An Update on Cancer in American Indians and Alaska Natives, 1999–2004

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Roger Fernandes (Lower Elwha Klallam), *Slapu the Terrible Monster*, 2006, acrylic ink on paper, 14 inches x 11 inches

“In this painting, Slapu, the mythical monster of the Klallam people of Washington State, represents cancer. The eight green and orange crabs circling Slapu’s face symbolize the community working together to defeat the monster. In the traditional Klallam tale, a little girl and an elder crab fisherman and his crabs outwit the monster and send it to the bottom of the ocean. While western societies may view a crab as a symbolic representation of cancer, the Klallam tale overturns that expectation. Just as the crabs work with the community to defeat the monster Slapu, so can tribal community members work together to defeat cancer through education, screening, and treatment.”

Roger Fernandes
Native People for Cancer Control
WORKING TO CONTROL CANCER THROUGH EDUCATION,
PREVENTION, ACCESS TO CARE, AND RESEARCH

What you need to know about breast cancer
- Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among American Indian and Alaska Native women
- Every woman is at risk for breast cancer

Early detection is your best protection
- All women should be screened for breast cancer
- Ask your doctor or nurse about a mammogram (x-ray of the breast).

Roger Fernandes (Lower Elwha Klallam), Healing Mother, 1994

The Native Art for Cancer project features Native art on brochures, posters, and printed materials to raise cancer awareness and increase cancer prevention activities. Working together with researchers at Native People for Cancer Control, Native artists are sharing their creativity and stories to help fight cancer in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The pages following the manuscripts in this supplement highlight the work of these artists.
“My work reflects both the inner and outer beauty of Native American people and the importance of practicing good health in transcending this universal beauty. In ancient days, toxins were few and tobacco was used for special occasions during rituals... and it only seems fitting that the magic of tobacco not be abused.”

Neil Parsons (Southern Pikunni/Blackfeet)
Medicine Shield, 2004

What you need to know about Cervical Cancer
- Cervical cancer is almost always caused by Human Papillomavirus, or HPV.
- Sexually active girls and women are at risk for HPV.
- American Indian and Alaska Native women with cervical cancer die twice as often as other women in the United States.

Cervical Cancer can be detected early and prevented
- A Pap test detects cervical cancer early and takes only a few minutes.
- A vaccine for girls and women 9 to 26 years old can prevent infection with HPV.
- The vaccine works best if it is given before a girl or woman becomes sexually active.
- Ask your health care provider about a Pap test and the HPV vaccine.

What you need to know about Lung Cancer
- Lung cancer kills more American Indians and Alaska Natives than any other cancer.
- Even if you don’t smoke, just being around other people’s smoke increases your risk of lung cancer.
- Parents who smoke around their children increase the chances their children will smoke.

What you can do to prevent Lung Cancer
- If you smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting.
- Encourage all people, especially youth and parents, not to smoke.
- Ask your health care provider about ways to quit smoking.

—Hulleah Tsinhahjinnie
(Seminole/Muskogee/Navajo) Grandmother, 2003

“Grandmother pays tribute to Grandmother McGirt, who died of cancer in 1963.”
“MY CHILKAT TEXTILES are adorned with land, air, and sea creatures. They are meant to convey the connection of humanity to the earth and heavens. Enjoy the visage of the Chilkat blanket, as I did in weaving it. The tour de force that I strive for in Chilkat weaving is spiritual wellness.”

Anna Brown Ehlers
(Chilkat Tlingit)
Brown Twins of Starr Hill, 2004
Using a Northwest Coast art style to illustrate the story of Octopus and Crow, I began with the expression of the octopus. I designed a double octopus to express that we have two choices in our lives when it comes to smoking: we either smoke or we choose not to smoke. It is truly up to the individual. The octopus expresses its role as the risk of cancer. The yellow crow caught in the tentacles of the octopus develops lung cancer while the blue crow escapes this fate by quitting smoking. At the center of this drawing, two hands are found. It is through our hands that we most often affect what goes into our bodies and our lives. The color red has many, many meanings throughout Indian country. Here, red is being used to express knowledge of the material or physical world, knowledge that we gain by using our five senses. Similarly, when a researcher studies a physical phenomenon to understand its underlying patterns and trends, that researcher will begin with knowledge of the physical world.”

Chholing P. Taha