

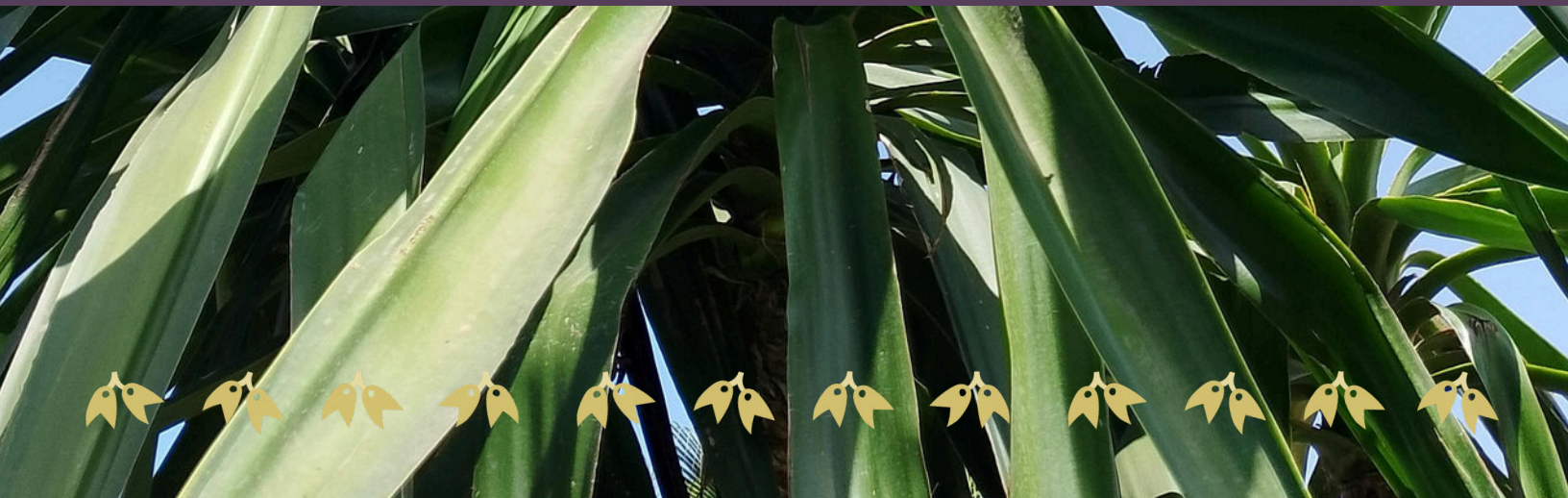


ROOTED IN RESILIENCE:

New Mexico Indigenous Social Drivers of Health Yucca Framework

Summer 2026

Prepared by the New Mexico Social Drivers of Health Collaborative
Supported by Presbyterian Community Health



Introduction

This framework outlines the importance of Indigenous Social Drivers of Health (ISDOH) in New Mexico, highlights community-developed definitions of health, and advocates for a shift in public health systems.

In New Mexico, our communities are abundant with ways of living that support the well-being of our people, animals, land, and water. Practices such as serving locally grown vegetables and deer meat on feast days, connecting with a provider at a local clinic who comes from the same community as you, and learning adobe-making are a few examples of what we do that contribute to our health. These practices are part of the social drivers of health. Social drivers of Health (SDOH) are, as Dr. Doreen Bird shared, “what makes us healthy”. There are several frameworks that describe social drivers of health, but recent research suggests that they are best understood when communities define them (Oré, C. E., Loerzel, E., Marziale, E., & Parker, M. 2025). This is what led to the development of the Rooted in Resilience: Healing the Circles within Indigenous Social Drivers of Health Co-Learning Series. Together, healthcare practitioners, community health workers, Tribal Liaisons, and Tribal community leaders met to identify what SDOH look like in New Mexico, grounding them in Indigenous ways of knowing.

Purpose of this Framework

- Share community-developed definitions of Indigenous Social Drivers of Health
- Inspire a collective shift in public health systems to more effectively address the SDOH for all communities in New Mexico by including Indigenous systems and approaches to health that are respected and integrated into broader health initiatives.
- Highlight local examples of addressing SDOH that contribute to the health and well-being of Pueblos, Tribes, Nations, and Indigenous communities in New Mexico.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Rooted in Resilience Co-learning Series participants and the NMSDOH-C Tribal Health Systems Workgroup that made this work possible. May your stories, efforts, and daily practice continue to inspire the changes in systems needed for all of our communities to thrive.

We are grateful to Seven Directions Indigenous Public Health Institute and the Praxis Project for creating frameworks to guide localized efforts.

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HOW THIS WORK CAME TO BE...

"By centering Indigenous health frameworks, we can reimagine public health systems that honor the interconnectedness of people, communities, and the natural world and the transformative power in these connections"
(Blue Bird Jernigan, V., & Maudrie, T. L., 2025.)

Beginning with a request to focus on social drivers of health specific to Indigenous communities and inspired by the work of Seven Directions Indigenous Public Health Institute, the Tribal Health Systems workgroup dreamed up a learning series with four goals:

- Increase understanding of Indigenous Social Drivers of Health
- Identify and share examples of strategies to Integrate Indigenous Social Drivers of Health within the Healthcare system
- Build knowledge about best practices in applying and evaluating Indigenous Social Drivers of Health
- Develop a localized ISDOH Framework to share with broader network

Over 20 members of the Tribal Health Systems workgroup informed the four session learning series, selecting speakers, creating session goals and co-developing session agendas. Initial planning began in October 2024 with the series taking place between October 2025 and March 2026 following nine planning sessions. At the first session, 54 individuals attended an in-person gathering where participants co-developed definitions for Indigenous Social Drivers of Health. Participants included medical providers, community health workers, peer support specialists, state designated tribal liaisons, tribal health council members, public health professionals, health care authority representatives, and tribal and non tribal community members. Seven Directions ISDOH Modules, The Praxis Project SDOH Framework and the CDC and WHO SDOH frameworks were used to help guide the definitions and community examples participants would highlight. Each participants' lived-experience and community connections informed what has become the New Mexico Indigenous Social Drivers of Health Yucca Framework.



New Mexico

State Department of
Health Collaborative

The New Mexico Indigenous Social Drivers of Health **Yucca Framework**

Learn more about the New Mexico Indigenous Social Drivers of Health (ISDOH) through the New Mexico ISDOH Yucca Framework in the following sections. Beginning with understanding ISDOH through the ecosystem of the Yucca, each following section continues with a definition developed by the community and highlights how community members are actively addressing these social drivers.



SOIL



ROOTS



FIBERS/LEAVES



BLOOMS/FRUIT

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

We encourage you to reflect on the following questions as you move through the framework.

What currently informs the way you think about health and wellbeing?

How do you interact with the ISDOH in your day to day, work and community?

How do we continue to strengthen practices that support the health and wellbeing of all our relatives?

What is your and/or your communities' visions of health and wellbeing?

Digging Deeper into Defining the New Mexico Indigenous Social Drivers of Health

CDC broadly defines social determinants of health (SDOH) as non-medical factors that affect health outcomes. These include the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age. SDOH also includes forces and systems that shape everyday life conditions (CDC, n.d). The Praxis' Social Determinants of Health equity framework directly names how systems of oppression directly influence SDOH and recognizes determinants such as hope and efficacy, valued cultures and identities, and community safety (The Praxis Project, n.d).

ISDOH specifically acknowledges that Indigenous knowledge and ways of being and doing have kept communities healthy and well since time immemorial. Emergent domains include connection to lands and kinship, continuity of language and identity, exercising sovereignty and governance, and historic – contemporary systemic and structural determinants (Oré, C. E., Law, M., Benally, T., & Parker, M. E., 2024). The United Nations states, “It is critical that we ensure that Indigenous cultural systems’ definitions of health are expressed and determined locally by Indigenous Peoples,” (Roth, G., Bermudez del Villar, A., Redvers, N., Warne, D., & Reid, P., 2023).

There are growing examples of communities defining their own ISDOH. The Native Coast Salish communities developed and pilot-tested a set of Indigenous Health Indicators which included non-physiological aspects of health (community connection, natural resources security, cultural use, education, self-determination, resilience) and the Winnebago Tribal Public Health department working with Seven Directions to apply the Indigenous Social Determinants of Health (ISDOH) to public health programming (Donatuto, J., Campbell, L., Gregory, R., 2016; Seven Directions, 2025) .

The New Mexico Indigenous Social Drivers of Health Yucca Framework is an offering to the movement co-create these frameworks to address health disparities and shift public health systems toward more comprehensive and relational strategies to improve the health of all people (Blue Bird Jernigan, V., & Maudrie, T. L., 2025).

What makes us healthy? The Yucca helps us visualize all the parts of our ecosystem that impact our health.

Soil - The soil represents the systems that influence social drivers of health. The illustration below shows what it looks like when our social drivers of health, or what makes us healthy, are rooted in soil or systems of Indigenous ways of knowing, equity, and justice. In the Praxis Project's SDOH Framework, racism, ableism, sexism, capitalism, and heterosexism are examples of systems at the foundation of U.S. institutions, reinforced through policies and legislation (The Praxis Project, n.d.). We choose to envision a different system while acknowledging and fighting against these systems rooted in inequity. It is up to us to tend to the soil.

Roots - The roots are the social drivers of health. The goal is to support positive conditions in the roots for the yucca to produce healthy fruit and thrive.

Fibers & Leaves - The fibers and leaves represent the strength and resiliency that is within our communities in New Mexico.

Blooms & Fruit - When our soil is healthy, the drivers of health result in healthy and thriving blooms and fruit. The fruit from this yucca then produces seeds and results in other healthy plants, animals, and communities.



Visual inspired by the Praxis Project Social Determinants of Health Framework.



Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous Knowledge is the collective wisdom, teachings, and practices that are passed down through generations that guide how communities live in balance with the land and one another, and share traditional practices/culture. Indigenous Knowledge is grounded in lived experience, culture, values, and respect for all life forms by connecting people to their roots.

Opportunities to strengthen Indigenous Knowledge include:

- Increasing Indigenous language programs to be available for communities to speak and write their languages
- Supporting oral storytelling about traditions, histories, kinship, and unwritten teachings



Community Highlights: Indigenous Language Programs

Language programs provide critical opportunities to connect with Indigenous Knowledge. The following are programs created by and for Indigenous language learners of all ages.

Pueblo of Isleta Tiwa Language Program

Santo Domingo and San Felipe Keres Language Programs

Native American Community Academy Navajo language classes

Santa Fe Indian School Navajo, Keres, and Tewa Classes

Santa Clara Pueblo-Tewa language classes at Kha'po Community School



Language & Identity

Language and identity are interconnected, serving as pathways to cultural sovereignty and self-determination. Language embodies stories, traditions, and beliefs, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness within communities. It is a powerful means of expressing identity, healing historical trauma, and celebrating resilience. The practice of language also promotes mental and emotional health by reinforcing cultural ties and a sense of purpose. Speaking Indigenous languages is a prayer. Language connects us to stories, protocols, and communities.



Community Highlights: The Navajo Wellness Model ([Link](#))

To increase health literacy, self-management, and cultural competency in health care and public health settings, the Navajo Area Indian Health Service, in partnership with Diné cultural experts, philosophers, and traditional healers, has developed the Navajo Wellness Model curriculum entitled “Shá’bek’ehgo As’ah Oodáát A Journey with Wellness and Healthy Lifestyle Guided by the Journey of the Sun.”

The curriculum integrates the traditional ways of Navajo teachings with how one approaches daily health: through exercise, healthy eating, and maintaining a balance in all aspects of life and in accordance with the natural daily cycles of dawn, day, evening, and nighttime. It is designed to increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding among health care and public health providers of the core Navajo teachings about personal and family health, healthy communities, and a healthy environment. The core teachings emphasize four domains of health and wellness from the Navajo perspective that include self-identity, self-respect, self-care, protection of self, and resiliency.



Land & Kinship

Recognizing and reaffirming that Indigenous Peoples, our relatives, are rooted in the duality of self-care, understanding that in order to have the privilege of being of service to others, we need to care for the self: understanding of specific places, sacred spaces, be it land- both urban or rural, or natural elements (water and air). This group of determinants includes spiritual connectedness, living cultural/traditional stories, song and dance, natural laws, language, place names, relationships with land and animals, tangible and intangible elements, and traditional ways of being at the heart.



Community Highlights: Cultural Re-integration Programs

Integrating traditional lifeways with spiritual practice and storytelling is essential for fostering a strong sense of self and community resilience. Through hands-on activities such as moccasin making, leather work, sewing, farming, and cooking, participants engage in the preservation of ancestral knowledge while building practical skills. When anchored by daily prayers, these practices deepen a profound connection to culture and support the ongoing development of a vibrant cultural identity. Ultimately, this holistic approach serves as a foundation for protective factors, empowering individuals with the belonging and heritage needed to navigate life's challenges with strength and purpose.



Sovereignty

Sovereignty is the Inherent Right of Tribal Governments to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of their people and ancestral lands. Sovereignty predates colonialism. This sovereignty is not “granted” by the U.S.—it is recognized by the Constitution, treaties, and centuries of legal precedent. Indigenous Governance practices, both current and traditional, support wellness for individuals, families, and the environment around them.

Why Sovereignty Matters for Tribal Nations – For Native communities—including Apache, Pueblo, Navajo, and other Nations in New Mexico—sovereignty is not abstract. It shapes:

- Healthcare systems
- Public health authority and data sovereignty
- Criminal justice and policing
- Economic development and gaming operations
- Cultural preservation and language revitalization
- Environmental and land stewardship



Community Highlights: Navajo Nation’s Healthy Diné Nation Act

Sovereignty is both a legal framework and a lived practice of self-determination. Tribes must have access to data on their own citizens to exercise their right to data sovereignty. An example of a Native Nation exercising sovereignty through Indigenous social drivers of health is the Navajo Nation’s Healthy Diné Nation Act (HDNA). This is one of the strongest, research-supported cases of a Tribe using governance, culture, and community-defined priorities to reshape the social and structural conditions that influence health



Healthcare

Healthcare encompasses clinical and preventive care, including specialty care, vaccinations, nutrition, counseling, injury prevention, and traditional healing. Healthcare systems are accountable for providing services to promote the physical, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing of community members served. Achieving excellent health requires high quality care, access to services, and comprehensive insurance plans. Healthcare should include culturally competent care, prevention through prioritized practice, Indigenous pathways to healing and clear communication of health conditions to patients. Highlighted below are opportunities to improve healthcare services.

Healthcare Workforce

- There is a need to recruit, train, and retain health professionals from our Native/Tribal communities.
- Providers should be trained on Indigenous Social Determinants of Health and community-specific frameworks of health and wellness in order to provide respectful and sensitive information and care to individuals.

Person and Family Centered Care

- Re-engage healthcare systems in how healthcare decision-making happens, bringing it back to the community level.
- Healthcare providers should respect autonomy by offering education and resources that allow individuals in making decisions regarding their healthcare.

Indigenous Approaches to Healing

- Ensure access to culturally competent, quality healthcare with outcomes, priorities, and practices that support the prevention and management of health conditions through Indigenous pathways and knowledge to healing.
- Include traditional healing as an integral part of healthcare services, ensuring access through state policy, insurance coverage, and hiring of traditional practitioners in healthcare organizations.
- Healthcare systems should offer services that address Indigenous social drivers of health whenever possible, such as Food is Medicine, transportation coverage, medical-legal services, and housing first models of care.

Healthcare Sovereignty

- Putting healthcare in the hands of the communities also requires tribal sovereignty over healthcare systems.
- Integrated services across tribal health programs and healthcare organizations, including referral pathways and coordinated management provides a more cohesive healthcare experience for community members.



Community Highlight: First Nations Community Healthsource

First Nations Community HealthSource, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, serves as New Mexico’s Urban Indian Health Center and a Federally Qualified Health Center. With a legacy of over 50 years, First Nations is deeply committed to high-quality, comprehensive, and culturally-centered healthcare services that integrate traditional values and promote the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native individuals and families and other underserved populations in Albuquerque and surrounding areas. [Learn more here.](#)



Housing

Access to safe and stable housing is critical to our health. Housing is complex and affects individual and community health on many levels. There are additional complexities when considering how access to housing differs between on- and off-reservation.

	Within Reservation	Off Reservation
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have no land to build on and do not qualify for housing • Stigma associated with needing assistance due to at-risk status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Barriers • Financing Barriers to Home Ownership • Stigma associated with needing assistance due to at-risk status and not knowing where or how to seek assistance in a metro area
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifting land ownership - re-acquiring or losing land and resources • Prioritizing the building of new housing or saving existing vacant housing for members experiencing housing risks. • Stigma associated with needing assistance due to members experiencing housing risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of sense of security because you don't know your neighbors • Multigenerational living is not supported • Stabilization and reintegration back to Pueblo, Tribal, Native Lands • Loss of shared resources
Tribal Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovereignty and Western policy not in alignment when creating housing policy and plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to engage Nations, Pueblos and Tribes in the conversation of housing and support for communities in urban areas
County, State, and Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length and complexities of long-standing federal and state contracts • Money for housing is allocated based on population size, which excludes smaller Pueblos, Tribes, and Native Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government to government relations to cross the boundaries (yours/mine) and partner to support community members off-pueblo/reservation



Community Highlight: Tiwa Lending Services

Tiwa Lending Services (TLS) provides home loans, consumer loans, and financial education to Isleta Pueblo Tribal Members and Native Americans within Bernalillo, Valencia, and Sandoval Counties. To read success stories and learn more, visit: tiwalending.org.



Education

An education system that supports our communities includes equitable access to instruction, well-prepared educators (culturally and linguistically), social and behavioral support services, funding, and data accountability. In general, models of instruction, intervention and assessment in public schools may or may not include an Indigenous population in a norm set, nor anticipate or deliver within Indigenous ways of knowing.

English-only policies limit access to education and the learning potential of indigenous students. Expanding our NM state seal of bi-lingualism and bi-literacy, which currently includes Diné, Pueblo and Apache language programs. Translanguaging addresses how we can use language to bridge gaps in access to academic information. We have seen advancements to-date in response to issues highlighted in *Yazzie v. Martinez*. It is imperative that efforts be sustained and expanded.

About Yazzie v. Martinez - From the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty

In 2018, the court ruled that New Mexico is violating the constitutional rights of "at-risk students"—including Native American students, English learners, students with disabilities, and those from low-income families—by failing to provide the education they need to be prepared for college or career. After years of delay and inaction, the Yazzie and Martinez plaintiffs returned to court in September 2024, filing a Joint Motion to show that the State still isn't meeting the court's order or its constitutional responsibilities. Plaintiffs demanded a remedial action plan to fix the education system and deliver on the promise of equity for at-risk students.

In April 2025, the judge agreed. The court found that New Mexico's public education system remains unconstitutional and ordered the Public Education Department (PED) to develop a comprehensive plan to address ongoing violations. The judge also required that the plan be created with real input from students, families, educators, and Tribal Nations. ([Learn more here](#))



Community Highlight: Supporting Native, Tribal, Pueblo Education - Native American Community Academy and Santa Fe Indian School

The Native American Community Academy (NACA) is a tuition-free public charter school serving students in grades Kindergarten–12th. NACA focuses on identity through culture & language, holistic wellness, community & family, and academic preparation. NACA's philosophy is grounded in both the Indigenous thought and a rigorous approach to career-preparatory education.

The Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS) offers a diverse range of departments designed to support the academic, cultural, and personal growth of its students. The Academic Department provides a comprehensive curriculum that includes core subjects such as mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies, all designed to prepare students for higher education and career success. Their Native Language Programs play a vital role in preserving and promoting Pueblo Culture & Heritage, offering programs and activities that immerse students in their traditions, languages, and histories.



Economic Conditions

Collaboration between tribes is needed in order to make meaningful connections and share resources to promote and increase economic stability. Economic conditions may consist of employment opportunities, government structure, healthcare, businesses, education, etc. Tribal collaboration is needed to successfully support and exercise Indigenous sovereignty by providing each other with opportunities to work, educate, and promote socioeconomic success. These components may look like job training, entrepreneurships, contracting, healthcare, financial literacy, housing, etc. Seeking ways to strengthen our sovereignty as tribal members can help uplift an array of factors affecting our well-being and economic conditions in our tribal nations.



Community Highlight: Building Community Capital, New Mexico Community Capital

New Mexico Community Capital (NMCC) activates life-changing opportunities with Indigenous communities to achieve economic sovereignty. NMCC bridges access to knowledge, technology, space, people, and capital for Indigenous communities through economic and community development. [Learn more here.](#)



Food Systems

Strong food systems support overall well-being. Lacking access to nutritious foods can cause disease and poor health outcomes that shorten life expectancy, such as obesity, diabetes, and diet-related diseases, as well as affecting the overall health of the family cycle. To prevent chronic disease and support maternal-child healthcare, all Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes should exercise sovereignty to grow, provide, and expand access to nutritious consumable foods through tribal farms, programs, and markets that promote traditional foods.

Reflections on Food Systems

"We have to empower our own our communities to do this work (grow local foods), we cannot rely on outside people to solve our problems and that's because in New Mexico all of our Tribal Communities are diverse. We have to empower ourselves."
- Dr. Yolandra Gomez,

"We have to think food system wide to realize that all of our communities are part of our local food system and have a role in this system and to insist that our state government supports this." - Kirsten Hansen

"We are growing nutrient dense foods that are environmentally sound. If you're hunting, gathering growing it's physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, economical, ecological, practical...all those things! When you grow in a certain environment or region, what's in the air and water is specific to that place and the people of that place. That is our health, producing food is part of our health. I need health professionals to help communicate this work to leadership." - Bryce Townsend



Community Highlight: "Food is Everything" A Collaboration between the Jicarilla Apache Nation, Northern Roots Program, Black Mesa Farm and the New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association

After returning home to Dulce and the Jicarilla Apache Nation, Dr. Yolandra Gomez recognized a need to strengthen food access and security for families within the Nation. After having trouble identifying food vendors, who often said no because the location of the Nation was too far for them to reach, they were introduced to Jasmine Meyer, who leads the Northern Roots Program. Northern Roots is a comprehensive produce prescription program that offers families healthy food resources in Northern New Mexico. Jasmine was able to support Dr. Gomez in enrolling families in the Jicarilla Apache Nation Home Visiting Program through the Food is Medicine Program. Part of this program works with Native farmers such as Black Mesa Farm, led by Bryce Townsend, in offering locally grown produce to Tribal communities in partnership with the New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association alongside Kirsten Hansen. You can learn more about this powerful collaboration through [this recorded presentation](#).



Transportation

Transportation systems impact communities' ability to access essential goods and services such as food, employment, health-related services, and community programs as well as shape environmental outcomes. Transportation, whether public or private, is especially important in communities where these resources are not readily available (The Praxis Project, n.d). Public transportation is accessible for urban Indians and Natives, however, transportation options are limited on reservations due to its remoteness and limited transportation infrastructure.

Transportation in tribal communities is crucial for healthcare access, but challenges that exist include:

- Geomapping: Challenge with locating and mapping tribal homes, homesteads, villages, and communities (i.e. chapters, tribal roads, etc.). In addition, tribal roads are unpaved and need attention.
- Corporations' technology
- Cultural sensitivity Training
- Language barriers
- Uninsured challenges
- Physical landscape directions vs. modern technology
- Availability



Community Highlights: Pueblo of Isleta Community Health Representatives

Community Health Representatives provide transportation to and from non-emergency medical appointments within Los Lunas, Isleta Health Center, and Albuquerque areas. They also coordinate with the Rio Metro Regional Transit District which operates Dial-a-Ride service within the Pueblo of Isleta and to nearby destinations.



Hope & Efficacy

Hope and efficacy refer to an individual's or community's capacity, desire, and ability to conceive of and work towards ways to improve their conditions or achieve a goal. Hope and efficacy include feelings of optimism about the future, opportunities for success and wellbeing, and possibilities for enacting change.

For many communities facing ongoing and historical harm from systems of oppression, hope allows for the collective imagination of radically different futures and fosters the agency necessary to create movements and forms of care that challenge systems of power and make those futures a reality. Communities nurture hope and efficacy through collective healing, addressing trauma, creating structures of care and accountability, and building power. Radical healing and radical change require radical hope (The Praxis Project, n.d).

In Indigenous communities, hope is often rooted in:

- *Cultural teachings and ceremonies*
- *Land-based practices*
- *Food based systems*
- *Language revitalization*
- *Elders' guidance*
- *Collective responsibility and kinship systems*



Community Highlight: Pueblo Action Alliance

Pueblo Action Alliance is a community driven grassroots organization that protects Pueblo cultural sustainability and community defense by addressing environmental and social impacts in Indigenous communities. Pueblo Action Alliance organizes campaigns, offers an annual Healing Circle and mentors youth through their Youth Justice Program. [Learn more here.](#)



Civic Participation

Exercising your sovereign voice to create a common vision in a way that reflects community values, traditions, and responsibilities.

Who is doing the work:

Schools, native communities, elders, social media influencers, indigenous media channels, artists, organizers, community advocates and activists, public health workers, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, tribes, pueblos, and elected leaders and national-based organizations

How are they doing the work?

Storytelling, resource development, voting, community connections, role modeling, teaching classes, trainings, community workshops, policies enacted, showing up in the community, social and traditional media/sharing, phone calls/texts, emails, tabling, conferences, protests, strikes, blockades, canvassing, public events - fairs and pow wows.



Community Highlight: NM Native Vote

NM Native Vote advocates for Native American working families and for social, economic, and environmental justice principles through civic engagement, policy advancement, and the building of a Native American electorate that is active, informed, and empowered. [Learn more here](#)



Reproductive Wellness

Reproductive wellness is the sacred and continuous cycle of creating, nurturing, and sustaining life, cultural teachings, and shared responsibility within the community. This perspective also acknowledges the structural barriers that limit access to sex education, open communication, quality healthcare access, and upholding reproductive life means ensuring that all individuals are respected and empowered to make informed, culturally grounded decisions about their health and wellbeing, and sexual/reproductive lives. Opportunities to strengthen reproductive wellness include:

- Increasing MCOs' understanding of reproductive wellness, health education, and having health plans incorporate health education planning
- Changing the language used to talk about reproductive wellness to be more inclusive
- Increasing access to child and maternal health home visiting programs
- Supporting unspoken/unwritten cultural teachings and practices with families and communities with respect to individuals' lifestyles and backgrounds
- Working with healthcare systems to allow traditional birth rituals/practices in hospital settings
- Increasing access to reproductive preventive care and education for men and women



Community Highlight: Indigenous Women Rising & Changing Women Initiative.

Indigenous Women Rising: Indigenous Women Rising is an Indigenous-led full-spectrum reproductive justice organization. We help our Indigenous families pay for and access abortion care, menstrual hygiene, and midwifery funding and support. [Learn more here.](#)

Changing Women Initiative: Changing Woman Initiative is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization seeking to renew cultural birth knowledge to empower and reclaim indigenous sovereignty of women's medicine and lifeway teachings to promote reproductive wellness, and healing through holistic approaches and to strengthen bonds to family and community. [Learn more here.](#)



Community Safety

Everyone deserves to feel supported and safe in their community. True safety is built through collective accountability, healing, and non-punitive approaches that address harm at the root causes. Transforming social conditions that breed violence towards ensuring safety for everyone is vital. Providing community engagement tools such as recreation, diabetes education clinic, safety mechanisms, training pueblo members, maintaining Indigenous knowledge, and maintaining sovereignty help promote community safety. Working to ensure safety both through law enforcement, forestry and fire departments promotes sovereignty and rapid response to natural disasters, promoting land and kinship. Safety is also rooted in the ability to express, recognize, hold, inform/educate, be aware of, heal with and from personal trauma and intergenerational trauma in an environment (that includes space, people, community, methods or traditional practices) that creates and exudes or exemplifies safety.



Community Highlight: Medically Assisted Treatment

MAT - Medication Assisted Treatment Prevention or Reintegration. In the community by the community, supporting Indigenous knowledge, sovereignty. The integration of western medicine with traditional, holistic, culturally-safe practices (i.e. accessibility of healers) and lifting up the importance and equality of healers (there is no hierarchy between western med and additional medicinal practices).



Parks & Recreation

Ample availability and access to safe, clean, and green open parks and recreational spaces that appeal to interests and activities across generations have been found to significantly improve health and well-being (The Praxis Project, n.d). These spaces often serve as multipurpose community hubs, serving as cooling stations, community gardens, warming shelters, and resource hubs. When these spaces are community-informed and accessible, they help reduce isolation, strengthen cultural continuity, and promote resilience across generations.

Communities see the greatest health gains when parks are:

- Close to where people live
- Safe and welcoming
- Designed with community input
- Equipped with amenities that reflect cultural and generational needs
- Connected by safe walking, biking, and transit routes
- Properly and consistently maintained



Community Highlight: Picuris Pueblo Recreation Park

Picuris Pueblo Recreation Park is open from sunrise to sundown. The park offers volleyball, basketball, workout equipment, walking/running trails, skate ramps, trampolines and a pump track. Throughout the year exercise classes such as yoga and swimming are available.



Connections with Neighbors

An interconnected communities includes all relations – the land, the soil, the plant life, animals, the spirits, all living things – to include contemporaneous and historical. These relationships promote collective well-being, identity, belonging and improve health by fostering collaboration, engagement, and shared responsibility by creating inclusive environments that unite community members. Facilitators for connections with neighbors include senior centers offering activities and free lunch, recreation centers, transportation services, and more.

Reflecting on Community Connection

“One thing that uplifts me is when my community and elders encourage me to keep going and pray that I have the power and the blessings to achieve all the goals that we have for the community.”

– Yvette Martinez , CHW

“Success is the trust that our community places with us. The number of calls our drivers receive a day shows us that we are a reliable resource for them. It speaks volumes when you see your community out and healthy and well. When community feels loved they feel more open to sharing and reaching out making their appointments and that benefits everyone”

– Samantha Murrey, CHW



Community Highlight: Santo Domingo Community Health Workers and Caring for our Relatives

The Santo Domingo Community Health Worker Program is centered around caring for every relative that is part of the community. This programs allows for younger generations to learn from Elders and to be able to further feel pride and connection to heritage and ancestry and to receive more knowledge. Through this relational thinking, the program facilitates patient engagement, promotes trust, strengthens community bonds, sovereignty, language and identity. Learn more about the direct ways Santo Domingo centers connections through [this recorded session](#).



(In) Justice System

Mechanisms of the legal and carceral system that are meant to promote fairness, justice, safety, and rehabilitation (in theory) but perpetuate harm, colonialism, and marginalization, and physical harm. The prioritization of restoration, healing, and community balance over retribution and punishment. Viewing justice as a holistic and spiritual way of life. It allows the individual to connect with their souls/themselves and gives opportunity for reflection on harm caused and how to apply this reflection to their lives and interaction with community, themselves, family, the world and to repair relationships by addressing the root harm.



Community Highlight: Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD) Diversion Program

LEAD program – diversion program that protects community ties, sovereignty, kinship, and language and identity and reduces carceral interventions, which further enhances the cultural sensitivities of tribal communities



Marketing and Retail Environment

The marketing and retail environment within a community can determine the accessibility and availability of safe, healthy, ethical, and affordable products and services (The Praxis Project, n.d.). For our Indigenous communities, this also means protecting artwork, adhering to best practices when using imagery, and exercising media sovereignty. The Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA) of 1990 (P.L. 101-644) prohibits offering, displaying, or selling any art or craft product in a way that falsely suggests it is Native-produced, an Indian product, or the work of a specific Native Nation or artist without certification from that Nation (Hovie, C., Matinee K., 2025).

Marketing sensitivity includes:

- *Ensuring logos, brands, and imagery are researched and confirmed that it relates to the population being served.*
- *Strengths-based representation of our Native people.*
- *Regulation of the use of AI-generated photos without authorization.*
- *Proper permission, research and understanding of logos, motifs, and imagery (i.e. Zia symbol).*
- *Ensuring the creative process involves Indigenous perspectives and voices to ensure authenticity, alignment of community values, and norms.*
- *Following community and tribal protocols, critical to understand and respect tribal authority and autonomy for the local marketing and retail environment.*



Community Highlights: Indigenous Marketing in Practice

Pueblo of Zia Sun Symbol Request allows for people to official request use of the Pueblo of Zia Sun Symbol.

Tribal Health Councils Factsheets highlight their Council's purpose, mission, vision, priorities, goals and objectives, and successes for the fiscal year. Factsheets include the tribe's seal, images of community and events, and cultural designs. Factsheets can be found on the New Mexico Alliance of Health Councils [webpage](#)



Community Infrastructure

The duality of community infrastructures and the juxtaposition of traditional and community infrastructures, and their connections to concepts of being within space and to healthy ecosystems for families. Community infrastructure includes spaces to pray and make offerings connected to community centers. Infrastructure includes underground pipes, ditch work for our farms, and other resources. Building community infrastructure supports ongoing kinship - coming together to share knowledge, education, and awareness.

How communities support community infrastructure

- *Farming and planting - teaching about seeding, planting, healthy styles to climate change, and the scarcity of water.*
- *Tribal Injury Prevention - rehabilitation of homes while protecting original structures. Rehab homes to prevent elderly injury.*
- *Teaching lost cultures - healing of historical trauma.*



Community Highlight: Three Sisters Collective

Three Sisters Collective engages in a land-based Rematriation praxis that restores wellness and uplifts traditional lifeways with an emphasis on art, advocacy, education, and community building. Three Sisters Collective has hosted events to bring awareness to the epidemic of Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives, created several murals, co-founded Indigenous Women's Day at the state capitol, hosted art shows and community events to highlight Indigenous peoples and our land based efforts, offered educational webinars, hosted self-defense classes for Native girls & gender non-conforming relatives, established a community garden and educational/community space, advocated for the removal of antiquated racist monuments in our city and more! [Learn more about Three Sisters Collective here.](#)

Closing

As we conclude this report on Indigenous Social Drivers of Health (ISDOH) in New Mexico, we reflect on the profound insights and collective wisdom shared by our communities. This work is more than just a documentation of definitions and examples; it is a testament to the resilience, strength, and vibrant cultural heritage of our Pueblos, Tribes, Nations and Indigenous communities.

Through the lens of ISDOH, we recognize that health is not solely defined by the absence of illness but is deeply intertwined with our cultural practices, social structures, and the natural environment. By centering Indigenous perspectives, we ensure that our health frameworks are holistic, inclusive, and reflective of our lived experiences.

The journey towards integrating these Indigenous systems into broader public health initiatives is just beginning. It requires ongoing collaboration between healthcare practitioners, community members, and policymakers to create and implement strategies that honor our unique ways of knowing and being. Together, we can advocate for policies and practices that dismantle systemic barriers and promote healing across our communities.

While we highlight the SDOH work happening across New Mexico, we encourage you to connect with SDOH services through the many closed-loop referral networks and resource directories available.

We invite all key partners to engage with this report, reflecting on the stories and insights shared. Let us work collectively to champion the ISDOH that promotes the health and wellness of all peoples in New Mexico. It is our hope that this effort will inspire further dialogue, research, and action, paving the way for a healthier and more equitable future for generations to come.

Thank you for your commitment to this vital work. Together, we continue to build a legacy rooted in resilience, ensuring that our traditions, identities, and communities thrive.

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