

## **AHNS Cancer Prevention Service Community Service Grant – University of Oklahoma**

16% of Oklahoma's population is Native American<sup>1</sup>. Research shows that the AI/AN population have a higher burden, earlier age at presentation, and later stage at presentation of head and neck cancers, which leads to worse outcomes and higher morbidity and mortality<sup>2</sup>. We also know that early detection leads to better prognosis, and many AI/AN face barriers to accessing healthcare<sup>3</sup>. Thus, we believe that a targeted intervention for a population at high risk of head and neck cancer will improve health outcomes and save lives of AI/AN throughout the state of Oklahoma.

The University of Oklahoma Department of Otolaryngology is planning to host a free head and neck cancer screening event targeting the large American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population in Oklahoma at the First American Museum. The museum has weekly events promoting the history of AI/AN people in Oklahoma, and is a regular draw for the local AI/AN population. Through no-cost screening for oral, salivary gland, throat, larynx, thyroid, sinus, nasal, ear and facial cancers, this event works to protect the culture of Native people by enabling longer, healthier, and fuller lives.

At the event, participants will be able to have a free oral cancer screening, and a head and neck skin cancer check. In addition to providing screening, we will promote distribute educational material regarding head and neck cancer, especially as it pertains to AI/AN people. The First Americans Museum offers a large screen on which to display educational PowerPoints, as well as ample space for displaying posters and distributing pamphlets. An emphasis will be placed on preventative risk factors such as alcohol use, tobacco use, and environmental factors.

We will also distribute information on the role of HPV and HPV vaccination. Patients will learn self-screening techniques through demonstration, videos, and take-home material. For patients where follow up is deemed necessary, appointments will be offered through OU. The efforts outlined above are geared towards enhancing knowledge and strengthening health literacy around head and neck cancer in a vulnerable population. Through this event and its promotion, we hope to expand education and care to the AI/AN community for a group of cancers which disproportionately affects their own.

The estimated cost of the project is \$2,000, enough to cover the rental fee at the First American's Museum as well as to cover the cost of distribution materials (paper information sheets, sunscreen, self-screening mirrors and keychain flashlights). We are not expecting any outside funding outside of free promotional material from the Head and Neck Cancer Alliance.

Oklahoma has the largest population of AI/AN people in the lower states, and this population has long experienced disparate outcomes in access to care and disease outcomes. We feel that focusing on the AI/AN people is the first step in establishing trust and enhancing opportunities for community level interventions.

1. U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Oklahoma, 1 July 2025.  
[www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/OK/PST045225](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/OK/PST045225).
2. Warren BR, Grandis JR, Johnson DE, Villa A. Head and Neck Cancer among American Indian and Alaska Native Populations in California, 2009-2018. *Cancers (Basel)*.2021;13(20):5195. Published 2021 Oct 16. doi:10.3390/cancers13205195
3. Vokes EE, Weichselbaum RR, Lippman SM, Hong WK. Head and neck cancer. *N Engl J Med*. 1993;328(3):184-194. doi:10.1056/NEJM199301213280306