

# Governments created an informational black hole for Indigenous communities and COVID-19 | Poynter

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We may never know how many American Indians or Alaska Natives died of COVID-19. The Indian Health Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is not keeping track. The Centers for Disease Control cannot tell us. And some state health authorities will not disclose that data, despite multiple public records requests, even though it would shed light on the pandemic's death toll in Indian Country.

Earlier this year, the Indigenous Investigative Collective, a network of reporters from multiple outlets working collaboratively to investigate stories in Indigenous communities, attempted to report and analyze COVID-19 death numbers in and around the Navajo Nation.

News media across the United States had reported on high Navajo COVID-19 mortality rates, but that coverage primarily focused on communities within the Navajo Nation's borders. IIC journalists Jourdan Bennett-Begaye, Sunnie Clahchischiligi, and Christine Trudeau knew that to get a more accurate picture of how the pandemic had affected Navajo citizens, they would have to look beyond those borders, at communities and towns adjacent to the reservation where thousands of Navajo citizens live.

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