

# Beyond Access – Restoring Balance and Justice in Indigenous Maternal Health

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THE RAVEN COLLECTIVE

# A little about me...

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*My grandmother taught me to speak up, show up, and to never be afraid of a little good trouble if it means protecting the health and future of our people. Her teachings walk with me in every space I enter.*

I carry forward her wisdom and fire—braiding together policy, prevention, and purpose in the work I do.

I believe our communities already hold the answers; our job is to create space for those answers to thrive.



# Maternal Health is More Than a Medical Episode

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- A social responsibility
- Deeply relational and intergenerational
- Embedded in reproductive justice, women's health and sovereignty



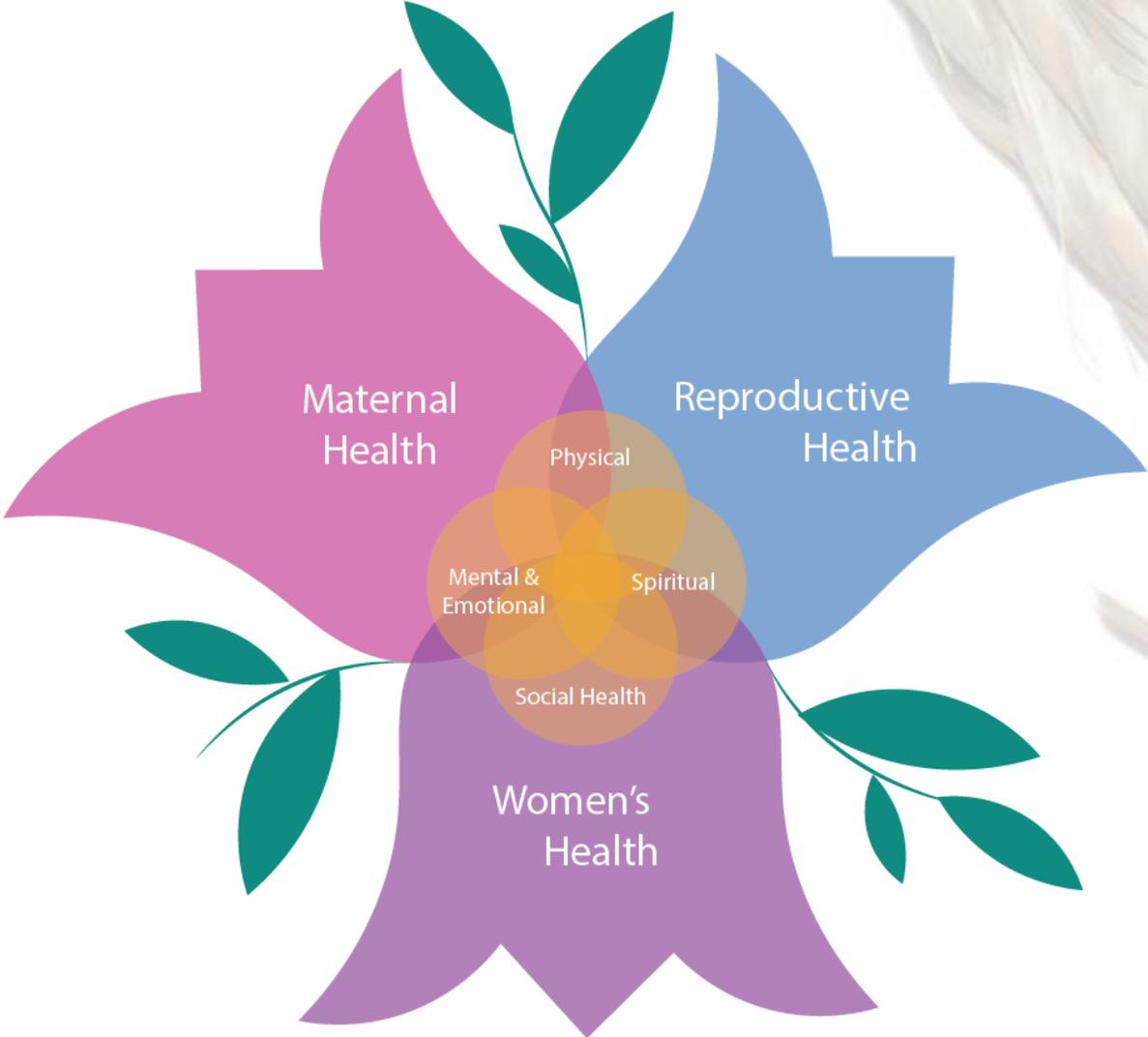
# Objectives

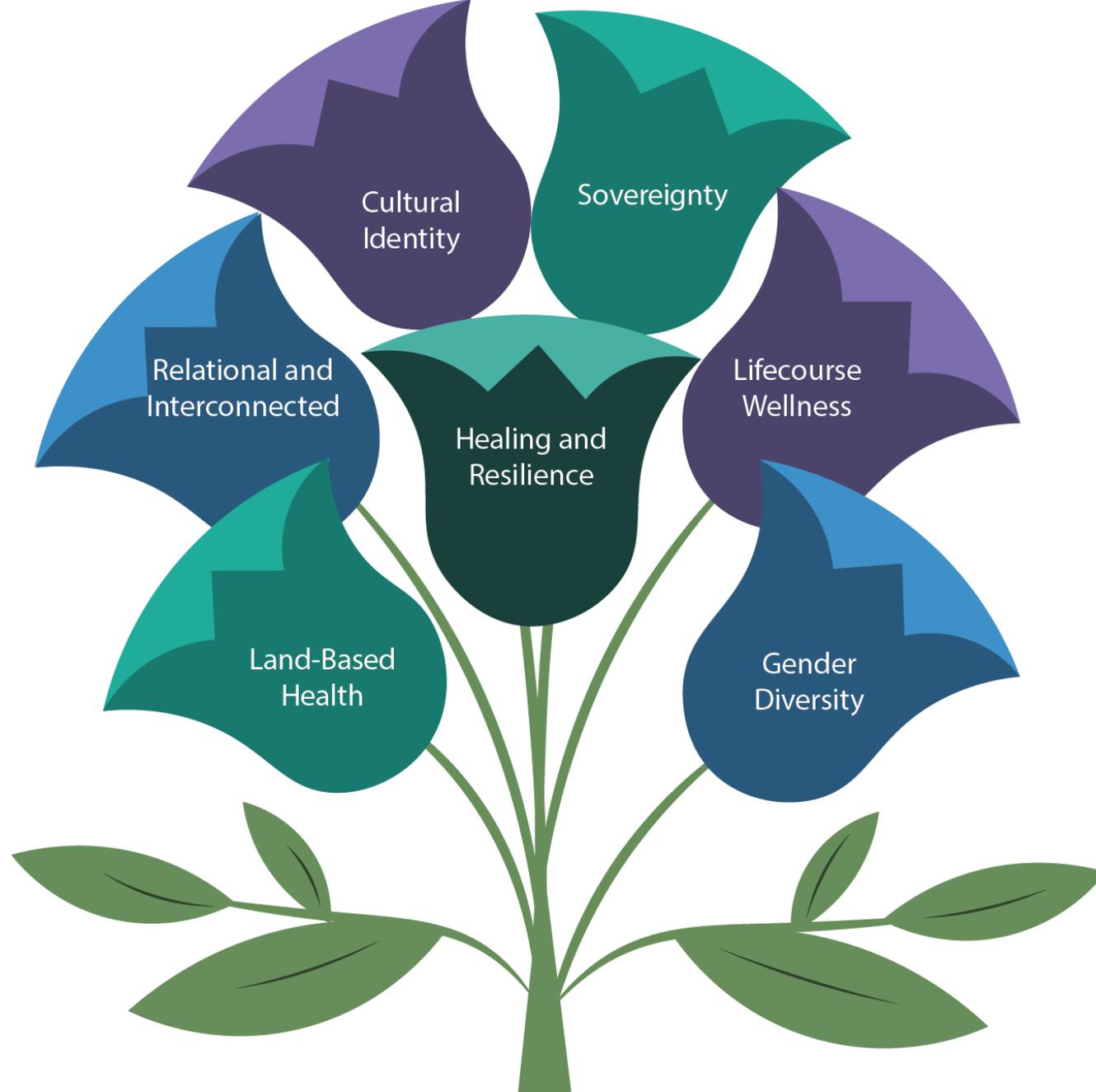
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1. Analyze the systemic factors that create and perpetuate key disparities in Indigenous maternal and reproductive health outcomes.
2. Examine the IDoH framework and analyze how cultural, relational, and land-based approaches to care influence maternal and reproductive health.
3. Evaluate Indigenous-led models of care and discuss how policy and practice can shift from access alone toward balance and justice through sovereignty and systemic change.

# Woven Issues

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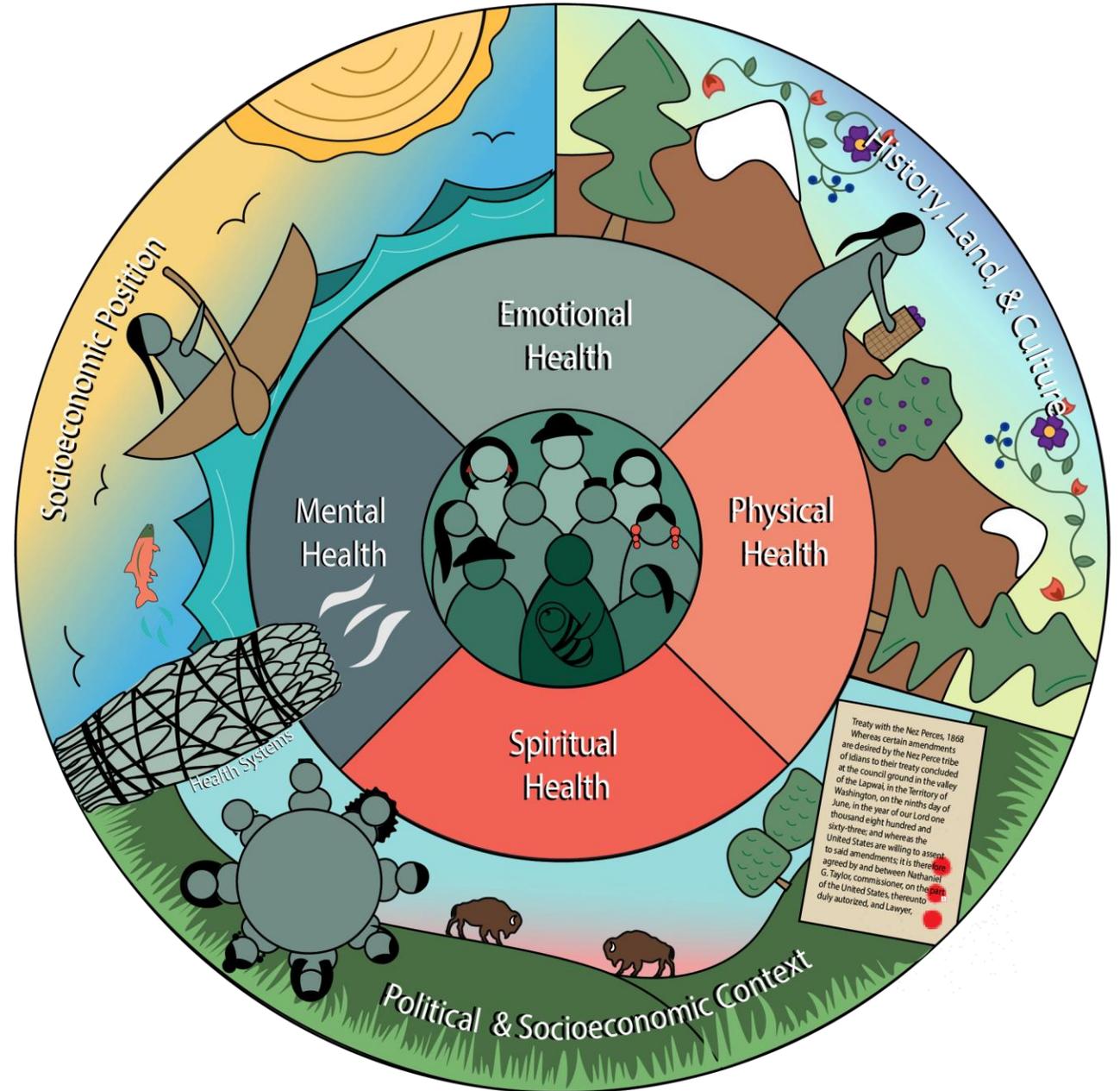




A Holistic Indigenous Lens on Womens, Reproductive and Maternal Health

# Indigenous Determinants Of Health Framework...

...not just risk  
factors; *protective  
systems.*



# Maria's Story: A California Mother Navigates Systems

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- Long travel distances create barriers to timely prenatal and delivery care
- Cultural visibility and respect build trust in maternal care
- Home visiting and Native doulas bridge access and cultural alignment
- Maternal health requires whole-person, whole-community support



# Beyond Access: Why Maria's Story Matters

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- She had access, but not balance
- Her needs were medical *and* relational
- Justice requires aligned systems



# Reproductive Justice in Indigenous Communities

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More than maternal care

Rooted in the right to parent, not parent, and parent safely

Intersections of policy, history, women's rights, and self-determination

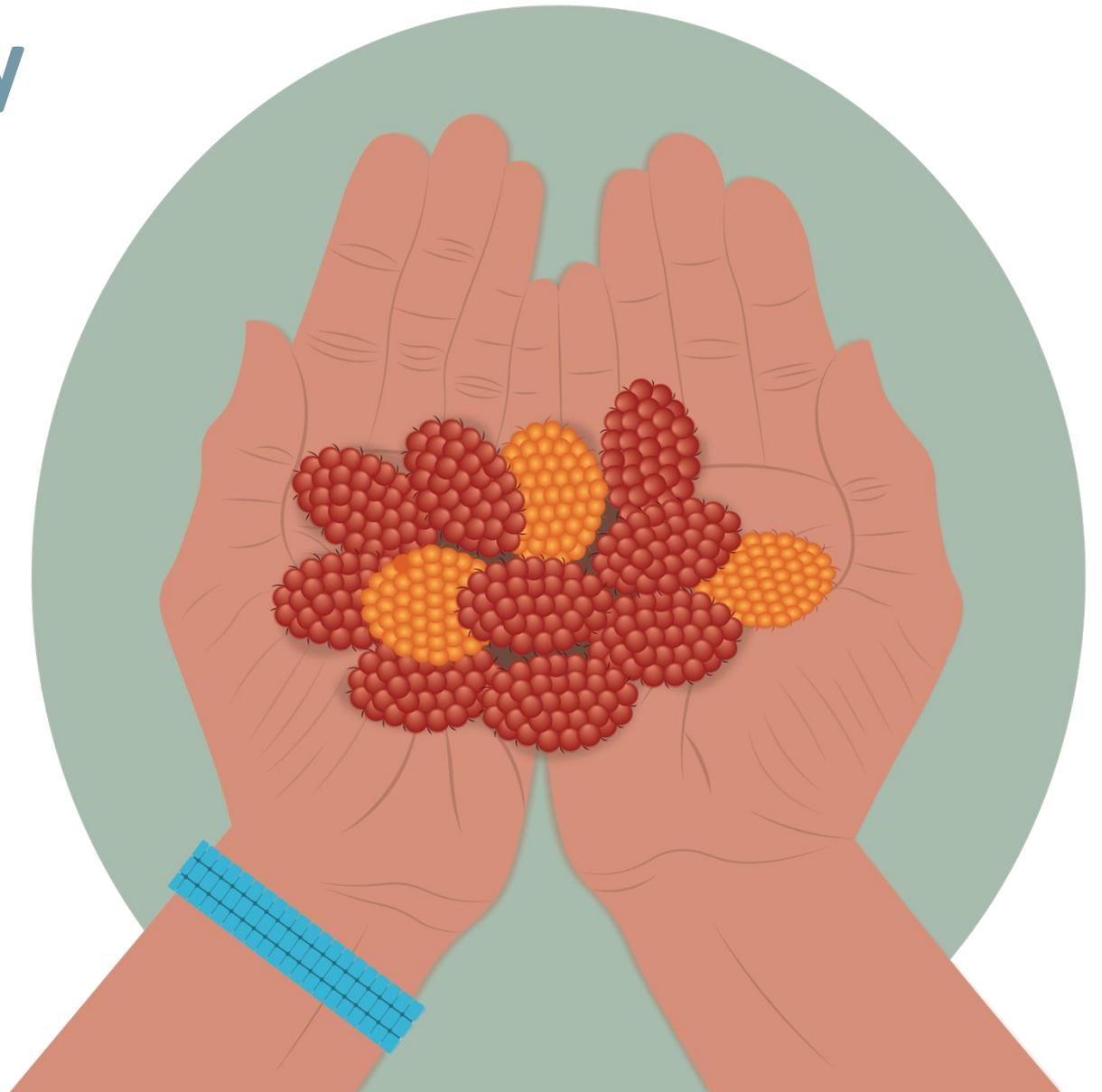
For more information: <https://www.theravencollective.org/resources/strengthening-indigenous-public-health-the-tribal-disease-investigation-specialist-learning-pathway>



# Talia's Story: Reproductive Health and Autonomy

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- Provider bias can limit reproductive autonomy
- Culturally safe counseling restores informed choice
- Traditional teachings strengthen decision-making
- Sovereignty includes the right to make reproductive choices without coercion



# Autonomy in Care

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- Reproductive coercion is still present
- Inclusive care means affirming all identities
- Indigenous reproductive justice = choice + care + culture



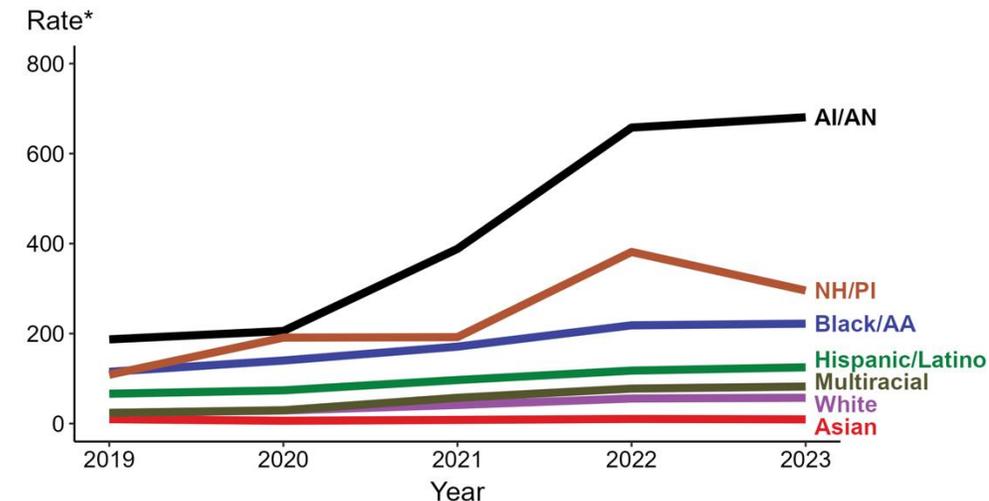
# Systemic Change & Sovereignty: Building Systems Worthy of Our People



# Clinical Realities & Data

- Indigenous women face 2-3x higher rates of maternal mortality
- Rising rates of congenital syphilis
- Nearly 40 percent of pregnant women who use substances did not receive prenatal care.
- Unmet contraceptive needs
- Gaps in STI/HIV prevention, gender-affirming care and safe abortion access
- Underfunded IHS system and fragmented care

Congenital Syphilis — Rates of Reported Cases by Race/Hispanic Ethnicity of Birth Parent and Year of Birth, United States, 2019–2023



# Maternal Infant Health Assessment CA, 2019-2021

- In good to excellent health  
AI/AN 81% White 95%
- Food insecurity during pregnancy  
AI/AN 34% White 10%
- Intimate partner violence  
AI/AN 10% White 4%
- Depression  
AI/AN 23% White 16%
- Houselessness  
AI/AN 14% White 2%

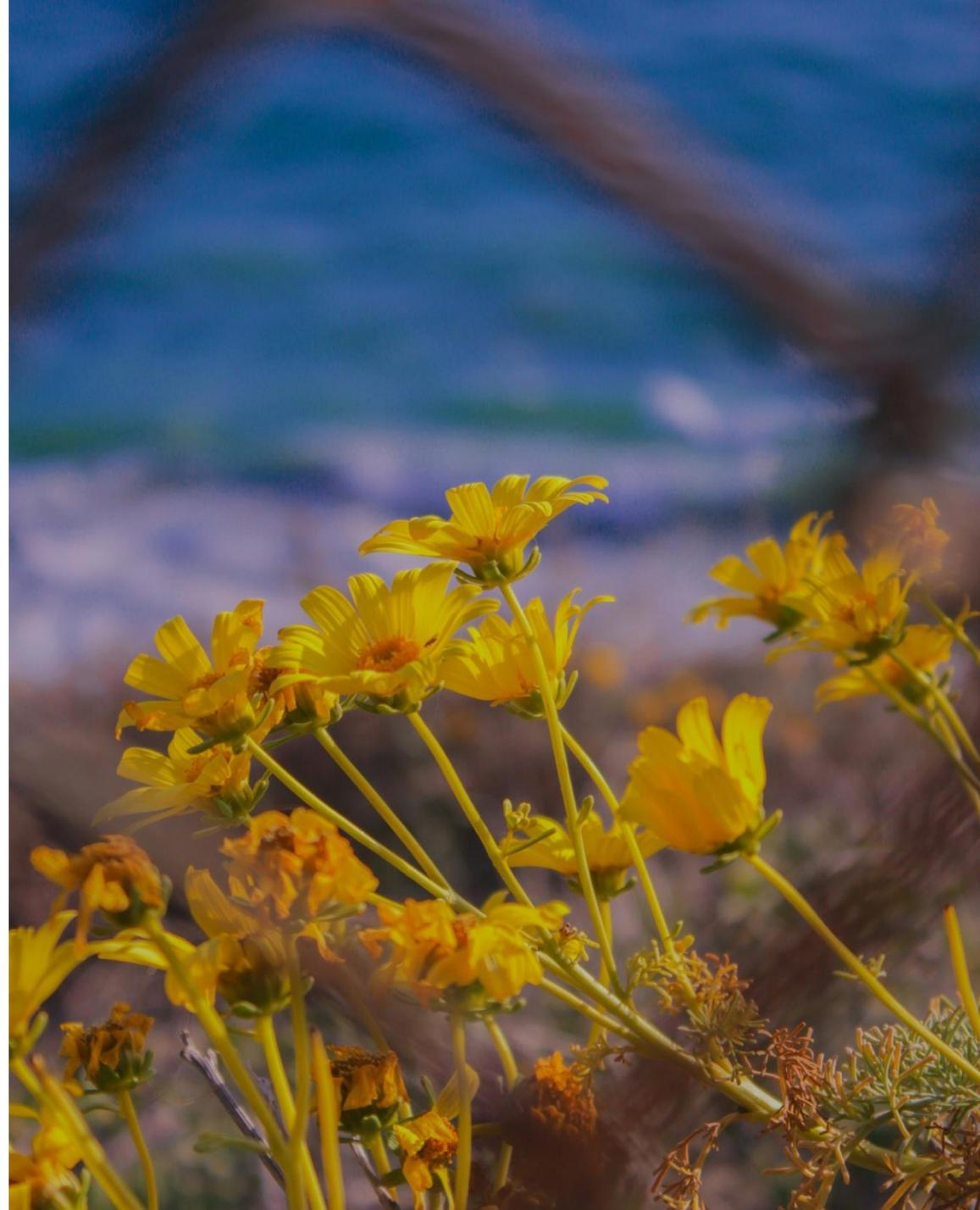


# When Systems Don't Fit the People They Serve

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- Lack of cultural safety
- Limited care coordination
- Invisibility

*Other reasons*



# Indigenous-Led Solutions

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Traditional birthkeepers and Indigenous doulas

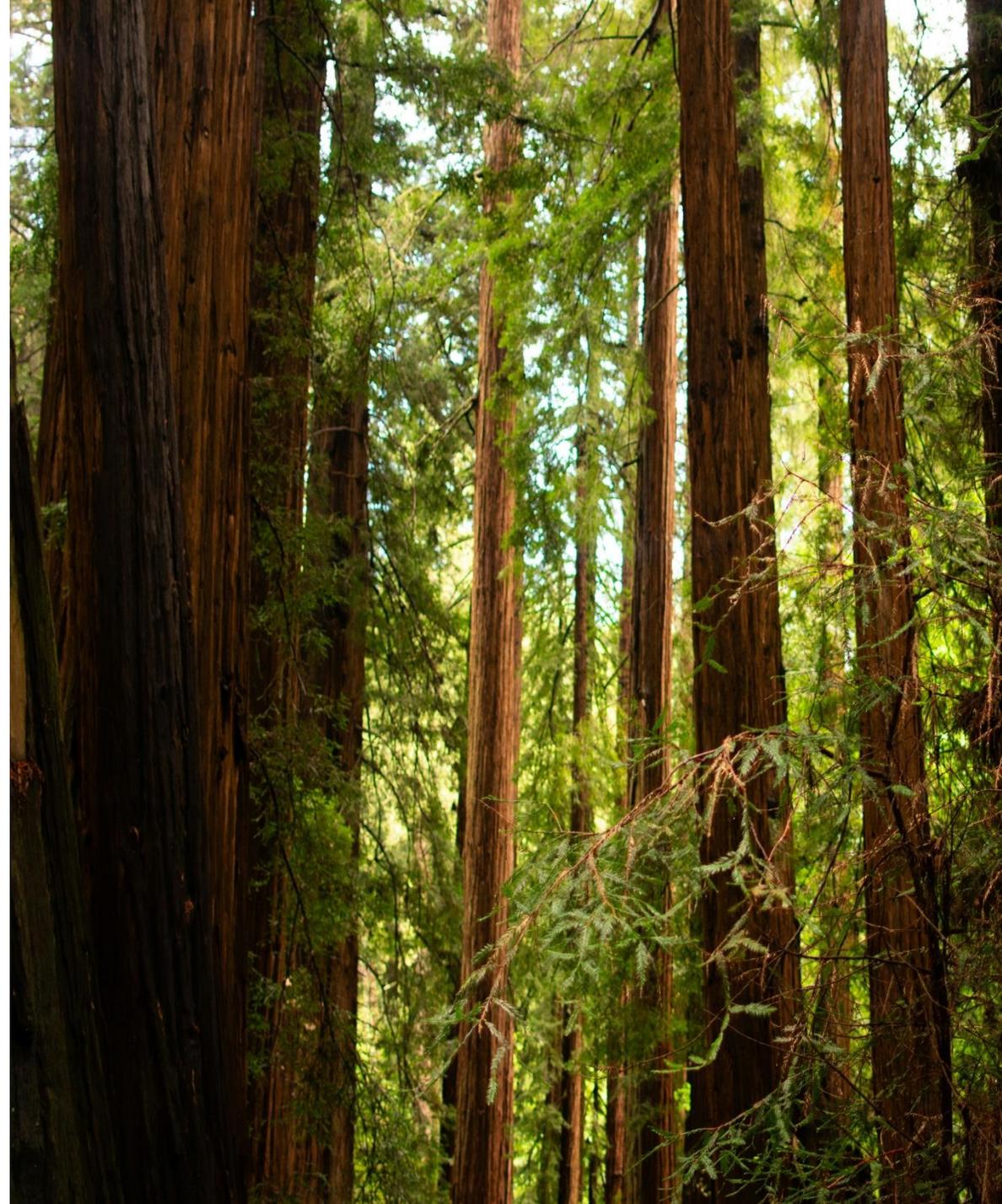


Land-based birthing practices



Tribal perinatal programs and midwifery collectives

For more information: <https://www.theravencollective.org/resources/indigenous-syndemic-pathway>



# Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services – Restoring Balance Through Holistic Care

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- **Indigenous BirthKeepers** – full-spectrum doula model
- **The Nest** – A Guaranteed Basic Income pilot providing \$1,250/month to Indigenous pregnant people until their child's 3rd birthday
- **Pilimakua Family Connections** – Home visiting, peer support groups, storytelling

# Family Spirit – Home Visiting by and for Indigenous Communities

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- Culturally centered home visiting model developed by the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health
- Trained Indigenous paraprofessionals deliver services from pregnancy through age 3
- Strengthens parenting, maternal mental health, child development, and cultural connection
- Used by Tribal MIECHV grantees in at least 7 California communities



# Tewa Women United – Community-Led Birthing & Reproductive Justice

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- **Yiya Vi Kagingdi (“we carry you”) Doula Project** — Launched in 2008, providing culturally grounded doula support to first-time Native mothers.
- **Reproductive Justice Program** — Centers ancestral practices, communal healing, and Indigenous health sovereignty for women and families.
- **Circle of Grandmothers & SaYain** — Intergenerational leadership circles offering wisdom, ceremony, and holistic support across lifecourse stages.



## Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center (NAWHERC)

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# The Pathway

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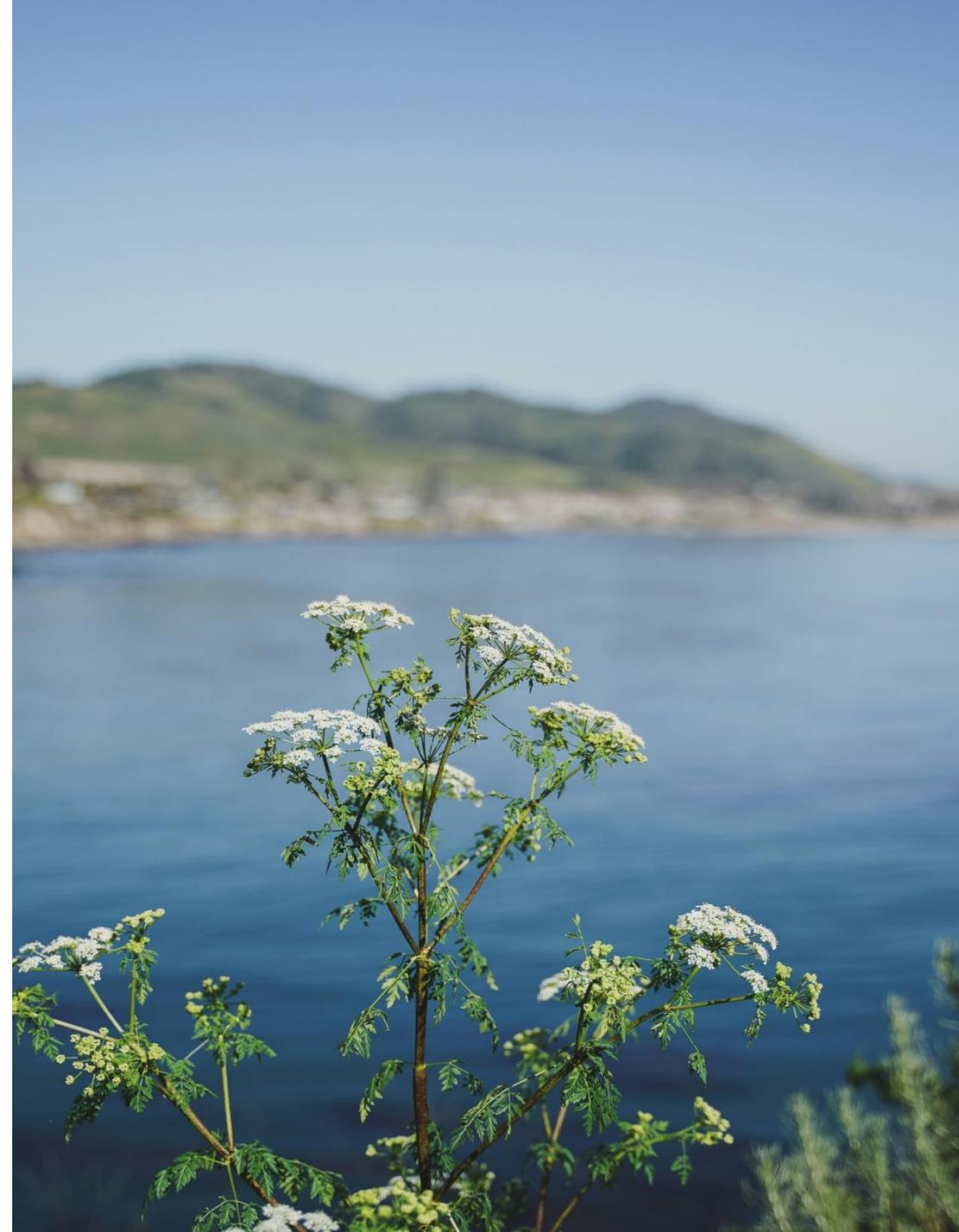
Access =  
Baseline expectation



Balance =  
Cultural and relational alignment



Justice =  
Systemic change and sovereignty



**Justice Lives  
in Every  
Birth and  
Body We  
Protect.**



# Connect with us...

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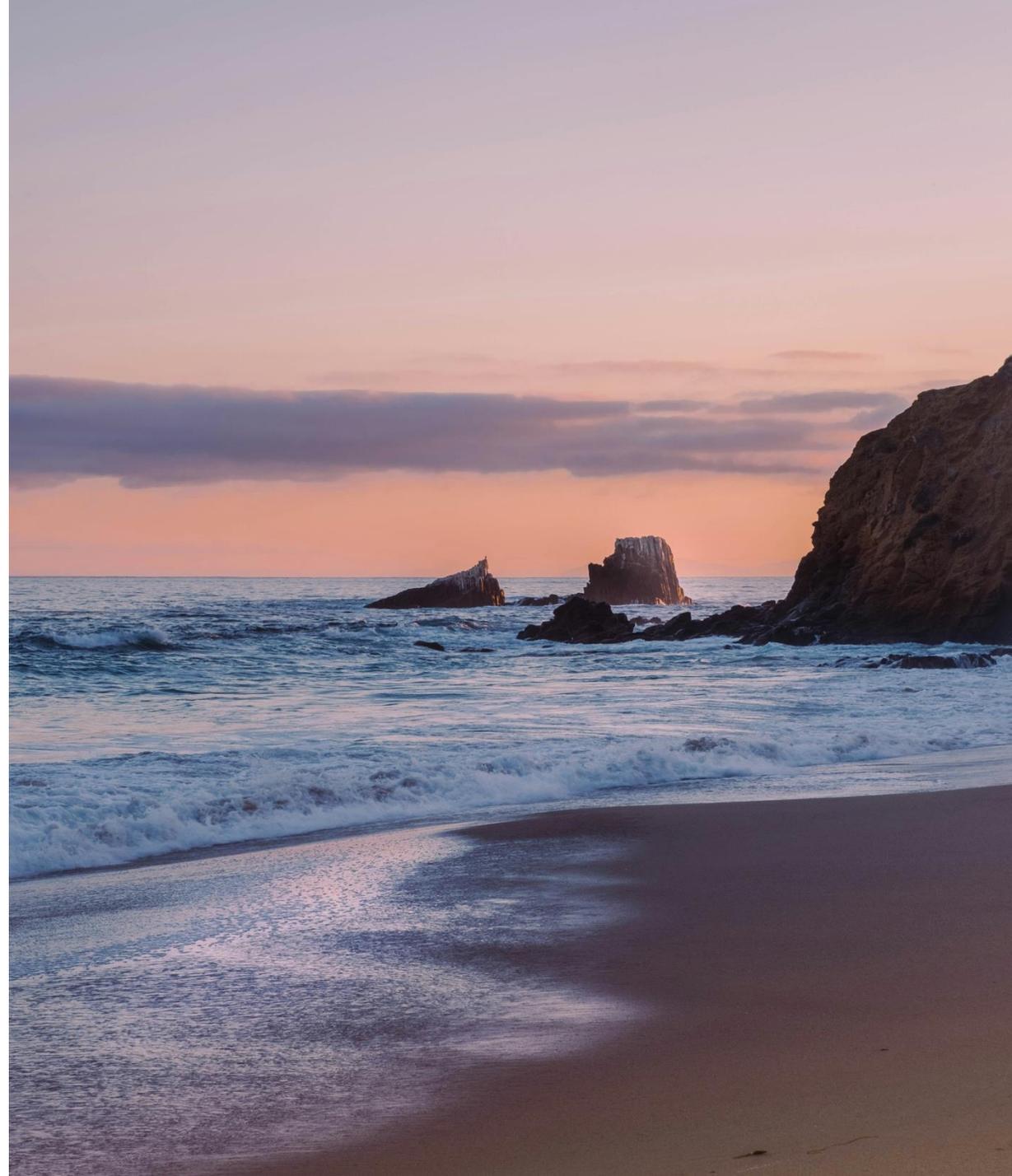
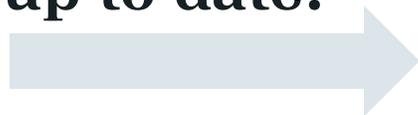
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In deep respect and solidarity for the healing  
journeys of our communities.

Thank you.

