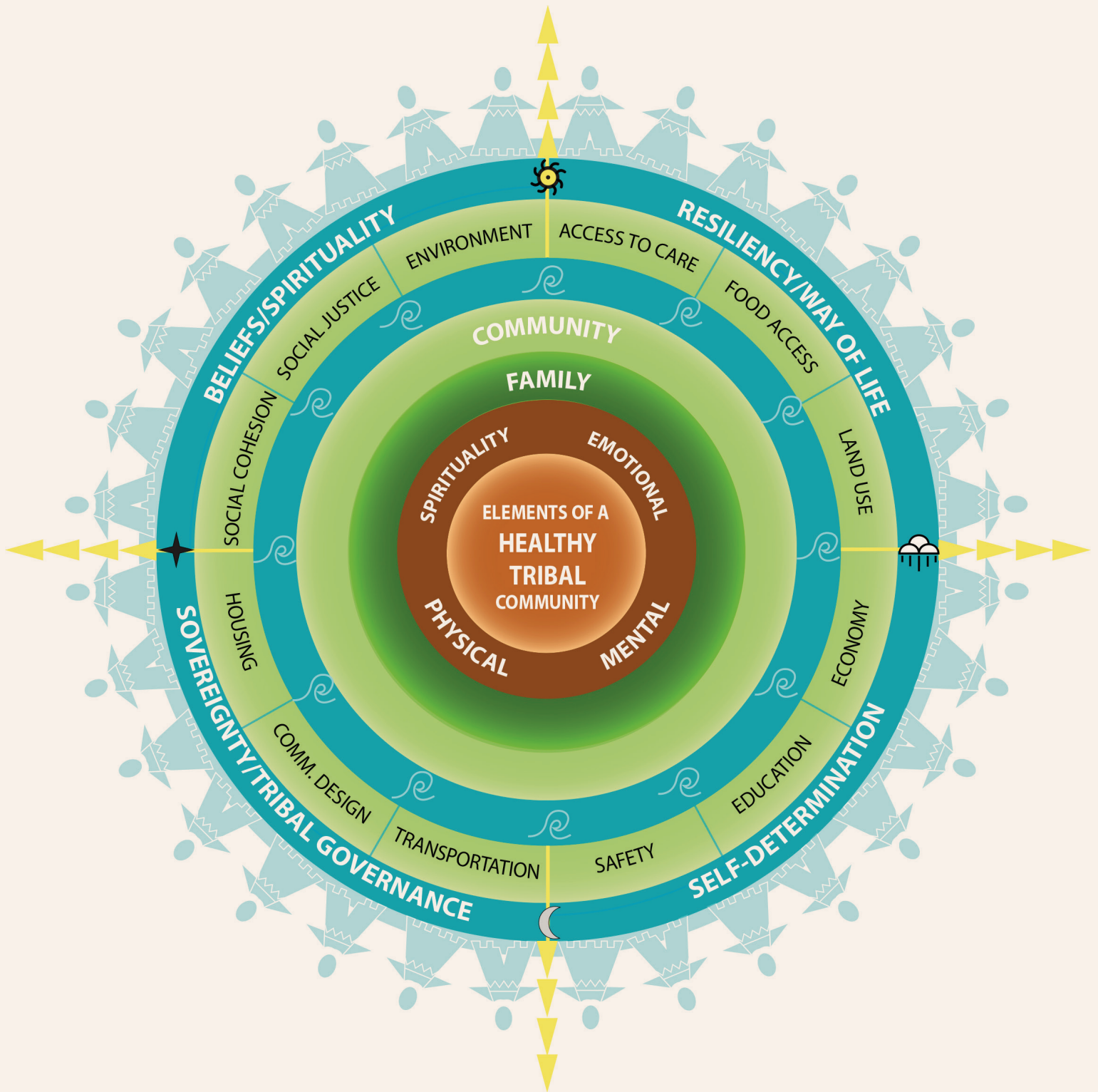


# ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY TRIBAL COMMUNITY





# WHAT COMPRISES A HEALTHY TRIBAL COMMUNITY?

The **Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.**, and **Vitalyst Health Foundation** convened sessions with Tribes to develop the “Elements of a Healthy Tribal Community Wheel.” They were held on July 9-10, 2019, October 15, 2019 and January 14, 2020. The Healthy Tribal Community Wheel is based on this input. Longstanding Tribal values are identified that align with factors that contribute to one’s personal health and more broadly to the overall health of a Tribal community. The wheel is a tool that can guide the development of policies and funding sources whether generated by federal, state and tribal governments and agencies involved in providing health care services to American Indian/Alaska Native peoples.

The “wheel” was designed to correspond to traditional knowledge of the “Four Directions” and associated stages of life, medicinal plants, animals and healing ways connected to the four quadrants of the earth and the sky. The center represents the core of Mother Earth and next the soil, rivers and oceans that give us sustenance. The participants also identified factors in the four quadrants that enhance our personal health and that of our families, and how these are linked to the well-being of a Tribal community.



## DEFINING A HEALTHY TRIBAL COMMUNITY

A healthy tribal community is one where families have the opportunity to live in balance from birth to an elderly age, within environments that are clean, safe and promote wellness. A Tribal perspective is that one’s health is influenced by cultural and environmental knowledge that sustained Tribal communities prior to colonization and that continues to provide a basis for addressing factors that influence our quality of life. These factors stem from overarching values that have continued and influence wellness in Tribal communities:

### Four Tribal Principles of Sustaining Health

- 1 Beliefs and Spirituality** >> Long held knowledge that’s accepted and considered to be true which is the foundation of traditional ceremonial practices, connection to sacred places, plant and animal knowledge as well as faith-based religions.
- 2 Resiliency/Way of Life** >> Resilience as a cultural value or trait that helps one cope with life’s challenges. Striving for balance when there’s imbalance and recourse in negative situations to sustain the Tribe or one’s “way of life.”
- 3 Self-Determination** >> Decision making, policy or program development based on the Tribe’s choices in which outside influences or policies are weighted factors of consideration.
- 4 Sovereignty/Tribal Governance** >> Tribal form of government internally influenced by cultural values and norms, historical factors and resulting actions in which policy implications have been considered.

Through this endeavor, Tribes elevated public health considerations that contribute to one’s personal health. These include a sound public health infrastructure, access to clean water, food security and local environmental considerations. Contributing factors, known as social determinants of health (SDOH), include quality housing, employment, sustainable economies, improved educational systems, sound social justice systems, community safety, transportation and cultural foundations.

# CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF A HEALTHY TRIBAL COMMUNITY

## Beliefs and Spirituality



### SOCIAL COHESION

- Supportive relationships, clan systems, nuclear and extended families
- Ongoing child welfare protection services
- Home place is the central focus
- Resources for housing area maintenance and beautification
- Livestock and pets protected
- Support for mental well-being
- Opportunities for recreational activities and sports
- Opportunities for engagement with arts, music and culture, including traditional activities
- Robust social and civic engagement
- Community empowerment that can lead to positive systems change

#### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Economic stability, community welfare and all aspects of spiritual, mental, emotional and physical well-being satisfactorily addressed.



### SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Addresses historical trauma and structural racism
- Promotes restorative and transformational practices
- Addresses incarceration policies and practices, adds diversion and re-entry programs
- Ensures that sentencing and correctional policies do not adversely affect disadvantaged subgroups within Tribal populations
- Pursues fair distribution of resources to Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Tribal adult/juvenile correctional facilities
- Establishes a team of medical/behavioral health staff to provide services in BIA and Tribal adult and juvenile correctional facilities

#### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Longevity, physical and mental health, intact families, community well-being, social cohesion, tribal solutions.



### ENVIRONMENT

- Clean air, rivers, creeks and waterways
- Healthy and clean soil
- Water security and water supply protection
- Tobacco- and smoke-free spaces
- Minimized toxins, greenhouse gas emissions and waste
- Affordable and sustainable energy use
- Minimize waste and enhance waste disposal adequacy

#### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Health promotion and disease prevention, childhood brain development, reduction in asthma and other respiratory diseases, exposure to environmental contaminants including lead reduced.

## Resiliency/Way of Life



### ACCESS TO CARE

- Accessible and high-quality medical care and coverage
- Integrated, coordinated systems of care and public health services
- Trusted and health professionals that align services with cultural values
- Traditional practices and cultural values incorporated in the health care system
- Development of federal and state policy guided by Tribes
- Health equity achieved (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social well-being)

#### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Focus on wellness, disease prevention and treatment, integrated physical, emotional and mental health care, data collection and data sovereignty.



## FOOD ACCESS

- Strengthening and establishing local food systems
- Affordable, accessible and nutritious food
- Promoting a variety of healthy food access to enhance food security
- Sustainable agriculture, livestock and wildlife protection practices
- Traditional plant gathering, habitat preservation, access and utilization
- Clean water sources
- USDA policies that favor Tribal GAP food handling

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Enhanced nutrition, healthy food choices, obesity and disease prevention, cultural knowledge, mental well-being, childhood brain development.



## LAND USE & PRESERVATION

- Access to affordable safe opportunities for physical activity
- Maintaining natural open spaces for plant and animal habitats and appropriate human interaction
- Sustainable grazing policies and agricultural buffer zones
- Preservation of sacred sites and traditional gathering places for appropriate shared-use opportunities within the Tribe
- Support for traditional practices and cultural values, and tribal policies that protect cultural, archaeological, sacred place and historic sites
- Opportunities for engagement with traditional arts, song and dance and games
- Land use policies that do not negate NEPA/NHPA/AIRFA
- Development of community parks

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Physical activity, disease prevention, mental and emotional health, childhood brain development, land, water and air quality, land-use policies that acknowledge these considerations.

## Self-Determination



## ECONOMY

- Increased meaningful employment
- Living wages
- Access to capital for Tribal and Tribal member entrepreneurship
- Access to affordable and diverse small business commercial spaces for Tribal member enterprises
- Job training and mentorship/accelerator space
- Local talent development
- Location of commerce mindful of open space and land-use considerations
- Access to internet/media
- Recognition of traditional jobs

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Economic stability/access, strategic decisions to promote land, water and air quality, walkability/physical activity, mental well-being.



## EDUCATION

- Investment in long-term support of tribal members and residents
- Focus on Native language revitalization
- Opportunities for developmentally-appropriate and affordable childcare and early childhood education programs
- Opportunities for high-quality and accessible education (K-12, G.E.D.)
- Access to a variety of post-secondary opportunities such as Tribal Colleges and Universities
- Native American focused career development and advancement within Tribes
- Focus on growing-our-own in health careers
- Opportunities for transmission of elder knowledge
- Involve Tribal and school libraries in health events

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Greater educational achievement, economic stability, American Indian professional development, tribal members operate departments and programs.



## SAFETY

- Socially-connected communities, free of crime and violence
- Promotes community cohesion and encourages positive social interaction
- First responder policies and practices that are inclusive of all reservation residents
- Coordination with Tribal Courts, health and human services, and employment opportunities

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Injury prevention, reduction in correctional and detention services, inmate medical and behavioral health services and supports, inmate release coordination, increased positive community involvement.

## Sovereignty/Tribal Governance



## TRANSPORTATION

- Safe, sustainable, accessible and affordable transportation options
- Connects people with places including parks, retail and schools
- Promotes built environments that encourage walking, biking and taking transit
- Access to IHS/Tribal/Urban Indian health care services, health fairs, workshops, conferences and evening educational events

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Reduces obesity and promotes disease prevention, increases physical activity, mental well-being, economic stability, air quality, unintentional injury prevention.



## COMMUNITY DESIGN

- Focus on community development that's culturally appropriate
- Maintains environments free of excessive noise and light pollution
- Vacant land assessed for adaptive reuse opportunities
- Access to shaded spaces, green and open spaces, including a healthy tree canopy
- Community gardens and agricultural land
- Ensures agricultural/wildlands buffer zones and conservation techniques
- Protection of archaeological, historic sites and sacred places
- Incorporates traditional structural design in building plans
- Requires energy efficient structures

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Economic stability, mental well-being, physical activity, inside air quality, injury prevention, obesity reduction, heat-related illness.



## HOUSING

- Affordable, high-quality housing options through H.U.D. and other agencies
- Policy and funding ensures water wells, onsite waste water systems, connection of homes to community water, and waste water facilities, upgrades to old water supply and waste disposal facilities
- Energy efficiency and grey water re-use opportunities
- Provision of housing and services for Seriously Mentally Ill (SMI) and other vulnerable populations

### HEALTH IMPACTS >>

Economic stability, disease prevention, environmental quality, NEPA/NHPA regulations preserved, mental and physical well-being, childhood brain development, injury prevention, addresses exposure to extreme climates, reduces exposure to lead.



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The participation of staff of 17 Tribes that attended these sessions is highly appreciated.