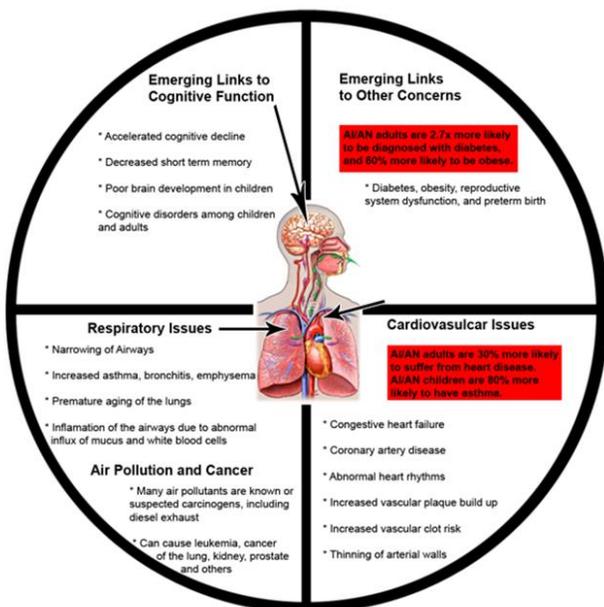




The **National Tribal Air Association (NTAA)** is a member-based Tribal organization with over 140 principal member Tribes. The organization’s mission is to advance air quality management policies and programs, consistent with the needs, interests, and unique legal status of Indian Tribes. As such, the NTAA uses its resources to support the efforts of all federally recognized Tribes in protecting and improving the air quality within their respective jurisdictions.

**Information in 2019 Status of Tribal Air Report on climate and health impacts in Indian Country**



- The health impacts of air pollution on many American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities is magnified by such factors as the inability to receive quality medical care due to issues like cultural barriers and geographic isolation. Approximately 14.2% of AI/AN adults have asthma compared to 11.6% of non-Hispanic white adults and AI/AN children are 60% more likely to have asthma as non-Hispanic white children.<sup>1</sup>

- Ambient air pollution is known by the EPA, CDC, CARB, and WHO to cause a variety of health impacts and lead to missed school or work days, increased emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and premature deaths. Many studies have linked

air pollutants to heart and lung disease. Further, recent studies have linked air pollutants to alarming health outcomes including obesity, diabetes, poor neurological development in children, and decreased cognitive function in adults. In particular, AI/AN adults are 1.6 and 2.7 times more likely to be obese and suffer from diabetes respectively than non-Hispanic white adults.<sup>2</sup>

- Monitoring and maintaining indoor air quality (IAQ) plays a very important role in maintaining health within Tribal communities. Americans spend as much as 90% of their time indoors,

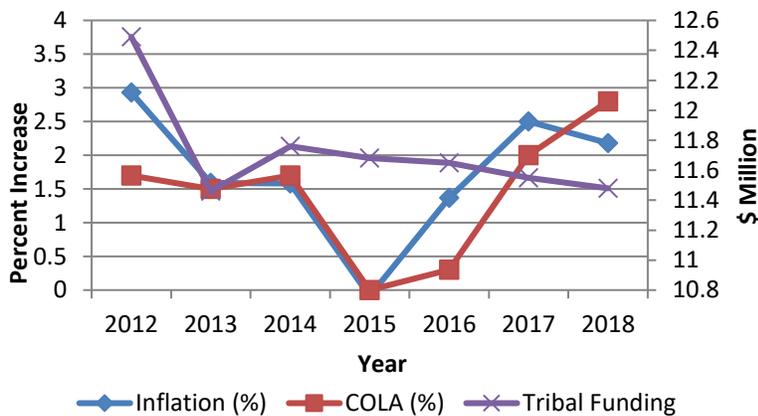
<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. Asthma and American Indians/Alaska Natives at <https://www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlID=30>

<sup>2</sup> National Health Statistics Report, Number 20. "Health Characteristics of the American Indian and Alaska Native Adult Population: United States, 2004-2008 (March 9, 2010) at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr020.pdf>

where levels of air pollutants are often 2, 5, or even 100 times higher than levels outside.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown that people working in conditions with better-than-average air quality showed “significantly higher cognitive function” and scored nearly 300% higher when tested for cognitive strategy and information usage.<sup>4</sup> Mold issues in Tribal housing are getting worse with increased flooding and higher temperatures due to climate change, which exacerbates asthma and respiratory illness.

- Hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) are known or suspected to cause serious health effects such as cancer, neurological problems, and birth defects. This concerns Tribes whose members are more exposed to ambient air due to subsistence and traditional life ways.
- Mobile source emissions released by highway vehicles and non-road equipment (especially diesels) are known to cause cancer or other serious health outcomes. This is of significant concern to Tribal communities that often rely on old or “legacy” fleets of diesel vehicles and equipment that produce high levels of air pollutants. Many Tribal communities are in close proximity to roads, rail yards, and ports.
- Higher temperatures and increased drought affect southwest Tribes such as the Navajo Nation with increasing siltation and the creation of sand dunes, which leads to dust storms that can cause air quality problems.<sup>5</sup>
- Wildfires are larger than in the past, and wildfire season begins earlier in the year and ends later than it used to due to the build-up of fuels from decades of fire suppression, and to climatic conditions, such as the dryness of the fuels and hot temperatures. A typical fire season in the west could soon last more than 300 days.<sup>6</sup>

### **Tribal Air Program Funding Challenges**



Tribal Air Program funding has not kept pace with cost of living adjustments (COLA) or increases in inflation. According to EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation, funding for Tribal Air Programs has decreased from a peak of \$12.49 million in 2012 to just \$11.48 million in 2019, while inflation and health care costs have risen by 2-4% per year. Tribes face funding challenges from wildfires, IAQ issues, and climate change issues more drastically than in the past.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2016). Air and Radiation: Basic Information. Retrieved from <https://www3.epa.gov/air/basic.html>

<sup>4</sup> Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (October, 2015). Green office environments linked with higher cognitive function scores. Retrieved from <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/green-office-environments-linked-with-higher-cognitive-function-scores/>

<sup>5</sup> Cordalis, Daniel and Dean B. Suagee, The Effects of Climate Change on American Indians and Alaska Native Tribes, [www.americanbar.org](http://www.americanbar.org).

<sup>6</sup> Blankenbuehler, Paige, and Brooke Warren, “The 2017 Fire Season Has Been More Expensive Than Any on Record. And It’s Only Going to Get Worse.” Mother Jones, December 9, 2017.