

# NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN DISABILITY SYMPOSIUM JULY 16 AND 17, 2026

Cultivating Care: The Three Sisters Approach to Disability in Native Country

Rooted in Community, Kinship, and Shared Responsibility

The 2026 National American Indian Disability Symposium is a two-day virtual gathering focused on building relationships with those who serve American Indians with disabilities. Centering the lived experiences of Native Peoples with disabilities, this gathering works to address barriers while developing actionable recommendations that uphold their wellbeing and inclusion. Intended for Natives with disabilities, advocates, Native Nation leadership and service providers.

ASL and captioning services will be made available.

The sessions will be recorded and posted on the Sonoran Center YouTube page.

Please register and a link to the recording will be sent to you.

## Agenda:

### Day 1: Thursday July 16 AZ Time

8:30 AM

Welcome and Blessing

Speaker, Dr. Kimberly Yellow Robe, Symposium Moderator

8:45-9:30AM

Keynote: Inter-Tribal Disability Advocacy Council Report:

Elevating the Invisible Voice of Indigenous Peoples with Disabilities

Speaker, Dr. Kimberly Yellow Robe on behalf of the Inter-Tribal Disability Advocacy Council

9:30-10:20 AM

My Health My Choice: Improving breast and cervical cancer screening for Native American Women with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Speakers, Dr. Darold Joseph, Northern Arizona University and Dr. Julie Armin, University of Arizona

10:30-11:20AM

Deaf Education/Self-Representation

Speaker, Dr. Melanie McKay-Cody, Assistant Professor Department of Disability and Psychoeducational Studies and Secretary, Turtle Island Hand Talk

11:30 - 11:50AM

Tribal Elder Justice Collaborative

Speaker, Peggy Jo Archer, International Association for Indigenous Aging

12:00 - 12:50

Meeting Access Needs: All We Need is a Path

Speakers Frances Spiegel, Attorney Advisor, Debra Martins, Training Coordinator and Amy Nieves from the U.S. Access Board

1:00 - 1:55 PM

Speaking the Patients Language, a program development expanding Navajo Interpreter access in urban areas

Speaker, Francine McLendon, University of New Mexico

2:00 - 2:55 PM

Abuse & Neglect: Protection & Advocacy

Speakers, Benita McKerry, Advocate and Outreach Team Leader, Native American Disability Law Center and Austin Moore, Staff Attorney

3:00 - 3:55 PM

National Indian Council on Aging

Speakers, Scott Willie, Bernina Gray and Daniel Dolman

Day 2: Friday July 17 (AZ Time)

8:30 AM

Traditional Blessing

Provided by Dwight Francisco, Gathering of Native Americans

8:45-9:20 AM

Disabilities and Indigenous Peoples: Listening, Engaging and Collaborating  
Speaker, Agnes Attakai, Program Manager, Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities, University of Arizona

9:30-10:25 AM

IDEA

Speaker, Therese Yanan, Executive Director, Native American Disability Law Center

10:30 - 11:55 AM

Indigenous Empowerment and Adaptive Sports and Recreation  
Speaker, Jim Warne, Affiliate, Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities, University of Arizona

12:00 - 12:50

White House National Council on Disabilities Reports on the Incidence of Disability on Tribal Lands

Speakers, Amy Nicholas, Senior Attorney Advisor and National Council on Disabilities Tribal Workgroup Members

1:00 - 1:55PM

Home- and Community-Based Services for American Indians and Alaskan Natives: Recommendations for Increasing Access and Recognizing Resiliency

Speakers, Natalie Keene, Managing Director Health Advocacy, Justice in Aging and Sahar Takashi, Senior Attorney

2:00 2:55 PM

Disability and Aging - The Importance of Planning Throughout the Lifespan  
Speakers, Mellie Adu, Chief Executive of Strategy and Innovation. Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council and Melanie Mills, Executive Director, The Arc of Arizona

3:00 - 3:55 PM

Native Disability Justice Initiative

Speaker, Kim Mettler, Next Generations Director, Association on American Indian Affairs

4:00 - 4:30PM

American Cancer Society

Speaker, Kristina M. Martel, Strategic Director, CGH Division Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. West Region, American Cancer Society

If you have any questions, please contact

Kimberly Yellow Robe, Planning Committee Chair at

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Or Agnes Attakai, Program Manager at [agnes@arizona.edu](mailto:agnes@arizona.edu).