

Executive Summary 2021

ALASKA INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PROGRAM PROMOTING RESILIENCE, HEALTH AND WELLNESS



ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM



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Project Background

Since 2019, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and the Alaska Pacific University (APU) have hosted the Alaska Indigenous Research Program (AKIRP). This partnership has demonstrated success in implementing a three-week cross-cultural research education and training program. There are few Indigenous-based programs which incorporate Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies in health research education and training, such as AKIRP.

AKIRP is unique in providing more than cultural competency education and training; it promotes a Two-Eyed seeing approach to research:

Two-Eyed seeing or Etuaptmumk

– “to learn to see from your one eye with the best or the strengths in the Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learn to see from your other eye with the best or the strengths in the mainstream (Western or Eurocentric) knowledges and ways of knowing... but most importantly, learn to see with both these eyes together, for the benefit of all.

This framework speaks to the reality of many Indigenous students and researchers who navigate multiple identities and perspectives in their lives, across disciplines, and within institutions. The application of this framework requires a common ground, or ethical space, where Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, knowledge generators, and knowledge bearers co-exist and engage in knowledge building as equal partners.¹⁻⁴

AKIRP serves as an ethical space of support and empowerment for Indigenous students and scholars to become researchers and investigators. The program nurtures their ability draw on different values and knowledge systems, and to collaborate with Indigenous communities, to find future ways for healing and wellness. Non-Indigenous program participants benefit in gaining an understanding for the need and value in reciprocity and relationality between Indigenous knowledge and Western science to address the health disparities for Alaska Native/American Indian peoples.

Goal

The goal of Alaska Indigenous Research Program is to increase the health research capacity of Alaska Native/American Indian people and communities by providing Indigenous-centered, cross-cultural research education and internships.

Over the past three years, 279 participants have attended AKIRP, an Alaska-based research training program for Alaska Native/American Indian college students, non-Native or Western-trained researchers, and health professionals.

Program Learning Objectives

- Understand Indigenous and Western ways of knowing as a foundation for Alaska Native health research
- Understand Indigenous methodologies in Alaska Native health research
- Understand community-based participatory research and how it aligns with the research process
- Recognize different levels of community engagement and ownership of Alaska Native health research
- Understand the principles of ethics in Indigenous health research
- Describe the impact of past health research practices on current perceptions of health research among Alaska Native/American Indian peoples

Year Three in Review

ANTHC and APU hosted the third Alaska Indigenous Research Program: Promoting Resilience, Health and Wellness (AKIRP) May 10-28, 2021. In light of the significant impact of COVID-19, the 2021 AKIRP planning team decided to deliver the research program in an online format. The announcement followed the proactive precautions ANTHC and APU implemented for the health of all participants, speakers, employees, Elders, youth, and rural Alaska communities.

To increase a sense of community and engagement, AKIRP incorporated cultural art activities by mailing over 100 boxes of art supplies to participants within the US and abroad. Amelia Simeonoff from ANTHC Behavioral Health led a beaded seal heart activity, and participants shared their creations via Whova. The program also showed the ATTLA documentary and incorporated daily blessings, drumming, songs and stories. As one of the AKIRP interns noted,

“Hearing how the seal was used for many purposes, and how Alaska Native people relied on it for survival helped me tie the research learnings into traditions of Alaska Native people and their way of life.”

Whova Platform

AKIRP was delivered through a series of daily 3.5-hour live sessions in the Whova event website and app. The sessions featured audio-video content facilitated by speakers, presentations, and in-depth reciprocal conversations among participants. The online sessions and event app encouraged participant discussion and networking through a variety of interactive features such as polling, photo sharing, poster presentations, article sharing, session Q&A, messaging, and discussion boards.

Table 1. 2021 Alaska Indigenous Research Program Virtual Program Schedule

Week	Session Title	Speakers
Week 1: Advanced Research	Keynote Address	Linda Tuhiwai Smith & Graham Hingangaroa Smith
	Land Acknowledgement Workshop	Melissa Shaginoff
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Doug Modig; Amy Modig
	Keynote Address: Researching within an Indigenist Paradigm	Shawn Wilson
	Youth perspectives on cultural strengths and resilience in two research projects using Photovoice and digital storytelling in rural Alaska communities	Jacques Philip; Jessica Black; Inna Rivkin; Donald Charlie; Janessa Newman; Cathy Brooks
	ATTLA Screening	Janessa Newman
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Amy Modig; Doug Modig
	Alaska Native Traditional Healing	Yaari Walker
	Promoting Social Connectedness in Alaska Native Communities through Culture	Georgianna Ningeulook; Simeon John; Abraham Rivers; Wybon Rivers
	We Are Here Now: A Multi-Level Intervention to Prevention Sexual and Productive Health Disparities Among American Indian Youth	Elizabeth Rink
	Youth perceptions of childbearing, family support, and academic achievement in a Northern Plains American Indian reservation community	Malory Peterson

Week	Session Title	Speakers
Week 1: Advanced Research	Cultural Activity: Beaded Seal Hearts	Amelia Simeonoff
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Amy Modig; Doug Modig
	Preventing Suicide in Sápmi	Jon Petter Stoor
	Toowu Latseen Shaa - Our Collective Spirit: Indigenous Approaches To Health And Wellness	Maka Monture Paki
	Bioethics of Indigenous Genomics: Increasing health and data equity	Krystal Tsosie
	Building respectful research relationships with Indigenous communities	Sandra Juutilainen; Melanie Jeffrey; Suzanne Stewart
	Poster / Exhibitor Session	
	Indigenous ways of knowing and decolonizing methodologies in Indigenous health and wellness research	Malcolm King; Alexandra King
	Mixed Methods in Practice	Vanessa Hiratsuka
	Community of Learners Connect	Karli Tyance Hassell
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Doug Modig; Amy Modig
	Closing Ceremony with Wales Kingikmiut Dancers & Singers	Gregory Nothstine
Week 2: Research Ethics	Welcome	Kirsten Kolb, ANTHC Community Health Services
	Keynote Address	Dave Wilson
	Learning from Indigenous Communities about Participation in Genomic Research	Denise Dillard
	Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Leadership and Application	Kathy Etz
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Doug Modig; Amy Modig
	Shaping Spaces for Indigenous Well-Being: Interventions and Opportunities	Beth Ginondidoy Leonard
	rEthics: Research Ethics Training for Health in Indigenous Communities	Cynthia Pearson
	Sovereignty and Governance for Indigenous Data Futures	Stephanie Carroll
	Navigating the New Arctic: Community Extension Office	James Temte
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Amy Modig; Doug Modig
	Community of Learners Poster Session	

Week	Session Title	Speakers
Week 2: Research Ethics	Brief Overview of the Impacts of Colonialism on Alaska and the 21st century Renaissance	Maria Williams
	Overview: Alaska Blanket Exercise	Jaclynne Richards; Jackie Engebretson
	Traditional Teachings with Liz Sunnyboy	Amelia Simeonoff; Liz Sunnyboy
	Alaska Area Specimen Bank - A Unique Tribal-Federal Partnership	Brenna Simons-Petrusa
	Cultural Activity: Beaded Lanyard	Amelia Simeonoff
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Amy Modig; Doug Modig
	Developing Responsive Indicators of Indigenous Community Health	Jamie Donatuto; Larry Campbell
	Drum-Assisted Recovery Therapy for Native Americans (DARTNA): Results from a Feasibility Clinical Trial	Daniel Dickerson
	Accelerated Review of Research Amidst a Pandemic	Abbie Willetto; Elizabeth Ferucci
	ATTLA Screening	
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Doug Modig; Amy Modig
	Genomic Research and Community Engagement in Tribal Communities	Jessica Blanchard
	Indian Health Service/Alaska Area IRB: Human Subjects Principles	Terry J. M. Powell
	Ethical engagement in Indigenous health and wellness research in the virtual era	Malcolm King; Alexandra King
	Panel: Tribal Review of Health Research	Abbie Willetto; Tonya Kjerland; Karen Morgan
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Doug Modig; Amy Modig
	Community of Learners Connect	Karli Tyance Hassell
	Closing Ceremony	
Week 3: Intro to Research	Welcome	Hilton Hallock, APU Interim President
	Keynote Address	Haliehana Stepetin
	Land Acknowledgement Workshop	Melissa Shaginoff
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Amy Modig; Doug Modig
	Community of Learners Connect: IS 25500 Indigenous Health Research	Stephanie Morgan
	Traditional Tuesday	
	Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre and the Piliriqatigiinniq Community Health Research Model	Moriah Sallaffie

Week	Session	Speakers
Week 3: Intro to Research	Developing a Literature Review	Stephanie Morgan
	Developing a Research Proposal	Sarah Nash
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Amy Modig; Doug Modig
	Cultural Activity: Beaded Seal Hearts	Amelia Simeonoff
	Partnering with Indigenous Communities to Design and Implement Strength-Based Health Interventions	Vanessa Simonds
	Study Design, Data and Analysis	Gretchen Day
	Student Panel: Research Projects & Experiences	Abbie Willetto; Ally Gee; Dalaki Livingston
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Amy Modig; Doug Modig
	Poster / Exhibitor / Art Gallery	
	Keynote Address	Evon Peter
	Community Engagement & Research Ethics	Matthew Hirschfeld
	Qualitative Research Methods in Rural Alaska	Adam Hays
	Research & Medical Career Pathway Roundtable	Nicki Jordan; Sarah Rasmussen-Rehkopf; Mary Owen; Tommy Ghost Dog
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Doug Modig; Amy Modig
	Keynote Address	Treena Delormier
	Becoming a Resilient Scientist	Sharon Milgram
	Data for Indigenous Justice	Charlene Apok
	49 Days of Ceremony Wellness and Healing	Danica Love Brown; Wendee Gardner; Doug Modig; Amy Modig
	Community of Learners Connect	Karli Tyance Hassell
	Closing Ceremony	

2021 AKIRP Attendance & Demographics

AKIRP brought together a diverse group of approximately 169 participants and guest speakers. Participant characteristics were obtained from application forms and demographic analysis was completed using MS Excel (2016). Participants were able to select multiple races, ethnicities, professions, and occupations on their program application. Due to the cancellation of in-person programming, the planning team made exceptions for last-minute registration, and was unable to obtain all demographic information.

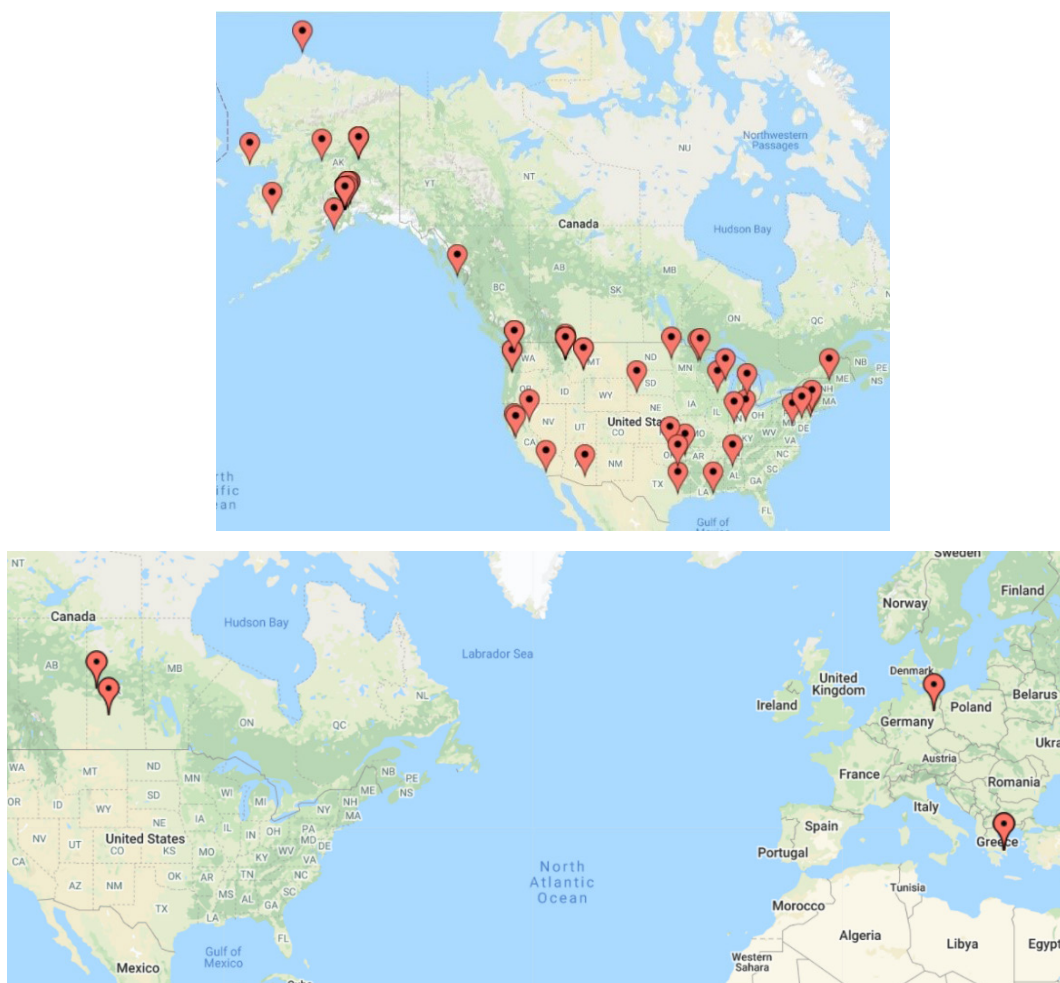
Table 2. Number of participants per week

Week	Number of Participants
1	58
2	69
3	31
Unique Participants = 95*	

The total number of unique participants is 95 because some participants registered for more than one week.

Geographic Reach

Figures 1 and 2. National and international reach of program participants



Demographics

The third annual AKIRP was attended by a total of 95 participants, with several attending more than one week. Approximately 42% of AKIRP participants identified as Alaska Native, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and/or Pacific Islander; 56% identified as White; 3% identified as Hispanic-Latino; 6% identified as Asian; 6% identified as Black/African American and 3% were listed as 'Other.' Participant's education level for all three weeks ranged from high school degrees (12%), associates degrees (6%), undergraduate degrees (19%), and graduate degrees (52%) to PhDs (12%). Participant's professional background included students (50%), researchers/public health professionals (63%), work in rural Alaska (16%), Alaska Tribal Health (20%), community Leaders (5%), ANTHC or APU faculty (16%), and other (5%); participants could check all that applied. Approximately 56% of registered participants were from Alaska, 38% from other areas within US and 6% were based internationally.

Figure 3. Race/ethnicity of AKIRP participants all weeks*

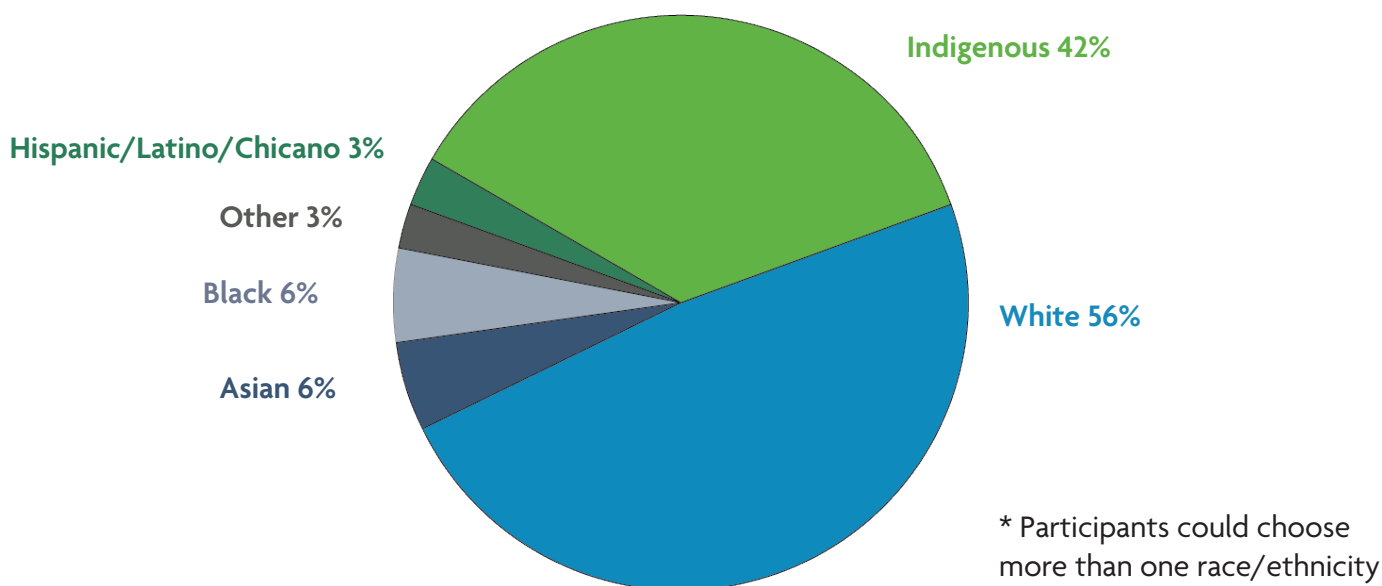


Figure 4. Participant Gender All Weeks

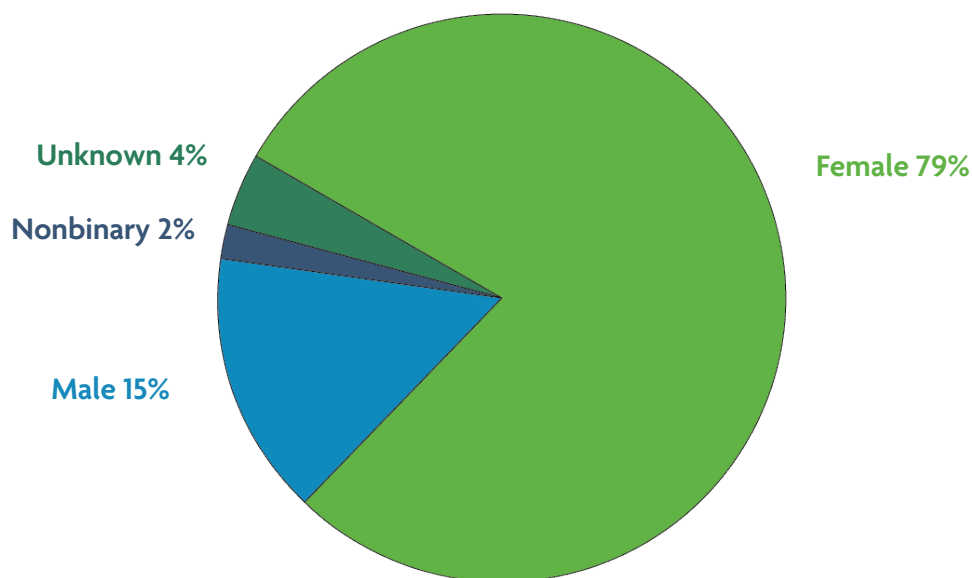


Figure 5. Participant Occupation & Area of Work All Weeks*

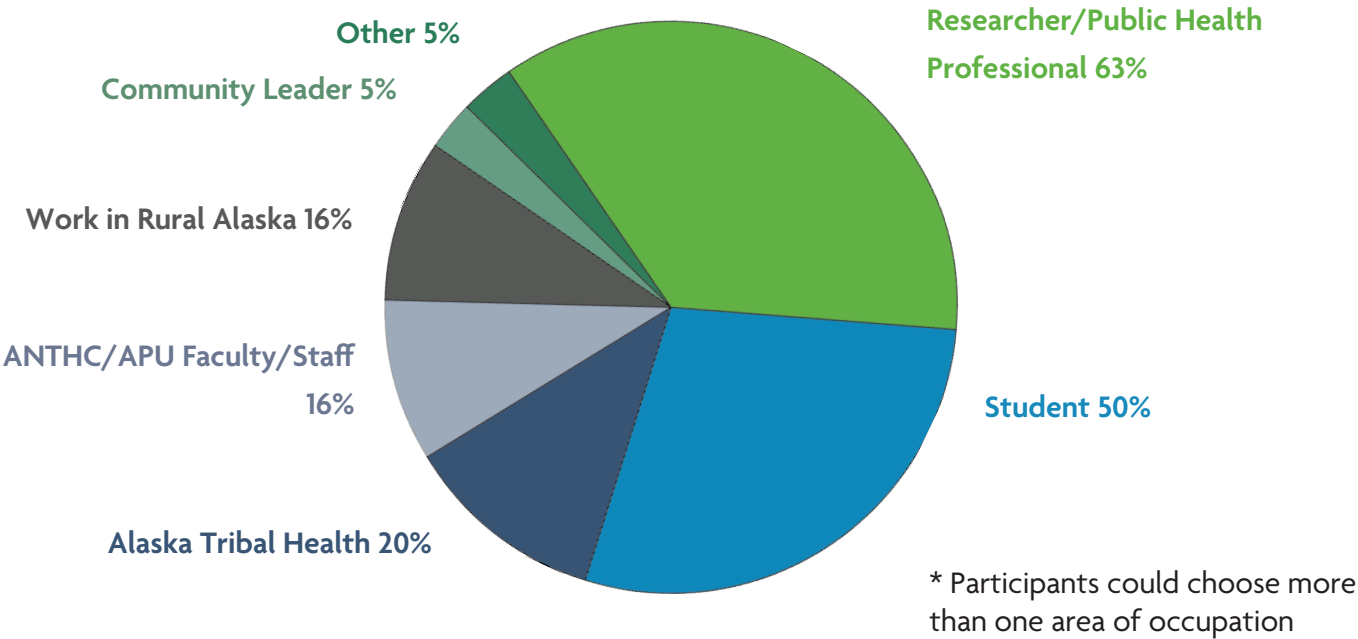
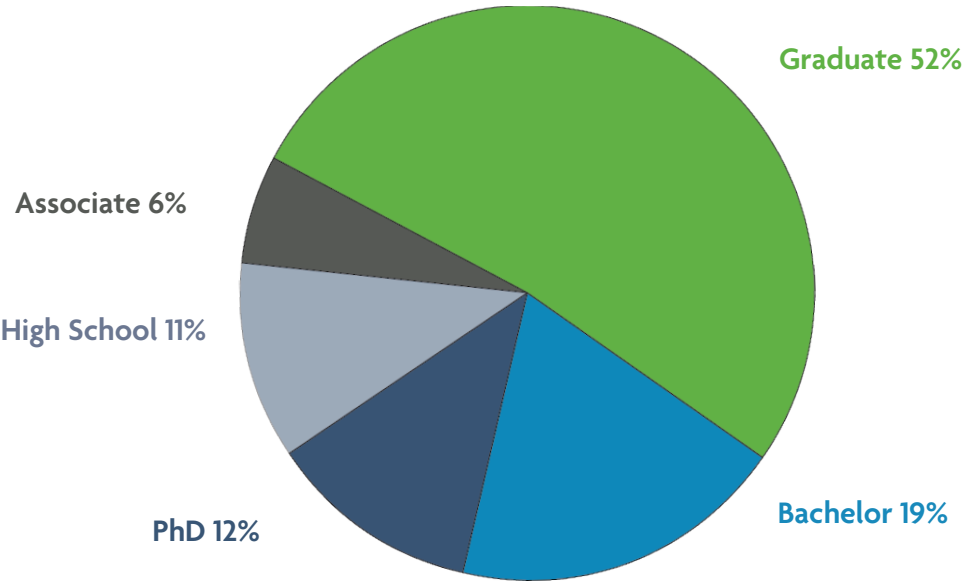


Figure 6. Educational Background All Weeks



Undergraduate Credits

The 2021 virtual program increased to 3.5 hours a day, compared to 2.5 hours a day in 2020. This increase allowed the program to provide one undergraduate credit through APU. Six participants received credit after applying and completing week 3 of AKIRP.

Internships

From June to July (8 weeks), AKIRP hosted three Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) undergraduate interns and three graduate interns in collaboration with the AN/AI Clinical and Translational research program. Interns participated in AKIRP, 49 Days of Ceremony, assisted with ongoing ANTHC projects, clinical shadowing, research brown bags, extracurricular field trips, and attended the Alaska Native Health Research Conference. The interns who joined AKIRP came from across Alaska, Texas, Louisiana and Nevada.

Picture 1. 2021 Summer Interns, from left to right: Carter, Mariah, Karen, Nina, Margaret and Rachel.



Intern Takeaways and Lessons Learned

- *The value of incorporating traditional Indigenous knowledge, culture, and worldviews into research as well as every day life.*
- *The importance of including and corresponding with the community throughout the research, program development and intervention process.*
- *Community-based participatory research “Nothing about us without us is for us”*
- *Indigenous examples of applied research methodology*
- *The importance of Elder and community member input in research studies, and emphasizing sovereignty and community benefit.*
- *The importance of land acknowledgement; the land acknowledgement is also an important take away for everyone, not just those working directly with Indigenous people.*

Program Evaluation

Participants were asked to submit weekly, anonymous evaluations to provide feedback on expertise, presentations, online support, and general program improvement recommendations. Participants who attended multiple weeks were encouraged to only fill out the second part of the evaluation once. A 6-month follow-up survey will measure how the AKIRP has affected participants research, schooling and professional development, and evaluate how the program meets the needs of the target population.

Table 3. Survey Response Rates

Week	Number of Evaluations Received	Response Rate
1	26	44.8%
2	18	26%
3	9	29%

Table 4. How likely would you recommend AKIRP to others?

Week	Rating
1	72.7% Extremely Likely
2	91.6% Extremely Likely
3	55.6% Extremely Likely

Table 5. How likely are you to attend a future AKIRP?

Week	Rating
1	72.7% Extremely Likely
2	83.3% Extremely Likely
3	44.4% Extremely Likely

Figure 7. Week 1: How much has your knowledge about Indigenous knowledge and research methods improved?

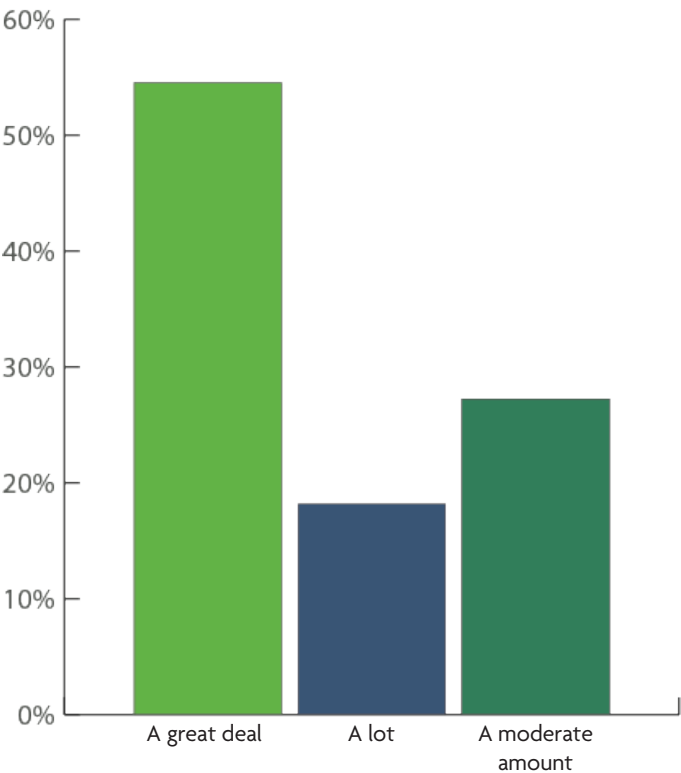


Figure 8. Week 2: How much has your knowledge about Indigenous knowledge and research methods improved?

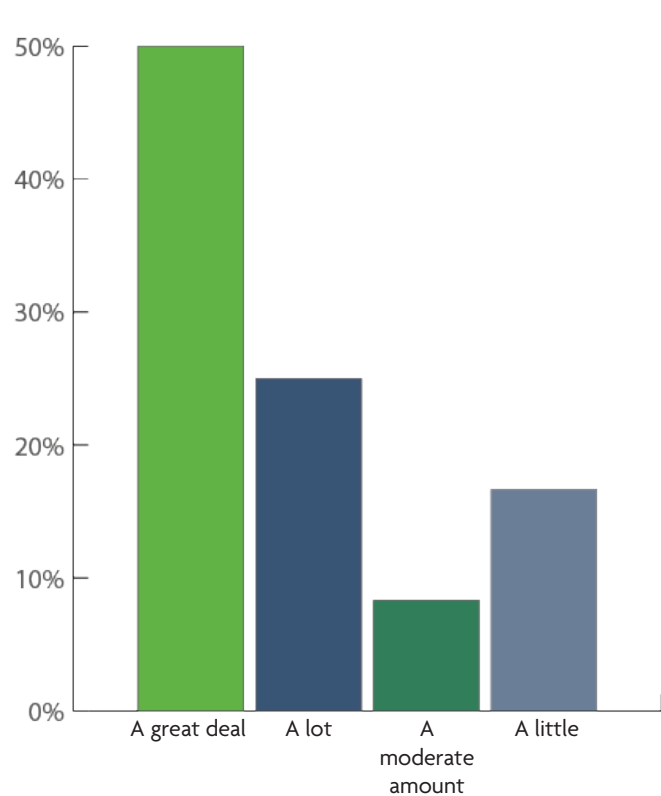
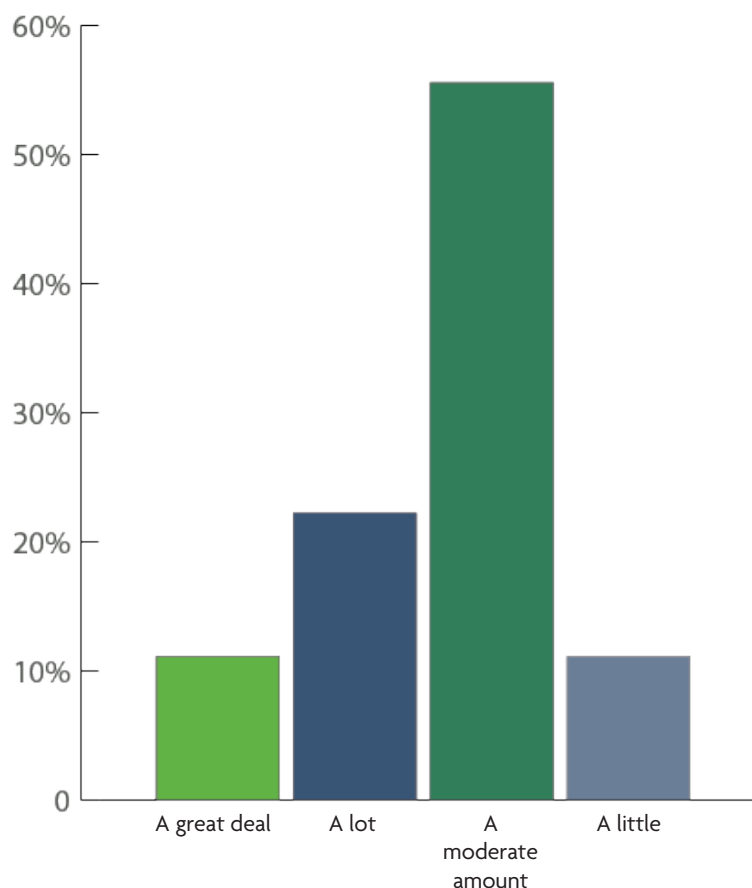


Figure 9. Week 3: How much has your knowledge about Indigenous knowledge and research methods improved?



Overall Comments

- *This has been a wonderful experience. I learned a lot – much to think about, and some concrete things I can incorporate in my work. Such a rich week. Thank you so much.*
- *AKIRP helped open me up to a new experience within the professional atmosphere of research and integrating Indigenous needs and practices within research. It's really motivational and helps ground the practice.*
- *The cultural activity made me feel connected to the group, despite being virtual. The presentations that resonated most with me all reinforced the importance of relationships and community.*
- *I was most appreciative of the cultural learning just by listening to the presenter and how they presented, what they said, and their presence. Even on Zoom, I feel like we were able to connect across time zones and geography.*
- *These presentations opened my eyes to Indigenous experience and revealed both cultural bias and areas of strength and growth from my experiences.*
- *Dr. Wilson reminded me that research should change the researcher. Yaari exposed me to a different perspective of spirituality, and one that I will always carry with me from now on. Dr. Tsosie affirmed the dissonance I experience with IRBs, ethics, and academia.*
- *Gives me more hope and motivation for continuing my educational journey, after hearing other students and professionals' paths as Indigenous researchers and students in a Western academic world.*
- *There was so much good information about how we conduct research and how we conceive of our research. I want to use the frameworks we discussed this week to be more deliberate about setting my next education goals and path.*

Overall Comments Continued

- *APIRP provides foundational insights into practicing social work in a culturally competent way. I hope to continue to integrate the ideas from the conference into my program and to encourage others to participate and learn.*
- *I think every presenter – both weeks I attended were phenomenal. The information was extremely useful and timely for me on a personal level. The information will assist with how I approach my PhD program research after I finish my masters*
- *I work with individual patients at ANMC and the information provided these 2 weeks helps me to better understand Native ways of knowing.*
- *The information I learned through AKIRP has informed every aspect of my career and life because my values as a person and as a researcher align with many of the values, if not all, that were discussed over the past 2 weeks. Specific to research, I learn immense amounts of information regarding IRB and federal rules and regulations around formalized ethical research.*
- *AKIRP helps to ground me in the Alaska Native context with my studies on trauma and social work since my school is out of state.*
- *I will be more diligent about how I do research with Native communities. We talked about how research ideas should come from the community, not the researchers entering the communities with big plans.*
- *My approach to research is forever changed. I find the idea of working with a community prior to determining my exact research question to co-develop an appropriate question, intervention, and meaningful measurements freeing.*
- *I greatly enjoyed the conference and the diverse presentations. I loved the two crafts, this added a great deal to learning and brought me closer to the other participants. Please keep doing that! Thank you very much for the many incredible presentations and connections.*
- *There was new knowledge that was shared with me and has supported my education and creativity.*
- *I loved hearing from students and about community research initiatives.*

49 Days of Ceremony Canoe Building Workshop

AKIRP 2021 also included the 49 Days of Ceremony Canoe Building Workshop. The 49 Days of Ceremony curriculum was developed in a collaboration between the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB), Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), and Alaska Native Elders to heal trauma and promote optimal health and wellness. The curriculum is based on traditional Indigenous wellness practices, ancestral knowledge, and teachings. The 49 Days of Ceremony Wellness Model explains wellness as a balance between the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual state of being. The medicine wheel, used by many Indigenous peoples, helps conceptualize the wellness and life balance in the 49 Days of Ceremony curriculum.

The 49 Days of Ceremony Canoe Workshop consisted of virtual morning sessions using the 49 Days of Ceremony curriculum, and in-person afternoon sessions to build a 24-foot canoe and paddles. The workshop began on May 6th with two days of paddle carving instruction provided by the One People Canoe Society from Juneau. Over the course of AKIRP, the workshop continued with 55.5 hours of in-person sessions and 22.5 hours of virtual sessions. A total of 26 participants registered for the virtual sessions of the workshop, of which 14 registered for at least 1 week of the in-person workshop, 15 participants attended the paddle carving pre-workshop. The canoe was dedicated to raising awareness and prevention of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in Alaska and the Lower 48.

Picture 2. 49 Days of Ceremony participants with their paddles



Pictures 3 and 4. Creating Formline Designs for the Paddles and Canoe



Picture 5. 49 Days of Ceremony participants with Tsimishian Elder Doug Modig and Tsimishian Cultural Bearer Johon Atkinson at the Alaska Native Heritage Center



Pictures 6 and 7. AKIRP Interns at the 49 Days of Ceremony Workshop



Picture 8. The Canoe Takes Shape



Summary

The 2021 AKIRP was well received with positive feedback. Week 3 had the lowest number of attendees who reported their knowledge increased “a moderate amount.” However, the response rate to the evaluation survey was also low at 29%. The complexity of Indigenous research concepts and methodologies for beginner level program participants may have impacted these evaluation results. The goal for Year 4 will be to increase outreach, participation, and create a community of learners for novice program participants.

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