



CIRCLE-NARCH May 2025 Newsletter

Welcome to the Center for Indigenous Research Collaboration Learning & Excellence (CIRCLE) NARCH May 2025 newsletter! CIRCLE-NARCH is a partnership between the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations and the Division on Addiction at Cambridge Health Alliance. Our flagship training, [xaʔtús \(First Face\) for Mental Health](#), prepares peers, teachers, coaches, and other Tribal community members to be the “First Face” supporting someone experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis or challenge.

Here's what we have been up to this month!

- On May 1st, the Healing Lodge participated in a White Camas Root Dig event with members of local Tribal communities. The Training and Research Coordinators (TRCs) assisted residents with digging for white camas and enjoyed time in the community.
- Dr. Martina Whelsula, one of the CIRCLE-NARCH Principal Investigators, presented updates on the First Face program at the [Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians](#) Drug Prevention Committee meeting held at Northern Quest Resort and Casino on May 13th.
- On May 16th, two TRCs facilitated break out sessions with the Spokane Tribal community as a part of their efforts to raise awareness of mental health issues during the Mental Wellness Fair. Attendees had the opportunity to learn how to help community members experiencing mental health crises using the Healing Hands.



Training and Research Coordinators attending the Camas Root Dig with the Spokane Tribe community.



Dr. Martina Whelshula presents findings from the First Face for Mental Health evaluation and program updates to the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Drug Prevention Committee.

Our Impact at a Glance



The TRCs finished their final Year 2 community survey collections on March 25th on the Colville Confederated Tribe of Indians reservation in Omak Washington. We have collected a total of 510 community surveys, including online submissions, exceeding our goal of 400! TRCs will still be working with your communities to conduct Year 3 community surveys, collect follow-up surveys from First Face trainees, and share information about the trainings and their evaluation.

Upcoming Events

- On May 31st, the CIRCLE-NARCH team will submit an annual progress report on all our grant-funded activities to the National Institutes of Health.
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Meet the Team

This month we are introducing Raleigh Brown, who works as the Audio Engineer of the Expressive Arts program at the Healing Lodge, providing a safe space for the Healing Lodge residents to express themselves and to heal from their trauma. Raleigh is well known around the Healing Lodge for his big hugs and his warm personality.



My favorite quote is, "Be cautious when a shirtless person offers you a shirt". I love this quote because I believe that it's very important that if you surround yourself with like-minded, loving people, your life will be filled with joy and happiness. And If you surround yourself with snakes, you too will start to shed skin every season.

Raleigh grew up in Spokane and always had an interest in music. He performed in his church's choir where he was recognized for his natural singing talent. Raleigh carried this momentum with him into high school, where he created a performance arts group called the "Rogers Step Team," followed by another student group called "The Crew".

Raleigh is a father to three daughters, the oldest of whom has been getting her own exposure for her musical talent, following in Raleigh's footsteps. Raleigh's ability to authentically connect with youth in an impactful way has served him well in his current capacity as the Audio Engineer for the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations' Expressive Arts Program. He co-facilitates creative spaces for residents to tell their stories using song. Through the process of coaching residents in music production and helping them find their voice, Raleigh has the opportunity to act as a valuable mentor to the residents.

When Raleigh is not at work, he is enjoying time with his wife and children, as well as focusing on his own creative pursuits. Alongside his band, Left Over Soul, Raleigh performs at various Spokane-area events, sharing original music that brings people together with a unique blend of R&B, Reggae, Soul and Afro Dance Hall. Using music to help heal from trauma is a powerful motivator for Raleigh, who has seen impactful breakthroughs with Healing Lodge residents who were struggling, and found a way to process their grief through making music.

If Raleigh had a pearl of advice he would like to share with adolescents, he would tell them, "The 14:40 effect" 😊 "There are 1,440 minutes in a day, and those are your minutes and only yours. Don't let anyone take a second of your time, especially if it's in a negative way. Because your time is precious."

Prevention Corner



The first Mental Health Awareness Month campaign began in 1949, led by [Mental Health America](#). Providing access to research and tools to reduce mental health stigma has been a huge endeavor in the United States and abroad. Every year,

many organizations raise awareness using media, local awareness events, and education.

Disproportionate Impacts

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Native American and Alaskan Native communities experienced [an increase in the rate of serious psychological distress](#) from 2022 to 2023, despite the fact that most other population groups showed a decrease. According to the same survey, in 2023, an estimated [52,000](#) Native Americans aged 18+ had serious thoughts about suicide, [20,000](#) made suicide plans, and [15,000](#) made suicide attempts. Many unique risk factors contribute to a high prevalence of mental health concerns in Native communities, including poverty, intergenerational trauma, ongoing negative impacts of colonization, and [high rates of](#) substance use disorders.

Protective Factors for Native American/Alaskan Native Communities

Native American and Alaskan Native communities have unique sources of strength that help to reinforce resilience of community members struggling with their mental health. These protective factors include a sense of belonging to one's culture, a strong Tribal/spiritual bond, the opportunity to discuss problems with family or friends, feeling connected to family, and positive emotional health. Many programs, including our own [First Face for Mental Health](#), incorporate aspects of culture from different Tribes and Native communities to create holistic healing environments. Talking circles, going to sweat, and attending community cultural gatherings help to reinforce community connection and allow for spaces to have open conversations to help reduce stigma associated with mental health.

Resources for Our Community

[Mental Health America](#): Refers to local mental health services or support programs: 1-800-969-NMHA (6642)

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#): Support, information, and referrals. 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

[Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance](#): 1-800-826-3632

[WeRNative](#): A comprehensive health resource for Native youth by Native youth, promoting holistic health and positive growth in local communities and nation at large.

[StrongHearts Native Helpline](#): The StrongHearts Native Helpline (1-844-762-8483) is a confidential and anonymous culturally-appropriate domestic violence and dating violence helpline for Native Americans, available every day from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT.

Culture Connections

Missing and Murdered Indigenous People



May 5th is the international day of awareness for the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People. Launched in Canada as a result of the widespread disappearances of Indigenous women from communities around the country, the movement has spread across the United States as well. This crisis now encompasses the risk to all Indigenous people. Indigenous communities host events throughout the month of May, and even throughout the year, as a way to remind others that this crisis is ever present.

A red hand, one of the primary symbols used to represent Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, refers to the silencing of the voices of those who have been taken. Native people and allies often paint a red hand on their face or wear the symbol during marches and gatherings to signify that they are speaking for those who can no longer speak for themselves. Native communities are working to create task forces that combine grassroots community efforts with partnerships created with Tribal and other police departments, court systems, as well as media outlets to raise awareness. In order to ensure that there are resources to assist in searches for missing people, it is critical for all of the missing to be correctly accounted for in national, state, and local missing people databases.

Organizations around the country host events in their communities to provide a way for the families of survivors and the missing and murdered to uplift the voices of those who have been silenced. On May 27th, the Spokane Tribal Health program in Wellpinit, WA hosted the Annual Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women 5k.

To learn more about this crisis and some of the organizations that are partnering with Native communities to bring awareness and create community-level resources, visit the Bureau of Indian Affairs' page dedicated to the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Crisis](#). There are many Native-led organizations involved in ensuring that this work remains in the public eye, including [Not Our Native Daughters](#), the [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center](#), and the [MAC Movement Spokane](#).

Healing Hands Tips

Safety First



Safety First (The Thumb): The first step of being a First Face for Mental Health is to remember to assess a situation for the safety of the person that you seek to help, as well as your own! Sometimes you might not be equipped to ensure that you can provide help while guaranteeing safety. Reach out to others who can provide that added support if necessary.

Some examples of Safety First:

- Practice Self Care to ensure that you are in a good mental space to be able to connect with someone in a vulnerable position. We do not want to unintentionally cause more harm.
- If you are worried about a person's safety, do not leave them alone. Seek out help from emergency services/Tribal Police. Stay with the person until help arrives.
- Seek out help from emergency services/Tribal Police if someone is acting violent.
- If the person you seek to help is attempting to detox, do not try to manage their care yourself if you are not a trained professional. Reach out to service provider(s) in your area to make sure the person receives the care they need.



Follow us on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages for even more updates!

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