



## That's a Wrap on the 2024 Alaska Indigenous Research Program!

The 2024 Alaska Indigenous Research Program (AKIRP) concluded on May 24th after three exciting weeks filled with engaging speakers, cultural workshops, the blanket toss, the Alaska Blanket Exercise, networking, delicious meals catered by Alaska Pacific University (APU), and other activities. The AKIRP team would like to thank every person who presented, led workshops and activities, assisted with housing and travel, prepared and served meals, attended as participants, and otherwise helped make the program a success.



### *Week One: Advanced Research*

Week One, designed for those who already have research experience, opened with a welcome and blessing by Dr. Tara Ford, director of ANTHC Research Services, and Elders Doug and Amy Modig. Drs. Alexandra and Malcom King gave the keynote “Re-thinking Indigenous Health and Wellness Research.” Other presentations covered Indigenous research methodologies, community based participatory research, research protocols in the Kawerak region of Alaska, Indigenous food environments, climate change and health, food sovereignty, and more. Lance and Corina Kramer led a blanket toss outside, followed by Jenni Harrison and Cyndi Reeves leading the Alaska Blanket Exercise (ABE). The ABE is an experiential learning activity which walks participants through Alaska Native history. On the Wednesday of each week of AKIRP, APU staff served a meal of traditional Indigenous foods.

*Left: Group photo of Week One participants.*

*Right: Selah Kone, AKIRP intern, during the blanket toss.*



### *Week Two: Research Ethics*

Week Two covered aspects of research ethics ranging from Tribal review of research, Institutional Review Boards, genomics, and biorepositories and the use of biological specimens in research. On Tuesday, attendees participated in rETHICS (Research Ethics Training for Health in Indigenous Communities), which is recognized as an alternative to the widely used CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) course. Drs. Sara Hull and Deana Around Him gave the keynote presentation and



ANTHC researcher Dr. Barb Stillwater presented a research ethics case study. Maria Galban and Dawn Biddison of the National Museum of the American Indian and the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center presented on collaborations with Indigenous communities at museums.



*(Left) From left to right: Walter Phelps, Dr. Jani Ingram, Jalisa Ingram.*



*Above: Group photo of several Week Two participants and speakers.*

### *Week Three: Introductory Research*

Week Three focuses on students and those who are new to health research. The program featured keynote presentations by Amy Topkok and Dr. Jim Jarvis, Elder talks by Doug and Amy Modig, a blanket toss, beading with Amelia Simeonoff, the Alaska Blanket Exercise, and poster presentations. A Resource Fair showcased academic programs, job opportunities, and public health organizations in Alaska. ANTHC Interviewer Research Assistant Valerie Tony gave a presentation on her perspective as a Yup'ik researcher. In an unexpected Alaskan twist, a moose was born directly outside the Alaska Pacific University dorms in which participants were staying!



Also during Week Three, the Alaska Indigenous Research Program had the honor of welcoming back five AKIRP internship alumni as presenters: Jalisa Ingram, Nathaniel Fast Wolf, Rachel Billiot, Nina Edwards, and Mariah McIntosh. They each presented as part of the Research Pathways panel, covering their experience as AKIRP interns, their educational and career journeys so far, their career goals, and what advice they would give to students. The AKIRP team was so glad to catch up with them and welcome them back!

*(Above) Left: Group photo of Week Three participants. Right: A moose born outside the APU dorms.*

*(Below) From left to right: Jalisa Ingram, Nathaniel Fast Wolf, Rachel Billiot, Nina Edwards, Mariah McIntosh.*





# Meet the 2024 Alaska Indigenous Research Program Interns

Research Services is excited to welcome the 2024 AKIRP interns: Emily Si'al, Erica Johnson, Selah Kone, and Tiffany Ongtawasruk! They are each paired with mentors and will assist with projects within Research Services, Injury Prevention, the Behavioral Health Aides Program, and the CDC Arctic Investigations Program. All four attended AKIRP and will have opportunities to participate in cultural activities, attend guest lectures, volunteer, learn more about the programs housed within Community Health Services, and shadow providers. The interns will be with ANTHC through the end of July.



## *Emily Si'al*

Emily Si'al is an AKIRP Summer Research Services Intern. She is Tlingit and Haida, of the Haida Eagle Frog Kuus Gaa Dii. She graduated from the University of Arizona and studied Neuroscience with an emphasis in Integrative Neuropsychiatry. She works at the University of Arizona as a coordinator for a program that supports Indigenous nursing students. In undergrad, she worked in nutrition research looking at the gut-brain axis. She is interested in research that can contribute to policy change that empowers healthy Native communities and promotes land and food sovereignty. This summer she's taking an ethnobotany class through UAF and would love to chat about the plants in the area! In her free time, she enjoys traveling, studying Haida, and hiking with her husband and dog.

## *Erica Johnson*

Hello! My name is Erica Johnson. I was born and raised in Alaska and have lived in Anchorage for the last 10 years with my son Jonah. I attended University of Alaska Anchorage, majored in biological sciences and on the pre-med track. I plan on applying to the WWAMI medical program next year and hope to return to the ANMC campus as a primary care physician one day. While I enjoyed my time performing bench work in research as an undergrad, I am looking forward to bettering my understanding of policy making and research ethics. I am excited to meet and learn from everyone this summer!



## *Selah Kone*

Aloha and Cama'i! I introduce myself using Native Hawaiian and Aleutian greetings as a way of contextualizing myself in my Unangan (Aleutian) heritage and also to honor my time spent in Hawaii engaged in community-based research that deeply influenced my worldview. I received my BS in psychology from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and was recently accepted into the Indigenous and Rural Health PhD program at Montana State University. Most of my research interests revolve around Indigenous concepts of holistic wellbeing and using the wisdom of our ancestors to live well, as opposed to just surviving within Western systems. I'm excited to be back in Alaska for the summer, it's the first time I've

lived here since moving away from Kodiak when I was five! I love being outside- so please let me know your favorite hikes- and I enjoy exploring new foods, cooking, reading, and crafting. Mahalo!

*Tiffany Ongtawasruk*

Hello! My name is Tiffany Ongtawasruk, I am an incoming graduate student at Thomas Jefferson University for a master's program in Forensic Biology. I just graduated from Fort Lewis College with a Bachelor's of Science in General Biology and a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology & Justice Studies and minors in Forensic Studies and Mathematics. I hope to become a Forensic Biologist for the Alaska State Crime Lab once I complete my program. My research interests are focused around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) on the forensics aspect of the epidemic. I enjoy reading, traveling, going to new coffee shops and playing Pokémon GO!



## Resources and Opportunities

### *Internships and Fellowships*

- **Public Health Laboratory Fellowship Program** — This program, which is jointly run by the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and the CDC, is accepting applications on a rolling basis. Fellowships last for one year and fellows are matched with mentors to work on a variety of topics including environmental health, food safety, infectious disease, and bioinformatics. You are eligible to apply if you have completed a Bachelors degree or higher (or will have graduated with your Bachelors degree by the beginning of the fellowship). Placements are located around the US and fellows are paid a stipend. For more information or to apply, visit [www.aphl.org/Career-Pathways/fellowships/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.aphl.org/Career-Pathways/fellowships/Pages/default.aspx)
- **Public Health Laboratory Internship Program** — As part of another APHL-CDC initiative, this program offers paid laboratory internships throughout the year. Applications for their winter cohort will be open June 24-September 25 with a start date around January 1, 2025. Interns are paired with mentors and work 10+ hours per week for an average of 12-16 weeks. Placements are located across the US and cover a wide variety of health topics. Applicants must be currently enrolled as a student in a certificate, Associates, Bachelors, or Masters program and must have completed at least the first semester of their program. Learn more and apply at [www.aphl.org/Career-Pathways/Internships/Pages/Application.aspx](http://www.aphl.org/Career-Pathways/Internships/Pages/Application.aspx)

## *Conferences and Symposia*

- **2024 Tribal College and University Institutional Research Collaborative Conference** — Hosted by Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, this year's conference will center around the theme "Expanding Data Access for Evidence Building and Decision Making". It will be held July 16-18, 2024. Online registration closes on June 30, although onsite registration will also be available. Attendees must be affiliated with a Tribal college or university. Learn more and register at [aihec.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_exsTUokdhKqd74a](https://aihec.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_exsTUokdhKqd74a)
- **15th International Conference on Brain Energy Metabolism** — This conference will be held September 17-21, 2024 in Ljubljana, Slovenia with the theme "Brain Bioenergetics in Aging — Neurovascular and Neurometabolic Coupling and Fuels." Researchers, clinicians, early-career scientists, and students are welcome. For more information, visit [www.brainenergymetabolism.org/](http://www.brainenergymetabolism.org/)
- **Impacted by INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence) Retreat (2024 Alaska INBRE Research Retreat)** — Open to those affiliated with Alaska INBRE member institutions, the annual retreat will be held in Talkeetna, Alaska on September 28-29, 2024. More information will be posted on Alaska INBRE's website at [alaskainbre.org/](http://alaskainbre.org/)
- **2024 AISES (American Indian Science and Engineering Society) National Conference** — The AISES 2024 national conference will be held October 3-5, 2024 in San Antonio, Texas with the theme "Rivers of Resilience: Sustaining Indigenous Innovation." Registration closes on September 20. Registration is open to both AISES members and non-members. Learn more and register at [events.aises.org/ereg/index.php?eventid=782781&](https://events.aises.org/ereg/index.php?eventid=782781&)
- **Elders and Youth Conference** — Registration is now open for the 41st annual Elders and Youth Conference hosted by the First Alaskans Institute. The conference will be held at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage on October 13-16, 2024. To sign up as a participant or to register for a vendor booth, visit [www.firstalaskans.org/41st\\_annual\\_elders\\_youth\\_conference](http://www.firstalaskans.org/41st_annual_elders_youth_conference)
- **2025 IDeA (Institutional Development Award) Western Regional Conference** — Hosted by Alaska INBRE, the 2025 regional conference will be held in Anchorage on February 26-28, 2025. More information will be posted on Alaska INBRE's website at [alaskainbre.org/](http://alaskainbre.org/)
- Please note that the **18th International Congress on Circumpolar Health**, originally to be held June 18-20, 2024, has been postponed. Updates will be posted at [www.iuch.net/](http://www.iuch.net/)

## *Trainings and Career Development*

- **AIHEC (American Indian Higher Education Consortium) NARCH (Native American Research Centers for Health)-BIRCH Health Sciences Summer Institute for TCU Students** — Hosted in-person at the University of South Dakota, this institute will be held August 5-16, 2024 and is open to enrolled Tribal college and university (TCU) students. There is no cost to attend and participants' travel costs, housing, and meals will be covered. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Students will participate in data collection and analysis, network with University of South Dakota research faculty, attend seminars, and learn about careers in health research. Apply at [docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSefNHuDF2CMxJg3MbjhzvsuRHpYCHUGFsUsA7Wc4sLPTb2qfQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSefNHuDF2CMxJg3MbjhzvsuRHpYCHUGFsUsA7Wc4sLPTb2qfQ/viewform)



## Scholarships

- Although applications are currently closed for the **American Indian College Fund**'s scholarships, their website features an extensive list of other available scholarships: [collegefund.org/students/scholarships/additional-scholarships/](https://collegefund.org/students/scholarships/additional-scholarships/)

## Online Resources

- **“Native Pathways: A College-Going Guidebook”** is a free online guide to help American Indian and Alaska Native high school students navigate college applications, scholarships, student loans, and their first year of college. Created by the American Indian College Fund, the guidebook is available at [issuu.com/collegefund/docs/201905-native-pathways-pub-web](https://issuu.com/collegefund/docs/201905-native-pathways-pub-web)
- **“Tribal Colleges and Universities: Exploration Guide”** is a free online guide to TCUs which lists schools by state and offers helpful information on scholarships and academic programs. The guide was created by the American Indian College Fund and is available at [issuu.com/collegefund/docs/tcu\\_exploration\\_guide\\_06292022](https://issuu.com/collegefund/docs/tcu_exploration_guide_06292022)
- **Research Services Brown Bags** — Many of you will remember attending Research Services' twice monthly virtual Brown Bags, in which researchers and public health professionals share presentations on their research findings, funding opportunities, fellowships, and more. If you would like to be added to the email list to receive the Zoom links, contact Gretchen Day at [gmday@anthc.org](mailto:gmday@anthc.org)

*Right: Rachel Billiot, 2021 AKIRP intern, displaying a bag she won in the Resource Fair drawing. The bag was handmade by ANTHC employee Hillary Strayer.*



*Right: Tiffany Ongtawasruk, 2024 AKIRP intern, during the Week Three blanket toss.*



## Contact Us

We love to hear from you! Reach out to us if you have any questions, feedback, ideas, life updates, or opportunities to share at:

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Find ANTHC at [www.anthc.org](http://www.anthc.org)



*Research Services:  
Advancing Tribal health through research*