

Good Health
and Wellness in
Indian Country

GHWIC Success Story

Coordinating Center for GHWIC: National Gathering 2023

Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (GHWIC) is the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's largest investment to improve American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) Tribal health. The National Coordinating Center for GHWIC (CCG) housed at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, supports all 27 GHWIC recipients and their sub-awardees—a total of over 120 Tribal public health programs across the country. The CCG supports the success of the GHWIC network in many ways: offering technical assistance, providing training and capacity building opportunities, collecting data, conducting the national evaluation, and facilitating a community of practice for collaborative knowledge sharing. On August 8-10, 2023, the CCG team achieved a great success of their own by hosting the National GHWIC Gathering in Anchorage, Alaska.



The GHWIC National Gathering: Celebrating Culture, Success, and Sustainability

The event was the first in-person Gathering in three years, and in it the CCG and the Gathering planning committee brought together 182 individuals from 78 Tribes, Tribal Epicenters, and Urban Indian Organizations from all over the country to share best practices and novel approaches, spotlight solutions and successes, and draw inspiration from one another. The Gathering planning team included the CDC Healthy Tribes and valued partner GHWIC programs: Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Fort Peck Community College, and Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board.

An opening night celebration was held at the Alaska Native Heritage Center, where guests were treated to Arctic games and storytelling, drumming and dancing, and a scavenger hunt that encouraged participants to explore the beautiful grounds, including the village sites. Highlights of the conference itself included remarks by Dr. Julianna Reece (Dine'/Navajo), Director of the Healthy Tribes Program at the CDC, and keynotes from the Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology Center (AASTEC)'s Daytona Raye (Navajo) and Urban Indian Health Institute in Seattle's Abigail Echo-Hawk (Pawnee). A partnership with Southcentral Foundation provided cultural sharing in the form of beading kits, traditional teas, and opening prayer. More than 20 Native artists also donated door prizes for the event and had vendor tables at the conference.

At the heart of the event were presentations, panels, and other sessions that allowed GHWIC recipients to share their valuable knowledge, experience, and successes that have come from their work. From culturally adapted lifestyle change programs to the importance of building partnerships to supporting breastfeeding parents with traditional plants, a vast array of innovative strategies and novel approaches were brought forward throughout the Gathering.

It was important to the CCG team that all participants felt connected and saw themselves as part of a bigger goal, and that the Gathering was most importantly an opportunity for participants to learn from, and about, each other. The hope is that participants are able to take the knowledge and inspiration they absorbed back to communities they support and care so much for.

This event was a powerful reminder that in any struggle we face, we are not alone; we can all walk together and learn together. In the words of one participant, “I love GHWIC because it puts a focus on the people and the family. And I love this conference and seeing all the different ideas come full circle, and I feel like everybody has a piece of the puzzle and here and now is where we put it together.”

It was an amazing honor it was for the CCG to host representatives from so many diverse Tribes and to create a welcoming space to share what is working in chronic disease prevention in our communities. Connecting with our history and culture, and with each other, is key to creating a healthier future.

