

6 things to know about ASU's Indigenous Health Initiative

By Eden Miller, ASU News
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According to the [World Health Organization](#), Indigenous communities in the Americas [face poorer health outcomes](#), including higher rates of chronic illness and mental health issues. Part of the reason for this is due to a lack of culturally inclusive services.

ASU's Indigenous Health Initiative seeks to change that by providing a variety of opportunities for health care professionals to expand their cultural understanding and promote the professional development of Indigenous health professionals. Through these opportunities, health care professionals stand to improve Indigenous health outcomes, from maternal health to life expectancy.

These initiatives, launched through support from the [Genentech Innovation Fund](#), were co-led by [Nate Wade](#), associate vice president and chief of staff in the [Office of the Chief Operating Officer](#) and a [College of Health Solutions](#) research assistant professor; [Angela Gonzales](#), director and professor of [American Indian Studies](#) and health solutions ambassador for the College of Health Solutions; and [Jacob Moore](#), vice president in the [Office of University Affairs](#) and health solutions ambassador for the College of Health Solutions.

The team worked together to conceptualize and implement the projects, leveraging community partners, students, national organizations, ASU units and more to bring their vision to life.

"The Indigenous Health Initiative is about building a future where Indigenous communities define health on their own terms," Gonzales said. "We are creating space for Indigenous voices to lead the transformation of health systems by strengthening partnerships that honor Indigenous knowledge, support Indigenous professionals and expand the capacity for self-determined, community-driven approaches to wellness."

In honor of Indigenous Peoples' Day on Oct. 13, here are six key facts about the initiative.

1. ASU was an Impact sponsor for the [National Indian Health Board's 2025 National Tribal Health Conference](#).

The National Indian Health Board advocates to advance the health of Indigenous communities, representing 574 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages.

With support from Genentech's Innovation Fund, the College of Health Solutions, American Indian Studies and the [Office of American Indian Initiatives](#) partnered to designate ASU as an "Impact" sponsor — the highest sponsorship level — at the National Indian Health Board's National Tribal Health Conference.

As a top supporter of this national gathering, ASU affirms its commitment to Indigenous communities and to advancing Indigenous-led approaches to health and well-being.

2. ASU's Indigenous Health Leadership Academy builds leadership skills to improve patient outcomes.

Supported by funding from Genentech's Innovation Fund through ASU's Indigenous Health Initiative, the Indigenous Health Leadership Academy was developed in collaboration with the [American Indian Policy Institute](#) to strengthen Indigenous leadership in health care and advance health equity.

The academy provides professional development grounded in Indigenous knowledge and community well-being, preparing participants to lead transformative change across diverse health systems.

The inaugural cohort — 19 professionals representing 13 tribal nations across seven states — met in person for the first time at the National Tribal Health Conference, where they completed their final module and graduated from the academy.

3. ASU offers the [Indigenous Health Cultural Awareness training certificate](#) program on CareerCatalyst for clinicians and researchers who work with Indigenous populations.

The first step in supporting the health of Indigenous communities is to establish better cultural awareness. This no-cost certificate aims to provide instruction on cultural respect and the traditional practices of Indigenous communities.

Together, this three-part course explores the sovereignty of Indigenous nations, the significance of key cultural concepts such as storytelling and ceremonies, and how to provide culturally respectful health care.

4. The [Promoting Indigenous Research Leadership](#) program supports early-career investigators advancing Indigenous health.

Co-hosted by Arizona State University in partnership with the [Center for American Indian and Rural Health Excellence](#) at [Montana State University](#) and the [National Institutes of Health](#), this leadership program is designed to strengthen Indigenous leadership in public health research.

Supported by Genentech's Innovation Fund, the three-day program provides intensive mentorship and applied training for 15 Indigenous health professionals and early-career faculty, helping participants build research capacity, expand professional networks and prepare competitive proposals for opportunities such as the NIH's "Intervention Research to Improve Native American Health" grant.

5. The [Indigenous Health Research Dashboard](#) features more than 3,750 curated articles related to Indigenous health.

Established with support from a Genentech grant, the dashboard compiles research specifically tailored toward gaining a better understanding of diseases and conditions that affect Indigenous health.

The project collects peer-reviewed research studies and can be visualized in a variety of ways, from journal and topic to tribe name and illness.

The database was [organized by a group of Barrett, The Honors College students](#) and further supported by students in the [Online Undergraduate Research Scholars](#) program within [The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#) and [EdPlus](#).

6. The Doing Research in Indigenous Communities Conference is a gathering dedicated to elevating Indigenous voices in research and knowledge production.

From Oct. 27–28, ASU's Tempe campus will host the annual, no-cost [conference](#), co-sponsored by the American Indian Studies program, the [Center for Indian Education](#), the [Labriola National American Indian Data Center](#) and ASU's Office of Tribal Nations Advancement and Indigenous Futures, with support from the College of Health Solutions.

This year's theme affirms the power and promise of bringing technology and Indigenous knowledge together to transform health and education. Rooted in sovereignty and community well-being, the conference highlights Indigenous-led innovation across three tracks — health, education and technology — while inspiring students, scholars and leaders to build pathways toward healthier, more equitable futures across Indian Country.

[Register here.](#)

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



ASU representatives and supporters of the Indigenous Health Initiative joined national leaders at the gala during the National Indian Health Board's 2025 National Tribal Health Conference. Photo courtesy of the College of Health Solutions.