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 4 quadrants of the earth and 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 wellbeing of a Tribal community.

### Four Tribal Principles of Sustaining Health

#### 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:

- **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.
- **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.”
- **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.
- **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.

**WHAT COMPRISES A HEALTHY TRIBAL COMMUNITY?**

**THANK YOU**

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

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