

Coverage of Indigenous People During COVID-19: Brazil, the United States and Australia

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Indigenous Coronavirus News Updates



France 24	<u>Coronavirus: The latest threat to the Amazon's tribes</u>
BBC	<u>Coronavirus: Why are Australia's remote Aboriginal communities at risk?</u>
Aljazeera	<u>Indigenous race into Ecuador's Amazon to escape coronavirus</u>
The Hill	<u>How the coronavirus threatens Native American communities</u>
ABC News	<u>Tribes take measures to slow spread of new coronavirus</u>
Reuters	<u>South America's indigenous people lock down as coronavirus takes hold</u>
The Guardian	<u>'Timing is critical': Native Americans warn virus may overwhelm underfunded health services</u>
InterPress Service	<u>Could the Coronavirus Pandemic have been Avoided if the World Listened to Indigenous Leaders?</u>
Salt Lake Tribune	<u>'We are not ready for this': Native American tribes struggle to deal with coronavirus</u>

BRAZIL: HOW IT HAPPENED

- 305 villages
- Around 900,000 people
- The first case of COVID-19 in the northern region of the Amazon was contracted by a 22 year old indigenous woman from the Kokama village.
- Dr. Mathaeus Feitosa, a doctor for the health services for indigenous people of Brazil (SESAI) treated 10 indigenous people from a Tikuna village
- 27 now being monitored after contact with Dr. Mathaeus Feitosa or from persons he was in contact with.



BRAZIL: THE FEAR

- Increased susceptibility to respiratory infection
- Increased chance of social spread due to communal habits
- Loss of / dwindling access to food
- Lack of access to water, hand sanitizer, and masks
- Loss of wisdom & customs
- Uncontrollable spread and lack of outreach to 107 isolated indigenous groups. Bolsonaro may break a 30 year agreement on leaving these groups isolated as a way to give them access to treatment. Natives worry this could worsen the spread of COVID-19 in indigenous communities
- Bolsonaro has openly said that the indigenous land belongs to all of Brazil. Indigenous groups worry that Bolsonaro's cabinet will let them perish in order to gain land
- A modern genocide



Image sourced from [Survival International](https://www.survivalinternational.org/)

BRAZIL: FEDERAL RESPONSE

As of now, the government is attempting at intervening by providing doctors and indigenous people with additional resources.

For the Indigenous

- Flu shots
- Food and hygiene supply
- Decentralization of resources
- Social distancing

For the Doctors

- Personal protective equipment
- Oxygen kits
- Beds



Image sourced from [Mongabay](#)

BRAZIL: COVERAGE

News Coverage		News Coverage	
MONGABAY	<u>First COVID-19 case among indigenous people confirmed in Brazilian Amazon</u>	The Independent	<u>Coronavirus: Brazil's indigenous people at risk of being wiped out from COVID-19</u>
Reuters	<u>Brazil confirms first indigenous coronavirus case in the Amazon</u>	MONGABAY	<u>Amazon's indigenous put at risk by Brazil's feeble COVID-19 response</u>
Live Science	<u>COVID-19 Has reached a Brazilian Indigenous tribe</u>	BBC	<u>Coronavirus could wipe out Brazil's indigenous people</u>
New Europe	<u>Brazil confirms first indigenous case of COVID-19</u>	EnviroLink	<u>First COVID19 case among indigenous people in Brazilian Amazon</u>
MFP	<u>MFP Recommends emergency action to protect the health of indigenous people</u>	Guardian	<u>Bolsonaro ignored by state governors amid anger at handling of Covid-19 crisis</u>



UNITED STATES

Indigenous populations in the United States

Historically, North and South American populations were reduced by 90% by introduction of old-world pathogens such as smallpox, influenza and other viruses which is a historically important part of the story of colonization. Rapid spread of disease has had devastating effects on communities that lacked immunity because of isolation. Contamination of isolated communities in North and South America continues today, particularly in the Amazon where there are possibly up to 100 isolated indigenous groups that are threatened by movement to expand and extract Amazonian resources. Native American populations in the United States are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 because of structural inequalities and underlying health conditions. **In 2009, American Indians and Alaska Natives died at 4x the rate of all racial and ethnic groups combined of H1N1.**

- 5 million people in the United States identify as Native American or Alaskan Native
- Native American people have access to a system set up by the US government IHS, in 1955. This is called “pre-paid healthcare” by some as a return for land cessations in the past by tribes.
- Social distancing obstacles: overcrowded housing (8x the national average), multigenerational households, position of elders in society, societal norms/ cultural value.
- Health obstacles are common underlying conditions among native population in US include high rates of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, asthma, high blood pressure, poor nutrition
- Underfunded health-care
- Reservations often lack electricity and running water in part due to conflicts over state and tribal jurisdictions and lack of funding.
- 1/4 under age 65 lack health insurance
- Native communities are severely short on Covid-19 test kits according to Indian Health Services contrary to the government claims.

United States



News Coverage		News Coverage	
USA Today	<u>SILENT AND SACRED</u>	VOA	<u>Native American Tribes Face Critical Shortages of COVID-19 Test Kits, Protective Gear</u>
Gotham Gazette	<u>They're Conditioned to Just Ignore or Erase Us': Native Americans in New York Fear Another Census Undercount</u>	Salt Lake Tribune	<u>'We are not ready for this': Native American tribes struggle to deal with coronavirus</u>
The Hill	<u>How the coronavirus threatens Native American communities</u>	Huffington Post	<u>What It's Like to to Not Have Water During a Pandemic</u>
ABC News	<u>Tribes take measures to slow spread of new coronavirus</u>	NPR KNAU.org	<u>Covid-19 Relief Package Includes \$8 Billion for Tribal Assistance</u>
The Guardian	<u>Timing is critical': Native Americans warn virus may overwhelm underfunded health services</u>	NPR	<u>As coronavirus cases rise, Navajo Nation tries to get ahead of pandemic</u>

United States



News Coverage (Cont.)	
VOX	<u>The coronavirus is exacerbating vulnerabilities Native communities already face</u>
The Atlantic	<u>What the Racial Data Shows</u>
AP	<u>Democratic Lawmakers call for racial data in virus testing</u>

United States

United States: Federal Response

- IHS (Indian Health Services) information webpage where they discuss joint efforts with Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate with tribal and urban Indian health organizations.
- IHS is holding webinars and national calls with tribal health organizations.
- IHS claims they are in contact with the white house and other HHS departments to give Indian country the necessary information.
- COVID-19 relief package included \$8 billion for tribal assistance. This includes \$1 billion for Indian Health Services and \$70 million to the Bureau of Indian Education.
- What the Racial Data Shows article in The Atlantic talks about the different ways that people of color are affected by Covid-19. Elizabeth Warren and Ayanna Pressley have pressured the government to collect and publish data on this. Democratic Lawmakers call for racial data in virus testing (AP) so that the disparities can be addressed.

AUSTRALIA



Australian Government

Department of Health

Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19.

AUSTRALIA

Need

- About 120,000 people live in remote communities. Many home to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - Known as the First Nation people or Indigenous Australians
- Communities living with underlying medical conditions are known to be at greater risk from Covid-19 - conditions of diabetes, renal failure and smoking rates are high among Indigenous Australians
- Fear of impact on population. Indigenous Australians live with lower life expectancy - between Indigenous males and non-Indigenous males the gap is 8.6 years, and for females 7.8 years. according to the latest Closing the Gap report.
- Advocacy efforts are pushing for the need to address poor communications as well as language issues that need support in efforts.
- General lack of knowledge about the Coronavirus in communities.



- Typically limited or if any medical care facilities.
- Communities on common cases use visiting doctors. Medical staff travel in by car to larger towns. Or if individuals become ill, they are flown out by the services. One being the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

AUSTRALIA

Response



Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19.

- Indigenous peoples over the age of 50 originally asked to self-isolate. Non-Indigenous Australians, the age cut-off was 70.
- 'Biosecurity Act' use for limitations to indigenous communities.
- Only medical and health staff, police and educational services allowed in.
- Suspension of non-essential medical treatments increasing pressure on the everyday health burden in Aboriginal communities.
- Result of travel restrictions and Some pushback on getting stimulus package to communities in Northern Territory (NT).
- Screening workers going into the remote areas.
- The Western Australian government claim to evacuate people early should infections occur.
- Current promise of mobile respiratory clinics to respond to outbreaks in places without hospitals or other health services.
- Medics stating there are low resources to evacuate very ill people from Australia's remote areas.
- Starting a new service to offer phone and online consultations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders over the age of 50.

AUSTRALIA



News Coverage		News Coverage	
BBC	<u>Coronavirus: Why are Australia's remote Aboriginal communities at risk?</u>	Sky.news.com.au	<u>Calls to suspend stimulus payments to NT residents</u>
The Guardian	<u>Frontline doctors prepare for 'death and suffering' when coronavirus hits Indigenous communities</u>	NITV/SBS	<u>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders face racism amid testing and treatment of COVID-19</u>
The Washington Post	<u>The World's Indigenous peoples, with tragic history of disease, implore outsiders to keep coronavirus away</u>	Reuters	<u>Australia restricts travel to remote indigenous areas to slow coronavirus</u>
The Conversation(Academic Website)	<u>The answer to Indigenous vulnerability to coronavirus: a more equitable public health agenda</u> <u>Coronavirus will devastate Aboriginal communities if we don't act now</u>	US News	<u>Australia Restricts Travel to Remote Indigenous Areas to Slow Coronavirus</u>
The Australian	<u>Fears for indigenous over coronavirus</u>	VOA- Voice of America	<u>Some Australian Aboriginal Communities Ban Visitors Over Coronavirus</u>

Overall Themes and Analysis:

Indigenous Need, Response and Coverage during COVID-19

Community Need

1. Community Protection
2. Health Services
3. Law protection against discrimination

Community Response

4. Indigenous communities advocacy petitions rise in need for health services, community protection, and government support

Government Response

5. Government policies enacted to prevent non-essential travel to indigenous communities

Media Coverage

6. Stories are not fully mainstream but there is general media coverage
7. Stories were covered almost as quickly and efficiently with mainstream Coronavirus coverage

Questions

Indigenous Need, Response and Coverage during COVID-19

- 1. Have you all found coverage for vulnerable communities in mainstream news reports?**
- 2. How can news standards increase resource support needed for vulnerable communities and stop discrimination on the local level?**
- 3. How do we place a value on the loss to the world of losing an elder generation of indigenous people and their cultural knowledge?**
- 4. How can media coverage continue to bear witness with barriers, social distancing and locality in the age of COVID-19?**
- 5. Will COVID-19 give birth to strong local news stories?**
- 6. Will COVID-19 birth new technology in local communities and become the new form of news coverage?**



THANK YOU



All Information is cited from news articles and sources found in underlined links throughout slides.

