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# NIH Tribal Health Research Office (THRO)

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Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives  
Office of the Director

**David R. Wilson, Ph.D., Director**

National Advisory Council for Nursing Research  
September 14, 2021

# Tribal Nations and the U.S. – A Government-to-Government Relationship

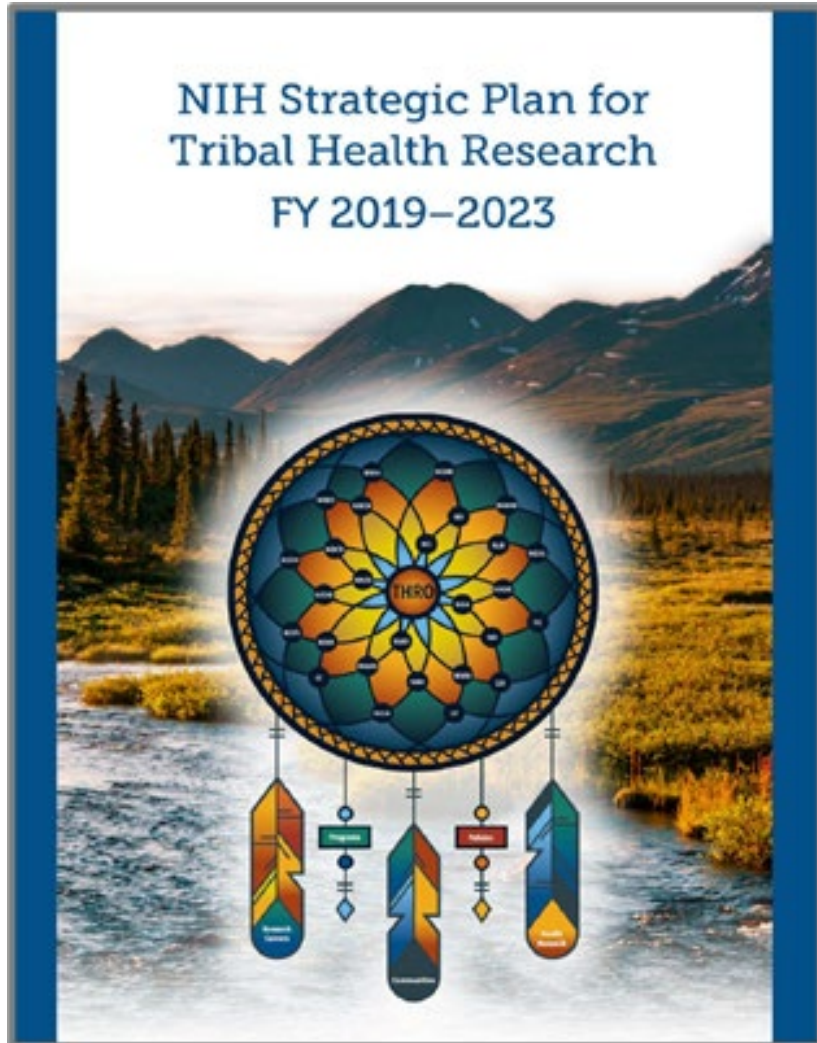
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The Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794. Parchment, ink, resin and wafer seals, ribbon. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

- Since the formation of the Union, the U.S. has recognized American Indian Tribes as **sovereign nations**.
- Resulted in the transfer of land under treaties
- Federal programs and services that benefit American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are based on this **unique government-to-government relationship**.
- **The relationship is political and legal.** It is not based on race.
- The Federal government recognizes **574 Tribal Nations**, each with their own culture, language, government, and history.

# NIH Tribal Health Research Office (Established 2015)

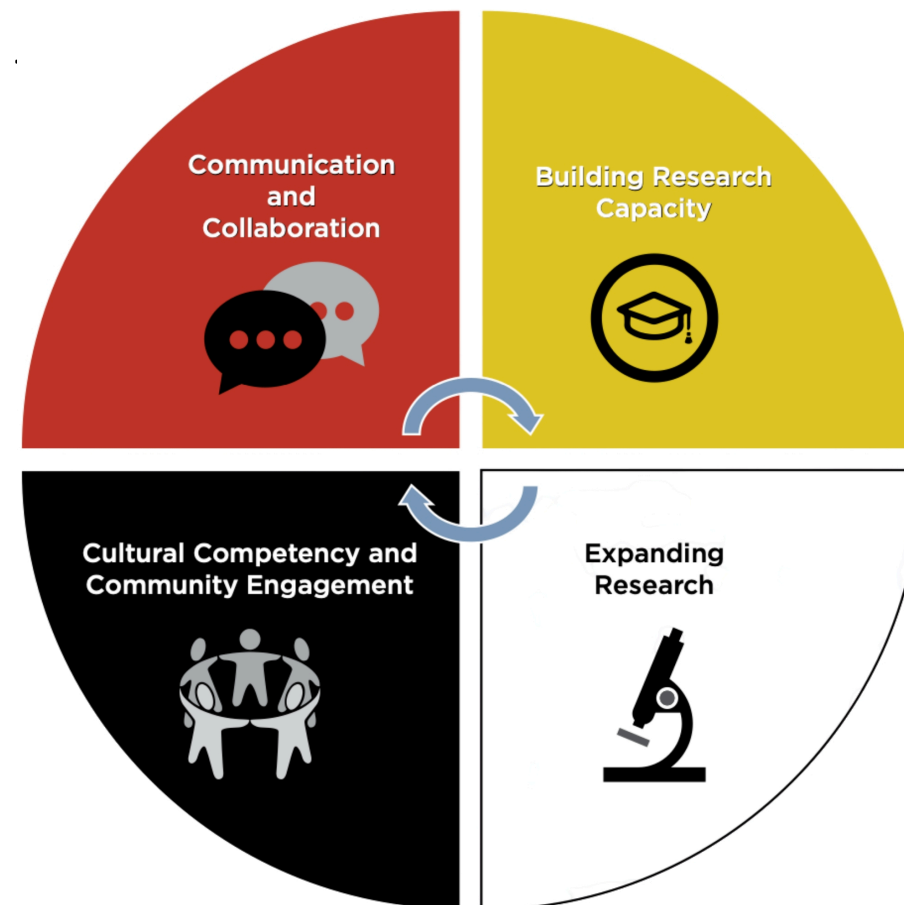


- **Central hub** for coordinating Tribal health research and AI/AN capacity building across NIH
- **Supports ICO efforts** to meet Strategic Plan Goals
  - THRO Coordinating Committee (THRCC)
  - Detail opportunities in THRO
- Ensures that NIH adheres to the **“NIH Guidance on the Implementation of the HHS Tribal Consultation Policy”**
- **Gathers meaningful input** from Tribal communities on NIH research policies, programs, and priorities
- Convenes **NIH Tribal Advisory Committee** with Tribal leaders from across the country

# NIH Strategic Goals for Tribal Health Research

The NIH Strategic Plan for Tribal Health Research articulates mission of NIH's relationship and collaborative efforts with American Indian and Alaska Native communities by:

1. Enhancing communication and collaboration
2. Building research capacity
3. Expanding research
4. Enhancing cultural competency and community engagement





# NIH Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC)



- Representatives from **12 geographic areas** advise NIH and help ensure NIH policies or activities that affect AI/AN communities are shared with Tribal leaders.
- Brings together Tribal officials (or their designated representatives) and NIH officials to exchange views, share information, and seek advice.

# Highlighted THRO Accomplishments and Activities

- **Strong relationships** with Tribal Leaders across the U.S.
- **Groundbreaking agreement** between Tribes and pharmaceutical companies for COVID-19 clinical trials
- First-of-its-kind **Traditional Medicine Summit** with NCCIH
- Pivotal **data-sharing and use agreement** between Navajo Nation and NIH grantees of the ECHO Program
- Extensive behind-the-scenes **technical assistance to solve issues** across NIH, HHS, and with Tribal Nations
- **Partnering with:**
  - ICs and Indian Health Service to **address barriers to research**
  - ODSS and N3C on **data science training**
  - **RADx-UP** – Indigenous Tribal Data Hub



# Partnering on Programs and Problem Solving

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NCATS



National COVID-19 Cohort Collaborative (N3C)

NHLBI



Strong Heart Study (SHS)

NIAID



Navajo Nation Town Hall  
Facebook Live: COVID-19 Research/Vaccines  
Great Plains Tribes and NIH  
CFARs and Tribal Epidemiology Centers

NIDDK



Intramural Research Program

NIGMS



Formal Consultation on NARCH Program

NIMHD



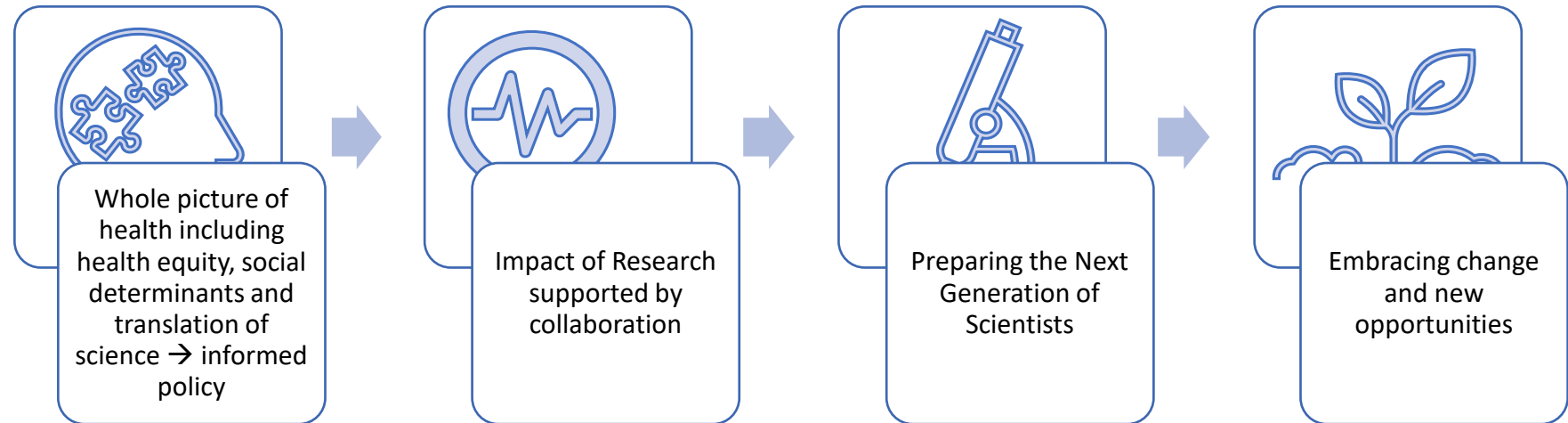
Tribal Epidemiology Centers

NINDS



Regional Training Hubs for AI/AN students

# NINR's Developing Strategic Plan and Tribal Nations



Tribal Consultations to ensure Tribal input is a part of program and policy development.

Working to ensure ethical inclusion of Tribal communities in clinical research

Building research capacity through research internships. Regional training hubs, and efforts with Tribal Colleges and Universities.

Tribal data sharing and biospecimen policy development, ongoing support with COVID-19 pandemic challenges, providing opportunities in NIH big data programs



“We are in double overtime. No one can substitute for us. We are all exhausted but every one of us individually really needs to step up and do our part to protect our families, to protect our communities and our cultures. **Native peoples are very strong, extremely resilient** and I believe armed with the current knowledge about this virus and the unfolding steps to **overcome it, I know we will.**”

– David R. Wilson, Ph.D., Diné, Director, NIH Tribal Health Research Office



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National Institutes of Health  
Tribal Health Research Office

*Building research partnerships for healthy Tribal Nations*

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COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation.

Get the latest public health information from CDC » Get the latest research information from NIH » NIH staff guidance on coronavirus (NIH Only) »

Tribal Health Research Office (THRO)

NIH Tribal Consultation on COVID-19 Research

Learn more >

NIH Strategic Plan for Tribal Health Research  
FY 2019–2023

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NIH THRO Building research partnerships for healthy Tribal Nations

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