When I was eight years old, I remember walking through two oversized doors into a grand foyer with yellow-kissed walls, lush rugs bespeckled with tiny flowers, and shiny wood floors. The wonder of this room was eclipsed only by a sea of smiling faces, and the question that dominated my thoughts: Had I found the place where grandparents are made?

As I followed my parents to the place where our Great Uncle Jabo sat, a chorus line of cascading hands filled with tightly wrapped peppermints and golden butterscotch candies were presented for my choosing.

I didn’t realize that I was in a nursing home; that understanding wouldn’t come until years later. Now, not only do the rugs and shiny floors set off alarms in my mind over fall hazards, but that day echoes through my brain with understanding. Phrases such as “we have to make sure he is okay,” “you know they don’t take care of us,” and “they will let him get sicker” did not mean anything to me then. Now, these words speak to the fear that care will not be delivered.

Many may say that this fear only speaks to the stigma of skilled nursing facilities that persists today, but I have heard these statements and more shouted loudly and whispered in tears across multiple care settings by people

Confronting racial disparities in long-term care involves changing our mindset about race and reconsidering how we provide care.

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The Unique Needs, Challenges of Native American Long-Term Care Residents

By Joanne Kaldy

What would you do if one of your residents wanted buffalo jerky? This request would not be uncommon at one of the many tribal nursing homes in the United States. These facilities are under the same federal oversight as other facilities, but they face unique challenges; their residents have specific cultural needs and preferences, and these sometimes clash with surveyor and regulatory guidance.

“The greatest challenge we have is funding. When you build a nursing home in a reservation, you have to comply with [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services] regulations, and many of these don’t fit in with language, culture, and traditions,” said Wayne Claw, CEO at NavajoLand Nursing Home, Inc., in Chinle, AZ. For instance, they have many residents who have lived on the reservation their entire lives and have never been traditionally employed or had a taxable income. “There is nothing you can take from them to pay for care and

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