



# CASE STUDY

## Improving Health Conditions of Native Americans in Washington State

*Washington Community Action Network (Washington CAN!) is one of Washington State's largest consumer advocacy groups, with over 40,000 members. They work within their community on a range of issues that aim to deconstruct systems of inequality. A major Washington CAN! goal is to improve the health condition of Native Americans in Washington State's Spokane County.*

*With a Native American population of about 16,000, Spokane County is one of the nation's largest Native American hubs. In collaboration with their community, Washington CAN! works toward their goal of improving the quality of health care Native Americans receive in the Spokane County. This story highlights the ways in which they have implemented the [Pyramid of Engagement](#) in order to strengthen their work in the Spokane County.*

**Awareness:** Washington CAN! actively reaches out to the Native American community in Spokane County to raise awareness about the health care disparities that plight their community. By attending powwows hosted by the Native American community, Washington CAN! has been able to discuss with attendees the importance of Native Americans taking on key roles in their campaigns and how their shared narratives will assist in strengthening the efficiency of Washington CAN!.

**Interest:** Through their partnership with the Native Project—Washington's largest organization that provides culturally competent care to Native Americans—Washington CAN! has gained access to patients who are interested in helping Washington CAN! better understand the Native American community's primary concerns regarding health and health care.

**Participation:** Washington CAN! hosted a tribal workshop called Cascade Pacific Health Action Alliance ACH – Tribal Alliance Workshop. Comprised of various activities, this workshop discusses the public health goals, objectives and desired outcomes of Spokane County's Native American community. At this event, community members have shared their unique experiences and voiced their questions, concerns and general thoughts about health improvement plans as it relates to the tribal community. The community's participation has provided Washington CAN! with a scope of what issues need to be addressed and the most effective ways to tackle these pressing issues.

**Commitment:** Understanding that marginalized communities face a number of barriers that can possibly contribute to their inability to commit or even participate in campaign activities, Washington CAN! has taken the initiative to make commitment feasible for the Native American community in Spokane County. Washington CAN! offers stipends for people

who participate in their campaign activities, which has led to an increase in the number of campaign activity participants. Their willingness to commit has manifested in their active participation in campaigns and their attendance at Washington CAN!'s bi-weekly meetings.

**Leadership:** Washington CAN! has organized community basketball games with Native American leaders. These games serve as a way to strengthen Washington CAN!'s relationship with the Native American community in the Spokane County. What seems to be a simple game of basketball has actually served as an effective way for Washington CAN! to gain the trust of community leaders, sparking conversations regarding pressing health issues in the Spokane County. Washington CAN! has also facilitated discussions with leaders about how the community can become active in combatting health inequity and inequality. These leaders have taken it upon themselves to empower their fellow community members to get involved in the organization's campaigns that work toward improving the public health of Native Americans in the Spokane County.

*Washington CAN! has been successful in incorporating the Pyramid of Engagement in their work by:*

- 1. Being innovative in the ways they help to alleviate community members of the challenges that may hinder them from engaging in their campaigns.*
- 2. Actively listening the voice of the people and reinforcing the idea that the people's voice is vital to the success of Washington CAN!'s campaign.*
- 3. Going to the people! Rather than solely relying on community members to go to their meetings/event, Washington CAN! attends events that are held by the community. This strengthens their relationships with the community.*