

Cancer has crept among us...the Natives. I never realized any of my family or community would be affected by this. My husband was diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus. They told us he had six months to live. He went to Kingman for his treatments. I used to take him all the time but later on, the community health representatives would help out and take him. Six months was too short. He didn't live that long. He died on June 1st of that year, 2000. It was just a big shock to me because he's been my everything. He took care of everything. I didn't have to worry. But when he died, it just fell onto me. And then my daughter was diagnosed, first with breast cancer. They treated her and she was okay, and then she was diagnosed again with cervical cancer. It was the hardest thing that she could go through, but I was there to help her. I used to bring her to Phoenix to Good Samaritan. That's where she got her treatments. She got over it. She survived. The hardest is my son, Chuck. He was diagnosed with brain cancer. They told us he didn't have very long. We knew that we would lose him so we were there with him all the time, every day, my son and my daughters and myself. He was taken to Flagstaff. He was diagnosed in January, and then, by February 22, he died from cancer. I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in October of 2006. By November 28, I had surgery and had my left thyroid removed. January 10, 2007, I went back to have my right thyroid removed and had radiation treatments. I'm a survivor. So that's where I'm at. I have my cousin. I call him my big brother. He was diagnosed with bone cancer back in 1998. He is still living today. He survived cancer. He is deteriorating real fast. Who knows. This year may be his last year because now he's gotten to the point where he's bedridden. He can't really eat or do anything anymore. So, this is my family that has had cancer, and that is why I am very, very concerned about why, why it's attacking my family. It's just too much. If it had been just one member of my family, I think it would be just something like any other sickness, like pneumonia, or these other diseases that we have, but after seeing and losing too many of my family members, the community people are shocked and wondering why. What's going on? Why is this happening? They're saying: Is it the food we eat? Is it the water? What is going on in our community? It's not only us; there have been others that have died from cancer. As a family, when we feel sick or when we feel that there's something wrong, we feel we need to get to the doctor to see what is really happening. We want to know right away what's going on with our body. That's what we do. And now a lot of people in the community also do that. Before they wouldn't. They didn't want to go to see the doctor, or they'll just stay home and try to get over it. But now, there's more of us that go to the clinic a lot. Maybe we're just afraid, afraid they're going to tell us there's something serious going on with us.

I used to feel that way. When the doctor sees that it's serious, and they don't have the equipment or the medication in the clinic, they call Kingman Regional Hospital or Phoenix Indian Medical Center or they know there are doctors in Flagstaff that deal with those kinds of illnesses. It's all different so whatever kind of cancer you have, they refer you out to these four cities: Kingman, Flagstaff, Phoenix and Las Vegas is the other one they sometimes use. As we get older, we really don't remember or our memory is kind of fading. It's not all gone, but it's kind of fading and we just need help. We need to have them take us to where we need to go, like the doctor or to a clinic or somewhere to get help I have a lot of grandchildren and I know I have to be strong so that they can see that we do struggle and we do have hard times, but there's going to come a time when we need to let go and be strong, so I was glad that I came to that conference. My daughter came with me - my oldest daughter. It helps just to get away and be among other people, other tribes, and just enjoy yourself.

It's the Gathering of the Pais, like the Yavapais, Havasupais, Hualapais and all the human tribes. Whoever's around, like the Salt River Pimas and Tohono O'Odham and all these other tribes. Apaches. They all get together and share; share their songs, their dances, their culture. Prayers are very powerful. It's really good. It gives me a good feeling. And then there's others, older elders in the community that encourage you, talk to you and tell you to just be strong, no matter what. That really helps me out, too. I hope that people will see this video and hear what we say, the experience that we've had and to let them know that there is hope, that they're not alone. We're all in this together and we just need to be strong and be brave and do what we can to help ourselves.