



Storytelling as Resilience on National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Watch videos with Brad Lum and Lisa Tiger from “HISstory, HERstory, THEIRstory, OURSTORY: Storytelling as Resilience.”

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March 20 marks National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NNHAAD), which coincides with the first day of Spring, and this year we are highlighting two videos featuring [Brad Lum](#) and [Lisa Tiger](#), from HISstory, HERstory, THEIRstory, OURSTORY: Storytelling as Resilience, an initiative aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge of HIV and breaking down the barriers of HIV/AIDS stigma in indigenous communities through the tradition of storytelling.

For the community, this is a ceremonious time of year that brings new beginnings and rebirth. The observance of NNHAAD, which is planned each year by the [National Native HIV Network](#), recognizes the impact of HIV among Native people (American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians) and encourages individuals within these communities to get educated, get tested, get involved in HIV prevention, and get treated for HIV.

The observance is an opportunity for us to renew our commitment to the [Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. initiative](#) by sharing information about HIV and its impact on indigenous communities, as well as to promote accessible HIV testing options and counseling and help decrease the stigma associated with HIV.

OURSTORY – Oral Tradition & Storytelling

As we are often reminded, in Native communities, stories connect people to place, time and community and are a protective factor in resilience and often offer messages to guide, teach, and provide perspective and inspiration.

The Indian Health Service (IHS), the Minority HIV/AIDS Fund, and HHS provided support to Kua`aina Associates, which partnered with the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board to produce OURSTORY, a celebration of life told through tradition oral/storytelling—the backbone of indigenous knowledge transfer.

HISstory: Brad Lum – HIV Long-term Survivor & Community Leader

Born and raised in Mō`ili`ili, O`ahu, Hawai`i, Brad Lum is an HIV long-term survivor who is a community leader for the Native Hawaiian and Two-Spirit/LGBTQ+ communities. Brad is a Kumu Hula, a dedicated master teacher in the art of hula, and a teacher in the Hawai`i Department of Education system for the past 23 years.

In HISstory, Brad shares that he can “show you what a survivor looks like” as someone with HIV and cancer that is in remission after two chemotherapy treatments. In the opening of HISstory, Brad asks a powerful question in poetic form: “what if I told you I win when I open my eyes every morning? Cancer and HIV, you will not triumph over me, because I am possible!” [Watch his video](#) (which is also posted at the top of this article) to hear him discuss dialogue and talk story—a Hawaiian term that means to converse, orally share experiences, and exchange stories—which he promotes as a means of HIV education and better understanding the virus.

HERstory: Lisa Tiger – HIV and AIDS Educator & Advocate

A member of the Muscogee Nation and of Creek, Seminole, Cherokee, and Irish descent, Lisa Tiger received an HIV diagnosis in the early 1980s and has served as an HIV/AIDS educator ever since. She’s raised four children, lives with Parkinson’s disease, and is a fierce advocate for crime victims and the HIV and AIDS community.

Lisa shared in HERstory that she’s proud to be a mother because she thought that HIV would not allow her that privilege. Prior to pregnancy, Lisa was resistant to start HIV treatment and notes that “if I got pregnant, I’d have to get on the [HIV] medication, if not for myself, but for my child’s sake. So, this child literally saved my life, because I was too stubborn [to start] the HIV medicine until there was a reason.” [Watch Lisa’s video](#) (also posted above) to hear her discuss her love for exercise and gymnastics, her HIV diagnosis, and her resilient spirit.

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