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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
April 15, 2014  
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### **COPE partners with Navajo Nation to host inaugural Cancer Survivorship Conference**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – In partnership with Navajo Nation, Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment (COPE) is hosting the inaugural “Cancer Survivorship Conference: Connecting Patients, Families, Caregivers and Providers.”

Focusing on the voices of Navajo women and men whose lives have been affected by cancer and the experience of their dedicated providers, the goals of the conference are to elevate the experience of cancer patients and their family members, increase awareness of treatment and palliative care services, identify collective community goals for improved cancer care, support communication, exchange best practices and enhance collaboration between community and clinic providers.

“The Navajo Nation welcomes this opportunity to address this very important issue to our citizens,” said Navajo Nation Vice President Jim. Vice President Jim will be in attendance as well as partners from across the nation, including officials from the Navajo Nation Community Health Representative Program, Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention Program, Health Education Program and Epidemiology Center.

American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) have the worst five-year cancer survival rates of any racial group in the United States. In the Navajo Nation, multiple cancers are diagnosed at later stages leading to increased morbidity and mortality.

Officials from the Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Partners In Health based in Boston, Mass., and the American Cancer Society will join in support of this important conversation. The conference will take place at the Navajo Nation Museum.

Sponsored by COPE, the conference is the result of the COPE Cancer Coalition (CCC) founded in 2012 to improve access to culturally relevant, patient-centered care for Navajo patients. The CCC is composed of patient and family representatives, a wide range of local providers, and a broad range of local, regional, and national partners. The CCC aims to build on the strength and resiliency in the Navajo cancer community, and the dedication of providers, to improve cancer morbidity and mortality among Navajo.

The Cancer Survivorship Conference is an important step toward addressing cancer disparities on the reservation – it will help the coalition to mobilize community members, confront stigma, strengthen referral systems and develop coordinated outreach activities that meet the communities’ needs. It will also commemorate National Minority Cancer Awareness Week.

Founded in 2009, COPE is a formal collaboration among Partners In Health, Brigham and Women's Hospital, the Navajo Nation Community Health Representative Program, and Navajo Area Indian Health Service.

COPE is committed to eliminating health disparities in AI/AN populations in the . It works at the invitation of tribal leadership and partners with health care providers and community advocates to develop programs that address structural barriers to good health, respond to burden of disease, and fill gaps in the health care delivery system identified by patients, families, and providers. Additionally, COPE provides technical assistance to local partners to build more effective health care delivery systems and to increase access to food in Navajo communities.

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