



Arizona: Partnering for Arizona Native Women

At the Arizona Retreat for Enhancing Tribal Collaborations in July 2009, public health professionals met for the third time to make sure all women in Arizona knew about cancer screenings. This collaborative partnership is a model and can be replicated in other states. —By Lori Joshweseoma, MPH (Hopi) and Loretta Chino (Navajo)

Arizona's (AZ) Well Woman HealthCheck Program is committed to sustaining statewide relationships with tribal programs.

This partnership started at the November 2006 and June 2008 retreats when the tribes were able to share their culture and ceremonies with the group to increase awareness of the uniqueness of each respective tribe; The Navajo Nation and The Hopi Tribe. Trusting, working relationships were formed and sustained among the organizations resulting in greater access to quality, culturally appropriate services making it a model for future cross-cultural collaborations.


Lori Joshweseoma, from the Hopi Women's Health Program encourages her staff to work with the partners who are a part of this collaborative effort. Through the partnerships, Case Managers from Hopi have found it much easier to navigate a patient through the system and to find them the help they need. Understanding one another's programs and what it provides is useful and to know that each partner is working toward the same goal makes the work less challenging. "We are all in this together, and the outcome is to make sure that Native American women receive the same quality health care (breast and cervical cancer screening) as any other individual."

The basic teaching of the Hopi Culture is to partner and it is important for patients to know that we have strong relationships with other groups. Lori shares that some patients feel that "it is always uncomfortable to go outside of the Hopi reservation to utilize services for our women, however once they see us speaking or working with someone from ACS, the Navajo Program, or Arizona, these women know they can put their trust in the programs we refer them to and this is exactly what we want from the partnerships we have established."

An example of true partnership reflects on the story Loretta Chino (Navajo) has to share about a patient who missed her treatment appointments. Loretta found out this patient lived under the Hopi Health Care Facility's jurisdiction and made contact with the patient that same day. The patient was hesitant to talk to Loretta at first, but after explaining why she was calling and sharing her reasons and concerns for the patient, the conversation began. The patient explained that she had been visiting the Hopi Health Center and was referred to Flagstaff Cancer Center for Radiation Treatment. After a couple of visits the cost of traveling became expensive and to make

matters worse she began receiving treatment bills which she could not afford, as she was on a fixed income.

Loretta asked if she had applied for AHCCCS (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System – Arizona's Medicaid system). Her response was that she did and was denied. Knowing that the patient was in Hopi's jurisdiction, but chose to receive medical care in the Tuba City hospital which is an hour and forty five minute drive from the patient's home, Loretta immediately contacted the Hopi Women's Health Program Case Manager, Genell Roland (Hopi). Loretta explained the situation and immediately Genell prepared for the trip to the patient's home. Loretta was reassured that the patient was willing to continue treatment and needed assistance with her billing situation. Genell and Loretta continued to follow-up on the patient and Wha-la...the patient is now receiving the radiation treatment she needed.....AHCCCS is paying for the treatment costs and The Hopi Cancer Assistance Fund Program is providing a voucher for her meals and fuel. The American Cancer Society is providing for her lodging at the Holiday Inn during her treatments.

The Hopi and Navajo Nation partnership has been enhanced and these Tribal Programs are primarily focused on the woman's health and health outcomes. There are so many more stories like this and it's the TEAMWORK that ensures an overall quality outcome for the patient. 

Working together with partners like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Cancer Society, Phoenix Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the AZ Department of Health held the Arizona Retreat for Enhancing Tribal Collaborations. Representatives for retreats included the, Hopi Women's Health Program, Navajo Nation BCCP, Native American Cancer Research, Indian Health Service, National Indian Women's Health Resource Center, Phoenix Indian Medical Center, Gila River Health Care Corporation, AZ and New Mexico Cancer Registries, CDC, and Tohono O'odham Comprehensive Cancer Control. All representatives contributed in planning activities to benefit American Indian women throughout the state of Arizona.