

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Return to the Heart Foundation
Raising Critically Needed Resources for Tribal Communities
with Native COVID-19 Action Fund

Entire tribal nations could be wiped by COVID-19 due to the higher rates of underlying health conditions and lack of access to sufficient health care, according to the Washington Post. With this potential loss, comes the reality that some of the last living language keepers and culture bearers could also disappear. Return to the Heart Foundation, an Indigenous Women-led intermediary grantmaking organization, has stepped forward to utilize their broad experience and vast networks to build and curate opportunities for life saving equipment including Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) with manufacturers.

“The tribes in the Great Plains are engaged in modern day warfare against this disease. We are in a fight to protect our wisdom keepers, our first language speakers, and our culture teachers and we are unarmed. The armor we need are testing systems, personal protective equipment and medicines. We need infrastructure to care for the infirmed and to hold the anticipated casualties should this disease spread exponentially within our reservation borders,” stated Jerilyn Church, Executive Director of the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Health Board.

Red Dawn Foster, South Dakota State Senator and COO of Return to the Heart Foundation, and Sarah Eagle Heart, former CEO of Native Americans in Philanthropy and CEO of Return to the Heart Foundation, are taking action now to provide resources swiftly to fight COVID-19 by identifying and supporting urgent safety needs of with current distribution partners: Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, Indigenous Mutual Aid - Michigan Tribes, Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation and University of California San Francisco - Do No Harm Coalition. The areas of priority identified by regional tribal health partners include Rapid Covid-19 tests and PPE supplies such as N95 masks, face shields, gloves, gowns, Tyvek suits, cots, disinfection wipes, and hand sanitizer.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Native Americans communities are at a higher risk for complications associated with COVID-19 due to higher rates of chronic diseases and immunocompromised individuals. Additionally, Native Americans are at higher risk as many tribes have large families living in close quarters.

Return to the Heart Foundation is an Indigenous Women-led intermediary grantmaking organization empowering visionary Indigenous Women-led initiatives invested in healing through: narrative change, civic engagement, climate justice, and restorative development. Return to the Heart Foundation has over 30 years of combined experience working with grassroots communities and is able to connect donors/funders to meaningful opportunities for significant long-term impact. Return to the Heart Foundation is fiscally sponsored by Amalgamated Bank Foundation.

Return to the Heart Foundation’s goal is to raise \$4 million over the next three months by continuing to identify and support the urgent safety needs of Indian Country, connecting traditional healers, and supporting regenerative strategies. Donors can make a contribution to [Return to The Heart Foundation - COVID-19 Action Fund](#) and please note the name of the recipient fund in the check memo line or special instructions line.