



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

**May 18-22, 2020**

**PRESENTER BIOS**

### **Panigkaq Agatha John-Shields, PhD**

Agatha grew up in a Yup'ik village on the southwest coast of Alaska, on Nelson Island, knowing as early as the 4th grade that she wanted to become either a teacher or a counselor. After graduating from high school, she pursued an undergraduate degree in secondary education (starting in Bethel and ending in Fairbanks). After nine years teaching and eight years as principal at the Yup'ik Immersion Charter School in Bethel, Agatha and her husband decided it was time to transition their family to Anchorage in 2010 where she currently is Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). She has supervised intern principals and currently teaches preservice teachers and graduate programs. Her passion is indigenizing culturally responsive education through being present in the community. She developed the Indigenous Values Gathering Series for the greater student body at UAA and teaches classes through including values and elders' teachings. For her all her efforts in the education field, Agatha was honored with the President's Award for Education from the Association of Village Council Presidents and the Eileen Panigeo MacLean Education Award from the Alaska Federation of Natives.

### **Sarah Nash, PhD, MPH**

Dr. Nash is the Director of Cancer Surveillance at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. In this role, she manages the SEER Alaska Native Tumor Registry, and is also involved with registry-related research to understand the causes of cancer disparities among Alaska Native people. She earned her PhD in Biological Sciences at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Masters in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and completed her postdoctoral fellowship with the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program. Her interests include cancer prevention and epidemiology, cancer surveillance, and Native American and rural health disparities.

### **Gretchen Day, MPH**

Gretchen Day is a Biostatistician for Clinical & Research Services at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). She first came to Alaska in 1990 and worked at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation located in the remote Yukon-Kuskokwim region. After a number of years, she left Alaska to pursue her MPH degree, but returned to work as an epidemiologist/biostatistician, first for the Alaska Native Epidemiology Center, and then at the newly created Office of Alaska Native Health Research at ANTHC, which later became Clinical & Research Services.



### **Larissa Crawford**

Larissa is a published Indigenous and anti-racism researcher, award-winning ribbon skirt artist, certified mediator, activist, and proudly passes on Métis and Jamaican ancestry to her daughter, Zyra. She is the founder of Future Ancestors Services, a youth-led professional services social enterprise that centres ancestral accountability, climate justice, and equity. Future Ancestors Services also hosts the Constellation, a portal that charts and supports diverse speakers, trainers, researchers, and artists based in Canada; they do so with the goal of uplifting people who, despite facing disproportionate barriers, remain committed to Earth and community in their work and lives. Larissa is a 2019-20 Action Canada Fellow; Government of Canada 2020 10 Influencers to Watch; FLARE Magazine Top 50 Women; a 2019 GLOBE Very Impactful Person; and a Corporate Knights' 2019 Top 30 Under 30 in Sustainability.

### **Sharon Milgram, PhD**

Dr. Sharon Milgram received a BS degree in Physical Therapy from Temple University and a PhD in Cell Biology from Emory University. She completed postdoctoral training at The Johns Hopkins University before joining the faculty at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. There, she rose to the rank of Full Professor in the Department of Cell & Developmental Biology. Dr. Milgram served as the Associate Director of the Medical Scientist Training Program, Director of the Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program, and the Director of the Summer Undergraduate Research Experience. In 2007 she joined the NIH Office of the Director as the Director of the Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) where she directs a trans-NIH Office dedicated to the career advancement of over 5000 trainees. Dr. Milgram lectures widely on science careers, mentorship, leadership, and management in research environments. She lives in Takoma Park, Maryland with her wife and son.

### **Mary Owen, PhD**

Dr. Mary Owen is from the Wooshketaan or shark clan of the Tlingit nation. She graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School and North Memorial Family Practice Residency Program before returning home to work for her Tribal community in Juneau, Alaska. After eleven years of full-scope family medicine, she returned to Duluth in July 2014 to take the position of Director of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health (CAIMH) at the University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth campus. Her primary roles now are: promoting and developing pipeline programs to increase the numbers of American Indian Alaska Native (AI/AN) students entering health professions careers, outreaching to local and national Native leaders and their communities to ensure that CAIMH and the University of Minnesota Medical School remain in tune with AI/AN health care and education needs, developing an AI/AN track for all students interested in providing healthcare to Native communities and developing research efforts to address the health disparities faced by AI/AN people. She continues to practice family medicine once weekly for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Her primary interests in healthcare are the impacts that social determinants of health have on individual and population health.



### **Karli Tyance Hassell, MS**

Karli Tyance Hassell is Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) from Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay First Nation). Karli recently graduated with her Masters in Environmental Science from Alaska Pacific University and now works as a Community Engagement Research Associate at the Fisheries, Aquatic Science and Technology Lab on campus and as a Research Associate at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. 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 community-driven research, environmental sustainability and protection, and has a passion in serving and working with Indigenous communities. She is highly interested in decolonizing higher education and academia, and greatly enjoys mentoring Indigenous students. She founded the Alaska Pacific University Indigenous Student Association and continues to mentor student officers. In her spare time she enjoys being on the Land, dancing in powwows as a traditional jingle dress dancer, travelling and spending time with family.

### **Abbie Willetto, MA**

Abbie holds a BS in Biology and an MA in Educational Leadership both from Northern Arizona University. She completed PHD coursework in Social Foundations of Bilingual-Multicultural Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. In Alaska she has worked as a researcher for Chugach Regional Resource Commission and Southcentral Foundation. She served as an Assistant Professor at the University of Alaska Anchorage in the School of Education M. Ed. program for 7 years. Her early career included; teaching middle and high school science, staff development, educational leadership, and curriculum development on the Navajo Nation. She has worked with the National Science Foundation as Co-Principal Investigator of a nationwide systemic initiative. Throughout her career she has worked to improve the opportunities for underrepresented groups to increase access to the areas of mathematics, science, research and evaluation. Since 2010 she has worked with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. Currently she leads the ANTHC Abstract, Manuscript & Proposal Review Committee and works closely with the ANTHC Health Research Review Committee, where all health research conducted with ANTHC receives review and approval by tribal leadership. She is also the ANTHC Specimen Archive coordinator. She has served on numerous national and statewide committees that focus on science, mathematics, and multiculturalism. She is a member of the Navajo Nation and lives in Anchorage, Alaska with her children.

### **Jordan Lewis, PhD, MSW**

Dr. Jordan P. Lewis, Unangax, from the Native Village of Naknek, is with the Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team and Professor with the University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth campus. Jordan is the former Director of the UAA National Resource Center for Alaska Native Elders and Professor with the WWAMI School of Medical Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage. 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 generative-based 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



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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.