



# ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Every Native American has the right to clean, safe, affordable water in the home ensuring a minimum quality of life.

## Historical inequities persist today.

- › American Indian and Alaska Native households are **19 times more likely** than white households to lack indoor plumbing.
- › **48% of tribal homes** do not have access to reliable water sources, clean drinking water, or basic sanitation.
- › Over the last century, the U.S. federal government's investment in modern water and sanitation systems **largely bypassed Native communities**

## COVID-19

- › The pandemic has provided a stark reminder that access to clean water is a matter of life or death.
- › COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on Native Americans, affecting them at a rate **3.5 times higher** than the white population.
- › **Widespread lack of access to running water** on Indian reservations has left Native communities more vulnerable to COVID-19.

## Lack of access to clean water takes several forms.

- › No piped water system connects to the household.
- › The water available to the household is poor quality, potentially dangerous to health.
- › The water and sanitation infrastructure is insufficient or deteriorating.
- › Tribes may be unable to operate and maintain existing water and sanitation infrastructure.

Access to clean and safe water is essential to public health, educational attainment, and economic development – in other words, communities without clean water struggle to thrive.



# HOW DO WE FIX IT?

Access to clean water for Native communities is at the nexus of the main priorities of the Biden/Harris Administration: controlling the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing racial equity, economic recovery through investment in infrastructure, and tackling climate change. Data supports definitive action on this issue. Every dollar spent on sanitation facilities in tribal areas in the U.S. has at least a twenty-fold return in health benefits. Now is the time to join together to solve this longstanding public health crisis.

- 1 The Executive Branch must commit to providing universal access to clean water to honor its trust responsibility to Indian tribes.
- 2 Establish accelerated targets and deadlines for providing Native households with access to clean, safe water.
- 3 A whole of government approach is essential to ensure that Indian country has this basic service that is so often taken for granted in the U.S.
- 4 Design on-the-ground solutions in consultation with affected tribes and communities.
- 5 Congress must provide adequate funding for the federal agency programs addressing clean water access.

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