

# **Learning from Indigenous Communities: How to do suicide prevention differently**

**NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING AND MEDICINE'S  
FORUM ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS**

## **Webinar 3: Suicide Prevention in Indigenous Communities**

Session 1 Keynote

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Lisa Wexler, MSW, PhD

School of Social Work

Center for Research on Group Dynamics

Institute for Social Research

University of Michigan



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# Overview of the Next 20 Minutes

- AIAN suicide – What have the Workshops covered?
- Suicide Prevention: Key challenges
- Learning from Indigenous Communities
  - Acknowledge and resist structural violence
  - Uplift culture, context and self-determination to bolster community / family resilience and reduce risk
  - Recognize and built from strengths and protection: Support upstream strategies
  - Transform systems of care to serve Indigenous communities better

# NASAM Webinars 1 - 3

- Suicide overview with emphasis on protective strengths and factors needed in suicide interventions (webinar 1).
- Evidence base for suicide interventions in AI/AN/NH Communities and innovations from Indigenous Communities (webinar 2).
- Explore gaps and opportunities for action to decrease suicide rates in Indigenous communities (webinar 3).

Key  
Challenges for  
Indigenous  
Suicide  
Prevention  
Research and  
Strategies



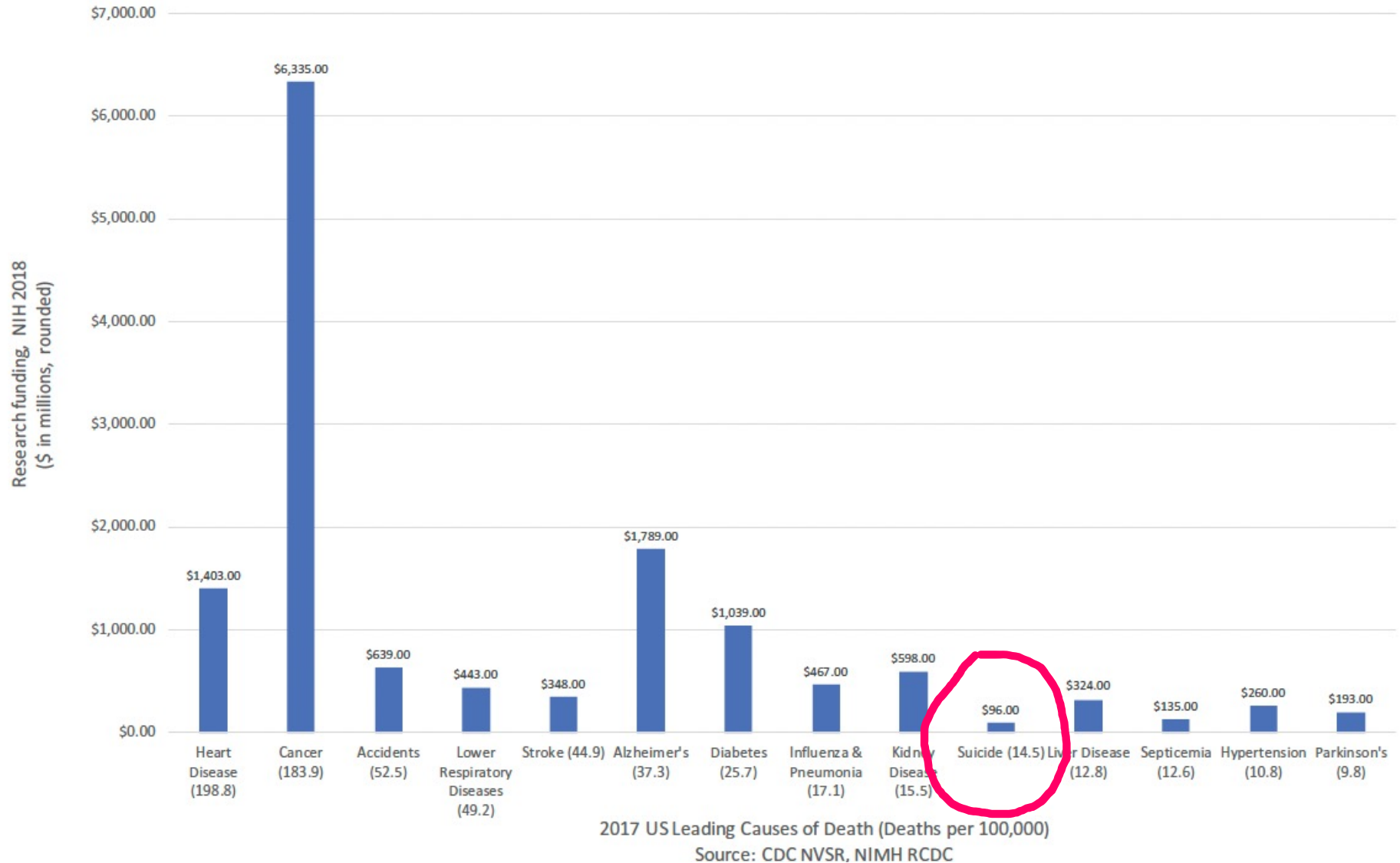


## Questions

- Why have current suicide prevention strategies/programs failed to substantially decrease population level suicide rates in AI/AN communities, specifically in children and youth?
- What can be done to address potential reasons?
- How should this work be undertaken?



# Research Funding for Leading Causes of Death



Fortgang, R. G., & Nock, M. K. (2021). Ringing the alarm on suicide prevention: a call to action. *Psychiatry*, 1-4.

# Suicide Prevention Research

- **Focuses on individual RISK** (overlooking protection)
- **Present Focus** (ignoring the past, intergenerational views: shared collective experiences over time)
- **Decontextual science** (ignoring relationships that support/promote wellbeing)
- **Problem focused** (missing shared risk-protective factors)
- **Develops 'programs'** (privileging professional interventions; neglecting community development)
- **Identifies-amplifies deficits** (ignoring strengths)
- **Aggregates across time and place** (overlooking potential learning from specificity)
- **Top-down** (missing locally-specific innovations)

Wexler, L., Chandler, M., Gone, J. P., Cwik, M., Kirmayer, L. J., LaFromboise, T., ... & Allen, J. (2015). Advancing suicide prevention research with rural American Indian and Alaska Native populations. *American journal of public health*, 105(5), 891-899.

# Indigenous Suicide Prevention

## Often ignores:

Historical trauma

Structural violence

-marginalization

-colonization

-racism

Material needs

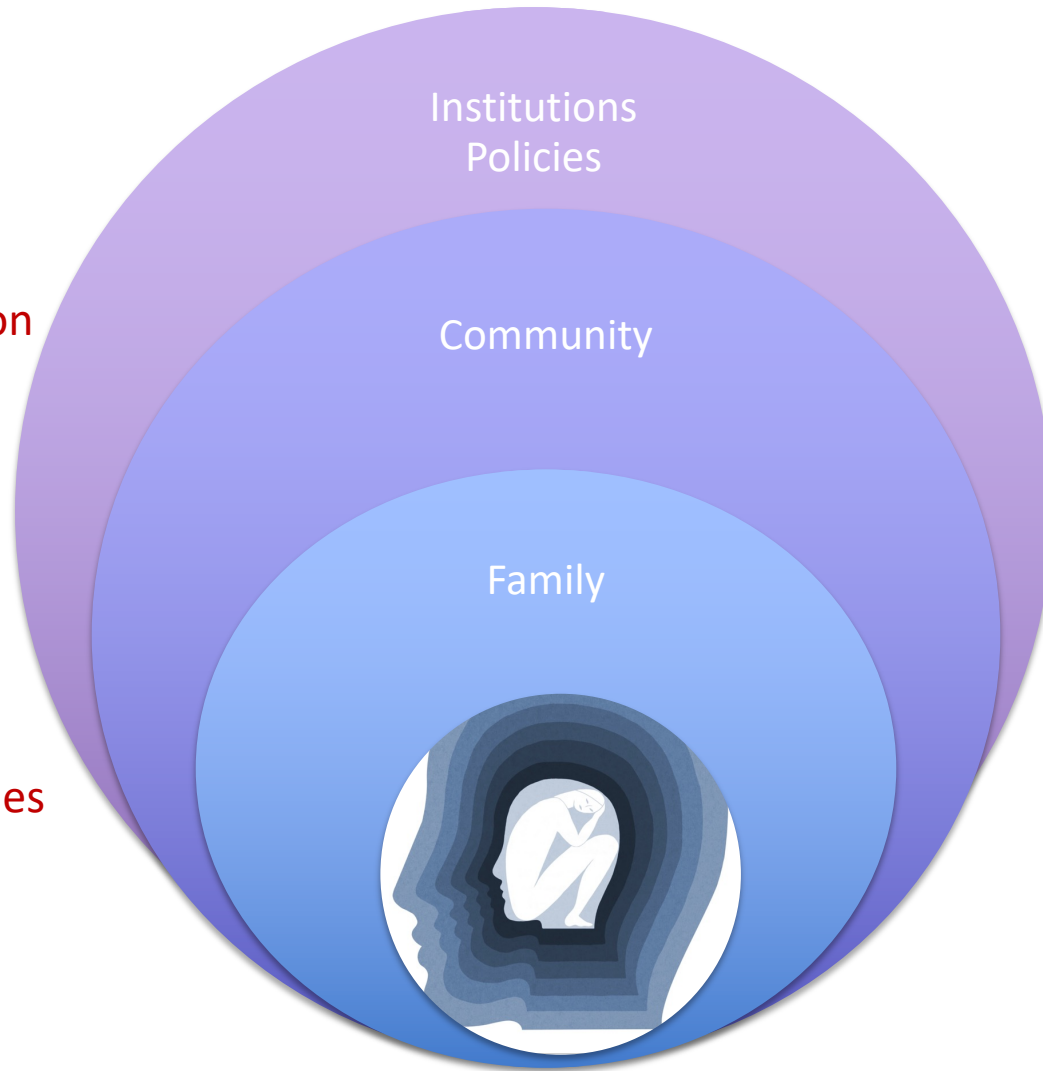
Injustice

Support systems

in people's lives

Limited opportunities

for the future



## May possibly:

Acknowledge harms

Center culture &  
community

Support:

-resistance

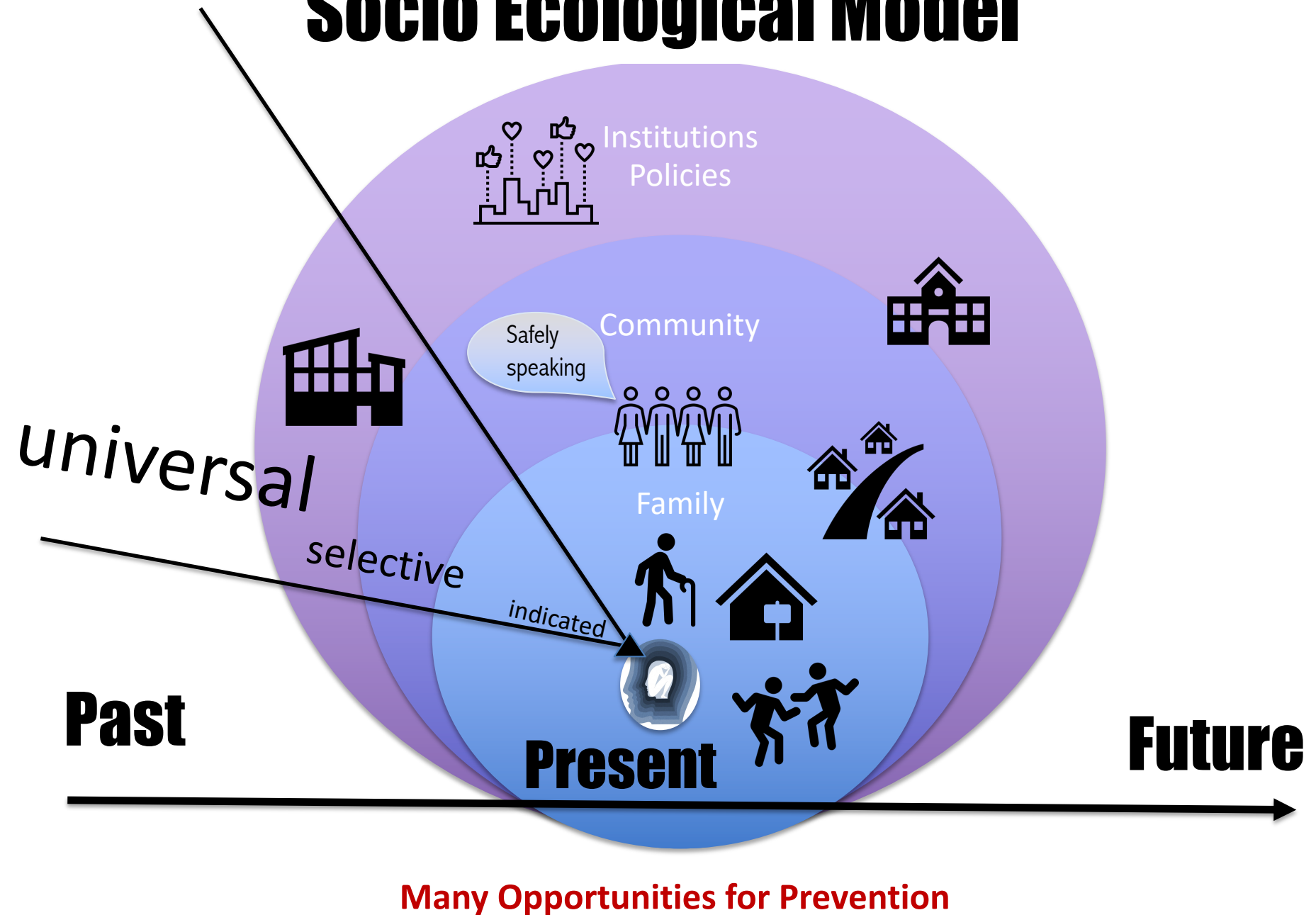
-self-determination

Offer contextualized,  
culturally-rooted  
systems of care

Support community  
development to  
create pathways  
into the future



# Socio Ecological Model



# Where to Go From Here?

- Acknowledge harms and move toward a more equitable system.
- Move from risk only to also understand strengths
- Research as ceremony: Process matters
- Center culture & community
- Engage families & local helpers
- Support self-determination – tribal & personal
- Honor scientific and Indigenous knowledges



# Acknowledge and Appreciate

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