



May 21, 2020

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

During these unprecedented times, I am writing to initiate a virtual National Institutes of Health (NIH) Tribal Consultation on COVID-19 Research, on Thursday, May 28, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. ET. We know Tribal communities are being significantly affected by this pandemic. Scientific research to improve our understanding of SARS-CoV-2 (the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19) and to develop strategies to mitigate illness and death from COVID-19 is of paramount importance for all of us. We are seeking to share pertinent information on NIH COVID-19 research initiatives and receive input on key research questions, including how to best partner with Tribes for robust and meaningful outcomes.

The NIH mission, achieved through research, research training, and the dissemination of research findings, is to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and to apply that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. Our work has been bolstered by federal stimulus funding and we recently launched several major initiatives, including the Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) interventions, a public-private partnership to develop a coordinated research strategy for prioritizing and speeding development of the most promising vaccines and treatments. Another effort, called the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) initiative, will infuse funding into early innovative technologies to speed development of rapid and widely accessible COVID-19 testing. Additionally, the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics in Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) is being planned to support a consortium of interlinked community-engagement projects to enhance testing among underserved and/or vulnerable populations across the U.S. Further, the *All of Us* research program will be launching a study to identify COVID-19 antibodies in samples previously collected by the program to better understand when the virus arrived in the U.S. and how it spread.

NIH's COVID-19 research has important implications for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and we are committed to collaborating with Tribal nations to harness the power of science to build research partnerships in support of healthier communities. In accordance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tribal Consultation Policy, NIH is announcing a two-hour virtual ***NIH Tribal Consultation on COVID-19 Research on Thursday, May 28, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. ET.*** We encourage you to participate in this timely and urgent discussion. Some questions to consider:

- What research questions, including around COVID-19 testing, are most important to your respective communities during the current COVID-19 pandemic?
- What special considerations for Tribes should be in place as we are developing funding opportunities?

- How can we better encourage and facilitate research partnerships to respond to the current and prepare for future public health emergencies?

Participant information:

What: NIH Tribal Consultation on COVID-19 Research

Date: Thursday, May 28, 2020

Time: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. ET (1:00 p.m. CST | 12:00 p.m. MST | 11:00 a.m. PST | 10:00 a.m. AKST)

Live videocast link: <https://videocast.nih.gov/watch=37778>

If you have any technical questions related to connectivity or audio/visual regarding the meeting, please contact Shawn Thomas at shawn.thomas2@nih.gov.

If you are unable to attend, you are encouraged to send any testimony, comments, and questions to NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov before Tuesday, June 2, 2020. For more information, please contact Dr. David Wilson, Director of the NIH Tribal Health Research Office (THRO), at NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov.

Thank you for your continued partnership as we work together during this public health emergency to improve the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives through research.

Sincerely yours,



Tara A. Schwetz, Ph.D.
Associate Deputy Director, NIH