



NDSU

NURSING



CANKDESKA CIKANA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
*Spirit Lake Dakota Nation*



# Building, Filling and Proving the Nursing Pipeline

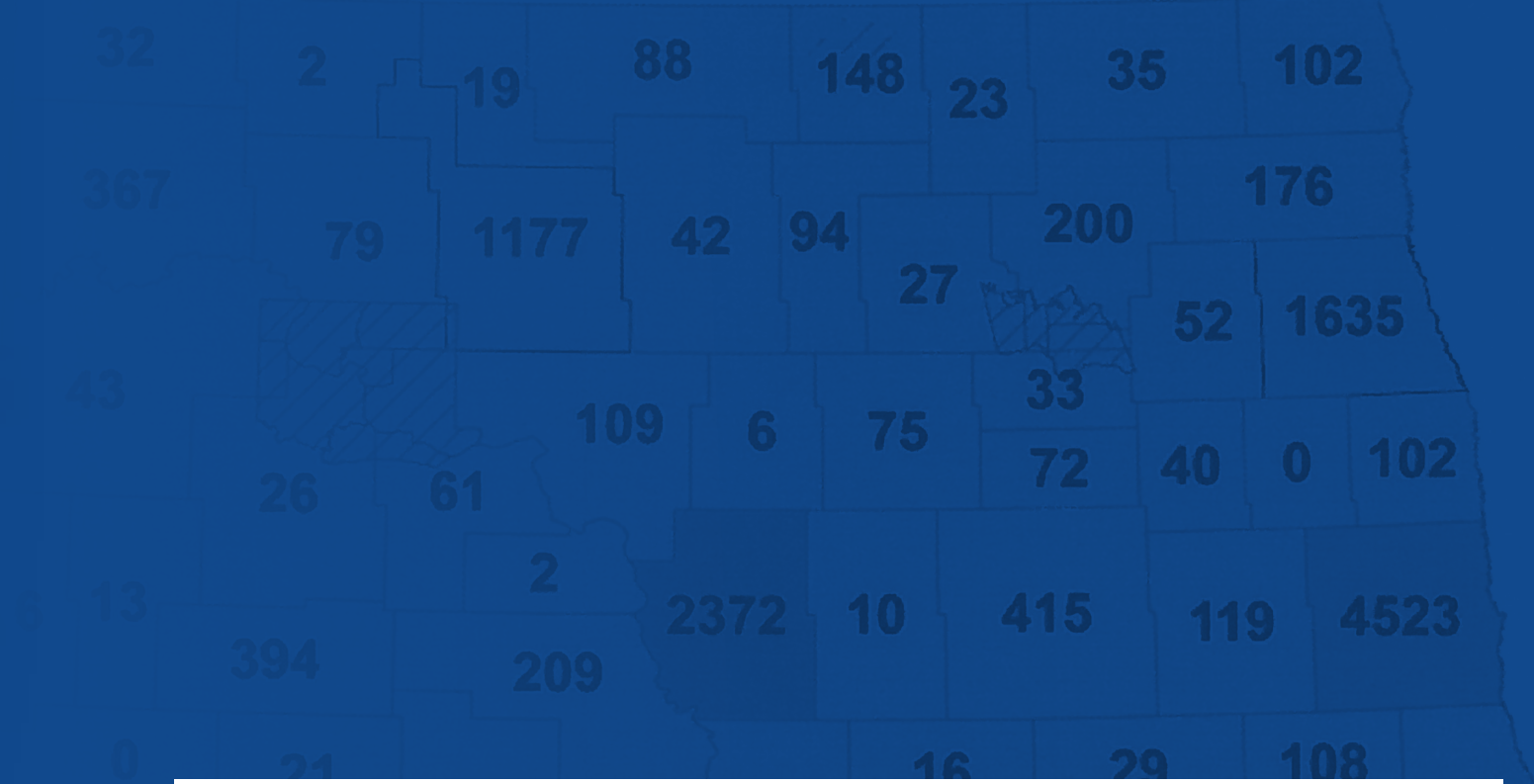
Efforts to Increase American  
Indian Involvement in North Dakota  
Healthcare Careers



## THE CHALLENGE

### Disparity of American Indians in Healthcare Programs and Careers Throughout North Dakota

Across the United States, the demand for healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, is booming. North Dakota is no stranger to this trend. According to a 2013 study conducted by the North Dakota Center for Nursing, which examined the future of healthcare provider needs in the state, currently there is a good supply of LPNs and RNs to meet demand, but the projections of future providers will not be adequate for expected growth. This is especially true with LPNs, but there is also concern of maldistribution of RNs and APRNs for rural areas, with many of these regions not having adequate resources to support the local population.



There are many efforts underway to increase awareness and interest in healthcare careers across the state. Furthermore, North Dakota has a solid infrastructure for developing healthcare professionals, with an impressive 18 nursing education programs. Yet, there is a major disparity of American Indians in nursing programs and careers throughout the state when compared with the general population.

American Indians make up the largest minority group in North Dakota. Of the 683,932 residents found in the latest general census, 37,531 (or 5.4%) identify themselves as American Indian. Comparing this with North Dakota nursing statistics, there are 13,598 employed nurses in the state (roughly 2% of the overall population), but only 168 employed American Indian nurses, which is less than 0.5 percent of the total American Indian population.

Delving into this problem further, the North Dakota American Indian Nursing Demographic Study, a joint effort between the North Dakota State University (NDSU)

Department of Nursing, the NDSU Environmental and Conservation Sciences graduate program and the North Dakota Center for Nursing, found that 48 of the 53 counties in the state exhibit an underrepresentation of American Indian nurses. Compounding this issue are the significant healthcare needs of tribal populations throughout the state, and the preference of American Indian patients to be cared for by their own people.

Thus, there is a need to build a sustainable career path for the American Indian people in North Dakota and infuse them into the state's healthcare and nursing industry. In other words, a "nursing pipeline" is required. This should not be a single effort, but instead a multifaceted approach that develops strategies for the education of American Indians about healthcare careers (i.e. Building the Pipeline), the recruitment and retention of students into healthcare programs (i.e. Filling the Pipeline), and the placement of graduates into healthcare positions (i.e. Proving the Pipeline).

# Sustaining Career Pathways for American Indian Health Professionals In North Dakota Project

With the goal of forming a nursing pipeline for the North Dakota American Indian population, Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC), in collaboration with the NDSU Department of Nursing, applied for the University Partnership Research Grants for Health Professional Opportunity Grants (HPOG) to launch a statewide initiative. This program is part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), with the Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families acting as the funding agency.

One year prior to the grant being awarded, CCCC, through its Next Steps program, started to address the need for more American Indians in North Dakota healthcare careers with several initiatives. However, upon being awarded the four-year HPOG grant, more resources were applied to these established activities and the “Sustaining Career Pathways for American Indian Health Professionals in North Dakota: Building Apprenticeship and Workforce Options with the Next Steps HPOG Project,” was put into action.



The project has three major objectives:

**Objective I:** Engage state nursing educators and employers in an annual conference focusing on nursing education and employment for American Indian students.

**Objective II:** Encourage interest in healthcare careers through mentoring courses and programs for American Indian students.

**Objective III:** Create employment opportunities through a healthcare apprenticeship/residency program for participants of the Next Steps project.



The following is an overview of the project's first-year activities to support these prime objectives. The project is led by CCCC and the NDSU Department of Nursing and involves several organizational partners in the pursuit of establishing a comprehensive nursing pipeline for American Indians in North Dakota.





## Future of American Indian Nursing in North Dakota Conference

The first stated objective of the program is to establish ongoing annual conferences to focus on challenges and opportunities for American Indians in nursing. Thus, the first annual “Future of American Indian Nursing in North Dakota” conference was held on May 22-23, 2012. Facilitated by John Eagle Shield, Director of the Community Health Representative Program at Fort Yates, the overall purpose of the conference was to bring attention to the recruitment and retention issues surrounding American Indian college students in nursing careers and to develop strategies for the countering of this trend in North Dakota. The two-day conference activities included:

- Oral history presentation by tribal elders of nursing on the Standing Rock Reservation.
- Keynote address by Mary Lynn Eaglestaff (MSN/RN), area nurse consultant for the Aberdeen Area Indian Health Service.
- Identification of recruitment strategies for American Indian nurses using the nominal group technique.
- Panel presentation of the educational experiences of six practicing American Indian nurses.
- Panel presentation of tribal college nursing program directors.
- Tour of Sitting Bull Tribal College and nursing facility.
- Presentation of the Recruitment and Retention of American Indians in Nursing (RAIN) program at University of North Dakota.



One of the key components of this conference was the nominal group technique process used to develop strategies geared to North Dakota's unique environment and challenges. Using the guiding question – “What strategies will increase and retain the number of American Indians in the nursing profession?” – 35 conference participants generated 184 items in response. The results of this nominal group will help develop program strategies and drive future activities.

## THE CHALLENGE

# BUILDING THE PIPELINE

## Driving Interest in Healthcare Careers and Increasing Access to Nursing Education

The second main objective of the program is to encourage healthcare careers for American Indian students. The first logical step to this end is to provide better resources and support for American Indian youth. Currently, there are many programs and activities underway for the general public targeting K-12 students in an effort to increase their overall awareness in healthcare careers. These efforts have been successful in the increase of interest in such vocations. But, up to this point, there have been no ongoing efforts specifically geared toward American Indian youth.



## Health Careers 4 U (HC4U) Summer Program

Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC) on the Spirit Lake Nation of North Dakota identified the need for an American Indian youth program aimed at increasing interest in healthcare careers. Partnering with NDSU nursing professionals and medical students, public health students, residents and physicians from both Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, a health careers summer program called “Health Careers 4 U,” or HC4U, was held for 11- to 14-year-olds from July 23-26, 2012

There were 22 youth participants who were recruited using flyers distributed at community centers and other summer camps. The four-day curriculum focused on such subjects as health careers, nutrition and physical activity, actively engaging the participants with simulations, games and role-playing scenarios.

Beyond the direct benefit of further educating these participants on healthcare career opportunities and personal health information, the main objective of this program was to assess whether a health careers summer program for American Indian youth could change attitudes about health careers and intentions to become healthcare professionals. Therefore, daily evaluations were collected from participants as well as conducting pre- and post-camp surveys to assess any progress.

Based on the evaluations and survey data, the vast majority of participants believed the event was “very helpful.” Furthermore, most were not only more interested in pursuing a healthcare career, but they also are more confident in doing so.

## Introduction to Community & Public Health Course

Reaching American Indian youth is important to encouraging interest in health-oriented careers, but further efforts are required to continue this momentum as individuals get closer to launching their careers. In general, educational interventions focusing on health career opportunities have shown success in encouraging the pursuit of health careers by minority students. Therefore, through a community/university partnership between CCCC, Mount Sinai School of Medicine and the Mailman School of Public Health, a college-level course called “Introduction to Community & Public Health” was established to test the educational intervention concept with American Indian students. The NDSU Department of Nursing later got involved with the course curriculum development to focus some attention on potential healthcare careers, in general, for participants.

Offered in July of 2012 at CCCC in Fort Totten, North Dakota, the three-week summer course addressed public health issues of importance to the nation, state and Spirit Lake population. The class was conducted using an interdisciplinary, interactive approach, with faculty, residents, medical school students and others with ties to Mount Sinai and Mailman acting as instructors.

With only eleven students completing the course, it is difficult to draw any specific conclusions in regard to statistically significant changes in student health career intent. But open-ended survey responses from participating students showed a very positive reaction to the curriculum. With future educational efforts like these, more will be done to design programs to measure for statistical significant change in American Indian students’ attitudes toward healthcare careers.





## FILLING THE PIPELINE

### Recruiting/Retaining American Indian Students Into Healthcare Programs

A simultaneous effort with driving better understanding and consideration of healthcare careers is to actively recruit those interested into appropriate programs. Furthermore, given the challenges of such programs, an additional, yet equally important, effort is to provide support to help retain students in these programs until completion.

### 2012 Nursing Program Survey

To gain a better perspective regarding the recruitment and retention of American Indian students into nursing programs, a survey was developed for nursing program directors, deans and chairs. This was designed to assess characteristics of nursing programs in North Dakota. It included questions about background information on nursing programs, enrollment of American Indian students, admission criteria, university/college support services, nursing program support services and specifically about recruitment and retention strategies for American Indian students. Results from this survey will help clarify current attitudes about the recruitment/retention effort and drive actions to achieve greater results.



## Pre-Nursing Students

Total	American Indian
383	19
285	
140	5
79	78
75	1

## Applications

Total	American Indian
269	7
130	2
40	2
35	35
197	2
36	1
5	5
8	5
125	
75	5



## Next Steps Project

The Next Steps project was created to make it possible for American Indian people to pursue careers in healthcare. Those interested in such careers can receive a wide range of educational support services through Next Steps. This includes full tuition, mentoring services, childcare assistance and other forms of support.

Healthcare career education opportunities available through Next Steps include quality service provider (QSP), certified nursing assistant (CNA), certified medical assistant (CMA), licensed practical nurse (LPN), registered nurse (RN), licensed registered dietitian (LRD), licensed social worker (LSW) and other related health professions.

Acceptance into the program is contingent on need and requires compliance with baseline expectations to continue enrollment.

## Recruitment/Retention of American Indians into Nursing (RAIN) Program

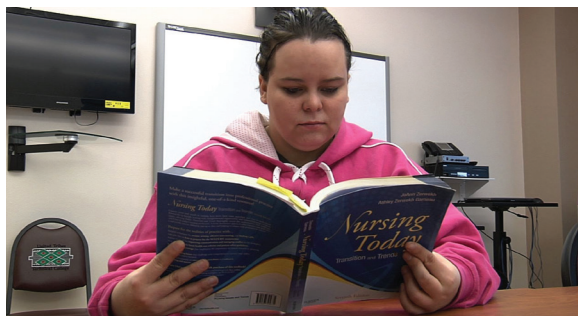
In collaboration with the Next Steps grant, RAIN is a program run by partner University of North Dakota (UND) that offers further assistance to those pursuing nursing specific degrees. Support offered by RAIN includes mentoring and academic advisement, tutoring, scholarship and financial aid advisement and other student services.

Results from the RAIN program have been very encouraging. Since the 1990s, more than 150 RAIN program participants have earned nursing degrees. Also, of the American Indian registered nurses in North Dakota, roughly 80 percent are RAIN program graduates.

# PROVING THE PIPELINE

## Securing Employment for Healthcare Program Graduates

The overall efforts to attract American Indians into healthcare oriented careers and pursue their degrees is all for naught if the final connection to appropriate employment is not made. Therefore, the third main objective of the Sustaining Career Pathways Project is to create employment opportunities through a healthcare apprenticeship/residency program for participants in the Next Steps program.





## Establishing Healthcare Career Advancement Programs (H-CAPs)

To help connect American Indian nursing students to meaningful employment, work is being done to establish and evaluate implementation of a pilot program to initiate at least three Healthcare Career Advancement Programs (H-CAPs) in North Dakota rural areas near or in reservation communities. This will result in the development of an apprenticeship/residency program for graduate nurses. Next Steps, in conjunction with the NDSU Department of Nursing, will work to secure employment sites interested in employing Next Steps graduates and participating in the apprenticeship/residency program.

An additional objective of this effort will be to explore and measure the impact of participation in the H-CAP pilots on the successful attainment of professional licensure and employment among American Indian nursing students. Once the program is fully implemented, data will be collected to measure the statistical significance of this initiative.



# PROVING THE PIPELINE

## 2012 Healthcare Facility Survey

To better understand the perspectives of healthcare facility administrators and directors of nursing, the Healthcare Facility Survey was developed and conducted. Goals of the survey were to determine participants' interests in developing Apprenticeship for Health Care (AHCP) programs and their interests in recruiting HPOG Next Steps program participants as future employees.

Approximately 200 facilities were invited to participate and 47 responded. The survey included questions regarding number of full-time nurses and vacancies, number of part-time nurses, scholarship or educational loan programs available, orientation processes for new nurses, residency/apprenticeship programs available, current employment of American Indian nurses, and recruitment and retention of American Indian nurses.

Early results from the survey indicate limited recruitment/retention programs designed for American Indian prospective employees. Further conclusions from the survey data are pending.

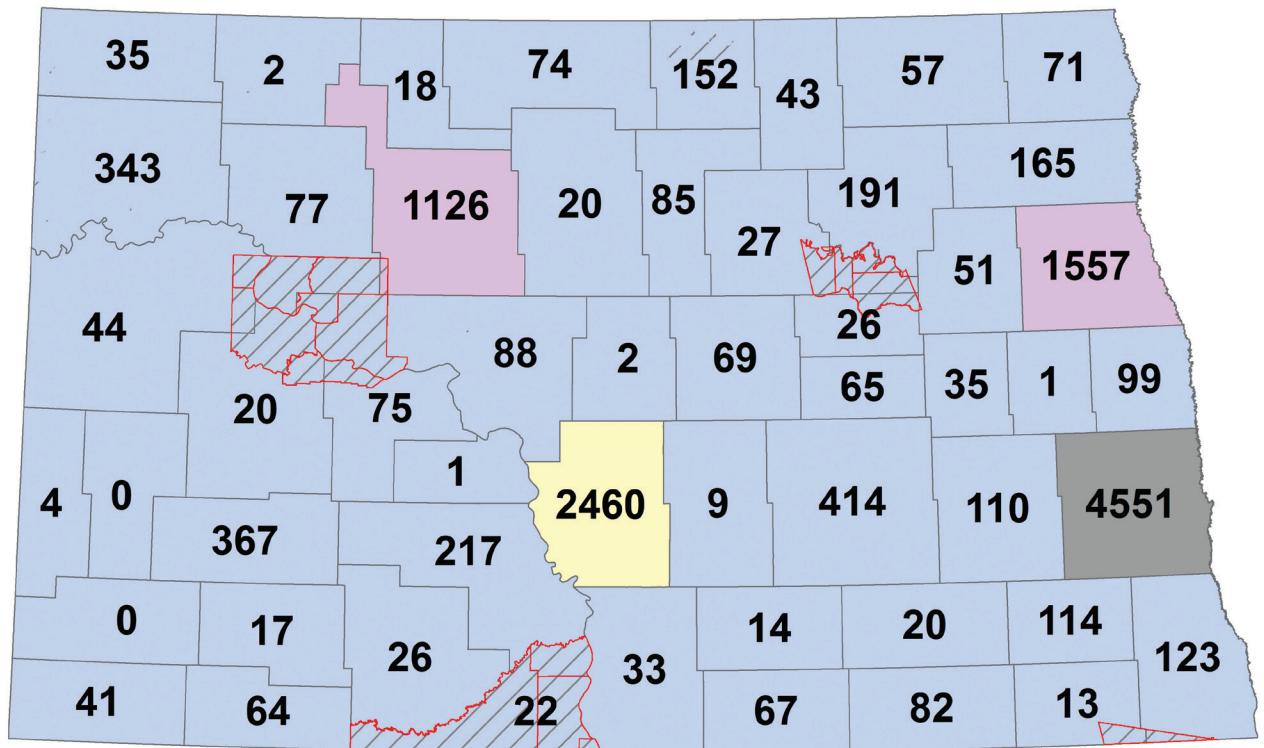
## Continued North Dakota Nursing Demographic Studies

As mentioned before, the North Dakota American Indian Nursing Demographic Study was conducted to establish a baseline reading of the current discrepancy between the American Indian population and the number of American Indian nurses.

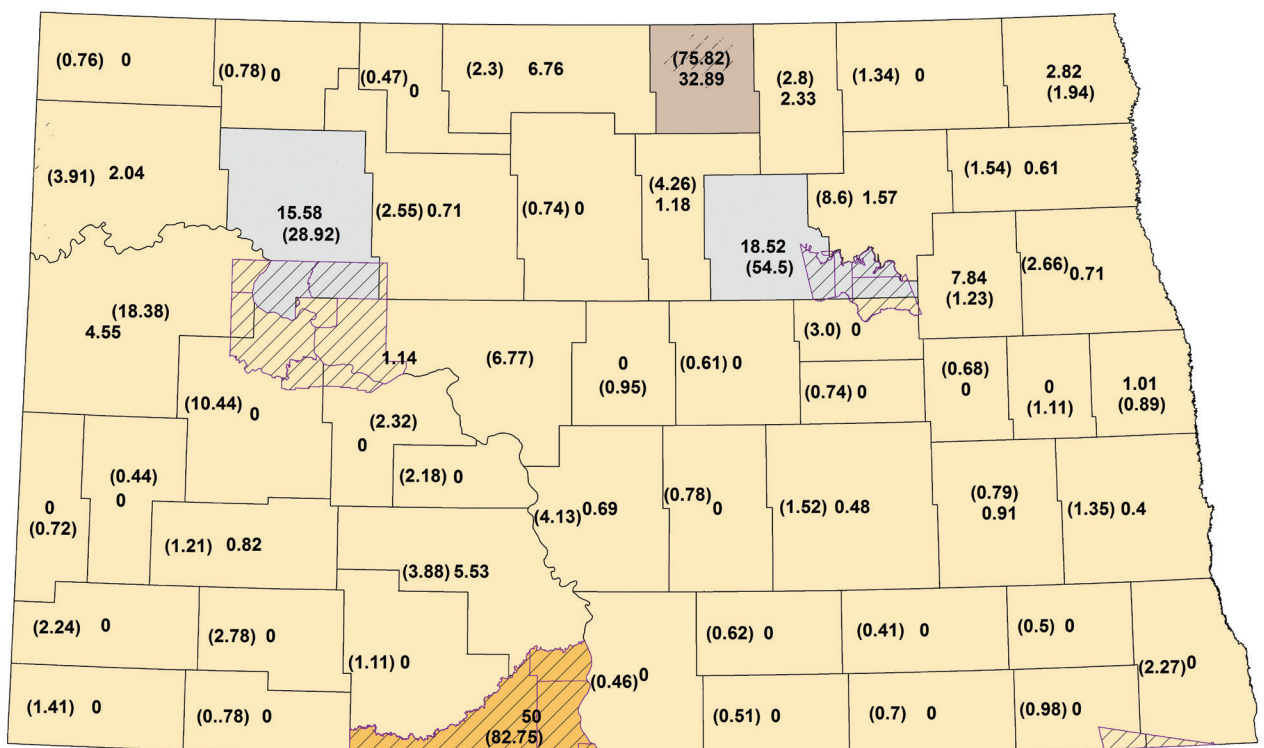
The maps generated by this study highlight each of the 53 individual counties in the state and identify the total number of nurses per county compared with the total number of American Indian nurses for the same area. Further maps were generated to show the percentage of American Indian nurses compared to overall county American Indian population, and then a step further to identify American Indian nurses by nursing specialty. Beyond the initial findings, these demographic studies will be continued throughout the grant efforts, and beyond, to help measure their overall impact. By looking at the issue not only on a statewide basis, but also on the more granular county level, the information will be more valuable, determining which areas of the state need further assistance and which do not.



## Total Number of Employed Nurses - **13,598**



## Percentage of Employed Nurses who are American Indian as Compared to Percentage of County Population that is American Indian



\*Number in parentheses indicates percentage of county population that is American Indian.



## CONCLUSION

The Sustaining Career Pathways for American Indian Health Professionals In North Dakota Project is in its infancy, but the initiatives within have already proven promising and fruitful. As current activities continue and further initiatives are launched, more work will be done to research and measure the effectiveness of each component. In the end, the result of all of these efforts will be the completion of a solid nursing pipeline for the American Indian people in North Dakota.



CANKDESKA CIKANA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
*Spirit Lake Dakota Nation*



NORTH DAKOTA  
CENTER FOR NURSING  
*A unified voice in nursing excellence.*

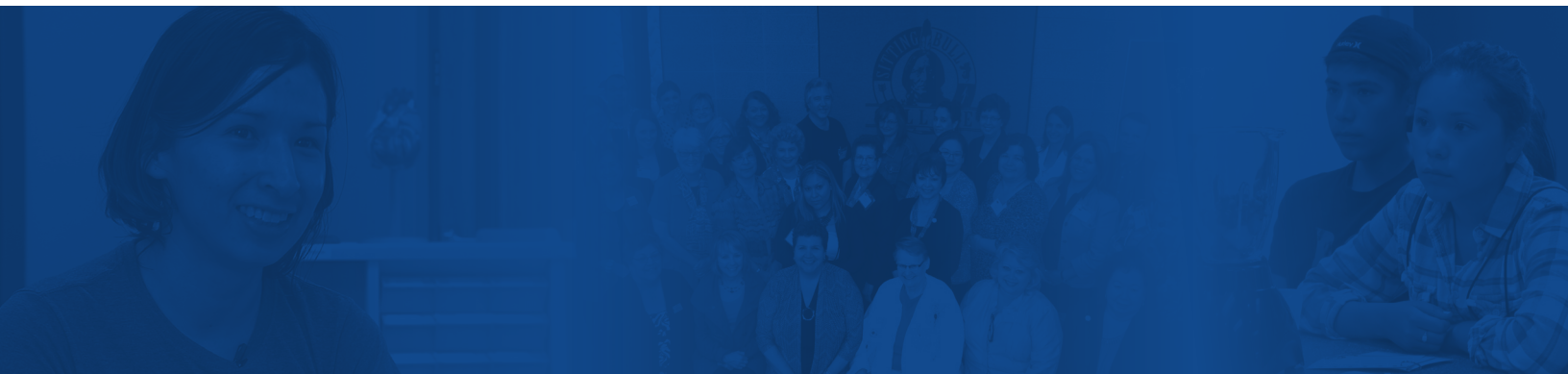
NDSU

NURSING

## Thank You Project Partners!

Cankdeska Cikana Community College  
Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University  
Mount Sinai School of Medicine  
NDSU Environmental and Conservation Sciences  
North Dakota Center for Nursing  
NDSU Department of Nursing  
Next Steps  
RAIN





Funded by The University Partnership Research Grant for Health Professional Opportunity Grant,  
# 90PH0019, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families.  
**For information contact** Loretta Heuer, PhD, RN, FAAN at [loretta.heuer@ndsu.edu](mailto:loretta.heuer@ndsu.edu) or 701-231-8502.