


A network diagram consisting of white dots connected by thin white lines, forming a complex web-like structure against a dark red background.

# ALASKA INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PROGRAM: Promoting Resilience, Health and Wellness

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**Executive Summary**  
September 16, 2019



ALASKA NATIVE  
TRIBAL HEALTH  
CONSORTIUM



ALASKA  
PACIFIC  
UNIVERSITY

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## Project Background

Alaska Indigenous Research Program (AKIRP)'s goal is to move beyond the limitations of currently available research training programs to further advance the resilience, health and wellness of Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) people. There is a great need for locally available research education and training opportunities for students and health professionals and researchers. The program offers cross-cultural research education and experience for Alaska Native students and researchers with Western research practices. It was designed to increase the cultural competency of health researchers and scientists by emphasizing the importance of conducting research in collaboration with AN/AI communities in a Tribally-driven and culturally responsive manner.

### Overall Goal

The goal of this collaborative capacity building project between Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Alaska Pacific University is to develop a three-week credit bearing AKIRP hosted on the APU campus in Anchorage, Alaska. The objective is to offer an Alaska-based research training program for AN/AI college students, as well as non-Native or Western-trained researchers and health professionals, to strengthen the capacity to conduct culturally responsive and respectful health research that addresses the unique setting and health needs of Alaska Native people through the following learning objectives:

#### Overall Program Learning Objectives

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

### Memorable Quotes from Participants

“This program is very positive. I felt like this was a safe space and the speakers discussed topics I needed to hear. Listening to their journeys and how they made it through college was helpful. It was wonderful to see people who made it and didn't give up.”

“I loved the openness and encouraging discussion.”

“I feel more comfortable and prepared to work with community-based participatory research from all the stories and explanations given by presenters. It feels natural and I look forward to utilizing their shared techniques in the future.”

## Course Learning Objectives

### Week One: Advanced Research May 6-10

Integrate Indigenous research methods and ways of knowing

Implement community-based participatory research practices

Apply best practices in community engagement: building rapport and connections with communities

Implement meaningful communication strategies and practices in dissemination of findings to communities

Recognize the role of historical trauma and research and how it impacts research projects

### Week Two: Research Ethics May 13-17

Understand the historical context of the Alaska Area Institutional Review Board (IRB), university IRBs and Tribal review processes

Describe the role of historical trauma in health disparities and Indigenous mistrust in research and researchers

Understand how to navigate IRBs and the Tribal review processes

Manage varying expectations of IRBs and Tribal review

### Week Three: Introductory Research May 20-24

Describe Indigenous and Western research methods

Understand how to implement community-based participatory research practices

Articulate the steps involved in the research process/cycle

Understand the role and value of different members of the research team

Describe different genres of health research

Understand the role of Indigenous health research in public health and its impact

Understand culturally relevant dissemination practices



## Year 1 in Review

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and Alaska Pacific University (APU) hosted the first Alaska Indigenous Research Program: Promoting Resilience, Health and Wellness (AKIRP) May 6-24, 2019 in Anchorage, Alaska. The program included three weeks of advanced, intermediate and introductory courses designed for all levels of research and covered a variety of topics including: Indigenous and Western research methodologies, community-based participatory research, health research ethics, historical trauma and culturally responsive community engagement.

An important component of the program was discussing the history of intergenerational trauma and the history of research mistrust between research entities and Tribal communities. The program aims to increase cultural humility and sensitivity of health researchers with emphasis on the importance of Tribally-driven and culturally responsive research as well as building research capacity by supporting and growing Indigenous researchers and scholars.

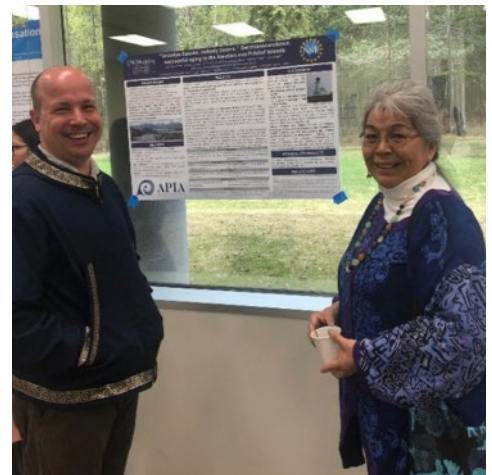
The first AKIRP was well attended with over 135 participants and guest speakers from many parts of Alaska, the Lower 48 (Oregon, South Dakota, Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, and Louisiana), Canada (Manitoba, Ontario, British Columbia), Mexico, and Europe (Sweden). It proved to be a great success as an inspirational and empowering event that is expected to lead to lifelong friendships and continued collaboration across various sectors, projects and programs.

Many of the participants expressed that the program “has ignited a journey of personal passion and discovery that is grounded in deep learning with a holistic focus on healthy communities, research and resilience” and provided “a foundation of understanding to be built. A fire has been lit to continue our collaborative efforts in working towards community-driven, grounded research. Each participant is like an ember from a fire – smoldering, slow-burning – and this program has given us the strength to share our teachings and knowledge-gained in our own journeys.”

### Highlights of AKIRP included:

- Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Dr. Graham Hingangaroa Smith, Maori scholars, The Indigenous Education Revolution: The Need for ‘Ringa Raupa’ (Blistered Hands-A Maori Proverb) lecture at the Anchorage Museum
- Calricaraq Historical Trauma Workshop
- Ceremony, smudging, drumming, potluck, song and dance
- Placed-Based Learning: Walk in the Woods – learning about medicinal plants and healing
- Two-Eyed Seeing lecture by Dr. Alexandra King and Dr. Malcom King
- Alaska Blanket Exercise, historical trauma and talking circle
- Indigenous Ways of Knowing, decolonizing and indigenizing research
- Indigenous Connectedness
- Aunties & Uncles Research Talk
- Developing a Research Proposal, IRB Guidelines and Ethics, and the National Indian Health Board funding presentations
- Diverse panels comprised of Indigenous scholars in academia and health research

In addition to the three-week research course, AKIRP also offered paid internship positions designed to gain hands-on research skills and experience in health research. The interns are exposed to a variety of trainings, events, projects, and programs over a five to seven week period.



Dr. Jordan Lewis (Director, National Resource Center for Alaska Native Elders, University of Alaska Anchorage) and Amy Modig (Alaska Native Leader, RurAL CAP) at the Community Engagement in Research poster session.

### Memorable Quotes from Participants

“...great references to all research happening across the world! There was a lot of great literature to incorporate into my own thesis research and background.”

“Loved having a diverse group of researchers from around the world.”

“I hope to apply culturally relevant techniques to treatments and value the culture in the healing process.”

“I am realizing that there are so many different styles of research and this made me excited to move forward in my research in a whole new way.”

## Attendance & Demographics

AKIRP brought together a diverse group of roughly 135 participants and guest speakers. Quantifiable characteristics and associated information were obtained through participant application forms and demographic analysis was completed using MS Excel (2016). There are a few notes to highlight about the participant/guest speaker data:

1. Participants and speakers were allowed to select more than one ethnicity/race and profession or occupation on their program application;
2. Some of the data concerning race/ethnicity is associated with where the participant/speaker's family heritage or lineage and may not be directly correlate with where they reside at present.

**Table 1.** Number of participants per week.

Week Number	Number of Participants
Week 1	35
Week 2	33
Week 3	40
Total Participants	83*

\*The total participant number is 83 because some participants could have been registered for more than one week.

## Geographic Reach

**Figure 1.** Geographic reach of the program participants.



**Table 2.** Country/Geographic area and the number of AKIRP participants

Country/Geographic Region	Number of Participants
Alaska	65
Lower 48	10
Canada	5
Europe	1
China	1

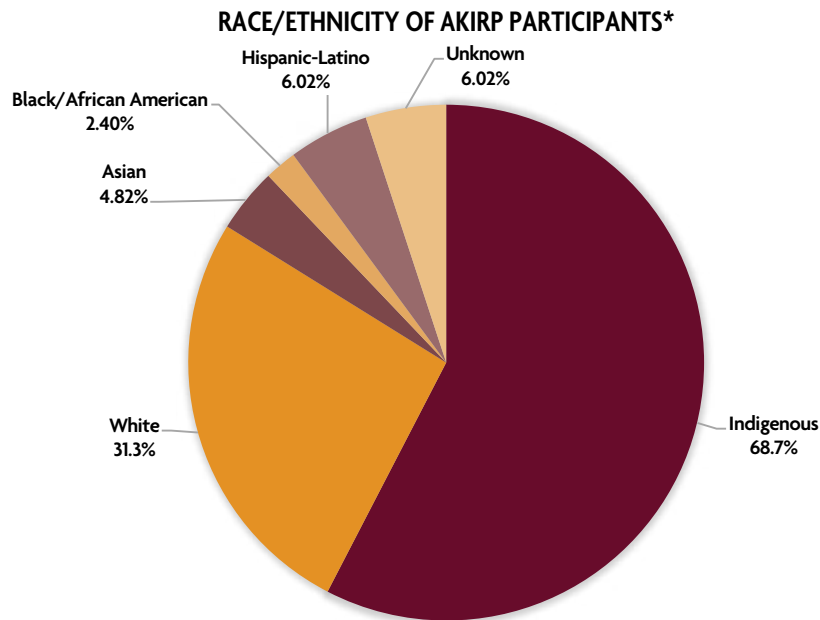


Rachel Alexis Billiot-Bruleigh, a member of the United Houma Nation with shared Chitimacha heritage from Louisiana, gets tossed in the air during the blanket toss exercise.

## Demographics

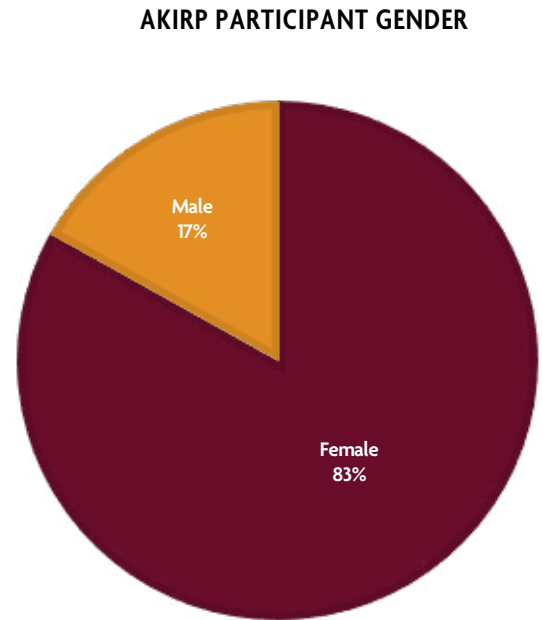
Approximately 68% of AKIRP participants identified as “Indigenous” which includes Alaska Native, American Indian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Mexican Indigenous or Sami (Sweden), 31.1% identified as white, 6.02% identified as Hispanic-Latino, 4.82% identified as Asian, 2.46% identified as Black/African American and 6.02% were listed as unknown because the information was not provided or explicitly stated.

**Figure 2.** Race/ethnicity of AKIRP participants.

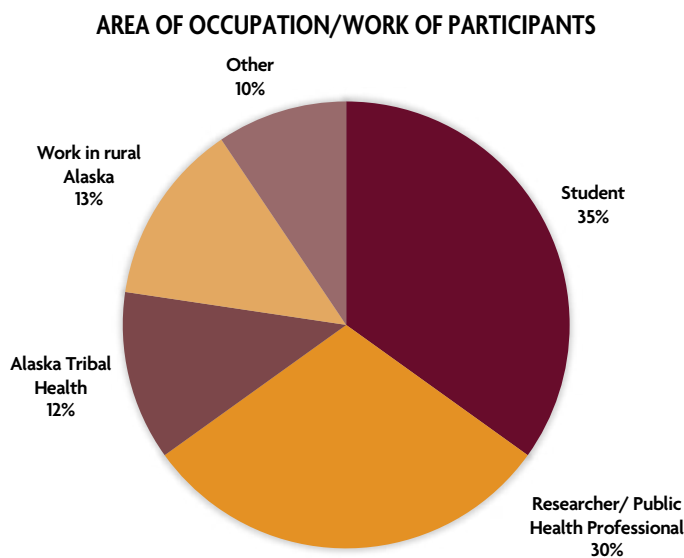


\*Participants could selected multiple races/ethnicities .

**Figure 3.** Participant Gender



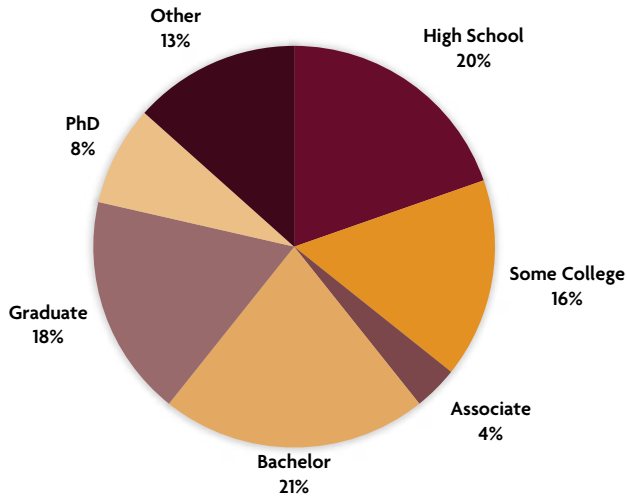
**Figure 4.** Participant Occupation & Area of Work



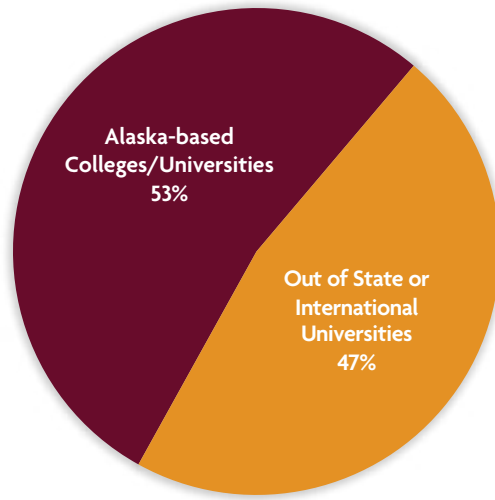
Jon Petter Stoor (Sámi/Swedish clinical psychologist), and Rosemary Ahtuanguak (Inupiaq, Honorary Doctorate, Nuiqsut, Alaska), AKIRP Week 1 participants.

**Figures 5 and 6. Educational Background**

**LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF AKIRP PARTICIPANTS**

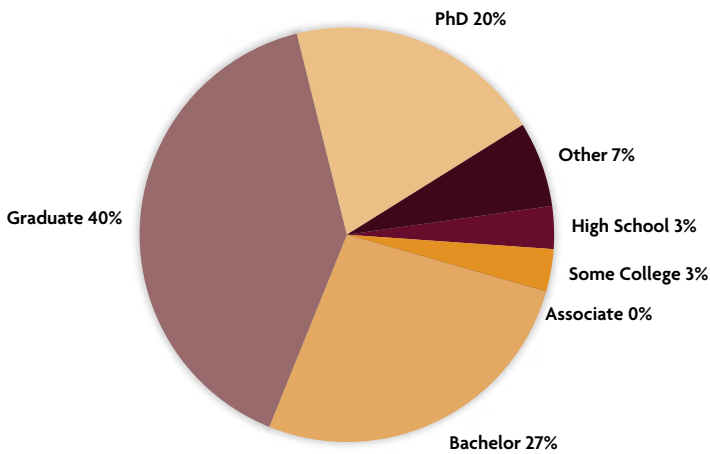


**AKIRP PARTICIPANTS: UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE STUDENTS**

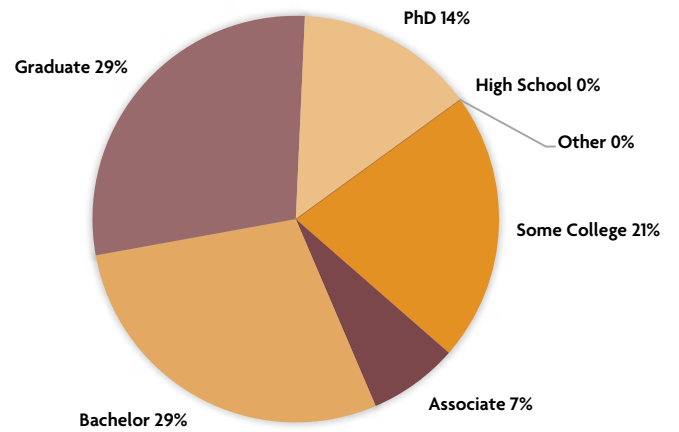


**Figures 6, 7 and 8. Educational levels by week**

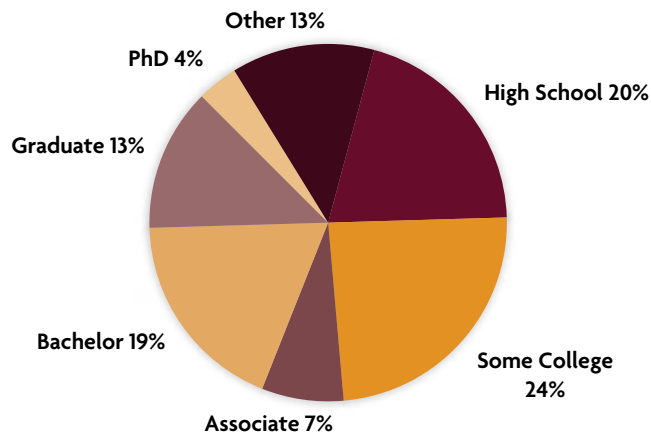
**LEVEL OF EDUCATION (WEEK 1 PARTICIPANTS)**



**LEVEL OF EDUCATION (WEEK 2 PARTICIPANTS)**



**LEVEL OF EDUCATION (WEEK 3 PARTICIPANTS)**



Figures 9. Participant class level

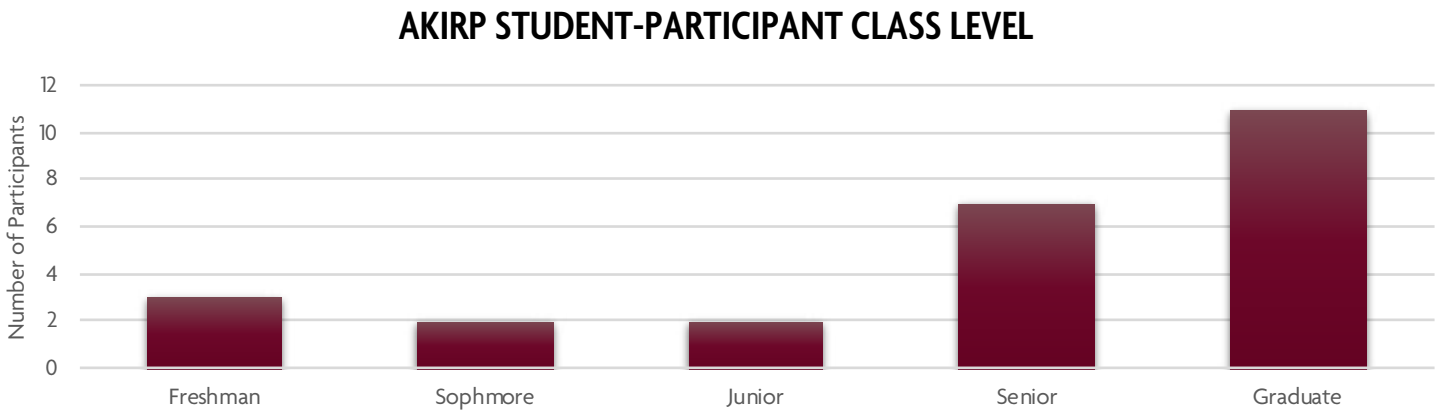


Figure 10. Participants who have taken course at APU

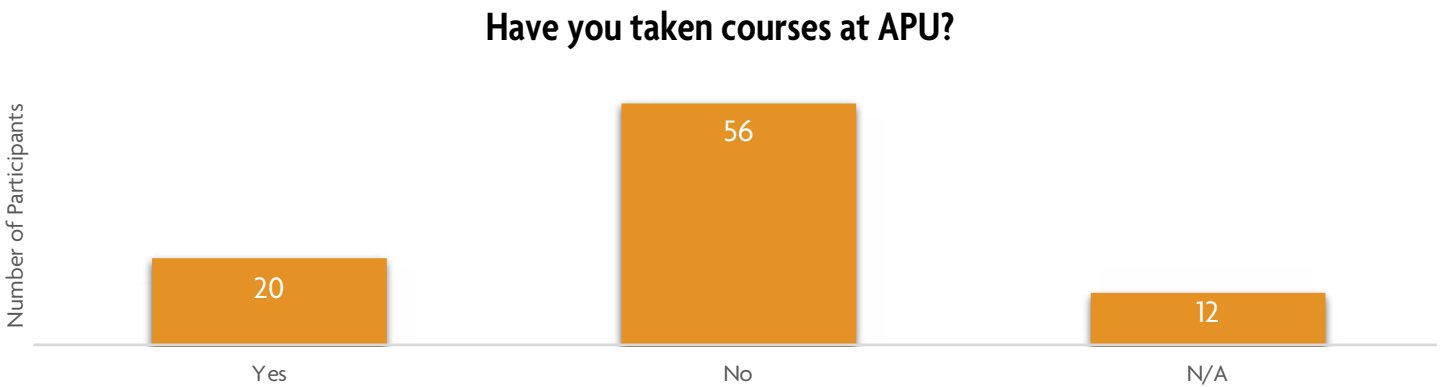


Figure 11. Participants interested in college credit

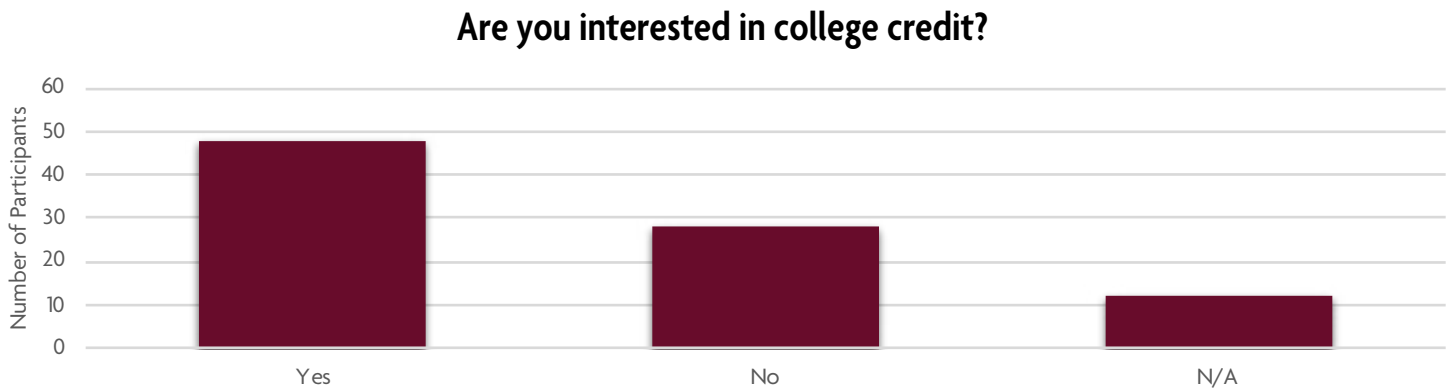
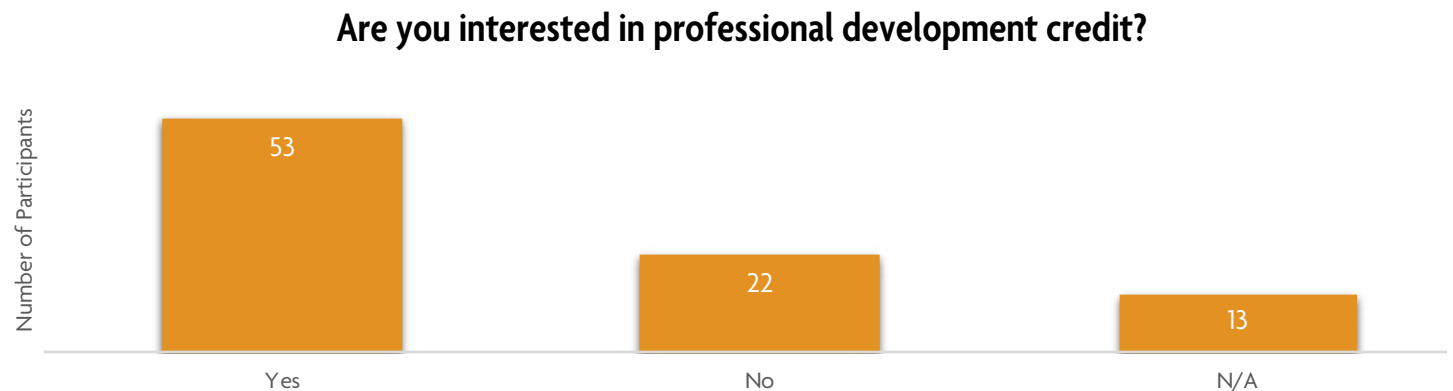


Figure 12. Participants interested in professional development





## Undergraduate Credits

Attendees who participated in the introductory research week from May 20-24 had the option of receiving three undergraduate credits through APU. Fifteen students signed up for the credits and 13 completed the requirements to receive three credits.

## Interns

The AKIRP hosted three beginner level interns for five weeks and one graduate level intern until the end of the first year. The graduate intern was subsequently hired as a permanent Research Associate at ANTHC and APU.

## Favorite Presentations

Participants were asked to vote for their favorite presentation of the day and provide any comments (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Favorite presentations

Week	Day	Presentation
Week 1	Day 1	Two-Eyed Seeing
	Day 2	Decolonizing and Indigenizing Research
	Day 3	Alaska Blanket Exercise and Blessing
	Day 4	Pre-Research Community Engagement in Native Communities in Alaska
	Day 5	Karli's Ceremony
Week 2	Day 1	Calricaraq Historical Trauma Workshop
	Day 2	Calricaraq Historical Trauma Workshop
	Day 3	Tribally Driven Research
	Day 4	Two-Eyed Seeing
	Day 5	Panel: Human Subjects Applications in Selected AI/AN Health Studies
Week 3	Day 1	Indigenous Ways of Knowing
	Day 2	Panel: Aunties and Uncles Research Talk
	Day 3	Panel: Culturally Responsive Communication and Dissemination
	Day 4	N/A
	Day 5	Developing a Research Proposal



Week 1 AKIRP participants and presenters outside the APU President's House.

## Learning Themes

Participants were also asked to reflect on what areas need change in their work, academic career or practice and how they plan to incorporate information learned. Lessons learned were coded into the following learning themes: ethics, methods, results and data, personal growth, research, community, communication, education, funding/economy, Indigenous and health. Some participant comments received multiple themes as they touched on a variety of lessons learned.

**Table 4.** Ranking of participant learning themes per week.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Research	Personal Growth	Personal Growth
Methods	Education	Research
Personal Growth	Research	Indigenous
Community	Health	Community
Education	Indigenous	Education
Funding/Economy	Methods	Methods
Health	Communication	Results & Data
Ethics	Community	Communication
Communication	Ethics	Ethics
Indigenous	Results & Data	Health
Results & Data	Funding/Economy	Funding/Economy

Additionally, the learning comments were input into a word cloud generator (wordclouds.com) that contains all participants learning themes depicted in large words (words that appeared the most) and smaller-sized words (words that appear less).



Week 1



Week 2



Week 3

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