

Utilizing Native American Media

Internet Access

Many tribal lands, often located in rural and isolated areas, still lag behind in Internet broadband access, although efforts continue to help increase connectivity. According to an analysis by the American Indian Policy Institute in 2021, only 67% of tribal lands in the continental U.S. have access to broadband internet. However, only 47% of the population on tribal lands have actually subscribed to broadband plans, largely due to cost.¹

The lack of broadband access has expedited the use of cell phones by Native people. Many Native people have moved straight to mobile Internet, accessing digital content through cell phones that do not require broadband connections.

In 2019, the American Indian Policy Institute conducted a survey that found:



- **18%** of individuals living on reservations had no internet access at home, wireless or land-based
- **33%** access the internet via their cellphone service at home
- **31%** reported their connection was “spotty” or they had no connection at home²

While broadband connection remains a significant issue in rural areas and on tribal reservations, according to 2020 U.S. Census data, only 13% of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) individuals live on reservations or other trust lands. The remaining 87% of the AI/AN population lives outside of tribal statistical areas, ranging from rural to urban areas.³ Therefore, it is important to tailor your outreach strategy for your intended audience.

Regardless, AI/AN elders remain, perhaps, the least wired of all AI/AN age groups. Native elders’ lack of technology is likely due to cost, accessibility, and/or inexperience. Therefore, it is important to use various outreach methods to reach Native elders.

Media Outlets

Native elders are more likely to access and pay attention to their tribal newspaper than an Internet-based report. Many still depend on local or national Native radio or television broadcasts for information.

Radio

Radio remains a strong medium for reaching Native American audiences, especially older populations that reside in AI/AN communities. **According to [Native Public Media](#), there are currently 57 Native radio stations, a 159% increase from 22 in 2009.** Native stations deliver news, health education, cultural information, and information in times of emergencies. They also provide a platform for discussion about issues of importance to their communities.⁴

One widely listened to and popular radio program, [Native American Calling](#), typically airs Monday-Friday at 1:00 pm ET. It can be heard on nearly 90 public, community, and tribal radio stations in the United States and Canada.⁵

Television

Television, although still popular with AI/AN audiences, can be expensive. Native Public Media (NPM) currently runs four television stations.⁴ [Use this interactive map to find an NPM radio or television station near you.](#)



Newspapers

Newspapers still have a significant influence with AI/AN audiences. Several regional and national print and online publications, including [Indian Country Today](#), are widely read in AI/AN communities. Additionally, many tribes have their own newspapers.

Other national newspapers covering AI/AN news include:

- [High Country News](#)
- [Indianz.com](#)
- [National Native News](#)



Other

Other communication channels include:

- Tribal websites
- Emails and newsletters (tribal, schools, senior centers, etc.)
- Outdoor advertising (including billboards, posters on transit, or street furniture)
- Tribal colleges and universities
- Announcements at public events
- Flyers and posters in tribal and other public buildings (senior centers, community centers, grocery stores, gas stations, churches, government buildings, etc.).

Social Media

While most Native elders do not use social media, it can still be a great method to share information with the family and friends of elders.

Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media site used by all AI/AN adults, both younger and older. Facebook has been used for information sharing among households that are geographically distant and have limited financial resources. Community-specific Facebook groups, or “virtual communities,” are particularly engaging for AI/AN individuals. These groups are intended to increase social support for lifestyle changes.⁶

Instagram and Others

Instagram is the second social networking site of choice, usually by young AI/AN adults.⁶ Many AI/AN teens and young adults use Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter, among others.⁷

Tips

- **Know your audience.** Every tribe is different, so tailor your message to your intended audience.
- **Provide translations.** When possible, ask a tribal member to create a version of your message in the tribe’s native language.
- **Utilize places and media platforms frequented by elders.** Post flyers, stream videos, and share handouts in health center waiting rooms, senior centers, tribal elderly service centers, churches, and other local gathering spots. Take advantage of local radio stations to disseminate your message, particularly during the morning and lunch hours.
- **Find the best time.** Usually, elders listen to the radio (e.g., Native Calling or NPR) in the morning or at lunch.

- **Use storytelling.** Storytelling is highly valued in some Native cultures and can be used to build relationships, as well as to engage the audience and convey a positive message.
- **Use grassroots marketing.** Partnerships at local and national levels can help extend campaign messages and influence the audience at the grassroots level where word-of-mouth plays an important role spreading the messaging. Family, friends, health care providers, and the tribal community are often the most credible and trusted sources of information. Encourage community members to share or forward your message to a friend.
- **Read more about how elders prefer to receive health information.** Visit: <https://iasquared.org/alaska-native-and-american-indian-community-health-communications-survey-results/>.
- **Read more about how to customize marketing for programs in AI/AN communities.** Visit: <https://www.ncoa.org/article/how-to-customize-marketing-for-programs-in-indigenous-communities>.

¹ U.S. Congress, Hearing of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States of the House Committee on Natural Resources. "Oversight Hearing: Infrastructure in Indigenous Communities: Priorities for American Jobs Plan." 117th Cong. (2021, April 21) (testimony of Dr. Traci Morris). Text from [https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/SCIP%2004.21.21%20Testimony%20-%20Dr.%20Morris%20\(AIPI\).pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/SCIP%2004.21.21%20Testimony%20-%20Dr.%20Morris%20(AIPI).pdf). Accessed on 12/14/2022.

² American Indian Policy Institute. (2020, April 3). Tribal Digital Divide: Policy brief and recommendations. Arizona State University. https://aipl.asu.edu/sites/default/files/tribal_digital_divide_stimulus_bill_advocacy_04032020.pdf

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. (2022, November 3). Profile: [American Indian/Alaska Native](https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=62). <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=62>

⁴ Native Public Media. (n.d.). About Native Public Media. <https://www.nativepublicmedia.org/about>

⁵ Native American Calling. (n.d.). About Native American Calling. <https://www.nativeamericacalling.com/about/>

⁶ Miles, A.A., O'Meara, M.A., & Crowder, J. (2022). Social media and Native populations [Unpublished brief]. International Association for Indigenous Aging.

⁷ Reed, N.D. (2021). Youth Health Tech Survey 2020. Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board. <https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/YHTS-No-Labels-FINAL.pdf>