

NIH Launches \$268 Million Initiative to Advance Native American-Led Research on Substance Use and Pain

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The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has announced the launch of the Native Collective Research Effort to Enhance Wellness (N CREW) Program. This groundbreaking initiative will provide \$268 million over seven years to support research projects led by Native American communities to address the complex issues of substance use, pain, and related health disparities.

Native American communities have been disproportionately affected by the opioid crisis, with overdose death rates significantly higher than the national average. The N CREW Program aims to empower these communities to lead research efforts that are culturally relevant and effective in addressing their unique health challenges.

“Elevating the knowledge, expertise, and inherent strengths of Native people in research is crucial for creating sustainable solutions that can effectively promote public health and health equity,” said Nora D. Volkow, M.D., director of NIH’s National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). “As we look for ways to best respond to the overdose crisis across the country, it is crucial to recognize that Native American communities have the best perspective for developing prevention and therapeutic interventions consistent with their traditions and needs. This program will facilitate research that is led by Native American communities, for Native American communities.”

The program will support research focused on:

- Prioritizing Native American communities' research needs
- Enhancing research capacity within Tribal Nations and Native American Serving Organizations
- Improving data collection and utilization to inform local decision-making

"Native American communities have been treating pain in their communities for centuries, and this program will uplift that knowledge to support research that is built around cultural strengths and priorities," said Walter Koroshetz, M.D., director of NIH's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). "These projects will further our collective understanding of key programs and initiatives that can effectively improve chronic pain management for Native American and other communities."

The N CREW Program is funded through the NIH Helping to End Addiction Long-term Initiative (HEAL Initiative) and is led by NIDA, NINDS, and the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS).