



CSUSM Center Leads Survey on American Indian COVID-19 Inequities

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In this file photo, American Indian students gather at the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center at CSUSM. The center led a survey that found that American Indian students have been particularly hurt by the COVID-19 crisis.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought with it an educational inequity crisis in California that has had a particularly damaging effect on American Indian students.

That is the main discovery of a recent survey conducted by a group of nonprofit organizations led by the [California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center](#) (CICSC) at Cal State San Marcos.

The survey found that one in four American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) students in the state does not have access to a computer and reliable internet access.

The findings, released in late August, were based on an online survey in an effort to support AIAN students in California who have been historically underserved. The survey was conducted in May and June and represented

97 Libre. The research study received Institutional Review Board approval in accordance with CSUSM procedures for research involving human subjects. (<http://www.csusm.edu/>)



The CICSC led the survey along with the nonprofit California Indian Education for All. Other partners were the [California Indian Museum and Cultural Center](#) and the [San Diego County Office of Education](#).

“The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center was proud to take the lead on this survey,” said Joely Proudfit, the center’s director and the chair of the American Indian studies department at CSUSM. “COVID-19 has made visible the structural inequities that plague our education systems, and nowhere is that more evident than within our California AIAN student populations. We look forward to working with educators, policymakers, parents and advocates to address the inequities and better serve our AIAN K-12 students in California.”

The research team found that child care has been an ongoing challenge for families, with nearly half of those surveyed experiencing gaps. In other key takeaways from the survey:

- 44% of respondents reported a learning difference or disability.
- 13% of respondents said they had no access to a specialist for their special needs’ child due to COVID-19, and 19% said they had only limited access.
- More than 40% of families surveyed said they rely on their school for meals.
- Nearly one in 10 families said there is sometimes or often not enough to eat at home.
- 36% of students’ psychological well-being has worsened due to COVID-19.
- Nearly 70% of students are not getting enough physical exercise as a result of COVID-19.
- 45% of families experienced a decrease in income during the pandemic.

“I want to thank all the organizations that participated in this review of COVID-19’s path of destruction in our communities,” said James C. Ramos, who represents the 40th District in the California State Assembly and is a lifelong resident of the San Manuel Indian Reservation in San Bernardino County.



“Their findings revealed what we suspected – the disease was especially vicious among communities of color. In my own American Indian Alaska Native community, the mortality rate was almost two times that of white people. The study also begins the process of digging deeper into why these communities suffered disproportionately to their populations. It is critical that studies like these continue so that we can undertake the difficult work of remedying disparities.”

About the California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center

The California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center (CICSC) fosters collaborative research and community service relationships between the faculty, staff and students of Cal State San Marcos and members of tribal communities, for the purpose of developing and conducting research projects that support the maintenance of sovereignty and culture within those communities. For more information, visit www.csusm.edu/cicsc. Follow the center on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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