



## Inclusivity in Action for Indigenous Veterans Toolkit

### An Awareness and Education Campaign for Indigenous Veteran Oral Health and Wellbeing

**November 13 - 17, 2023**

#### About Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Week

Indigenous veterans deserve equitable oral health that is inclusive and culturally responsive. During the campaign week, the [Southern Plains Tribal Health Board](#) (SPTHB) and the [Native Oral Health Network](#) (NOHN) in partnership with the [American Institute of Dental Public Health](#) (AIDPH) invite the oral health community to learn more about the intersection of veteran and Indigenous oral health as we seek ways to expand culturally responsive care to underserved and disenfranchised communities. The primary goals of Indigenous Veteran Oral Health week are:

1. **Raise Awareness:** Our mission is to inform the public, healthcare providers, oral health professionals, and those that serve Indigenous communities about the unique oral health needs and challenges faced by Indigenous veterans. These challenges often lead to disparities in oral health outcomes within this community.
2. **Promote Culturally Responsive Care:** We emphasize the importance of providing oral health care that respects and integrates Indigenous cultural values, practices, and preferences. We encourage oral health providers to adopt culturally responsive approaches in their practice, ensuring that Indigenous veterans receive care that aligns with their cultural backgrounds.
3. **Advocate for Improved Oral Health:** *Indigenous Veterans Oral Health Awareness Week* serves as a platform for advocacy. We aim to mobilize individuals, organizations, and communities to take action to address the disparities in oral health care faced by Indigenous veterans. Our advocacy includes efforts to secure expanded access to care and greater support for oral health initiatives tailored specifically to this population.



Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Week is a vital step towards recognizing and addressing oral health disparities while celebrating the contribution of Indigenous veterans to our nation's history. Join us during this week as we elevate community voices and action for Indigenous veterans.

Each day will cover content and resources that together, will help dental health professionals to become accomplices in confronting inequities in care for Indigenous Veterans:

- *Monday: Honoring Indigenous Veterans*
- *Tuesday: Cultural Responsiveness for Oral Health Providers*
- *Wednesday: Understanding Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Needs*
- *Thursday: Intersecting Healthcare Needs for Veterans and Indigenous People*
- *Friday: Advocacy in Action*

Please use this toolkit to promote the weeklong activities we have planned. You can find social media graphics to match the promotional copy [here](#).

Contact Julie Seward at [jseward@spthb.org](mailto:jseward@spthb.org) with any questions.

- [Background Information](#)
- [Promote the Week](#)
- [Request Stories](#)
- [Promote the Webinar](#)
- [Promote the AIDPH CAB](#)
- [Daily Content and Resources](#)

---

## Background Information

*Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Week* is a vital step towards recognizing and addressing oral health disparities while celebrating the contribution of Indigenous veterans to our nation's history. Join us during this week as we elevate community voices and action for Indigenous veterans. Use these facts and information to post on social media, share in e-newsletters, and spread the word widely about the importance of action for our Indigenous Veterans.

**Reflection:** Cultural identity of an Indigenous person is often attached to the way in which they prefer to be perceived or recognized. The terms "Native American" and "Indian," although commonly used and accepted by the majority of Indigenous peoples, carry remnant ideas of oppression to many because these were monikers that were assigned by white governments to categorize the Indigenous tribes of this land as Americans.

We must remember that assuming one term is better than another doesn't allow for the individual's preference, which further attempts to standardize all Indigenous peoples as a whole. While there are many who accept these standardized references in casual conversations, the best alternative when working with tribal communities is to respect the autonomy of the

community, or the person that you are talking to and see what their preference is.

I personally have always appreciated the term “Indigenous.” By definition, this refers to originating or occurring naturally in a particular place—which, prior to the arrival of colonists, is precisely how our people existed. We were nourished and flourished here, on this land, without manipulation from any power other than what the Creator provided for us.

— *Natalie Harjo (Mvskoke/Seminole)*

## **A Legacy of Service**

[Indigenous people have a long history of service to the United States, spanning over two centuries.](#)

Their commitment to protecting the nation has remained steadfast through both peacetime and war. Today, there are over 24,000 active duty American Indian and Alaskan Native service members and more than 183,000 veterans proudly identify as Indigenous. In fact, Indigenous people have served with distinction in every major conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the present day, and [serve in the US Armed Services at a higher rate than any other group.](#)

## **Indigenous People and Military Representation**

Nearly 20% of Indigenous service members are women compared to 15.6% in other ethnic/racial groups. [To date, 27 Indigenous veterans have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the military’s highest recognition of service.](#) However, despite their significant contributions, Indigenous veterans face significant disparities in income, education, and employment compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.

## **Addressing Disparities in Healthcare**

Despite their unwavering service to their country, Indigenous veterans experience disproportionate oral health and physical health disparities. Indigenous veterans are more likely to [report needing medical, dental, and vision care but not being able to access necessary care compared to non-Indigenous veterans](#) — with dental and vision care rating among the highest needs. The lack of access to dental care is often compounded by the increased likelihood of living in poverty for Indigenous veterans, an unconscionable result of historical exclusion from healthcare systems and culturally responsive care environments.

---

## **Promote the Week**

### **Sample Social Media Post:**

[Your Organization’s Name], the [Southern Plains Tribal Health Board](#) (SPTHB) the [Native Oral Health Network](#) (NOHN) and the [American Institute of Dental Public Health](#) (AIDPH) invite the oral health community to learn more about the intersection of veteran and Indigenous oral health as we seek ways to expand culturally responsive care to underserved and disenfranchised communities. Together, we’re determined to address challenges and drive needed change. #IndigenousVeterans #OralHealthEquity

**Sample Email:**

Subject: Join Us and Advocate for Indigenous Veteran Oral Health

Indigenous veterans deserve equitable oral health that is inclusive and culturally responsive. During the campaign week, the [Southern Plains Tribal Health Board](#) (SPTHB) and the [Native Oral Health Network](#) (NOHN) in partnership with the [American Institute of Dental Public Health](#) (AIDPH) invite the oral health community to learn more about the intersection of veteran and Indigenous oral health as we seek ways to expand culturally responsive care to underserved and disenfranchised communities.

*Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Week* from November 13 to 17 is a vital step towards recognizing and addressing oral health disparities while celebrating the contribution of Indigenous veterans to our nation's history. Join us during this week as we elevate community voices and action for Indigenous veterans. Post information on social media, share in e-newsletters, and spread the word widely about the importance of action for our Indigenous Veterans.

Two things you can do immediately is to [share a story](#) and [register to attend a webinar](#) on Friday 11/17 at 1:00 pm CT as part of the week's activities.

Bookmark these resources to learn more:

- [Understanding America: The Legacy of Native American Military Service](#)
- [National Congress of American Indians](#)
- [American Indian Veterans Have Highest Record of Military Service](#)
- [Healthcare Disparities for American Indian Veterans in the United States](#)

**Here's a look at the themes for the days ahead:**

- *Monday: Honoring Indigenous Veterans*
- *Tuesday: Cultural Responsiveness for Oral Health Providers*
- *Wednesday: Understanding Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Needs*
- *Thursday: Intersecting Healthcare Needs for Veterans and Indigenous People*
- *Friday: Advocacy in Action*

**How to get involved?** Post information on social media, share in e-newsletters, and spread the word widely about the importance of action for our Indigenous Veterans. Forward this email to your networks and follow us on [add your social handles or AIDPH social handles] throughout the week for more resources and opportunities to participate.

Thank you for joining us in this important campaign to raise awareness, promote culturally responsive care, and advocating for improved oral health for Indigenous veterans.

Sincerely,  
YOUR NAME

## SIGNATURE BLOCK

---

### **Request Stories**

We know that stories are an important tool in helping to make an emotional connection through which we gain a deeper understanding of other people's experiences. Please put out this call through your networks for stories that share personal experiences that will help the broader oral health community to understand the context around Indigenous veterans and their oral healthcare experiences. [Share this link to the story submission form widely, please!](#)

#### **Sample Social Media Post:**

We know that stories are an important tool in helping to make an emotional connection through which we gain a deeper understanding of other people's experiences. Please share your experiences that you feel would be helpful for the broader oral health community to understand the context around Indigenous veterans and their oral healthcare experiences. <https://tinyurl.com/ivohw-story>

---

### **Promote the Webinar**

Our week of action and activity will culminate in a webinar where panelists will explore the issue of oral health disparities among Indigenous veterans while sharing resources, stories, and the historical context of Indigenous military service. Through engaging dialogue and shared insights, attendees will gain perspective in supporting the oral health and wellbeing of Indigenous veterans and understand actionable next steps toward advancing oral health equity. We will discuss the power of local action and tribal-driven initiatives to support oral health and wellbeing. [Register here.](#)

#### **Sample Social Media Post:**

Join us on November 17 at 1PM CT for a webinar where panelists will explore the issue of oral health disparities among Indigenous veterans. Listen to their stories and learn about the historical context of Indigenous military service through engaging dialogue and insights. You'll leave with actionable steps toward advancing health equity for Indigenous veterans! <https://tinyurl.com/ivohw-panel>

---

### **Promote the AIDPH Oral Health Community Advisory Board**

#### **Sample Social Media Post:**

The American Institute of Dental Public Health (AIDPH) is excited to announce the creation of an Oral Health Community Advisory Board (CAB). The Oral Health CAB aims to bring forth voices from veterans, rural populations, people with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ community, and other marginalized communities, ensuring that these communities are accurately represented in its research agenda. AIDPH defines lived experience as knowledge based on someone's perspective, personal identities, and history, beyond their professional or educational experience. People with lived experience are those directly affected by social, health, public health, or other issues and by the strategies that aim to address those issues. This gives them insights that can inform and improve systems, research, policies, practices, and programs. If you have lived experience in any of the

described areas of focus, please apply to be a member of the Oral Health CAB.

<https://tinyurl.com/apply-cab>

---

## Daily Content and Resources

[\\*All graphics available here\\*](#)

### Monday theme: Honoring Indigenous Veterans

Begin the week by acknowledging and honoring the service and sacrifices of Indigenous veterans. Share stories, photos, and testimonials from Indigenous veterans. Highlight their contribution to the nation and their unique oral health needs.

#### **Monday Message Idea:**

Title: "Honoring Indigenous Veterans"

Today, we begin our week by paying tribute to the brave Indigenous veterans who have served our nation with honor and dedication. Their sacrifices have made our country stronger and more resilient. Join us this week as we:

- Share their stories of resilience and courage.
- Showcase powerful photos of Indigenous veterans.
- Amplify testimonies and experiences.
- Highlight Indigenous veteran unique oral health needs.

Let's practice Inclusivity in Action to honor Indigenous Veterans this week!

#IndigenousVeterans #HonoringHeroes #OralHealth

#### **Videos to Use During the Week:**

- [Native American Veterans | You Are Not Alone](#)
- [HonoringVets: Native American Veterans](#)
- [First Native American Veterans Roundtable](#)
- [Why We Serve — Stories of Native American Service](#)

#### **Social Media Post Ideas:**

- Today, we honor the Indigenous veterans who've served our nation with unwavering dedication. Their service inspires us all. #IndigenousVeterans #HonoringHeroes
- There are over 24,000 active duty American Indian and Alaskan Native service members and more than 183,000 veterans proudly identify as Indigenous. In fact, Indigenous people have served with distinction in every major conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the present day! #IndigenousVeterans #HonoringHeroes
- Nearly 20% of Indigenous service members are women compared to 15.6% in other ethnic/racial groups. To date, 27 Indigenous veterans have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the military's highest recognition of service. However, despite their significant contributions, Indigenous veterans face significant disparities in income, education, and employment



compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. #IndigenousVeterans #HonoringHeroes  
<https://www.nicoa.org/american-indian-veterans-have-highest-record-of-military-service/>

- Check out this blog about Indigenous veteran oral health and learn why we need to expand culturally responsive care to underserved and disenfranchised communities. Spread the word that we're determined to address challenges and drive needed change.  
<https://aidph.org/indigenous-vet-oh/>
- Start the week with insights on terminology from Natalie Harjo (Mvskoke/Seminole). Read her thoughts on the blog: <https://aidph.org/indigenous-vet-oh/>

**Call to Action: Encourage followers to share stories and photos of Indigenous veterans in their communities.**

---

### **Tuesday theme: Cultural Responsiveness for Oral Health Providers**

Focus on the importance of cultural responsiveness and humility in oral health care. Highlight how oral health providers can better understand and address the unique cultural needs of Indigenous veterans to provide effective care.

#### **Tuesday Message Idea:**

Title: "Cultural Responsiveness in Oral Health Care"

Today, we delve into the critical aspect of cultural responsiveness in oral health care. We recognize that each Indigenous veteran's journey is unique, and their cultural background shapes their experiences.

Cultural responsiveness is the cornerstone of compassionate and effective care. By listening actively, respecting traditions, and embracing cultural differences, oral health providers can foster trust and provide truly personalized care.

Indigenous veterans, like all individuals, deserve health care that respects and incorporates their cultural backgrounds. Understanding the unique challenges they face, such as historical trauma and healthcare disparities, is a vital step in this journey.

- Let's explore how oral health providers can better understand and address their cultural needs.
- Share your stories or insights on cultural responsiveness in healthcare.
- Embrace the power of cultural humility to provide more effective care.

Let us reflect on how we can make cultural responsiveness an integral part of oral health care. By doing so, we ensure that every Indigenous veteran receives care that not only addresses their oral health needs but also respects their identity and heritage.

#CulturalResponsiveness #HealthcareEquality #IndigenousVeterans

**Tools to Share:**

- [Weaving the Threads of Culture: Working Effectively with American Indians and Alaska Natives \(AI/AN\)](#)
- [Trainings from the Southern Plains Tribal Health Board](#)
- [Think Cultural Health for Oral Health Providers](#)

**Social Media Post Ideas:**

- Indigenous veterans deserve equitable oral health that is inclusive and culturally responsive. During the campaign week, the [Southern Plains Tribal Health Board](#) (SPTHB) and the [Native Oral Health Network](#) (NOHN) in partnership with the [American Institute of Dental Public Health](#) (AIDPH) invite the oral health community to learn more about the intersection of veteran and Indigenous oral health as we seek ways to expand culturally responsive care to underserved and disenfranchised communities. #IndigenousVeterans
- How can we provide care that respects the identity and heritage of Indigenous veterans? Check out this course from @spthb\_tec and @tulaneu: <https://pace.tulane.edu/content/weaving-threads-culture-working-effectively-american-indians-and-alaska-natives-ai-an>

**Videos for today:**

- [Native American WWII Veteran Performs Sage Ritual at Normandy](#)

**Call to Action: Encourage oral health providers to commit to cultural training and share their experiences or insights. [Link to tools above.]**

---

**Wednesday theme: Understanding Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Needs**

Dive deeper into the oral health needs of Indigenous veterans. Discuss common issues and challenges they face, such as access to care, trauma-informed care, and oral health disparities. Share the lack of data and available resources to fully define the need and informed interventions.

**Wednesday Message Idea:**

Title: "Understanding Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Needs"

Today, we take a closer look at the unique oral health needs of Indigenous veterans. While their service is honored, their oral health needs often go overlooked. It's time to shed light on the challenges they face.

Indigenous veterans, like many marginalized communities, face myriad barriers to accessing quality oral healthcare. These obstacles include geographical isolation, limited availability of culturally responsive care, and historical trauma.



One of the most pressing issues is the lack of comprehensive data and resources specifically tailored to address these needs. This gap in knowledge hampers our ability to develop targeted interventions and advocate effectively for the resources required to support our Indigenous veterans' oral health.

Today, we call for a collective commitment to better understand and address the oral health disparities faced by our Indigenous veterans. It is through awareness, data collection, and informed interventions that we can work towards ensuring equitable access to quality oral healthcare for those who have sacrificed so much for our nation.

By understanding these needs, we can work together to bridge the gaps and ensure better oral health for our Indigenous veterans. #OralHealthNeeds #IndigenousVeterans #HealthEquity

#### **Highlight Resources:**

- [Culturally Sensitive Care for Native American Patients](#)
- [American Indian and Alaska Native Communities Face a “Disproportionate Burden of Oral Disease”](#)

#### **Social Media Post Ideas:**

- Indigenous veterans are more likely to report needing medical, dental, and vision care but not being able to access necessary care compared to non-Indigenous veterans — with dental and vision care rating among the highest needs. #IndigenousVeterans #EquitableOralHealth
- According to a survey by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, individuals in American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities experience a disproportionate burden of oral disease compared to non-AI/AN communities. Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/ivohw-cqi> #IndigenousVeterans #EquitableOralHealth
- Today, we call for a collective commitment to better understand and address the oral health disparities faced by our Indigenous veterans. It is through awareness, data collection, and informed interventions that we can work towards ensuring equitable access to quality oral healthcare for those who have sacrificed so much for our nation. #IndigenousVeterans #EquitableOralHealth

**Call to Action: Improved research, data, and funding to support Indigenous veterans and their oral health.**

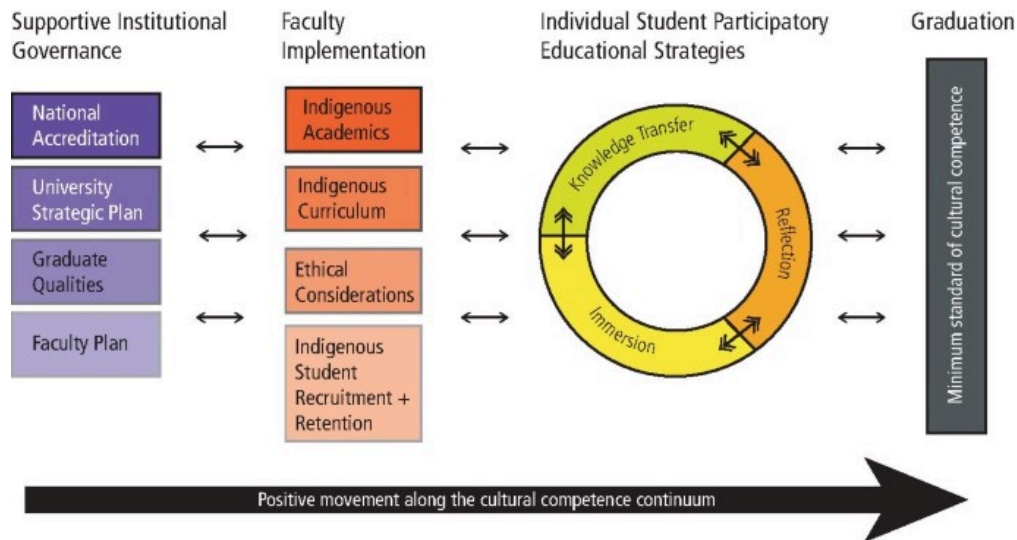
---

#### **Thursday theme: Intersecting Healthcare Needs for Veterans and Indigenous People**

Emphasize the importance of providing care that is centered around the unique needs and experiences of veterans and Indigenous people. Discuss the benefits and challenges of specialized oral health clinics for veterans, including those that cater specifically to Indigenous veterans.

#### **Additional Resources:**

- [An Indigenous Cultural Competency Model for Dentistry Education:](#)



### Social Media Post Ideas:

- While social justice movements often focus on one form of inequality at a time, it is important to understand the concept of intersectionality. What unique challenges might Indigenous veterans face at the crossroads of their identities? #IndigenousVeterans #HonoringHeroes
- Indigenous peoples in the United States have experienced centuries of colonization, forced removal from their lands, and attempts at cultural eradication. Serving in the military of a nation that has historically oppressed one's own people can create a profound internal conflict. #IndigenousVeterans #HonoringHeroes
- Navigating the complexities of being both Indigenous and a veteran requires a nuanced understanding and appreciation of the dual identity, as well as targeted support to address their specific needs. #IndigenousVeterans #OralHealthEquity

**Call to Action: Encourage healthcare providers to undergo training in veteran-centered care and pledge to prioritize the needs of all veterans in their practice.**

---

### Friday theme: Advocacy in Action

Today, we're shining a spotlight on the efforts of individuals and groups who champion the causes of equity, representation, and justice for Indigenous communities and veterans alike. Advocacy is not just about speaking up — it's about action. It's about creating space for voices that have historically been silenced. It's about challenging systems, educating allies, and pushing for meaningful change at every level.

### **Friday Message Idea:**

Title: "Advocacy in Action"

**Join our webinar** where a panel will explore the issue of oral health disparities among Indigenous veterans while sharing resources, stories, and the historical context of Indigenous military service. Through engaging dialogue and shared insights, attendees will gain perspective in supporting the oral health and wellbeing of Indigenous veterans and understand actionable next steps toward advancing oral health equity. Discuss the power of local action and tribal-driven initiatives to support oral health and wellbeing. [Register here](#).

**Highlight organizations:**

- [Native American Veterans Association](#)
- [Native American Veterans Assistance](#)
- [National Congress of American Indians](#)
- [Daybreak Star Native Veterans Association](#)

**Social Post Ideas:**

- Do you want to understand actionable next steps to advancing oral health equity for Indigenous veterans? Register for our webinar today at 1PM CT to learn how you can advocate for change. <https://tinyurl.com/ivohw-panel> #AdvocacyInAction #IndigenousVeterans #OralHealthEquity
- Listen to a panel that will explore the issue of oral health disparities among Indigenous veterans while sharing resources, stories, and the historical context of Indigenous military service. Join us today at 1PM CT! <https://tinyurl.com/ivohw-panel> #AdvocacyInAction #IndigenousVeterans #OralHealthEquity
- What did you learn this week? Ask yourself: How can I actively participate in advocacy that makes a difference? How can I help uplift the voices of those who need to be heard? Share in the comments below! #AdvocacyInAction #IndigenousVeterans #OralHealthEquity
- Join us in celebrating acts of advocacy and share your stories of action and change. Whether it's volunteering, educating, or legislating, every action counts. Let's inspire each other with examples of advocacy in action. #AdvocacyInAction #IndigenousVeterans #OralHealthEquity

**Call to Action: Attend the webinar and share the registration link with your networks.**