

TRIBAL Colleges & Universities: *Educating, Engaging, Innovating, Sustaining, Honoring*

AIHEC NATIVE AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER FOR HEALTH (NARCH) PROJECT SUMMARY REPORT



Trauma—including historical trauma—is a crippling reality among Indigenous nations, impacting many of the 5.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in this country. To the leaders of the largest education system created to serve Indian Country—the nation’s 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)—this reality has reached a tipping point. Operating more than 75 campuses and sites across 16 states and serving 160,000 AI/ANs from more than 250 federally recognized Indian tribes each year (AIHEC, 2016), TCU faculty and staff are on the frontline in addressing the behavior health needs of their students, families, and communities. They know all

too well the toll that unmet health and wellness challenges are having on teaching and learning, and more systemically, the threat they pose to the sovereignty and sustainability of our tribal nations. TCUs also know that effective solutions to reverse the generational impact of historical trauma must come from within Native communities. TCUs are the best resource to implement the tribally-driven and tribally-directed research needed to find answers. But currently, the capacity to conduct the research we need, on the scale that we need it, does not exist. The AIHEC NARCH Project is working to build research capacity in behavioral health at TCUs to find answers and share them with all AI/AN communities.

Overview of Sub-Award Projects and Status

The AIHEC NARCH Behavioral Health Initiative is a 5-year project launched in 2013 to build tribal research capacity in behavioral health through two 2-year cohorts of competitively selected TCUs engaging in professional development, community-based participatory research, and research partnerships with tribes and R-1 institutions. To build capacity quickly, AIHEC provides professional development for faculty and students, departments, and entire institutions. The first cohort of five TCUs (2014) includes Cankdeska Cikana Community College (Spirit Lake Reservation, ND); Diné College (Navajo Nation, AZ/NM); Northwest Indian College (Lummi Nation, WA); Oglala Lakota College (Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation, SD); and Stone Child College (Rocky Boy Indian Reservation, MT). This cohort is in the process of completing funded activities and leveraging their findings to seek additional support.

Cohort 2 (2016) is made up of six TCUs: Aaniiih Nakoda College (MT); Fort Peck Community College (MT); Haskell Indian Nations University (KS); Ilisaḡvik College (AK); Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (MN); and Tohono O’odham Community College (AZ).



Initiative Accomplishments

While only at the mid-point in this 5-year initiative and with much of their efforts still in their infancy, all of the TCUs are already achieving key milestones essential to building a lasting foundation for tribally-directed and tribally driven research. Solid research takes years to grow in the best of circumstances, but designing and implementing behavioral health research can be particularly challenging in AI/AN communities, where distrust of research is extremely high. Yet, in less than three years, the TCUs are beginning to help define research with their communities and train AI/AN student researchers. We've seen some significant steps forward:

- Five TCUs are conducting comprehensive behavioral health community needs assessments—two are completed and three are in their final stages of data analysis.
- 21 student researchers are trained in Community-Based Participatory Research, with 6-9 more slated to complete training in the next two years.
- 11 TCUs now have an enhanced behavioral health research infrastructure. For example, one TCU had no research policies at all in place; it now has established baseline policies and identified an Institutional Research Board for review of proposed research.
- TCUs are researching and building important implementation capacity in key and evidence-based behavioral health interventions:
Establishment of Positive Community Norms (Diné College); Mindfulness to Reduce Student, Family, and Community Stress (FPCC); and Historical Trauma Awareness, Healing, and Community Impact Curriculum (SCC).



Stone Child College President Nate St. Pierre at the 2016 Behavioral Health Institute. Photo courtesy of AIHEC.

Annual Behavioral Health Institute

AIHEC has hosted three highly successful week-long Behavioral Health Summer Institutes for TCU faculty and staff, with two more slated for 2017 and 2018:

- Nearly 150 participants have attended the AIHEC Behavioral Health Institutes: 40 in Year 1; 34 in Year 2; and 72 in Year 3.
- 21 behavioral health researchers working in Indian Country shared their expertise on topics such as definitional information regarding historical trauma, CBPR, institutional research boards and their roles and responsibilities. They provided examples of important research, such as the effective use of CBPR and provided models of intervention, including historical trauma and grief intervention; American Indian Life Skills Curriculum; Historical Trauma Curriculum; cognitive reframing; and mindfulness in traditional contexts.
- Presenters represented the following research institutions: Stanford University; UCLA; University of Washington's Indigenous Wellness Institute; Northern Arizona's CAIR Project; University of New Mexico; University of Virginia; North Dakota State University; and the University of Colorado-Denver.

Professional Development

Historical Trauma Curriculum Training: Training in the three-course series developed by Stone Child College on historical trauma was provided for 22 participants representing 12 TCUs.

Individual Professional Development:

- Professional development has been provided at the institution, department, and individual levels. One TCU requested support to assist in the professional development of its staff, faculty, students and

- community in the area of establishing positive community norms.
- 22 TCU faculty and staff members have attended professional development activities in behavioral health since the beginning of this project. This includes six faculty members who attended the National Institutes of Health's summer BRAD training.

Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS): Through important supplemental funding from the Indian Health Service, AIHEC supported 62 AI/AN students and faculty to attend the annual 2013 SACNAS conference; 54 AI/AN students and their faculty received full travel scholarships to attend the 2014 SACNAS Conference in Los Angeles, CA. In 2015, AIHEC was able to support 49 students and faculty to attend SACNAS in National Harbor, MD; and through ongoing support from IHS, we are planning to send another cohort of at least 50 AI/AN students and faculty to SACNAS 2016.

Native Research Network: AIHEC is pleased to have partnered with IHS and NIH to support the 2014 and 2016 biennial conferences of the Native Research Network. Supplemental funding enable NRN to provide travel scholarships to deserving students and faculty, secure key Indigenous speakers and cover general conference expenses.

Partnerships and Leveraged Resources

- TCUs have used community needs assessment findings to successfully apply for a Talent Search Project and the SAMHSA BRSS TACS project. The BRSS TACS project is supporting planning for behavioral health services to students with peer coaching that will be continued through other resources. Needs assessment data was also used for a Head Start application currently under review.
- One TCU worked with a community coalition of more than 25 behavioral health related organizations for healthy communities.
- At least one TCU is seeking additional resources through its own NARCH application using the lessons learned from this project.



Research concerns presented at Behavioral Health Institute.
Photo courtesy of AIHEC

Conclusion

In less than three years, the AIHEC NARCH Behavioral Health Initiative is building the research capacity of Tribal Colleges and Universities in key ways – laying a solid foundation for tribally driven and tribally directed research that will improve the lives and well-being of our people for generations to come: TCUs are establishing policies that work for our communities; we are training Native student researchers and faculty in Indigenous, community-based participatory research. Importantly, we are fostering a greater understanding of the impact of historical trauma on today's generations. Research projects are empowering Native communities themselves to assess their own behavioral health needs; they are piloting curriculum as a means of healing and intervention and examining potentially effective intervention strategies. AIHEC anticipates documentation of the strong evidence of the impact of these projects at the end of this five-year project.

References

- American Indian Higher Education Consortium. (2012). 2009-2020 AIHEC Aims Fact Book: Tribal Colleges and Universities Report. Retrieved from http://www.aihec.org/our-stories/docs/reports/AIHEC_AIMSreport_May2012.pdf.
- Norris, T., Vines, P. L., & Hoeffel, E. M. (2012). *The American Indian and Alaska Native population: 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf>

COHORT ONE

Five competitively selected TCUs received awards of \$90,000 over a 2-year period (2014-2016) to develop academic programs and build institutional research capacity in behavioral health:

Cankdeska Cikana Community College

The CCCC Behavioral Health Research Development (CCCC BHRD) Project is building the college's infrastructure to conduct behavioral health research at Spirit Lake, develop a uniquely-tailored education program based on the outcomes of the research so that the tribe can better address behavioral health needs identified by the community, and pilot the education program that is developed and research its impact. The CCCC project (1) increased faculty capacity to teach research skills; (2) trained students to conduct behavioral health research; (3) increased tribal knowledge of community behavioral health needs and (4) received SAMHSA funding to implement interventions to address identified needs.



Renaming ceremony of Cankdeska Cikana Community College's Wellness Center to the Paul Yankton Wellness Center. *Photo courtesy of Melody Volk, CCCC.*

Diné College

Diné College, through their project, (1) coordinated a behavioral health needs assessment of Diné College students; and (2) initiated partnerships between the faculty in Public Health and Social and Behavioral Science and other key faculty and staff at the college to address the issues identified in the needs assessment through education, research and community-based interventions. Other partners included Diné College's Student Success Program, a community coalition for healthy communities, a local non-profit community organization, the Montana Institute and the University of Washington Indigenous Wellness Research Institute.

Northwest Indian College



Northwest Indian College singers. *Photo courtesy of NWIC.*

The NWIC Behavioral Health Research Network project used Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach to develop, implement, analyze, and report the results of an NWIC student behavioral health survey while mentoring students to conduct research. Student researchers trained in the CBPR surveyed American Indian, Alaska Native, and other Indigenous (AI/AN) students at NWIC regarding resiliency and risk factors, including former students. Based on the survey results, they are identifying possible interventions that NWIC could implement to increase resiliency and decrease risk factors impacting NWIC AI/AN students' behavioral health and retention.

Oglala Lakota College

OLC's project is an interdisciplinary effort involving the Social Work and the Humanities and Social Science Departments. Students completed CBPR training and then conducted a behavioral health needs assessment at various OLC instructional sites as well as in several communities on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and in Rapid City. Based on the outcomes of this assessment, OLC is (1) incorporating education and training for students and faculty on behavioral health issues and research methods in the curriculum with a specific focus on issues identified in the needs assessment; (2) conducting community-based participatory health research on an on-going basis.

Stone Child College

SCC's project was designed to identify, develop, pilot, and evaluate intervention strategies and models that address significant Chippewa Cree behavioral health issues, especially related to substance abuse and mental health on the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation in Montana. The project was intended to "improve ownership that Chippewa Cree peoples' experience with regard to local research." The project: (1) conducted a needs assessment on the reservation, which identified a strong interest community in strengthening tribal cultural programming, specifically in Native language, and a need for enhanced communication about the educational and support services provided by SCC; (2) initiated a student-driven CBPR program focused on substance abuse and mental health treatment and prevention with an emphasis on historical trauma through their Rural Health Associate Degree Program; and (3) established the foundation of a behavioral health research infrastructure through the development of an SCC Office of Institutional Research.



Stone Child College tipi demonstration during Native American Week. *Photo courtesy of Kristie Pullin, SCC.*

COHORT TWO

Aaniiih Nakoda College

The goal of ANC's project is to design, develop and implement a community based, culturally appropriate research project that will address critical behavioral health issues facing the people of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Community based participatory research will be used to identify a research question, develop appropriate methodologies, implement research activities, and disseminate findings in a manner that reflects the self-identified needs and values of the Fort Belknap community. The project is targeting three outcomes: (1) provide the Fort Belknap community meaningful, context-rich research data related to a critical behavioral health issue that will provide a foundation for future intervention; (2) build behavioral health research capacity at Aaniiih Nakoda College, and (3) provide ANC students with meaningful undergraduate research experiences that can motivate them to pursue a career in behavioral health research.



Aaniiih Nakoda College student Charmayne Healy reading to Fort Belknap children in the Early Head Start program. *Photo courtesy of ANC.*

Fort Peck Community College

FPCC intends to introduce a mindfulness-based intervention to AI/AN college students and measure its efficacy in reducing stress-related symptoms related to identified risk factors as well as in building resiliency factors to better manage or prevent future symptoms. The research will assess the feasibility and early indicators of efficacy in improving coping/resiliency, reducing perceived stress and associated physical, psychological, and emotional symptoms among college students. Through the project, FPCC will acquire initial data that could provide the foundation for a larger-scale treatment study.

Haskell Indian Nations University

HINU's project is establishing a behavioral health campus initiative, Generation Indigenous Liberation. Based on the principles of Liberation Psychology, it will be a vehicle for transformative action and advancing social justice; particularly with respect to interpersonal violence issues on campus. A key component of this project is a behavioral health needs assessment of the campus community that will provide baseline data identifying the issues (and associated education and training necessary) in establishing the research infrastructure and academic programming necessary for implementation of HINU's Behavioral Health Initiative.

Ilisaġvik College

Ilisaġvik's community based research project is assessing the behavioral health needs of North Slope residents, including the



Ilisaġvik College students participate in the yearly Spring Parade in Barrow, AK. *Photo courtesy of John Bergman, IC.*

interest and need for a counseling center at the college and behavioral health awareness workshops in North Slope villages. Ilisaġvik' goal is to empower its students and North Slope residents through behavioral health knowledge, as well as to engage in research and collaborate with other TCUs to serve tribal communities as a whole.

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College

The goals of this project are: (1) to build capacity in KBOCC staff and students to conduct research on behavioral health; and (2) introduce culturally appropriate and informed adaptations of evidence-based, best and promising practices to meet identified behavioral health needs. KBOCC is conducting a college-specific needs assessment following a community-wide assessment conducted in the following academic year.



Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College wild rice project. *Photo courtesy of KBOCC.*

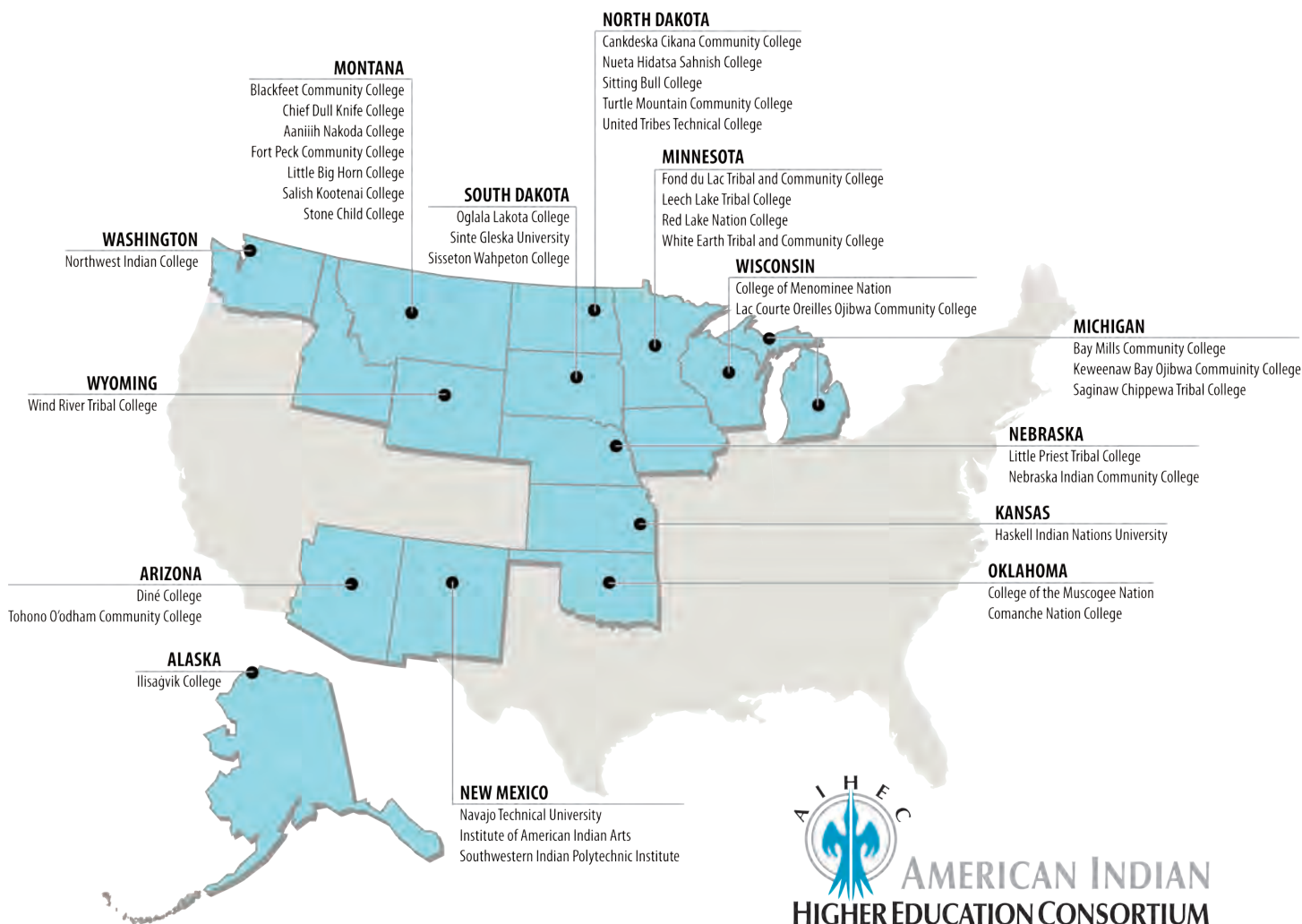
Tohono O'odham Community College

TOCC is conducting community-based, participatory research on behavioral health issues that affect TOCC students' ability to succeed in college. The project is using a behavioral health class that provides students an introduction to behavioral health issues and training in CBPR, which students will use to explore behavioral health issues affecting TOCC students. The research results will provide preliminary data that TOCC will use to identify appropriate interventions and support resources available to TOCC students.

The Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) program is an innovative, essential and modestly-funded collaboration between the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Indian Health Service (IHS) that supports partnerships between AI/AN tribes/tribally-based organizations and institutions engaged in intensive academic level biomedical, behavioral and health services research. NARCH-funded projects are meeting critical health needs of AI/ANs; building partnerships between tribes/tribal organizations and research institutions; and growing the next generations of AI/AN scientists and health professionals engaged in vital health research. In FY 2016, the NARCH program was funded at just under \$10 million nationally.

TRIBAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- 37 TCUs with more than 75 sites in the United States
- TCUs provide access to higher education to over 80 percent of Indian Country, serving more than 160,000 in academic and community-based programs annually
- All TCUs offer associate degree programs; 13 offer baccalaureate programs; five offer masters programs
- More than half of the federally recognized tribes are represented in TCU enrollments
- In 2014–2015, 78 percent of graduates earned degrees; 20 percent earned certificates
- 85 percent of TCU students receive federal financial aid



For more information, contact:

American Indian Higher Education Consortium
121 Oronoco Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314
www.aihec.org

Carrie Billy • cbilly@aihec.org

Deborah His Horse is Thunder • DHishorseisthunder@aihec.org