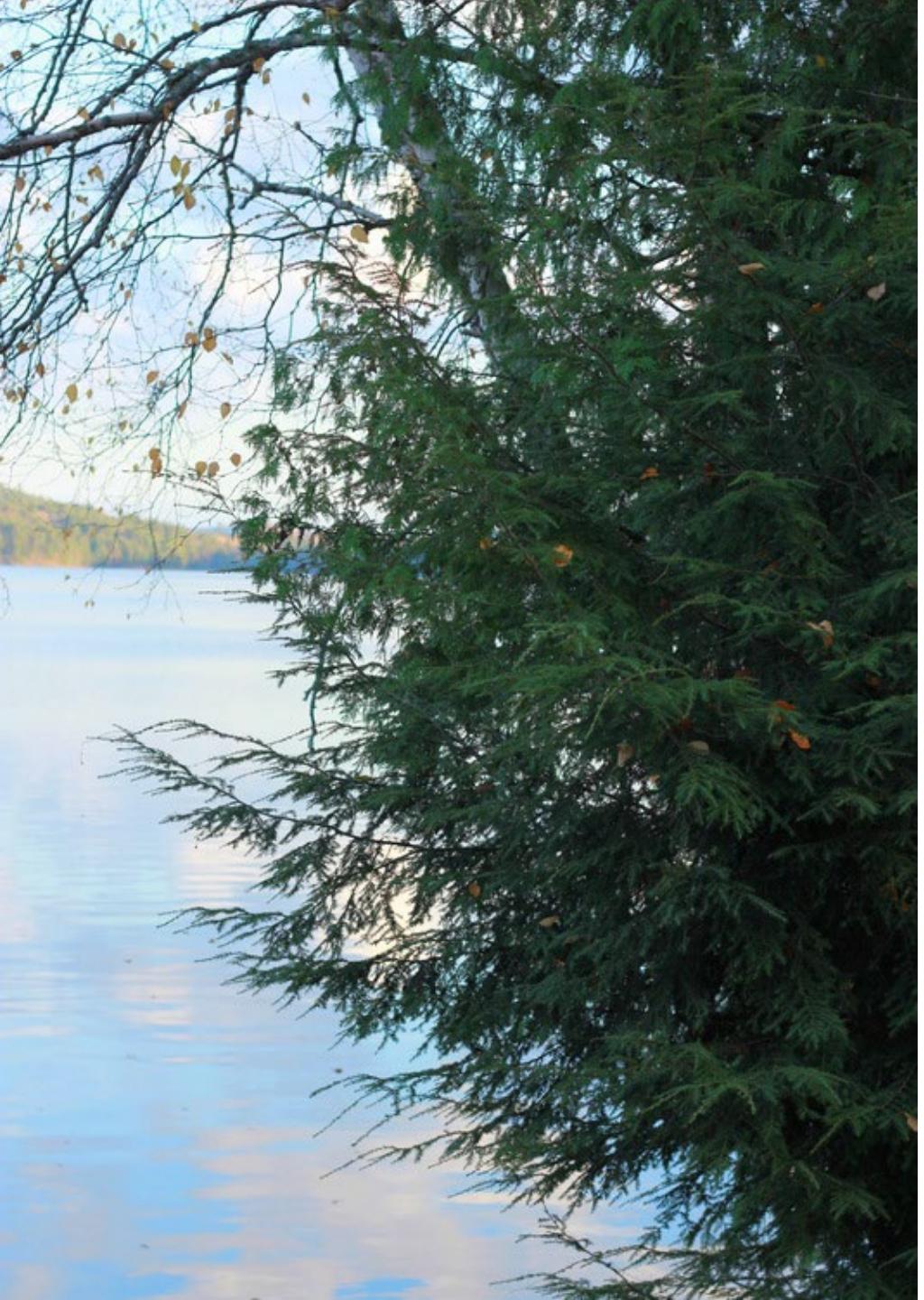
Working Across NIH - Partnering on Programs, TA, & Problem Solving



Moving Forward: THRO Vision Statement

- The proposed vision statement augments current NIH and THRO objectives. We envision...
- THRO as a vibrant hub, strategically consulting, coordinating, and collaborating with Tribal partners and Native serving organizations to generate AIAN science and a research workforce that builds healthy lives and communities.





Core Values: CEDAR

- **Creativity**: Moving beyond conventional approaches to science, we employ innovative Indigenist-centered ideas and methods to ensure science drives sustainable population health change.
- **Ethics & Integrity**: We maintain the highest standards of professional and ethical behavior, are culturally responsive, reflexive, and aware; and demonstrate transparency and honesty in every transaction.
- **Determination**: While recognizing and respecting the diversity of our tribal communities, we honor Tribal sovereignty and AIAN rights to self-determination.
- **Accountability**: We hold ourselves accountable for the quality, timeliness, and lasting impacts of our work and for the commitments we make to tribal communities and research partners. Accountability engenders trust, builds solidarity, and strengthens partnerships.
- **Respect and Responsibilities**: We respect and value unique and diverse talents and experiences of our Tribal communities, NIH, and research partners. We show respect by fulfilling our responsibilities with compassion, humility, dignity, and equanimity.

At THRO, this would turn culturally informed discovery into health equity of AIANs through...

1. Advancing culturally derived, community-informed biomedical, social and behavioral **research**.
2. Cultivating a culturally informed biomedical, social, and behavioral health **research workforce**.
3. Growing **Tribal Engagement, & Consultation**
4. **Coordinating and Collaborating** on AIAN research and research-related activities across the NIH and HHS.



Artist: Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie

At THRO, this would turn culturally informed discovery into health equity of AIANs through...

1. Advancing culturally derived, community-informed biomedical, social and behavioral research.

- Entails **uplifting and harnessing Native indigi-nuity (ingenuity)**, Indigenous Knowledges, and technologies as culturally appropriate across biomedical, social, and behavioral sciences.
- Includes **growing Indigenist methodologies**, designing and developing culturally based measures, developing culturally derived interventions, and centering cultural knowledges, community engagement and cultural protocols throughout all phases of research
- Includes **growing AIAN-specific initiatives and NOFOs that align with community priorities** (e.g., Opioid tx/prevention; climate change, MMIP, etc.)
- Entails **creating collaborative initiatives** within the NIH as well as in partnership with HHS Operating Divisions (e.g., IHS, CDC, ACF) as well as the DOI (e.g., boarding school healing/MMIW/R)



Artist: Steven Paul Judd



2. Cultivating a culturally informed biomedical, social, and behavioral health research workforce.

- Involves working across dual fronts:
 - promoting a **culturally informed internal NIH workforce** (intramurally)
 - **growing a culturally representative external AIAN research workforce** (extramurally + intramurally).
- Requires raising awareness through **technical advising**, convenings, coordinating activities, and conducting outreach within the internal NIH workforce.
- Includes reactivating the AIAN NIH staff meetings to stimulate recruitment and retention of AIAN NIH staff and intramural researchers.
- Growing an external NIH research workforce entails working with the THRCC, TAC, and OD and NIH ICS to strengthen ongoing initiatives (e.g., NARCH), further develop research workforce initiatives and to identify creative ways to **build AIAN community-based researchers and TCUs/NSIs- not just university-based researchers and initiatives.**

3. Growing Tribal Engagement and Consultation

- Ensures formal processes of Consultation, fostering engagement of the TAC, and stimulating outreach/listening sessions with AIAN communities.
- Ensures that **Tribal communities know what the NIH is and what tools and technologies are available to them to solve their most deeply entrenched health challenges.**
- Consultation must be **accessible, credible, and responsive** to the needs of Tribes.
 - Including respecting the demands on Tribal leaders and working to streamline Consultation so that it is both comprehensive but also coordinated across the ICs/NIH programs as well as across HHS ODs (e.g., COVID-19 –CDC & NIH)
- At THRO- a major activity involves **troubleshooting and educating** POs, PIs and others about tribal sovereignty, data sovereignty, Tribal Research Codes, Ordinances and Protocols, Tribal consent, and Tribal IRB protocols-including identifying a tribally designated IRB of record.
- **Accelerate scientific and ethical stewardship** to increase cultural and scientific integrity, tribal accountability, and social responsibility in the conduct of research by, for, and in partnership with AI/AN communities.
 - Coordinating and collaborating with relevant NIH Offices, ICS
 - Providing technical advice, outreach and coordinating activities to ICOS, Pos, and PIs to ensure compliance with Tribal protocols



Artist: Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie

4. Coordinating and Collaborating on AIAN research and research-related activities across the NIH and HHS.

- Necessitates building coalitions, soliciting insights, and stimulating collaboration and coordination across the NIH, HHS, and other Federal agencies as appropriate.
- Entails coordinating research and research related activities across the NIH including tribal and presidential initiatives (e.g., TEK/IK)
- Integrates tribal health priorities identified through Consultation and Listening Sessions.
- Ensures that NIH programs are each informed of what the other is doing regarding tribal health and engagement with tribes.
- Supports the ICS to ensure success in reaching AIAN communities.
- Provides education to ICs in terms of cultural protocols and identifies what is most meaningful or helpful.
- Requires THRO ensure dissemination of cross-IC coordinated and TAC informed guidelines and policies for NIH related to data sovereignty, data stewardship, data-sharing and secondary data (inclusive of biospecimen/ancient), as well as Tribal IRB/ethics support, and consultation.



Research Challenges

Justifiable historical mistrust

- Invisibility
- Historical trauma/ethical abuses

Small sample sizes, rural research

Sampling, particularly for urban populations

Measures- many do not reflect constructs meaningful to well-being or protective factors

SDH as opposed to disease-focused research

Critical Issues in Indian Country

Syndemics

Pandemic responses

Addictions and Opioid Crisis

Behavioral Health-Suicide prevention

Climate change impact and
prevention/promotion opportunities

Opportunities

November 30, 2022 Memorandum released by President Biden on Indigenous Knowledges

December 1, 2022, President Biden/OSTP released new Indigenous Knowledge Guidance for Federal Agencies

Building on IK in health promotion/prevention extramural research

- Climate change
- Traditional parenting/MCH
- E.g. OI, RR

The HEAL Native Collective Research Effort to Enhance Wellness

(N CREW) Program:
Addressing Overdose,
Substance Use, Mental
Health and Pain

As part of NIH's Helping to End Addiction Long-Term (HEAL initiative), the N Crew supports Tribes and Native Serving Organizations (T/NASOs) to conduct locally prioritized research to address overdose, substance use, and pain-including related factors such as mental health.

Intend to commit 268 million over 7 years for NCREW program

Priorities identified in Tribal Consultations and Listening Sessions:

1. Support T/NASOs to lead community-prioritized research projects, including research elevating Indigenous ways and Knowledges.
2. Enhance capacity within T/NASOs to conduct locally prioritized research.
3. Improve access to and the quality of data on substance use, pain, and related health and well being factors to maximize their potential for use in local decision-making.

Future Directions

- **Develop new Strategic Plan for 2024-2029**
 - Listening sessions in Tribal Regions and TAC
 - Align TAC with STAC and HHS
 - Listening and meeting tours with OD Directors (14) and IC Directors (27)
 - Identify portfolio, work with ICS to identify cross-cutting issues/priorities to collaborate together
- **Develop Indigenous Knowledges Guidelines**
- **Tribal Ethics/Biospecimen & Genomic/Genetic Data Protocols**
 - Tribal Consultation
 - Guidelines for biospecimens, genetic/genomic/paleogenomic/genetic sequenced data (collection through transfer/disposal), secondary data/big data, data repositories, and tribal IRB/Ethics within NIH IRB
- **Develop cross-cutting initiatives across NIH/HHS and in partnership with DOI** (E.g., MMIW/R and boarding school healing)
- **Develop Tribal IRB workforce at NIH**
- **Grow the THRO Office-2 positions now (HSAP GS-13-14)**



Building research partnerships for healthy Tribal Nations

Connect with THRO on LinkedIn



Website

<https://www.nih.gov/tribalhealth>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/nih-tribal-health-research-office>

EMAIL: karina.walters@nih.gov