Historical trauma is a reality throughout the indigenous nations in the United States impacting many of the 5.2 million (1.7 percent) American Indians living in this country. The impact of this reality has been recognized by tribal education leaders of the largest post-secondary education system established to serve Indian country—that of the 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). With 75 campus sites in 16 states, TCUs offer a college education to over 80 percent of Indian Country. This student body represents more than half of federally recognized tribes (250) and it is estimated that TCUs directly impacted nearly 47,000 community members not enrolled as students through community-based education and support programs (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2012). The answers leading to effective solutions to remedy the generational impact of historical trauma must come from within Native communities. TCUs are the best resource to implement essential research to find these answers. The AIHEC NARCH Project is designed to build the research capacity in behavioral health at these institutions to find these answers.

Overview of Sub-Award Projects and Status
The AIHEC NARCH Project is a five year project that was funded in 2013 specifically to build the research capacity of TCUs through financial support in the form of two year subawards to two cohorts of TCUs. In addition, the AIHEC NARCH Project provides professional development at the individual, department, and institution level. The first cohort of five TCUs was selected through a competitive application process in 2014 and includes Cankdeska Cikana Community College (Spirit Lake Reservation, ND); Diné College (Navajo Nation, AZ/NM); Northwest Indian College (Lummi Nation, WA/ID); Oglala Lakota College (Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation, SD); and Stone Child College (Rocky Boy Indian Reservation, MT). This cohort completed their funded activities and continue to leverage findings to seek additional resources.

The second TCU cohort was selected in 2016 and consists of six TCUs which are: Aaniiih Nakoda College (Fort Belknap Reservation, MT); Fort Peck Community College (Fort Peck Reservation, MT); Haskell Indian Nations University (National Native base, KS); Ilisaġvik College (North Slope Borough, AK); Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (Keweenaw Bay Ojibaw Reservation, MN); Tohono O’odham Community College (Tohono O’odham Nation, AZ).

The accomplishments of Cohort One and the goals of Cohort Two TCUs are provided in the insert for each cohort.
Accomplishments
As the AIHEC NARCH Project is moving towards the end of its fourth year of a five-year project, the NARCH TCUs have made significant accomplishments. The effort to provide support to assist the TCUs in behavioral health research is proving effect. Good research takes time, especially in American Indian communities where distrust of research is extremely high. The focus has been on defining behavioral health needs in the community, training American Indian student researchers, and then designing and implementing behavioral health research—all of which are major undertakings. The AIHEC NARCH Project is very pleased to report the following accomplishments:

- Five TCUs completed behavioral health community needs assessments with continued support for those who are seeking to publish the results.
- Twenty-nine student researchers are trained in Community-Based Participatory Research.
- Eleven TCUs now have enhanced behavioral health research infrastructure. At least one TCU had no policies with regard to research in place and it has now established baseline policies and identified an Institutional Research Board for review of proposed research.
- Specific behavioral health interventions continue to be researched such as establishing positive community norms (Diné College); mindfulness to impact stress reduction (Fort Peck Community College); historical trauma awareness, healing, and community impact curriculum (Stone Child College).

Annual Behavioral Health Institute
Three highly successful week-long behavioral health institutes were conducted with two more scheduled for 2017 and 2018:

- Nearly 150 participants have attended the AIHEC Behavioral Health Institute (note that several participants attended more than one institute) with the breakdown by year as: 40 participants attended the first institute in 2014; 34 participants attended in 2015; and 72 participants attended the 2016 institute.

- Twenty-one highly successful researchers in American Indian country presented on topics such as definitional information regarding historical trauma, CBPR, institutional research boards and their roles and responsibilities. They also presented examples of good 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; University of California-Los Angeles; University of Washington Indigenous Wellness Center; Northern Arizona University CAIR Project; University of New Mexico; University of Virginia; North Dakota State University; and 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 offered with 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 establishing positive community norms.

- Twenty-nine 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 sponsored Biomedical/Biobehavioral Research Administration Development (BRAD) training and two faculty planning to attend the 2017 BRAD training.

- Forty-two TCU faculty and staff members attended the Historical Trauma Curriculum Training, which has been offered twice. One TCU conducted this training for its employees as a result of attending the training, and a number of the participants have incorporated aspects of the material in their courses. This curriculum is also posted on the AIHEC NARCH website—http://aihec.org/our-stories/BHcurriculum.htm.

Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS): Forty-nine participants were provided travel support to attend the 2015 SACNAS Conference in National Harbor, Maryland, and 45 participants received travel scholarships to attend the 2016 SACNAS Conference in San Diego, California.

Partnerships and Leveraged Resources

- TCUs were able to use the findings of community needs assessment to successfully apply for a Talent Search Project and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale Technical Assistance Center Strategy (BRSS TACS) project. The BRSS TACS project supports 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 over 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.

Conclusion

In less than four years, the AIHEC NARCH Project is having a positive impact in building the research capacity of TCUs by assisting with the establishment of research policies, training student researchers and faculty in community-based participatory research, and in the design and implementation of behavioral health research. It also has fostered a greater understanding of the impact of historical trauma on today’s American Indian communities. Research projects allowed Native communities to assess their behavioral health needs; piloted curriculum as a means of healing and intervention; and examine potentially effective intervention strategies. AIHEC anticipates strong evidence of the success of these projects to be further reinforced at the end of this five-year project.

References


Cankdeska Cikana Community College
The CCCC BHRD Project was designed to build infrastructure to conduct behavioral health research at Spirit Lake, to better address behavioral health needs identified by the community, and pilot the research and education program. Students ability to understand and conduct behavioral health research was increased through modules in CCCC course offerings. Students also participated in the two research projects, including workshops teaching skills in data collection and analysis, planning a research project with a research workgroup, collecting data through individual interviews, analysis of the results using SPSS, and dissemination of results locally, regionally, and nationally. The research studies led to increased knowledge regarding behavioral health needs.

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. The Student Success Department and college administration is developing a campaign to announce positive community norms students share through social media, posters, PSAs and the College website. This is designed to be data based and reiterative the best student behaviors in ways to better align campus norms.

Northwest Indian College
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 (and former students) at NWIC regarding resiliency and risk factors. Based on the survey results, they submitted a faculty authored article about the project’s qualitative results to the American Indian College Fund Tribal College and University Research Journal and are currently working on a student-authored peer-reviewed journal article for future submission.

Oglala Lakota College
The purpose of OLC’s project was to: 1) learn about the behavioral/mental health issues and needs of OLC students; 2) increase the knowledge and capacity of OLC students and faculty regarding behavioral health issues and research; and 3) develop behavioral health curricula based on historical trauma. Two questionnaires were administered regarding perceptions of OLC student behavioral health needs: Student Survey and Faculty/Counselor Survey. Half of the students reported that their academic performance has been impacted by their own problems. OLC offers no mental/behavioral health services except for an occasional talking circle. Survey participants expressed that they would like OLC to offer more. As the research team continues analyzing the data, educational materials for college staff, students, and community members as well as recommendations to better meet students’ mental and behavioral health needs will be developed.

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.” SCC developed a three-course series on historical trauma which provided fundamental information about historical trauma in course one, then reinforced in course two with a focus on healing and including research training of students in CBPR. Course three implemented a CBPR research initiative on the impact of historical trauma using a phenomenological approach.
Aaniiih Nakoda College
The goal of ANC’s project was to design, develop and implement a community-based, culturally appropriate research project that addresses critical behavioral health issues facing the people of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. ANC determined from their CBPR model that a culturally relevant education is a high priority for American Indian education. Based on this, its study seeks to examine if student’s cultural engagement and knowledge affects their anxiety and persistence in college. It initiated its research project by conducting a community focus group with many of these participants now engaged as a community consultant team who assisted in the determination of the final research questions and design of its study. ANC narrowed its focus to study enculturation and anxiety related to enculturation and transculturation, and the College completed the qualitative interviews. It is now analyzing data using Dedoose.

Fort Peck Community College
FPCC’s behavioral health research project, Cande owastege (to have one’s heart in the right place), was designed to address the question: Will a mindfulness based culturally compatible community intervention reduce toxic allostatic load (toxic stress/elevated cortisol) on the Fort Peck Indian reservation? Three focus groups were completed in 2016 for community input. A five week intervention following a four directions cultural model was designed for each week. Participants are completing mindfulness intervention research using seven assessment tools.

Haskell Indian Nations University
HINU’s project is establishing a behavioral health campus initiative, Generation Indigenous Liberation. A community advisory board was established to examine the behavioral health needs of HINU students with a focus on historical trauma related to interpersonal violence. HINU completed 203 surveys and is in the process of convening focus groups, transcribing group sessions, and data analysis.

Ilisaġvik College
A change in NARCH project leadership within a month of receiving their sub-award created an excellent learning experience for Ilisaġvik College that resulted in IC developing procedures for conducting behavioral health research, identification of an Institutional Review Board (IC worked with the IRB from Northwest Indian College which serves as the IRB for AIHEC), discussion about the role and responsibilities of an IRB and the potential for developing a board at IC in the future, and researching human subjects’ protection training programs. The project director and student researchers have started data collection through focus groups in the local communities.

Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
The project goals were to: (1) 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 obtained tribal council approval to conduct the research and completed surveys with current student body and graduates. Upon analysis of data, KBOCC plans to identify curricula and training programs that will continue to meet behavioral health needs, identify and adapt interventions and outcome measures, and plan and develop behavioral health programs and services to facilitate student success.

Tohono O’odham Community College
TOCC conducted 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 emphasis of the project thus far has been on the student researchers research training. The project has developed research questions and interviewed key personnel to inform survey design. TOCC is preparing to present its proposal to tribal leadership as the next step in their behavioral health research capacity building process.
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 master degree 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