Partnerships for Native Health is a program of the Initiative for Research and Education to Advance Community Health at Washington State University. Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of American Indians and Alaska Natives – women and men, old and young, rural and urban, now and in the future.

Our organization emerged from many years of work with Native communities across the US. We have developed a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to achieve our mission by incorporating these core principles and activities:

- Engagement and participation of community members
- Research on health, healthcare, and other community priorities
- Education, training, and capacity-building
- Infrastructure development and technical assistance
- Sharing results in ways that recognize and respect the unique cultures, values, and histories of all Native people

Our work began in the 1990s and keeps gaining momentum as we near the third decade of the 21st century. With 33 research projects currently under way, we continue to place underserved communities front and center. Our work is not just community-based and community-placed – it is guided by community needs and governed by community values. Our ongoing studies address health conditions that are widely prevalent in Native populations, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, and diabetes. We look forward to many more years of serving our current collaborators as we build new partnerships with new communities that share our commitment to high-quality healthcare and health.

Dedra Buchwald, MD, Founding Director
Lonnie Nelson, PhD (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians), Associate Director
Ka’imi Sinclair, PhD (Cherokee Nation), Associate Director
Our Community Mission

Members of Partnerships for Native Health at the 2014 Spirit Walk in Seattle. Left to right: Catherine Stockdale; Corinna Tordillos (Northern Cheyenne); Lonnie Nelson, Assistant Professor (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians); and Cindy Gamble, Tribal Liaison (Tlingit).

We conduct community-centered research, training, and education to improve the health and quality of life of American Indians and Alaska Natives.
Our Diverse Staff and Leadership

Because our organization serves diverse communities, we value diversity in our staff and leadership. As of March 2018, Partnerships for Native Health employs 13 faculty and 30 staff. Our faculty serve as principal investigators and co-investigators on research projects, while our staff provide program support. Half our staff, and almost half our faculty, are members of racial and ethnic minorities.

Emma Elliott-Groves, PhD (Cowichan), Assistant Research Professor

Abigail Echohawk (Athabascan/Pawnee), Director of the Urban Indian Health Institute, with Trevor Slaney (Nez Perce), Research Assistant

Meghan Jernigan, MPH (Choctaw), Staff Scientist

Ursula Tsosie, MPH (Diné), Research Coordinator

Five of our 13 faculty members are American Indians or members of Canadian First Nations. They represent the Choctaw Nation, the Cowichan Tribes, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and the Dane-zaa Métis. Our 30 staff members include 10 American Indians and Alaska Natives, whose tribal representation includes the Tlingit, Diné, Makah, Colville, Nez Perce, Oglala Sioux, and Standing Rock Sioux.
During the most recent fiscal year, which ended in June 2018, Partnerships for Native Health conducted a total of 24 individual research projects. The aggregated annual direct costs for these projects exceeded $7 million. The bar chart at right summarizes the amount of support awarded by our top 5 funding sources, which collectively provided approximately 95% of our funding.

Our active research projects address a broad spectrum of Native health disparities. The chart on the right shows the relative numbers of studies in fiscal year 2018 that were devoted to specific health concerns.

Our research focus has varied substantially over the past decade. Right now, we are most intensively engaged in career development and in research on cognitive and cerebrovascular health among Native elders. Other major efforts address cardiovascular health, alcohol use, and diabetes. In previous years we conducted numerous studies on cancer disparities, and we anticipate building on this work in the future.
For an intervention study to promote organ donation among American Indians and Alaska Natives, we commissioned *Giving Life*, a series of posters by Native artists. Above, detail of a poster by Nathan Beaudry.

Since 2008, we have completed 4 program projects. Each included 2 to 5 interconnected studies. At right is the logo for the Collaborative to Improve Native Cancer Outcomes, which conducted 5 studies on screening, preventive interventions, and surgical outcomes for cancers of several organ systems. At left is the logo for Native People for Cancer Control, a 10-year effort that conducted extensive outreach, training, and intervention research.
Refereed Publications

Native People for Cancer Control
Years Funded: 2005-2015
Agency: National Cancer Institute


Over the past decade, faculty and staff at Partnerships for Native Health have published more than 125 peer-reviewed articles based on our research with American Indian and Alaska Native communities. A selection appears on this page and the next, grouped by research program.

Collaborative to Improve Native Cancer Outcomes
Years Funded: 2005-2010
Agency: National Cancer Institute


### Refereed Publications

#### Various Studies 2008-2017


#### Strong Heart Stroke Study

**Agency**: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute  
**Years Funded**: 2009-2013

The Native Investigator Development Program enrolled its first cohort of trainees in 1998. Since then, 10 cohorts of Native Investigators have participated in this two-year program, which has been continuously supported by funding from the National Institute on Aging and other agencies. Its founding directors are Dr. Dedra Buchwald of Washington State University and Dr. Spero Manson (Pembina Chippewa) of the University of Colorado Denver.

Participants are selected among applicants of Indigenous heritage with a professional degree in a field related to health sciences or health policy. They work collaboratively with program mentors who specialize in epidemiology and cross-cultural medicine. Each Native Investigator ultimately completes two research projects and prepares a proposal for independent research funding.

Networking and collaboration are the key to success for Native Investigators. After completing the program, most sustain productive professional relationships with their mentors and fellow alumni. The diagram at right represents a social network analysis of collaborations on manuscripts produced by 29 participants in the Native Investigator Development Program during its first five iterations. Now in its twentieth year, the program has trained 48 doctoral-level participants from 36 tribes across 10 cohorts. Fourteen alumni currently have tenured positions at research universities.
Mentoring and Career Development

Participants and faculty with the Native Investigator Development Program at a training session in Seattle, October 2013.

Our curriculum prepares Native Investigators to develop independent programs of culturally appropriate research on health disparities and to succeed in competitive academic environments.

Kimberly Huyser, PhD (Diné), member of the eighth cohort, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of New Mexico

Ashley Comiford, DrPH (Cherokee), member of the tenth cohort, Epidemiologist with the Cherokee Nation Public Health Program

Valarie Blue Bird Jernigan, DrPH (Choctaw), member of the eighth cohort, Associate Professor of Health Promotion Sciences at the University of Oklahoma
Partnerships for Native Health advocates for rural health and education and has conducted pioneering research on telehealth. Participation in community events helps us build collaborations.

In collaboration with tribal partners, we have developed nutritional education programs that prioritize traditional ingredients and Indigenous foods, including healthy options such as beans and vegetables.
Collaborations and Community Impact

Partnerships for Native Health is firmly committed to making a positive impact on the communities we serve. We include tribal clinic staff and community members in most of our research partnerships, and we regularly collaborate with community members to develop novel culturally tailored educational materials.

We also devote substantial resources to community outreach and capacity-building. Even before research begins, we strive to involve Native communities in the objectives and design of our studies, in keeping with the principles of community-based participatory research:

- Recognize the community as the unit of study
- Build on community strengths and resources
- Include community members and facilitate collaborative partnerships in all phases of the research process
- Integrate knowledge and action for the mutual benefit of all partners
- Promote co-learning and empowerment to address social inequalities
- Follow an iterative process
- Address health from an ecological perspective
- Disseminate findings and knowledge gained to all partners

We are dedicated to ensuring that our research partnerships result in positive benefits for communities according their own self-defined goals and metrics.

Partnerships for Native Health has produced several series of educational posters in collaboration with Native artists, who are compensated for permission to use their work.