



**American Cancer Society Circle Of Life<sup>SM</sup>**  
*Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities*

## Wellness along the Cancer Journey: Coordinator's and Educator's Guide

Revised October 2016

### Chapter 1: Module Overview



## ***Circle Of Life: Cancer Education and Wellness***

### ***for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities***

#### **Module Overview**

Across all races and ages combined, more than 1.6 million people in the United States get cancer each year. About one out of every two US men and one out of every three US women will have some type of cancer sometime during their lives.

Anyone can get cancer at any age; but about three out of four cancers are found in people age 55 and older. Cancer can be found in Americans of all racial and ethnic groups, but it can happen at different rates from group to group. Cancer is the leading cause of death among American Indians and Alaska Natives<sup>i</sup>.

The rate of cancer incidence among American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) populations is about half that of whites. The mortality (death) rates are about 70% that of whites<sup>ii</sup>. This means that even though fewer AIAN people get cancer, of those who do, more die than whites with cancer. In addition to access issues due to availability and affordability of medical care, there are several culturally specific barriers that make addressing cancer prevention and detection in the AIAN community difficult.

Today, more than 14 million people are living with cancer or have had cancer. The risk of getting most types of cancer can be reduced by changes in a person's lifestyle. Quitting smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, exercising, and eating a healthy diet are some changes that can help lower cancer risk.

Besides taking action to reduce risk, many people can get special screening tests to find cancer early before it spreads. Often, the sooner a cancer is found and treatment begins, the better the chances are for living for many years. That's why finding cancer early is such an important weapon in the fight against cancer.

The Circle Of Life program is an American Indian and Alaska Native initiative that was created through a collaboration of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal communities and the American Cancer Society. The initiative aims to reduce cancer deaths and improve well-being of native populations.