

# CULTURE AS MEDICINE



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
**Native American Health Sciences**





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### Thank You to Our Partners

- WSU Native American Health Sciences Tribal Advisory Board
- Empire Health Foundation
- Bank of America
- Spokane Tribe of Indians
- WSU Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and WSU Native Programs and WSU IREACH
- Lonnie Nelson, WSU College of Nursing, Assoc. Prof.
- Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board
- Portland Area Indian Health Service
- OHSU School of Medicine Northwest Native Center of Excellence
- University of California Davis School of Medicine
- Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians
- Association of American Indian Physicians
- University of North Dakota Indians Into Medicine Alumni
- Margo Hill, JD *Spokane Tribe of Indians*
- EWU Area Health Education Center
- Kaiser Permanente

## ▶ A Letter from the Director



*Culture as Medicine.* What does this mean exactly? In my own perspective of Culture as Medicine, it is not only a holistic view of how indigenous people view and practice healing, but it can also reference how we teach and prepare future healers,

gather and prepare foods and medicines, live traditionally and spiritually, support our families, and how we serve our communities. For centuries, indigenous communities, elders, and healers, have mentored, fostered, and created learning environments that fused scientific understandings with and through the environment such as plants, foods, water, animals, and also traditions, ceremonies, and spiritually. These teachings were, and are still important, because they provide an understanding of our place as healers in a world where culture is at the center of all we do. Thus, Culture as Medicine, is highlighted here in the stories and experiences you will read, because it has been, and will continue to be, the center of what we do.

Allin p'unchay! Good day! I am **Naomi M. Bender**, Ph.D., Indigenous Quechua (northern Andean Mountain region of Peru), and I have the distinct honor and privilege of serving as the Director of Washington State University's Native American Health Sciences (NAHS), the new Center for Native American Health (CNAH), and the tribal nations of the Pacific Northwest, since October of 2018. Our office of NAHS and the new CNAH are located on the WSU Health Science campus in Spokane, along the Spokane River, and upon the original homelands of the Spokane Tribe of Indians.

Since its inception in 2007, WSU NAHS has been blessed to run both the Na-ha-shnee Summer Institute that serves Native American (NA) youth interested in health occupations, and an annual academic retention program that has helped support the graduation of almost 70 NA nurses. In the last two years however, we



have seen a robust expansion of our work with students, tribal nations, education and health care systems, and community stakeholders locally, regionally, and nationally, that has increased our programmatic capacity from 2 to 13 pathway programs meant to recruit and support NA health students. Several of these programs are collaboratively developed, funded, and managed between NAHS and partners in the colleges of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences, veterinary medicine, and Native Programs in Pullman. With the colleges seeing some of their largest increases in the number of NA students they have matriculated, we at NAHS are thrilled to now serve and culturally support 54 NA students enrolled in these colleges and another 180+ NA pre-health students system wide. These increased numbers of NA students are in large part due to the continuous collaborative pathway efforts of each of the health sciences colleges and our office, but moreover, their commitment to expanding the diverse workforce through their admissions processes. To date, NAHS has now supported almost 90 NA health science graduates.

In addition to being responsible for helping the health science colleges recruit the number of NA's entering the health care workforce, the mission and work of NAHS and CNAH, have expanded to:

- 1) culturally embedding and teaching indigenous healing perspectives through newly developed curriculum and clinical education modalities to counterbalance western forms of medical and health education with traditional understandings and perspectives, toward equitable Indigenous patient care, and
- 2) providing a space for tribal community health initiatives through our land-grant mission focused in planning, training, facilitation, support, and collaboration with tribal nation partners and affiliates.

The priorities for NAHS and our Center are not only new and unique to WSU, but also across institutions of higher education and other health and allied health programs throughout the United States. A particular benchmark of NAHS and the Center's expansion is our vision to balance the long-held primary focus of western medicine's approach to patient care education with bridging

indigenous frameworks and perspectives of healing, so they may co-exist and better serve our people. Ideally, the training of culturally safe practices should be done early in the educational phases of career preparation, where unintentional harms through communication and practice can be better understood, acknowledged, be made aware of, and pivoted toward cultural proficiencies of care.

An exhilarating year at NAHS, we, along with the WSU NAHS Tribal Advisory Board and community partners, opened the doors to our new Center for Native American Health, on August 6, 2021. This was a beautiful day that helped launch years of preparation, vision, and work from those before me and other members of our NAHS team, who truly laid the foundation for what NAHS is today. The CNAH is a culturally centered home away from home for our students, and features three student smart rooms, a six-person computer lab, staff and faculty offices, a welcoming kitchen and event space, student storage areas, healing areas, and a clinical simulation space for students to practice their learned skills.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank the generous and continued support from each of our donors, the Empire Health Foundation for their continued commitment and partnership in all we do, Bank of America toward the expansion of changing healing practices, our Indigenous healer and educator cohorts who walk beside us daily to complete this work that our ancestors have laid before us, our WSU NAHS Tribal Advisory Board and elders for all you instill and support us with, and all of the other educational institutions, health care systems, and community partners along the way. Without each of you, we would not be able to provide these unique and impactful scopes of change.

Sulpayki! Thank you! I hope you enjoy this newsletter and we hope to continue walking alongside you.

**Naomi M. Bender**

**“We acknowledge the land on which we sit and occupy today as the traditional homelands of the Spokane Tribe of Indians. We take this opportunity to thank the original caretakers of this land.”**



# WSU NATIVE AMERICAN HEALTH SCIENCES PROGRAM

## 2021–2022: 236+ STRONG

Currently **54** Native students at WSU Health Sciences  
 Approx. **182** Native pre-health/health/science students at WSU system-wide



## GOALS

- Stabilize growth toward meaningful impact of program pathways and health initiatives, and Center for Native American Health
- Growth of WSU Center for Native American Health

## NEEDS

- Additional FTE
- Pathway Program Funding
- Funding to support Center for Native American Health

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## ▶ Na-ha-shnee STEAM Health Institute

This program is designed for students, grades 9-12, interested in health sciences and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM Health) fields.

Native American Health Sciences hosted the Na-ha-shnee STEAM Health Institute June 28–July 30, 2021. The program was a distance learning experience for high school participants for five weeks. This Institute was focused on health sciences and STEAM Health careers, as well as research and learning opportunities within these fields. We provided hands-on learning experiences four hours each weekday virtually. The participants were sent a Chromebook, experiment kits, and other materials, such as a culturally based art project, to do in their own homes. Participants learned from faculty and professionals across several health occupations and received cultural instruction from tribal elders. All expenses were paid for and students who participated for the full five weeks were able to keep their Chromebook, earned a .5 high school credit in health education plus a \$200 stipend.



**Lonnie Nelson, Ph.D., WSU College of Nursing, Associate Professor**

Dr. Nelson created the STEAM Health Sciences Research summer training experience for Native high school students to mirror a summer program he was exposed to in the 10th grade. The summer program gave him a taste of

what it was like to work in scientific research on a college campus and changed the course his life was to take, setting his feet firmly on the path to higher education, and eventually to become a health researcher himself, focusing on health disparities experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The STEAM summer program includes hands-on experiments and experiences in scientific fields relevant to the advancement of health sciences. Biology experiments in culturing and growing bacteria from various household surfaces, extracting DNA, microscopy, and gel electrophoresis are all carried out by the students in their own homes with supplies and equipment shipped to them at the start of the program. Students are provided with equipment and software to enable them to explore some of the processes associated with bioengineering, such as computer aided drafting, in which they designed and then printed 3D components for an adjustable smartphone holder. They also gained experience in social scientific methods through an elder storytelling project, in which they interviewed an elder from their family or community about their life events and cultural backgrounds. Once gathered, the students then presented to the larger group in a brief animated digital story. These activities are also supplemented by traditional art and craft projects in which they learned how to make dream catchers and game pieces for traditional games. All of these experiences are intended to connect the students to fields adjacent to the health sciences, and to introduce them to the possibility of seeing themselves in these professions as viable career paths. In many Native communities there is a paucity of Native role models in health science professions. The STEAM program is intended to remedy that lack of a vision for these Native youth of themselves in these roles. The hope is that this will encourage their entry into health science career paths.

### 2021 NA-HA-SHNEE STEAM HEALTH INSTITUTE

#### Participants

- 25 applicants accepted/ 20 completed
- 21 different tribes in WA, ID, OR, MT, CA, NM, OK
- 8 Native American students are from WSU MOU tribes (Cowlitz, Yakama, Confederated Salish & Kootenai, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla, Confederated Tribes of the Colville)
- 1 returning Na-ha-shnee student

#### Benefits

- The participants were provided with a Chromebook computer, microscope, stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, experiment kits, cultural activity kit, informational career guide on health sciences occupations, and more.
- Earned a .5 high school credit in health education
- Received a \$200 stipend







**Evanlene Melting Tallow,**  
**Blackfeet/Blood (Kainai)**  
**Native American Health Sciences**  
**Outreach Coordinator**  
**Na-ha-shnee Institute Coordinator**

“I coordinated Na-ha-shnee summer institute for the past three years. The first year, the program was held in-person at

the WSU Spokane campus. The second year of the program, we included STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) and merged with Na-ha-shnee. The combination of the two programs created a three-week long virtual camp. The switch to virtual was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was the only opportunity for the Native American high school students to participate. The 2021 Na-ha-shnee STEAM Health Institute expanded to a five-week, long distance learning experience. The two extra weeks gave an expansion in programing in research and health occupational fields.

“The last two years have been a challenge however, it has also given us opportunities. Opportunities to reach out and connect with more students in rural areas of Indian Country. We now are able to think outside of the box of what a ‘normal’ summer program could look like. With the ability of online learning, we now have other options to reach more people and provide an experience unlike the experiences before, in a sense, we are keeping up with the times.

“The comments about Na-ha-shnee and STEAM from participants are positive and parents are thankful for their student’s participation in the programs. The 2021 Na-ha-shnee STEAM summer Institute served 20 High School students from 21 different tribes in WA, ID, OR, MT, CA, NM, OK. The success of the last three years is a result of NAHS team leadership, WSU Spokane Information Technology services team, the staff and faculty of the colleges of Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, the UW Dentistry program, and tribal communities. I’m personally thankful for the opportunity to serve the Native youth and tribal communities for future Native healers.”



**Parent: Nicole Whiskeyjack**

**What has your child told you about their experience in Na-ha-shnee STEAM Health Institute?**

“She would highly recommend it to her

friends. She thinks that Washington State University sounds like a really good college for her, so there has been a lot of positive feedback.”

**What has your child gotten out of the program and how will it help them in the future?**

“A lot of the things she got from the program are from the start to the end. At the beginning, she thought it was going to be really long and now that she’s two days away from completing she said, “It’s so fast! I don’t want it to end now,” and because she got the routine of coming to the program.

“We’re really big into our culture and traveling, smudging and powwow. Some of the things that she learned during the five weeks of this program were making her own hand game sticks for stick games. She really enjoyed that because we do that as a family and we’ve been to many stick tournaments and powwows all over Canada and the U.S. As parents, a lot of those traditions that we tell her are important in life so that she can carry on those traditions, has been very beneficial to her coming from Washington State University because she’s realizing all this stuff is important.”

**What would you tell another parent in your community to expect if their children were to participate in our program?**

“It was a commitment for her and when she signed up she said, “I really want to do it,” and she was committed to it. I would tell the other parents to definitely go for it, but make sure you know that you’re going to be committed and ready to learn and grow.”





**Student: Aurora Whiskeyjack**

**What was your favorite lesson and why?**

“My favorite lesson from this week was journaling. Ever since we started this portion, I

have continued to journal ever since. The storytelling time was really awesome too. I look forward to journaling every Tuesday.”

**What is something that you learned?**

**What was it about?**

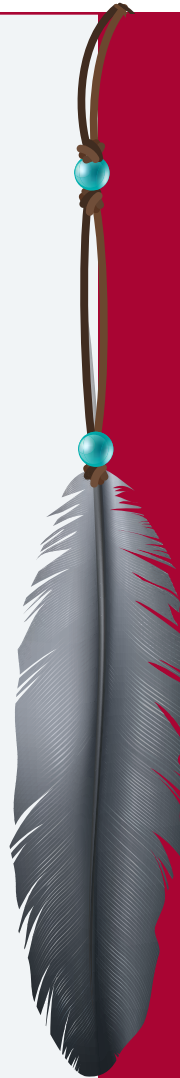
“I honestly didn’t know that usually when you see the dentist they have taken the time of hands-on work and academic classes to get to where they are, to say if your teeth are clean or not, or if you need to brush better. I heard all their stories—that they actually went through a lot to become a dentist. This was inspirational to me as the hard work they put in to get to where they are now and share those stories with the youth was really impactful.”

**What has your experience with the virtual presentations been like?**

“I really enjoyed the random conversations that sparked up during the virtual presentations. The topic on Twilight caught my interest! It was funny because when you’re in school, your teachers would tell you not to use the chat box for discussions unrelated to class. We all just talk about something while still staying engaged with the lecture and it’s really interesting and OK to let loose at times.”

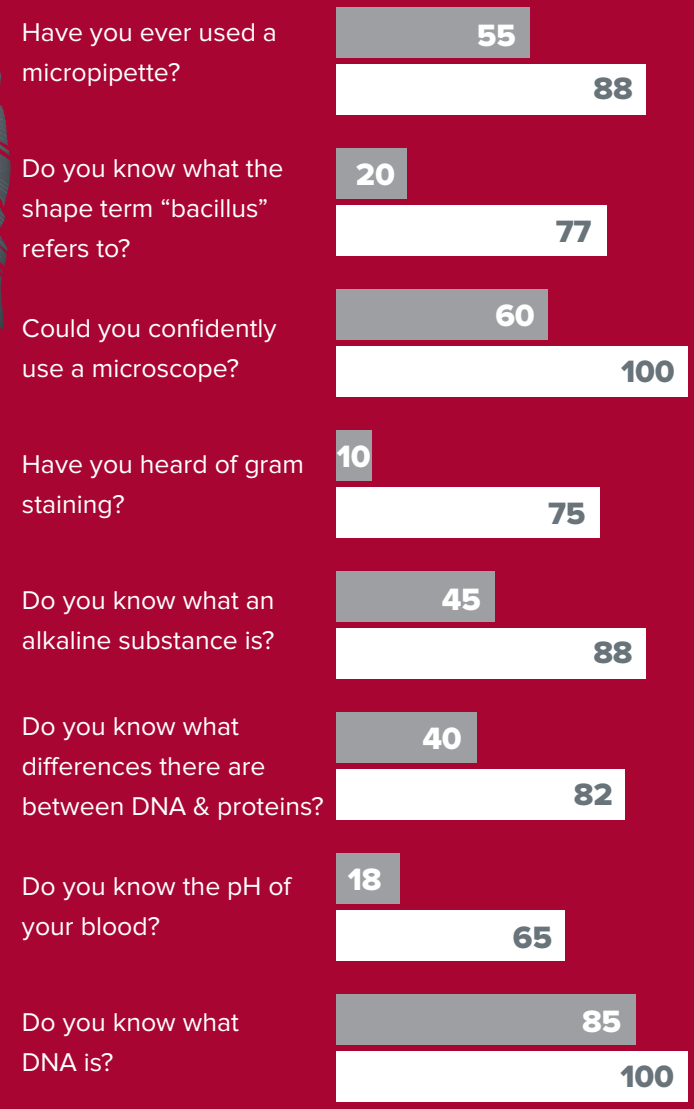
**What did you think of connecting with students from different states?**

“I thought it was really fun since I have a small group of friends from my swim team. One of the other girls I met—she and I are from the same town, which kind of shocked me. I think it was really fun to meet with people from different states, as I’m from a small town in Oregon. You can just kind of see all these other people, where they are from, and know the kinds of lives they lived or are living.”



At the end of the five weeks, the combined online institute proved to have positive impacts on the lives of participants. These 20 participants were able to interact with each other and gain exposure to the many opportunities available to them in the health sciences. A major step forward in empowering the next generation of healers.

■ **Pre Na-ha-shnee STEAM Health Institute**  
 ■ **Post Na-ha-shnee STEAM Health Institute**





**Paige D. La Cruz**

**What was your favorite lesson and why?**

“My favorite lesson this week was anatomy, because I really enjoyed how we got to see everything

internal to the human body.”

**Were there any speakers you connected with, and what was it about them or their presentations you enjoyed?**

“I enjoyed the Nursing Simulation the most. The presenters were showing us how they were conducting their skills and going step-by-step by verbalizing at which steps they were doing something.”

**Were there any speakers you connected with, and what was it about them or their presentations you enjoyed?**

“I think the bacteria presentation really made you think about the nasal swabs being conducted for the coronavirus.”

**What did you think of connecting with students from different states?**

“I think it’s really cool to connect with others across the country because we all share the same experience as a student. I’m from California and I’m learning so much more about Washington state that I didn’t really know before.”

**What is something that you learned this session? What was it about?**

“Something that I learned was what blood pressure is and how to conduct/measure it. I think that was really interesting because in my family, elevated blood pressure is common. I have to learn different ways to teach my relatives and so this was a helpful presentation.”

**What has your experience with the virtual presentations been like?**

“I think it’s really cool conducting and attending virtual presentations, because it is challenging sometimes. My wi-fi connection will sometimes go off and I’ll miss certain parts of the presentation. I’ll go re-watch recordings with my family being there so they’re also learning things.”



**Maysa Couture**

**What was your favorite lesson and why?**

“My favorite lesson was anatomy, because I’ve never actually seen inside a human cadaver, so I

thought this was really cool. The presenters did a good job of lecturing to us the material, but keeping us engaged.”

**Were there any speakers you connected with, and what was it about them or their presentations you enjoyed?**

“I think I connected with the ‘Nursing Skills’ presenters because I liked the hands-on portions of the presentation where we measured blood pressure with a sphygmomanometer, blood pressure cuff, and stethoscope. I think that was really cool for them to teach us this skill.”

**What did you think of connecting with students from different states?**

“I think it’s really interesting just to see those small difference between everyone. In our last week, a student mentioned not being able to see all four seasons, since he lives in California. The small things that different people have to bring forward is interesting.”

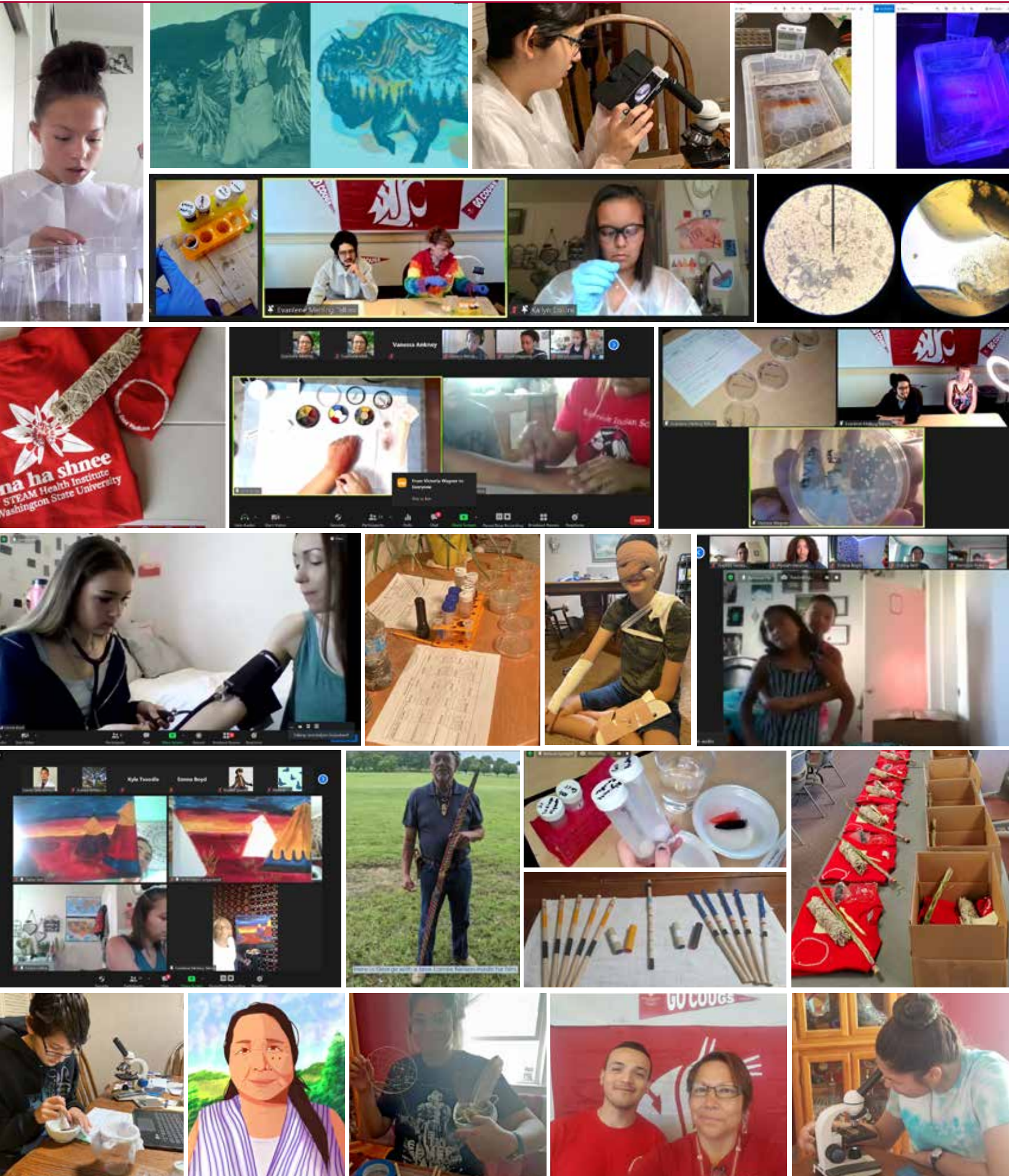
**What is something that you learned this week? What was it about?**

“I thought it was cool when Janine was showing us the different organisms and how they’re different depending on number of times they haven’t acted in some way.”

**What has your experience with the virtual presentations been like?**

“I think it’s been challenging just because you’re inside your own home, but at the same time it’s nice to be able to see my parents and what they get to see me accomplishing in my online classes. I get to share it with people that I’m at home with, and it’s what I’m doing for most of my time.”







## Reimagine IndianS into MedicinE (RISE) Summer Academy

### Partnership Encourages Natives to Pursue Health Care Careers

Washington State University is one of three Northwest universities working with the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board to increase the number of Native Americans practicing health care to decrease health disparities and improve public health. The joint project, called Reimagine IndianS into MedicinE (RISE), is a pre-med pathway meant to support and expand the number of Native American physicians in the workforce.



**Carlene A. Black**, Navajo Nation, “There is a saying that most Diné or my family say ‘T’áá hwo’ ají t’éego’ (It’s up to you). These words inspire and show me that it is really up to me, what I want my future to be. I have listened to the paths of many influential people and found that none are the same as mine but we

all have the same goal in the end, which is to help make difference in someone’s life. This makes me grateful for such a program to exist, that helps many American Indian/ Alaskan Native prepare for medical school and connect with other indigenous colleagues.”



**Abigail Bondurant**, Blackfoot/Sioux, “To be whole and to be the best version of myself by embracing who I am as I continue on my journey to being a physician. It is an honor and a blessing to be a Native, and I have the RISE program and all of the wonderful contributors to thank for the support, love, and acceptance.”



**Tia Gentry**, Klamath Tribes, “The RISE program has given me more than I could have ever anticipated. I have gained immense knowledge of the indigenous community that I would not have otherwise been exposed to at such lengths. Most importantly, this program allowed me to find the

importance in my individual journey while providing support and encouragement to discover who I am and who I want to become as a physician. I will draw strength from the connections and experiences this summer to continue my path to becoming a physician.”



**Tyler Gore**, Muscogee Creek Nation, “RISE has provided me the opportunity to not only develop the necessary skills and knowledge required for a successful application to medical school but has helped me build a strong community with my fellow future indigenous leaders of health care. The ability to work with

medical school admissions staff is has been extremely helpful in helping us better understand the admissions process. I look forward to working as a medical student and physician with my fellow scholars in the future.”



**Greg Gurrola**, San Carlos Apache Tribe, “Through the RISE program I have met people who are very similar to me and this has given me a sense of community that I needed. My confidence level has improved, and I now know I have help and resources that can help me in my journey. I am thankful for everyone involved and meeting the amazing people through RISE.”



**Germain R. Medina Jr.**, Wyandotte Nation, “I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of the RISE program to learn about the Native American culture and prepare for the MCAT.”



**Steven Jump**, (Cherokee Nation),  
 “In the Cherokee language the phrase ᏍᏏᏏᏁᏍᏔᏅᏍᏔᏅᏍᏔᏅ is often translated as ‘we all take responsibility of each other’s well being.’ RISE has allowed me to explore what this phrase really means to me and to so many others within our community. I will forever be grateful,

not only for the practical MCAT preparation, but for the many shared words and stories that I will carry with me and remember whenever I need encouragement on this path. ᏍᏏᏏᏁᏍᏔᏅᏍᏔᏅᏍᏔᏅ. Thank you, I am truly grateful and until we meet again.”



**Stacey Kangipneq Lucason**, “I am the daughter of Richard Lucason of Seward and Sandra Wing from Connecticut, granddaughter to Robert and Annia Lucason of Bristol Bay; Yup’ik; member of the Ninilchik Tribe. Through the RISE program, I have been encouraged to

imagine myself actually applying to medical school, not just dreaming about it. This program has expanded my confidence to look for a good fit instead of trying to make myself fit into a school and has fostered connection with two more young Native people that will someday be peers in medicine.”



**Bob Lynch**, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, “The pandemic hit my family hard and highlighted the continued need for Native physicians. Ironically, the lock down enabled me to get my medical plan back on track and Zoom from afar to RISE. This program’s

indigenous emphasis, admissions advice and science prep have set me up well for medical school. It can finally happen! I wish we had wrap-around programs to this extent years ago.”

**Jesse Johnson**, Kumeyaay from The San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians, “The things that make me different are the things that make me ME.” – Piglet.

**Sheridan Sherlock.**, Member of the Navajo Nation, “I have become a part of a very beautiful community and have grown more confident in my journey to medicine. I have had the opportunity to meet other indigenous students and was provided a safe space to become vulnerable and share my stories. I enjoyed our case studies and virtual rounds and having the chance to meet doctors who can help me achieve my goals. Most importantly, I have learned that resilience is key and there is a place for me in medicine. Thank you to the RISE program for providing me with the tools and support to prepare me for my next step. Thank you to my cohorts for the camaraderie and words of encouragement. I look forward to us all becoming healers.”



**Jaida M. Smith**, Navajo Nation,  
 “I am so grateful to be part of the RISE program. RISE has provided me with immense resources and support for my continuing journey in becoming an Indigenous physician. I have been able to learn about myself and my culture in many ways that I couldn’t have imagined

were possible. It has opened doors and renewed my passion for serving the underrepresented and those who are often marginalized. I hope to incorporate both traditional and modern medical practices into my work as a physician, and I would like to thank the RISE Program for empowering me toward this goal.”



**Nizhoni Sutter**, Navajo Nation (Diné),  
 “I greatly appreciate the RISE program and all those who contributed to its success. This experience has been extremely valuable. I will take the lessons and knowledge learned from all the incredible presenters and apply it to my medical school application process

and future medical practice. This program is so important, and I am grateful for WSU and its partners.”

**Desiree Flores**, Pascua Yaqui,  
 “RISE allowed me to connect with my culture and gave me the reassurance that I am on the right path.”







**Madison Verge**, Muscogee Creek Nation, “RISE has helped me learn so much about Native American culture and tradition that I did not grow up around. I feel the community that RISE has given me has helped me grow and understand not only more about where I came from, but others in our cohort as well.

It has been a great experience being able to learn more about where I come from all while preparing to become a physician. The preparation for medical school has been absolutely incredible. We have been able gain insight from so many physicians, as well as learn skills that will help us when the time to apply comes. I am excited for the future of becoming a physician and embracing my native culture and traditions ahead.”



**Laura Wilbur**, Member of Yakama Nation “Rise has helped me see there are people like me who have a direction but feel lost getting to it and has helped me realize not everyone needs to be a 4.0 Ivy League student to become a healer. I felt like my two worlds have merged with the help of RISE. Before

this program I had not got to sit down and talk to a Native American physician and what it was like for them. RISE was a networking opportunity that I didn’t realize I needed but I am so glad to have. RISE gave me a community that understands where I am at in life or what I may be going through. Thank you to all who have made this possible!”



**Bailey B. Williams**, Member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, “RISE has given me the opportunity to not only broaden but also deepen my wealth of cultural knowledge for my indigenous brothers and sisters. In addition to this, RISE has offered vital resources I would not otherwise have been afforded.

I appreciate all of the work that went into this program, the care and advancement for our people is so greatly showcased within this program.”

## RISE Developers and Instructors



**Erik Brodt, MD, Oregon Health & Science University, Associate Professor of Family Medicine, School of Medicine**

“Oregon Health & Science University Northwest Native American Center of Excellence (NNACoE) is grateful to partner with the visionary and relational leaders at both the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine and the Native American Health Sciences Center at Washington State University. We are proud of our joint efforts to work with Tribes to accelerate opportunities for American Indian and Alaska Native Youth.”



**Naomi M. Bender, PhD, Director, WSU Native American Health Sciences program**

**As a veteran pathways developer for Native American youth through professional health and allied health programming, how does RISE**

**compare to other pre-med pathways?**

“RISE is unique for a few reasons, and I believe it’s among the top programs of its kind in the nation. First, the program was developed as a multi-institutional commitment and regional collaboration through OHSU, WSU, and UCD. This is unheard of in higher education, because for decades (and still today), institutions have competed for programmatic grant funding, participants, and silo-ed their efforts that ultimately limited resources and capacity building and forced many programs to shut down.

“Secondly, because the RISE curriculum is meant to bolster the preparation of Native pre-med participants MCAT score and AMCAS application toward successful matriculation into a medical school of their choice, the contribution my office provides in developing, scheduling, and managing the cultural tenets (60+ hours of the curriculum), delivers a holistic culturally centered approach to their overall success. As indigenous people, we know we thrive in culturally

centered approaches to our learning, environment, and support systems; by doing so, we build upon the strengths-based approach of our resiliency through what many know to be one of the most challenging health professional career tracks. I am proud of the hard work the entire RISE staff and team when we see our Native pre-meds' confidence soar as they matriculate into medical schools!"



**Leila Harrison, PhD, Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions, WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine**

**What opportunities did your office contribute to the RISE program?**

"My office offered numerous

opportunities through the admissions component of the RISE Summer Academy including mock interviews, personal statement reviews, in-depth application strategies, and presentations by other admissions deans from medical schools that put forth strategic effort to support and enroll Native American medical students."

**In what ways do RISE participants transforming during the summer program from the admissions point of view?**

"Being able to hear directly from several admission deans gives scholars insights and strategies for applying to our various medical schools. Scholars shared that they felt more confident about applying to medical school and that process to do so felt less overwhelming and opaque. Scholars gained confidence in how they answered questions during the mock interviews and received feedback about sharing all their gifts and experiences in an interview."

**Why is this program important to colleges of medicine?**

"Our mission is to solve problems in challenging health care environment in Washington, particular among rural and underserved areas and communities. Beyond our mission, it is critical that we seek to support and enroll Native American medical students across this nation. This program is critical to give access and support to Native American aspiring doctors who might not otherwise have access, to help build their confidence that medicine is a path for them if they want it, and to convey that there are people and medical schools who care about helping them get there, regardless of which medical school they attend."



**David Garcia, WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, Assistant Dean for Equity and Inclusion**

**How does RISE measure up with many other programs you've helped develop?**

"When we began conceptualizing RISE we were sure that it was designed with

Native American scholars in mind. Oftentimes programs are designed to fit the status quo and then we try to call it a 'Native' program only because we recruit Native students to participate. RISE centers Native American ways of being and knowing along with intentional bridges so our scholars can understand the path to medical school. Plus, we have learned so much from our students, elders, and colleagues that will inform how we engage the next installment of RISE."



**Esteban Herevia  
WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, Pathway and Inclusion Coordinator**

**As someone who worked with RISE participants daily, what successes did you see with both the students AND the program over the past summer?**

"Competency and skill mastery are the very first areas of improvement scholars identify as their primary motivations for participating in a program like RISE. For the majority, those areas also seem to be where most of the concerns lie.

"As scholars progress through RISE, they uncover the intentionality of every aspect of the program. From medical school student mentors to faculty teaching to build competency instead of expecting it, the confidence of scholars grows over time. For many scholars, RISE provides the first space where students can meet Native physicians. Physicians who practice multiple forms of medicine. Physicians who come from the very communities they do. Physicians who look just like them. If nothing else, RISE provides the opportunity for each scholar to see themselves represented in a field where they have experienced every level of oppression. And hopefully, one day, they will return and have influence on the field and generations to come."



**Cristi Pinela**  
**Oregon Health & Science University**  
**Program Coordinator, Wy'East**  
**Post-Baccalaureate Pathway**  
**Program Coordinator, Re-Imagine Indians Into Medicine (RISE)**

**Why is RISE an important piece of a student's pathway into medicine?**

“The removal of obstacles and the provision of resources is critical for anyone’s path to medicine. This is especially true for Native students, whose path to medicine may be especially fraught with challenges. Summer Academy does an amazing job of removing some of those challenges and revealing a path forward. And it does more than remove obstacles—it provides rich learning and cultural resources and a caring Indigenous community that is genuinely invested in their success.”



**Christina Uh, Outreach & Recruitment**  
**Program Coordinator for the Northwest**  
**Native American Center of Excellence**  
**(NNACoE) at OHSU**

**Watching the collaboration between institutions come together toward medical pathways for Native students,**

**what do you see taking shape?**

“Watching this collaboration between institutions unfold has been so exciting. I believe it is paving the way forward for further collaboration with additional institutions which only strengthens the work we do. After all, the goal is to propel these future healers toward reaching their dreams and goals. I see a strong commonality of professionals, learners, community members, and allies taking shape – together we will continue to change the face of medicine.”

► **Wy'East Pathway Program**

Wy'East is the traditional Multnomah name for Mount Hood, a prominent feature of the Columbia River region. The Wy'East post-bac pathway is part of the collaborative efforts between Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), WSU, and UC Davis. The pathway is built on the early success of OHSU's 10-month program that offers citizens of federally recognized tribes a pathway to improve their academic skills and be successful in the medical school admissions process.

There are three major components to the pathway:

- academic preparation for medical school (including MCAT prep course)
- professional preparation for the rigor of medical school
- culturally-relevant experiential learning



**Perspectives from a Student**

**Alexandra Jones**  
**Medical Student, Class of 2025**  
**Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine**  
**Pronouns: She/Her/Hers**

**How did Wy'East help prepare you for your first year at the WSU College of Medicine?**

“The curriculum in Wy'East is modeled after a first-year medical student curriculum, and our teachers also teach the medical students. This curriculum allowed me to have a much easier transition between undergrad and medical school. We had classes on anatomy, fundamental sciences, and public health issues (including analyzing COVID research), intermingled with traditional medical knowledge. Our mentors and teachers well prepared us for the increased workload of medical school while supporting us with mentorship and research opportunities.”



**What are lessons you learned from engaging with your fellow Wy'East Scholars that you believe will help you as you continue in your training?**

“My fellow Wy'East scholars are all from very diverse backgrounds, and it was so rewarding to share cultural knowledge and traditions within our group. Every tribe has a different lifestyle and culture, some of which I was not familiar with. For example, some of the scholars were from Alaska, where their tribes rely heavily on subsistence hunting and gathering. Knowing this, as a future doctor, I can be more cognizant of prescribing certain diets to people who have limited food options such as these. I think these conversations have made me a more empathetic and considerate learner, as well as increased my cultural awareness.”

**How has Native American Health Sciences supported you during your transition onto campus within the new Center for NA Health?**

“Within medicine, there are not many spaces where we can gather as Indigenous people to learn together and share our experiences and cultures. The Center for Native American Health is one of these spaces where our perspectives are not only welcome but wanted. Not only is the Center a physical gathering place, it also gives us access to other Native doctors and health care practitioners whose mentorship and guidance has been invaluable as we navigate medical school. Being one of the only Native students in my class means that sometimes I am asked questions I don't know the answer to, so having other Native students and mentors to guide me has made me feel more confident in answering those questions. I also appreciate the cultural activities the Center hosts as a way for my fellow students to learn more about our culture.”

**What might you share with other Native American pre-meds considering WSU College of Medicine?**

“The WSU College of Medicine does an amazing job of supporting Native students and valuing our perspectives. Their mission of “solving challenging health care environments across Washington” closely aligns with many students' goals of improving health care in their communities.”













## Summer Research Opportunity (SRO)

Summer Research Opportunity is a sponsored summer research and learning opportunity for medical students who just finished year 1 and rising year-2 students. Sponsors lead the opportunities and are responsible for determining what students will research, learn, or do.

WSU NAHS has co-sponsored a total of 11 medical students with the WSU College of Medicine and 1 graduate student from another Washington state university over the past 3 summers. The program is meant to decolonize and indigenize approaches to understanding tribal community healthcare, health, food, environment and other trends, needs, responses, research, literature, and treating patients in indigenous communities in ways that build trust and with positive health impacts. The curriculum will expand to add more students from other colleges this coming summer.



**Wilbert James, MD**, is a family practice physician working in the WSU Native American Health Sciences and a member of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community of Washington. James is trained as a traditional speaker.



**Ava Goodman**, partner of James, is Cherokee and trained in a traditional fashion from her Grandmother, Great-grandmother and Guardian healing ways. Together we expand allopathic medicine into decolonized thoughts and complementary treatments learned from our experience and training.

“We are honored to have time to interact with SRO students. Our goal in interaction is to teach our students from a native oral tradition perspective. One of the first lessons is to learn one’s ‘advice’. ‘Advice’ is one’s genealogy and history, namely who you are and where you come from. The time spent is an immersion learning of each other striving to decolonize our thoughts, words and actions.

“We are a culmination of what has come before. We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors. We build on the work that has been done before and for us. It strengthens us to acknowledge our heritage and find the good in it.

“I have found that most people are not taught their heritage. We are not automatons separate from our social experience, rather we are a product of our ancestry. That is why it speaks to us. Everyone is unique, not because they are individually different, but rather everyone is unique because their perspective and experience is a culmination of everything that has led to them.

“In a world of measurables we challenge people to drop their rulers and really see themselves and those around them. When we can take pride in ourselves. When we can acknowledge the special nature of each person. Our medicine grows.

“Our goal is to feed the healer in everyone we touch. There it is in the King’s English. Decolonized thought written down. These thoughts are more powerful in their original format, oral tradition. Oral tradition is more than stories. It is about listening. Can you listen without the expectation of understanding? Can you listen without the urge to agree or disagree? Can you just listen using your cumulative perspective to distill meaning from the words? That is what we do, listen to each other.”

### Perspectives from Students



**Jasmine Birch**: Iroquois and Sioux descendant. “This program gave me the opportunity to connect with my heritage, mentor pre-medical students, and learn from Native providers to better serve my future patients. I gained a tremendous amount of knowledge of historic trauma, Indigenous sovereignty, and healing

frameworks. This has provided me with the information to start pushing for implementing change in our current curriculum to address and inform other students about these important subjects.”



**Maggie DeBell:** “Working with the Native American Health Sciences team this summer has allowed me to reframe and start to decolonize many of the perspectives on history, health care, and research that I had picked up earlier in my education. It has given me more chances to practice cultural

humility in the exam room and challenged me to consider ways to work with patients in ways that are comfortable and effective for them, with an understanding that my training in Western medicine is just one method of healing and maintaining health. I am looking forward to building off everything I have learned this summer as I continue my education and training.”



**Kameron J. Goetz:** “It has truly been an incredible blessing to have been given the privilege of taking part in the WSU SRO program. I cannot begin to quantify all that I have gained, but above all other things I believe that I have gained first humility and then wisdom. Humility that looks back upon

the land I grew up on and asks, ‘Who was here before me?’ And wisdom to know that good intentions mean nothing without creating real change. As Dr. James has told us, ‘We are all indigenous of this earth.’ Because of this opportunity, I hope to be a better member of this world we call home.”



**Shelby Koch:** Member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. “I have gained a greater understanding of how decolonizing methodologies can be utilized in health care research and in the exam room itself. Our time with Dr. James has also given me insight into what it’s like to be a physician for

Native communities and we were able to experience a practice exam scenario – which provided a great learning experience & memories I will hold for a lifetime.”



**Leah Kooiman:** “In this program I have gained and am still gaining a deeper appreciation for Indigenous perspectives on medicine, healing, and medical education. I am learning to go deeper than just learning things about another culture, shifting to really learning from and with these other

cultures. What I ultimately want in the future is to be a physician that my patients from all sorts of backgrounds can feel safe and comfortable with, and with whom they can get the best possible care.”



**Phuong Van:** “I am honored and grateful to have been a part of the SRO program as it has been an enlightening experience, exposing me to indigenous history, culture, and traditional healing. This program has changed the way I look at western medicine and what it means

to decolonize medicine. I will be walking away from this experience with a better understanding of what it means to have cultural humility and will continue to push myself to grow and learn so that I can one day serve the indigenous population in a culturally safe and aware manner. I want to thank Dr. Bender, Dr. James, and everyone else who has opened the space, allowed vulnerability, and pushed for growth.”



**Jessica Wang:** “I am so grateful for the opportunity to participate in the SRO program this summer. This program has enhanced my understanding of the land that I grew up on and the indigenous populations I may one day treat. Learning about Native American culture and history and the importance

of decolonizing methodologies from a Native perspective has highlighted a different way of learning and looking at medicine that has enriched my medical school training. As I continue my training, I strive to continue to be open to learning, mindful in my experiences, and to practice cultural humility in serving my future patients.”

## ► Margo Hill's Resilience is an Inspiration to Native Students

By Kevin Dudley



When **Margo Hill** speaks, her audience listens.

It's easy to, after all, as Hill's life experiences are an inspiration to people of all backgrounds. She was partially raised by her grandparents and then her mother in a trailer for much of her youth before embarking on a journey that brought her to Seattle, Russia, London, Los Angeles and Spokane. Along the way, she accomplished a lot and continues to accomplish things today.

It's why when Naomi Bender, the director of WSU Spokane's Native American Health Sciences (NAHS) program, arrived on campus in 2018, she sought out Hill's expertise. Since then, the relationship has blossomed into one that puts Hill in front of Native and non-Native students and audiences sharing her story and encouraging students to be resilient.

Hill has experience in being resilient.

"I think part of the beauty of being Native is being resilient. We have had a lot of things thrown at us," Hill said.

Despite the obstacles she and the Spokane Tribe have faced, Hill was able to attend college and graduate from law school with the support of her tribe.

But graduating wasn't easy. After enrolling in Edmonds Community College, Hill realized she wasn't quite prepared for post-secondary education. She had to take some low-level math courses to catch up. But being resilient, she never wavered. She eventually joined the American Institute for Foreign Study in Europe, which took her to London and parts of Russia. She returned to the states and enrolled at the University of Washington, where she earned a political science degree.

Hill enrolled at UCLA's law school and once again faced obstacles and new culture shock.

"I was in over my head. I was there during the Rodney King riots and I had friends who were guarding their family stores with guns. Just crazy," she said. "There was soot on my windowsill and sirens, and it was the weekend before finals."

Hill left UCLA without a law degree and returned to Spokane to work for Urban Indian Health. But the allure of a law degree never left, and she decided to enroll at Gonzaga's School of Law for a second try at becoming a lawyer.

Studying at Gonzaga wasn't easy for Hill, either. There was another learning curve and she experienced racism by a Gonzaga professor. But Hill remained resilient and became the first member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians to earn a law degree.

"A lot of times we go to college to help our people and to help our tribal communities," Hill said. "And so that is why I wanted to go to law school, to fight for my tribal government, tribal sovereignty, and protect our natural resources."

Hill practiced law for 10 years and then earned a degree in urban regional planning from Eastern Washington University, where she currently teaches. She uses her experiences to inspire other Native students.

"My main objective is helping Native students be successful in school," she said.

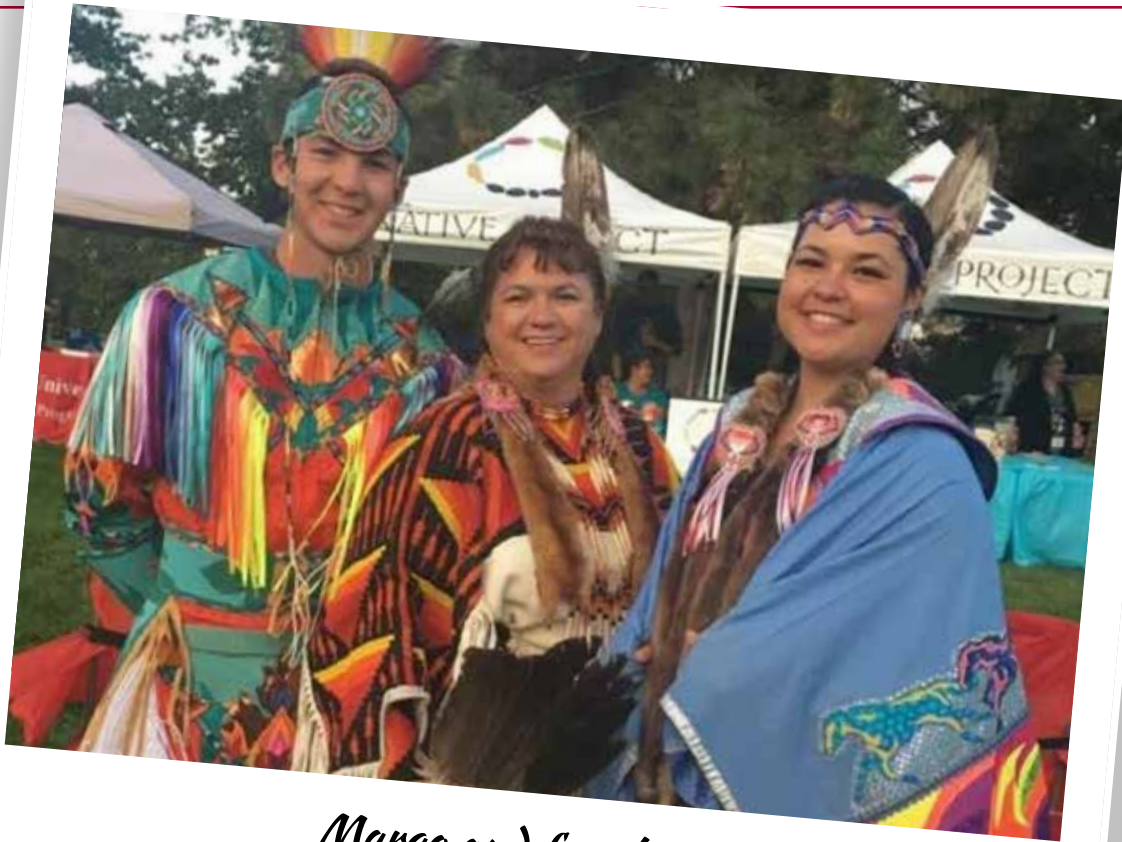
Hill does that in various ways. Working alongside NAHS, Hill is involved in the Na-ha-shnee STEAM Summer Institute and the RISE Summer Academy.

Na-ha-shnee brings Native high school students to WSU Spokane for two weeks of health sciences education introductions. The RISE Summer Academy is a six-week pathway program that helps prepare Native students for the medical school preparation and application process.

Hill has two daughters who completed the Na-ha-shnee STEAM Summer Institute when they were in high school. Hill was also inspired by Bender's tenacity in learning about the needs of tribal nations across the region.

"Native Americans have the least representation in the medical field," Hill said. "And it's because of programs at WSU





*Margo and family*

like Na-ha-shnee and RISE that we will see those numbers increase.”

Getting Native students into the health sciences programs at higher education institutions is one way Hill works to increase health awareness in tribal communities. Another way is through her research on opioids and addictions, with addiction problems in tribal communities attributed largely to the trauma tribes experienced.

“I don’t ever feel sorry for myself, but I understand when it comes to drugs and alcohol, it’s the historic trauma and how the American Indians were treated and that treaties were broken,” Hill said.

Hill’s advocacy efforts to help reduce addictions in tribal populations include stories—again—on resilience. She points to federal officials like Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Washington State Supreme Court Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis, and former Idaho state legislator Paulette Jordan as resilient Native women who overcame obstacles to achieve success.

Hill has been at the forefront of major changes in the region that honor Spokane’s Native American history. One of those changes was the elimination of Col. George Wright’s name on a street in North Spokane. The street, which runs along Spokane Falls Community College, is now named Whistalks Way, after Whist-alks, a female Spokane Tribe member who carried a medicine staff in battles against Wright’s army.

The resilience Hill has shown throughout her life is a great inspiration for Native students across the Pacific Northwest. It’s those experiences that drive Hill to inspire the next generation.

“We have excellent Native students that work their tails off, but they’re just at the fringe and they’re still not heard, and we’re still not seen. We just need the opportunity,” Hill said. “And with programs like Na-ha-shnee and the RISE program, we have that opportunity, and we can prove ourselves all day long.”



## Center for Native American Health Built and Will Expand Thanks to Support from Local Foundations

As WSU's Native American Health Sciences (NAHS) program serves tribal communities, the greater Spokane community serves NAHS. Two local foundations stepped up big time this year to allow NAHS to grow and expand into territory it's never experienced.

First, Empire Health Foundation (EHF) provided financial support to enable NAHS to build out the Center for Native American Health, a space that opened in 2021 and provides space for education, healing and gathering for all students at WSU Spokane. The support from Empire Health also helped WSU see its largest increase in Native American pre-health students, and the colleges of Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences in Spokane saw their largest increase in Native students as well.

This is due in large part to the hard work and policies of the individual Colleges, the recruitment and pathway efforts of Native American Health Sciences program and Native Programs, and support of our tribal community partners.

The Center supports students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native or as First Nations Indigenous, plus peers, faculty and staff colleagues, tribal partners, and community stakeholders who are all invited to visit and partake in enriched cultural and educational events. The larger goal is to increase Native representation in health and medicine.

“For Empire Health Foundation, there are as many reasons to support this project as there are needs in our region,” said Emma Noyes, program officer at Empire Health Foundation. “Some of the primary conversations were around the lack of doctors being able to serve in tribal communities. I come from the Colville Tribes where we have one doctor and one (physician’s assistant) serving the district reservation with a total tribal membership of 10,000 members and close to 5,000 living on the reservation. Part of it is really about the quality of care and really having the future of medicine and health services and the workforce be one that is deeply centered in the strength and value of our native cultures.”

In fall 2021, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation provided financial support to build Indigenous-developed clinical simulation space in the Center for Native American Health. NAHS will construct 1,045 square feet of clinical space to include a patient exam simulation room, a hospital patient exam simulation room, a teaching and mediation room, and storage for the clinical simulation spaces and accompanying healing modalities.



“This program is creating pathways for Native American communities by reimagining both education and patient care in a way that is uniquely influenced by those it will serve,” said Kurt Walsdorf, Bank of America Spokane president. “Our partners at NAHS are providing a strong curriculum that tackles health disparities for tribal communities in the Pacific Northwest and beyond, while also developing a diverse future workforce. We appreciate the invaluable contributions of Dr. Bender and all those involved for ensuring that our region is a beacon for positive change.”

The Center is unique in that it offers its own Native American-developed and culturally based clinical patient exam room with telehealth and educational opportunities from Native providers and clinicians, WSU faculty from across the three health science colleges, and interprofessional engagement between students and faculty. Also, Indigenous patients can use the space to share their views of clinical communication and exchange.

As a place of belonging, the Center plans to grow with a Tribal Community Partner Initiative arm that provides opportunities to work with tribal communities, partners, clinics, and other stakeholders to support tribal community health outcomes (whether that’s in research, community projects, or even student-driven scholarly projects).

We plan to continue to impact Native American students, who are interested in health careers from this space, by providing them virtual or face-to-face academic advising, financial aid, community service, application assistance, mentoring, and cultural support from this space.



## OPPORTUNITIES

Sustain and expand programming and operational support for all areas of the Center for Native American Health over the next two years.

### **Student Success - \$150,000**

*Native American health care workforce expansion and student support.*

Investment will support pre-health and health pathways programs for 200+ Native American students on Pullman and Spokane campuses, along with operational support for student-driven activities and events.

### **Indigenous Healing Clinical Education - \$250,000**

*Culturally embedded education toward culturally responsive patient interactions.*

Investment will ensure administrative support for management of the Indigenous Clinical Simulation Suites, including clinical training and the Interprofessional Indigenous Healing Perspectives certificate.

### **Tribal Community Health - \$300,000**

*Tribal community partnerships and health initiatives.*

Investment will expand partnerships with tribal communities, with a focus on trainings, workshops, and seminars around holistic care.

### **For more information on giving opportunities contact**

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Associate Vice President, Development  
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## Center for Native American Health Blessing Celebrates Native Health

By Kevin Dudley

On Aug. 6, 2021, WSU's Native American Health Sciences (NAHS) marked a major milestone in its journey: It held a blessing ceremony for its newly constructed Center for Native American Health.

The Center, which had a soft opening in early 2021, represents the trajectory taken by NAHS in the last three years. The Center was built thanks to generous support from Empire Health Foundation and supports students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, or as First Nations indigenous. The Center is open to everybody on campus—students, staff and faculty.

It offers a Native American-developed and culturally based clinical patient exam room, and thanks to a generous gift from Bank of America, it will expand its clinical simulation space in the coming years. Its clinical simulation space is unique compared to its peers across the country and will offer virtual curriculum, allowing WSU's NAHS program to reach across the globe.

The blessing recognized the work it took to get to this point and looked toward the future.

"This has always been a gathering place of plenty where people from far away come to be fed by the Falls," said Dr. Wilbert James of the Swinomish Tribe and a WSU NAHS healers cohort member. "Now we have a refuge at WSU to provide a community gathering place for the students to thrive."

The setting was fitting: The Center for Native American Health is half a football field away from the Spokane River, the original gathering place of the Spokane Tribe. The blessing ceremony recognized and honored the people who helped create the Center. It was a day of celebration, gifting, feasting and tears. The Spokane Tribe came with their drum and honored the attendees.

As is tradition, the Center received gifts of art and artifacts as medicine for display. Students served a salmon feast and afterwards, returned the salmon remains to feed the river.

"The day was uplifting and a challenge to the Native American Advisory Board and the WSU Spokane campus to rise up and continue to seek funding and personnel to support the Center for Native American Health," said Robbie Paul, WSU Spokane's retired director of NAHS. "Overall, it was a 'wow!' day and there's much to be thankful for. I offer praise for Naomi Bender and Evanlene Melting Tallow for their work and all the others who have contributed to the growth of the center."

The day was also an opportunity to recognize those who supported NAHS in its pursuit of opening the Center, particularly Empire Health Foundation.

"The support from donors shows they too want to help and recognize the importance of being inclusive in creating the space and help with the development of culturally appropriate health sciences curriculum in collaboration with the WSU Native American Health Science Advisory Board," Paul said.

Plans to expand the Center are already in the works, and the Center's virtual capabilities are just the tip of the iceberg of what the Center can achieve.

"I operated a Native American center at a small community college and witnessed the successes of the Native students in academic and personal growth because they had a place to be together and be supported," said Evanlene Melting Tallow, a member of the NAHS team. "The Center benefits all the Native American students in all the colleges and gives them technology, support, and in building community."

The blessing was symbolic in how it gathered so many people in one spot to celebrate and learn. That's what the Center will achieve in the coming years: gathering students of all backgrounds to dive into Native health practices so WSU Health Sciences students can be better doctors, nurses and pharmacists for populations across Washington and the Pacific Northwest.







# Indigenous Healers Cohort Helps NAHS Thrive

By Kevin Dudley

When WSU Spokane's Native American Health Sciences (NAHS) program was building its Center for Native American Health, it needed a way to re-imagine health sciences education for Native students. The Indigenous Healers Cohort—a group made up of Native healers and where non-Native educators were invited to participate, stepped up to create the nation's first Indigenous-developed and—instructed clinical simulation space using funds from Empire Health Foundation.

The Cohort used a series of meetings beginning in December of 2020 to design the curriculum for the space. It determined what the impactful learning outcomes should be, who should be teaching the curriculum, and how they would be teaching it. The goal was to create an indigenous healing framework and a space for training the future health care workforce. The curriculum and the space help balance the work between western medicine and Indigenous healing perspectives toward culturally centered safe practices and proficiencies.

Dr. Gary Ferguson is the director of outreach and engagement for WSU's Institute for Research and Education to Advance Community Health (IREACH). He is also a Cohort member and says the Center and its simulation space is a special place of learning for all students.

"We recognize our first medicines and we honor them equally among all the other medicines and ways of knowing," he said. "We bring together the understanding that culture is medicine, that food is medicine."

Dr. Rex Quaempts wanted the place to be as welcoming as possible, and wanted to create a space, "to help our physicians, nurses and pharmacists be comfortable dealing with patients to really get to the story that each patient has to share," he said. "The real healing starts when the patient really opens their heart to really let you know what's going on, so we wanted this place to be warm and comfortable and releasing."

Andy Joseph Jr. is the chairman of the Confederated Tribes of Colville Tribal Council. He's hopeful that the Center and its clinical simulation space is one way WSU creates more Native health care workers to serve Native communities.

"We're going to grow our own doctors," he said. "A lot of our people want to come home. Hopefully we'll have jobs for them when they finish their schooling."

The space is key for Native students who simply need a place to study and learn in an indigenous-developed manner.

"Native students looking to serve their communities will have a greater access and opportunity to acquire a health education relevant to their people's needs," said Margo Hill of the Spokane Tribe.

Incorporating traditional medicine into the curriculum at NAHS brings a more inclusive atmosphere at WSU Spokane and broadens the educational opportunities for students of all backgrounds.

"Many tribal people still do not seek out modern health care on an ongoing basis for many reasons, and one of them is their inherent underlying belief that traditional medicine is what keeps them healthy in the body, mind and spirit," said Stephen Kutz, a registered nurse and Chair of the WA American Indian Health Commission. "The ability to work with our students to bridge this gap has the potential for positive differences in many Indian communities."

The Cohort's work isn't done yet. It will meet in spring of 2022 for a 3-day retreat to continue its impactful work alongside community stakeholders.

Members of the Cohort will in spring 2022 attend The RTT Collaborative, a national meeting in Hood River, Oregon, that brings together health and education professionals. Members of the Cohort will be among the speakers and will present on where culture and medicine come together in rural medical education and practice.

It's yet another example of the great work the Cohort has achieved alongside NAHS. With all it has achieved this past year, NAHS has great partners in the Indigenous Healers Cohort.









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