

**Alaska Indigenous Research Program:
Promoting Resilience, Health and Wellness**

May 6-10, 2019

PRESENTER BIOS

Danica Love Brown, MSW, PhD

Dr. Danica Love Brown is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma born and raised in Northern New Mexico. She has worked as a mental health and substance abuse counselor, social worker and youth advocate for over 20 years. She has a history of working in the areas of prevention, drug and alcohol/mental health treatment, community and restorative justice, and sexual health with Native American and adjudicated youth. She specializes in working with culturally and socio-economically diverse populations and Tribal communities. Danica is an Indigenous Wellness Research Institute ISMART fellow alumni, Council of Social Work Education, Minority Fellowship Program fellow alumni and Northwest Native American Research Center for Health, Fellow. Her research has focused on Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Decolonizing Methodologies to address historical trauma and health disparities in Tribal communities and she loves puppies.

Sheila Caldwell, PhD

Dr. Sheila A. Caldwell is a Program Director in the Division for Research Capacity Building, where she manages the Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) program, as well as components of the Institutional Development Award (IDeA) program. She was previously a program officer in the Division of Research Infrastructure at the former National Center for Research Resources. Caldwell earned a B.A. in International Relations from Boston University and a PhD in Molecular and Cellular Oncology from George Washington University. She conducted postdoctoral research at the National Cancer Institute.

Billy Charles

Billy Charles (Yup'ik) resides in his home community of Emmonak, Alaska and is a Research Professional in the Center of Alaska Native Health Research at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Mr. Charles provides leadership, cultural direction and intervention implementation and fidelity management for several NIH grants and a new NSF grant focusing on environment, rural economies and wellbeing in relation to fossil fuels in Alaska. He is a co-investigator on a NIH R01 prevention trial study that seeks to test the efficacy of a Yup'ik Alaska Native model and theory-driven intervention implementation and dissemination process. He is also co-investigator for the Alaska Native Collaborative Hub for Research on Resilience (ANCHRR). Mr. Charles maintains his traditional life ways by speaking his Yup'ik language,

practicing the Yup'ik song and dance and being a fisherman and subsistence hunter/gatherer. Mr. Charles is an experienced tribal leader in his community, serving as the President of the Emmonak Village Corporation and is actively engaged in every aspect of the health disparities research efforts taking place in his and other Yup'ik and rural Alaska Native communities.

Maria Crouch, MS

Maria Christina Crouch is Deg Hit'an (Athabascan), Mexican, and Scandinavian. Her Deg Xinag name is Tavo meaning swan. She currently works in the Behavioral Health Department at Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. She earned her BA and MS degrees in Clinical Psychology from the University of Alaska Anchorage. Maria is a doctoral candidate in the Clinical-Community Psychology program with a rural and indigenous emphasis at UAA. She is a National Institute of Health Diversity Award fellow and an Indian Health Service scholarship recipient. Her passions are in community, research, and clinical pursuits related to the health promotion, holistic wellness, and advancement of Alaska Native peoples.

LaVerne Demientieff, LMSW, PhD

Dr. LaVerne Demientieff is the daughter of the late Rudy and Alice (Frank) Demientieff of Holy Cross and Anvik, Alaska, and the granddaughter of Stanley Demientieff and Edith Bifelt and Joe Frank and Marcia Reed. LaVerne is Deg Xit'an, Athabascan on her mother's side and Koyukon Athabascan, Yupik and Russian on her father's side. Born in Fairbanks, Alaska, She was raised in the small roadside town of Nenana and in big city of Anchorage, as well as at her family's fishcamp along the Yukon River. LaVerne is grateful to have the magical memories of fishcamp as part of her childhood where she observed the hard work her parents put in on a daily basis to provide for their family of ten children and teach their children the importance of relationship to the people, as well as to the land and animals. LaVerne currently resides in Fairbanks, Alaska, and has one son, aged 23. She describes herself as being on both an individual and collective wellness journey, and works daily toward creating healing and wellness in her life through exercise, healthy eating, practicing mindfulness, and nurturing relationship and connection with others. She believes that because we are all interconnected in the world that the energy of healing and wellness in her life ripples out and positively impacts her family, community, ancestors and future generations.

Since high school LaVerne has wanted to be a helper. She started off as a Natural Helper at West Anchorage High School where she graduated. She was inspired to pursue social work following in the steps of her later sister Darlene, who died from cancer at the age of thirty-eight right after graduating with her Bachelors in Social Work (BSW). LaVerne graduated from the University of Alaska Fairbanks with her BSW and went on to receive her Masters in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, with a concentration in social and economic development and with an emphasis in management. She graduated with her PhD in Social Work from the University of Utah, College of Social Work. The title of her dissertation was Deg Xit'an Athabascan Conversations on Wellness: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Radical Possibilities of Relationships.

LaVerne is currently working as a Clinical Associate Professor for the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Bachelor of Social Work program; she is also a licensed master social worker through the State of Alaska. She has found an increasing passion and interest in health and wellness research and practice and enjoys teaching students and sharing her love of learning and people. She believes these areas of interest will allow her to work on behalf of the people and communities in Alaska; as well as work towards awareness and understanding of diversity, wellness and social justice.

Kathy Etz, PhD

Dr. Kathy Etz is the Director of the Native American Program at the National Institute on Drug Abuse, where she also serves as a Program Director in the Epidemiology Research Branch. In addition to leading efforts for AI/AN Drug Abuse research, her program area includes studies of population and clinical epidemiology in adolescence and early adulthood; psychological, familial and environmental risk and protective factors and processes and how these interact in the development of drug abuse; and the sequencing and temporal potency of risk factors that affect the development of substance abuse. Her program also supports epidemiologic research studies examining the social, cultural, environmental and historical factors related to drug use among American Indians and Alaska Natives as well as a more general focus on epidemiology and health disparities. In addition, the program includes a focus on data sharing and the support of a behavioral and social science drug abuse and HIV data archive. She is a Project Scientist on the University of Alaska at Fairbanks BUILD program. Dr. Etz received the Phillip L Smith Award for Exceptional Contribution to Research to Benefit Native Communities in 2012 from the Native Research Network. Dr. Etz received the 2018 Advances in Culture and Diversity in Prevention Science award from the Society for Prevention Research (SPR). Dr. Etz received her Ph.D. in Human Development from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro in 1997. Prior to joining NIDA, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Prevention Research Center, University of Kentucky.

Karli Tyance Hassell

Karli Tyance Hassell is an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) from Gull Bay First Nation in Ontario, Canada. She is a graduate student with the Fisheries, Aquatic Science and Technology Lab at Alaska Pacific University. As an Indigenous woman who studies science, she considers herself a traveler between scientific and Indigenous ways of knowing. As such, she is interested in both worldviews in research, environmental sustainability and protection, and has a passion in working with Indigenous communities. In her spare time she enjoys being on the land, dancing in pow wows, travelling and spending time with family.

Polly Hyslop PhD

Dr. Polly Hyslop is an Assistant Professor for the Indigenous Studies Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She is from Upper Tanana Dineh and Scottish ancestry. She was born at a fish camp located near the village of Northway in the interior region of Alaska and grew up in Galena and Tanana, villages

along the Yukon River. She serves on the Peacemaking Advisory Initiative for Native American Rights Fund. Her doctoral thesis focused on the design of Circle Peacemaking in Kake, Alaska, a remote Tlingit community in southeast Alaska. She teaches classes related to research methods in Native communities and documenting Indigenous knowledge. Her interest includes the role of change-makers as volunteers in revitalizing language and local community dispute resolution processes in Indigenous communities in to maintain and restore balance and healing in relationships. Her work is part of a growing field she calls Indigenous Dispute Systems Design (IDSD).

Alexandra King, MD, FRCPC

Dr. Alexandra King is a citizen of the Nipissing First Nation (Ontario). Alexandra is the inaugural Cameco Chair in Indigenous Health at the University of Saskatchewan. She works with Indigenous communities and relevant stakeholders to understand the health and wellness needs of First Nations and Métis peoples in Saskatchewan and the structural changes needed for improved Indigenous health outcomes. Alexandra brings leadership skills in culturally safe and responsive research and care, Two-eyed Seeing (bringing together Indigenous and Western worldviews or forms of knowledge) and Ethical Space—which needs to be created when peoples with disparate worldviews are poised to engage each other.

As a First Nation researcher, Alexandra is a Principal Investigator on various CIHR research grants related to Indigenous people and HIV, HCV and co-infections. Other research interests include Indigenous wellness and Indigenous research ethics, and much of her research is community-based interventions grounded in Indigenous epistemology, culture and wellness. Alexandra also teaches Indigenous health and contributes to the University of Saskatchewan's decolonization, reconciliation and Indigenization.

Malcolm King, PhD, FCAHS, Professor

Dr. Malcolm King, a member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, is a health researcher at the University of Saskatchewan, joining the Department of Community Health & Epidemiology in October 2017. There, he serves as the Scientific Director of SCPOR, the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research; he also continues to teach and research in Indigenous health, with a particular focus on wellness and engagement. Dr. King's international Indigenous health interests include improving Indigenous health through workforce development and provision of culturally appropriate care, and developing Indigenous health indicators to monitor progress in programs aimed at achieving wellness and health equity.

From 2009 to 2016, Dr. King led the CIHR Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health as its Scientific Director, spearheading the development of a national health research agenda aimed at improving wellness and achieving health equity for First Nations People, Métis and Inuit in Canada. Dr. King was honored with a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 1999, and in 2016 he was named a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

Jessica Leston, MPH

Jessica Leston (Tsimshian) has worked with tribal health services for 15 years. She has been employed at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board for the past 8 years and currently serves as their HIV\HCV\Opioid Clinical Programs Director. Jessica has contributed to many community-based participatory research and systems development projects at the local, regional and national level. She is a healthcare advocate and respects the influence and positive effect people and communities have on healthcare systems. Jessica is currently enrolled in a DrPH program at the University of Illinois.

Jordan Lewis, PhD

Dr. Jordan P. Lewis is Aleut from the Native Village of Naknek and the Director of the National Resource Center for Alaska Native Elders is an Associate Professor with the University of Alaska Anchorage, WWAMI School of Medical Education. Trained as a cross-cultural community psychologist and social worker (BSW, MSW), and a credential professional gerontologist (CPG), Dr. Lewis's has worked with Alaska Native Elders for many years in numerous capacities, including federal policy in Washington, DC, state and local capacities with education and program development, and tribal health programs in rural and urban Alaska.

Dr. Lewis's research identifies characteristics that enable Alaska Native Elders to age well and become role models for their families and communities. Using the lessons and experiences of elders, Dr. Lewis develops culturally-tailored approaches for family and community members to improve the health of all generations, from long term care programs, dementia caregiver education programs, peer based alcohol interviews, to community-based programs to support aging in place. His past research has explored cultural understandings of successful aging, intergenerational programming in tribal communities, as well as collecting stories to improve program and service delivery in long-term care settings. Jordan received his BSW from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, MSW from Washington University in St. Louis, and PhD from University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Roberta Moto

Roberta Moto is an enrolled member of the Native Village of Deering, Alaska and her tribal affiliation is Iñupiaq Eskimo. Roberta has worked as an ICWA Coordinator and Tribal Administrator for her tribe. She worked as a Village Based Counselor for 8 years for Maniilaq Association. She transitioned from substance abuse counseling to the Wellness Program Manager position in 2014. Roberta earned the Rural Human Services certificate in 2008 from UAF Chukchi Campus. She completed her Social Work internship under Michelle Woods at the Northwest Arctic Borough School District Teck John Baker Youth Leadership Program. She expects to complete her BSW in Dec. 2019.

Stacy Rasmus, PhD

Dr. Stacy Rasmus is the Director of the Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She holds a joint appointment with the Northwest Indian College, in western Washington State. Dr. Rasmus has worked with American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities for over two decades and has built an international program of research focusing on the promotion of Indigenous strengths, wellbeing and resilience in Alaska, the Arctic and the Pacific Northwest. Dr. Rasmus is trained in the social and behavioral sciences with specific expertise in the translation of Indigenous knowledge and practice into health interventions that are community-driven and culturally-centered. She currently leads several NIH, NSF and SAMHSA grants that together engage AIAN populations in research and evaluation initiatives to eliminate disparities in youth suicide and substance use disorders, with a special focus on alcohol, opioids and co-occurring disorders. In addition to her research program, Dr. Rasmus also co-directs the American Indian and Alaska Native Clinical Translational Research Program (AIAN CTRP), a collaborative training program building research capacity in Indigenous communities in Alaska and Montana.

Arleigh Reynolds, DVM, PhD, D.A.C.V.N.

Dr. Arleigh Reynolds received his Bachelors of Science in Biology (1983), Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (1986), and PhD (1992) Degrees from Cornell University. He became board certified in clinical nutrition in 1996. He has worked in private practice, (1986-19889), in the private sector as a research scientist for Nestle Purina (1998- 20014) and as a faculty member at Cornell University (1994-1998) and UAF (20014-present). He helped start the veterinary medicine program at UAF where he served as the Associate Dean for 4 years. He is a Principal Investigator on the NIH funded BLaST program which supports Alaska Native and Rural Alaskan students who are interested in careers in biomedical research and is currently the Director of the One Health Center for Research at UAF. His research interests have focused on the relationship between diet and performance in sled dogs, studying sled dogs as sentinel models for people in rural Alaska, and supporting resilience in young people through sled dog training and husbandry.

Claire Siekaniec, MS

Claire Siekaniec is a Registered Dietitian at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium currently working as the Congenital Sucrase-Isomaltase Deficiency (CSID) Education and Outreach Coordinator. She received her undergraduate degree in nutrition and dietetics from the University of New Haven and completed her dietetic internship through the University of Alaska Anchorage. She received her master's degree in sports nutrition from the University of Colorado. Claire has previously worked as a clinical dietitian at the Alaska Native Medical Center and a community dietitian for Intermountain Healthcare in Utah. Claire has spent the majority of her life in Alaska, growing up in Cold Bay and Homer.

Teisha Simmons, MA

Teisha Simmons, Neggeguk', is Denakk'e from the communities of Notaalee Denh (Galena) and Meneelghaadze T'oh (Koyukuk), both communities along the Yukon River. She now lives in Fairbanks where she and her partner are raising their 13-year-old daughter Tassy. Teisha was injured in a car accident in 1992 and as a result is paralyzed from the chest down. Wheelchair accessibility in rural Alaska does not make permanent life at home possible, but she loves going home to visit as much as possible. Despite being in a wheelchair, she is living a very productive and beautiful life.

Teisha's professional work experience has been diverse over the years. Upon graduation from the University, she developed and oversaw a culturally relevant children's mental health program that served Alaska Native children and their families in Fairbanks and six of the rural interior communities. From there, she went to work for the University where she served in positions ranging from recruiting and mentoring Alaska Native students to teaching and then serving in executive management as a Campus Director. She later served as the senior manager for the Division of Wellness and Prevention at the Tanana Chiefs Conference. After 10 years of working in management positions, Teisha returned to teaching which has always been her favorite career. That is why she has returned to teaching and currently works part-time as an instructor with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Behavioral Health Aide Program. Teisha is also involved with song and language realization and volunteering in the community and committed to promoting individual and community empowerment, cultural strengths and reducing stigma surrounding addiction and seeking treatment

She attended the University of Alaska Fairbanks and graduated with a BA in psychology in 2000, then received a Master of Arts in Clinical – Community Psychology in 2003. Her thesis research focused on protective factors against suicide among Alaska Native people.

Jon Petter Stoor, MSc

Jon Petter Stoor, Nilsa Ánde Biehtár, is a Sámi/Swedish clinical psychologist born and raised in the city of Giron/Kiruna and Laeváš Sámi reindeer herding community in Arctic Sweden. Stoor is a PhD student at Sámi Norwegian National Advisory Unit on Mental Health and Substance Abuse / UiT – the Arctic University of Norway. He lives in Umeå, Sweden, and is the proud father of two girls. Stoor researches cultural and contextual aspects of suicide among Sámi, particularly young men, in Norway and Sweden. In recent years, he has worked on psychosocial health issues on behalf of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden, written a plan for suicide prevention among Sámi on behalf of Sámi Norwegian National Advisory Unit on Mental Health and Substance Abuse and the Saami Council and been appointed member of the committee that developed a proposal for Ethical guidelines in Sámi health research in Norway on behalf of the Sámi Parliament in Norway. At present he is a Fulbright Arctic Initiative scholar visiting the Center for Alaska Native Health Research at University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

James Temte, MS

James Temte is a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and grew up in the Rocky Mountains living in Wyoming and Colorado. He joined the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) in 2010 working in the environmental health field, and the National Tribal Water Center (NTWC) at ANTHC in 2014. He has previously served as the Program Manager for the Southern Ute Indian Tribe Air Quality Program, The Director of the Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management, the Vice Chair of the National Tribal Air Association and on the Board of Directors of the Climate Registry. James currently works as a Project Manager for ANTHC and the Alaska Pacific University (APU). He also serves as Adjunct Faculty at APU.

His interest in water and sanitation work focuses on human health, including affordable access to adequate and sustainable water and sanitation services. James has a passion for tribal sovereignty, tribal self-determination, protecting the human health and the environment through innovative community interventions through art, culture, science and media. He loves to work with communities on multi-disciplinary teams to incorporate innovative health education techniques to inspire positive actions.

Sean Asiqtuq Topkok, PhD

“Uvaŋa atiga Asiqtuq. Aapaga Sanguk. Aanaga Aileen-mi. My Iñupiaq name is Asiqtuq. My white-fox name is Sean Topkok. I am Iñupiaq, Sámi, Irish, and Norwegian.” Topkok is an Assistant Professor at the School of Education in the graduate programs. His family is from Teller, Alaska, and are Qaviaragmiut. Dr. Topkok’s research interests include multicultural and Indigenous education, decolonization and Indigenist methods and methodologies, working with communities to help them document their cultural heritages, and community well-being.

Jessica Ullrich, MSW

Jessica Saniguq Ullrich’s parents are the late Catherine Maki and the late Gordon Ruck; her grandparents are Nancy (Senungetuk) Felton, of Wales and Nome, and the late Willard Felton. Jessica’s hometown is Anchorage. She has a BA from Gonzaga University and MSW from University of Alaska Anchorage. Jessica’s research interests include Alaska Native kinship care, Indian child welfare policy implementation, and primary prevention intervention development that centers on Alaska Native cultural values and practices. Jessica worked in child welfare for 11 years in positions ranging from visitation supervisor, permanency worker, in-home services case manager, ICWA Specialist, and supervisor of the first Alaska Native Family Services unit in Anchorage, Alaska. Jessica is committed to moving forward racial equity and social justice dialogues in the classroom, in research, and through political advocacy. She is a student in the doctoral program in social work at University of Washington in Seattle.



Dave Wilson, PhD

Dr. David R. Wilson (Diné, Born for Tódích'í'í'ni and born to Honágháahnii) is the first Director of NIH Tribal Health Research Office. Established in 2015, the Tribal Health Research Office is located in the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives in the Office of the Director (OD). The office coordinates NIH research related to the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) across the NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices. The office was created in recognition of the importance of ensuring meaningful input from and collaboration with Tribal Nations on NIH programs and policies.